

Sharif stirring up Islamic fundamentalism: Benazir

ISLAMABAD, Dec 1: Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto accused Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif today of stirring up Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan and called for international pressure to halt the process, reports AFP.

The former Pakistani Prime Minister made the call in a letter released by her Pakistan People's Party and addressed to world leaders and international human rights groups. Bhutto said Sharif wanted to impose a system of justice similar to that introduced by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

A bill designed to enforce Islamic Sharia law has been passed by the Lower House of Pakistan's National Assembly and is awaiting endorsement by the Senate.

The world leaders should send a strong message to the Sharif regime that the Taliban system of justice is as unacceptable in Pakistan as it is in Afghanistan, Bhutto said.

The party said the letter had been sent through private

channels to international human rights groups and leaders of various countries including British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The appeal came as Sharif left here Monday for Norway and an official visit to the United States during which he is to meet President Bill Clinton in Washington on Wednesday.

Bhutto said the imposition of barbaric Taliban style justice would undermine Pakistan's "liberal" constitution and its "pluralistic and tolerant" democracy, besides threatening ethnic and religious minorities.

While we in opposition will do all we can within our power to thwart actions additional voices from the international community must be raised against the reactionary and extremist goals of Sharif," she said.

A similar appeal by Bhutto earlier this month triggered strong condemnation by ruling Pakistan Muslim League members who described it as an act of treason.

Jerusalem on top of agenda for talks with Israel, says Arafat

WASHINGTON, Dec 1: Declaring Jerusalem the No. 1 item on his agenda in peace talks with Israel, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has reignited a hot dispute with prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by publicly laying claim to the "occupied" eastern part of the city, reports AP.

At the end of a donors conference that netted the Palestinians pledges of more than \$3 billion from 43 nations, Arafat on Monday registered his satisfaction with the outcome, saying the pledges would be fulfilled and then opened up on Jerusalem.

Referring apparently to East Jerusalem, Arafat said it was "occupied territory" that Israel was bound to relinquish under UN Security Council resolutions on an overall settlement

with the Arabs.

He also asserted anew at the conference his hope to establish a Palestinian state next year, despite stern opposition from Netanyahu and repeated admonitions from the US government to soft-pedal the Jerusalem and statehood issues in advance of talks with Israel on a final settlement.

The city was divided before Israel pushed Jordanian troops out of east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war and declared the united city the eternal capital of the Jewish state — a stand most Israelis support however they may differ on other aspects of the ongoing peace effort. Jerusalem is home to 422,000 Jews and 180,000 Palestinians.

The pledges of aid to the Palestinians on the West Bank and in Gaza are designed to al-

leviate poverty. The assistance is to be used for water projects road-building, the construction of a Palestinian airport and seaport and for industrial zones.

The American Committee for Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem, which treats Palestinians often free of charge, said the United States should have increased its relief package by providing for health care.

To help the Palestinians in their quest for independence, the United States must help Palestinians care for themselves," Suat Taber, the executive director, said in a statement.

"No peace stands a chance of lasting if it does not deliver real results to ordinary people," President Bill Clinton said in urging the European, Asian and

Arab nations to do better than the \$2.3 billion pledged five years ago.

Clinton met privately also with Arafat at the White House, hearing his complaint that Israel had not released enough political prisoners under the Wye agreement the president helped arrange in October.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright invited the Palestinian leader to her home Sunday for a similar chat.

"I am satisfied," Arafat said in response to the announcement by Albright that "it appears the delegations pledged more than \$3 billion dollars." She called the response "a substantial achievement."

The European Union pledged \$2 billion in assistance to Palestinians on the West Bank and in Gaza over five years, Austrian Foreign Minister

Wolfgang Schuessel said at a windup news conference.

He said half a million jobs had to be created for the Palestinians over 10 years, adding that the EU would continue to give money.

"We are by far, as a group of countries, by far the largest donor," Schuessel said. "We pledged today to keep the momentum during the last five years' period; all in all, we spent more than \$12 billion, and I think this will be possible for the next five years."

Clinton said the United States intends to increase its contribution by adding \$1 billion to the \$100 million a year it plans to donate over the next five years. The United States has contributed \$1.5 billion since 1993.

India to deploy Prithvi missile on ships by Jan 16

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: India's naval version of formidable Prithvi missile would be deployed on-board certain surface ships by January 16 and its newer submarines upgraded to have missile-launching capability, Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat said here today, reports PTI.

The naval chief said India was also developing certain elements of a short-range anti-ship weapon. He, however, did not elaborate.

Asked if India would upgrade its "Kilo" class submarines to allow them to launch missile like Pakistani submarines, the admiral replied in the affirmative and said the newer versions of such ships being acquired from Russia would also have this capability. Till now Indian submarines could only launch torpedoes.

Bhagwat, assisted by the naval top brass, said the sophisticated "Sea Harrier" jump jets would undergo a mid-life upgrade within a time-frame and fitted with top-of-the-line avionics and radars.

Baghdad complains to UNSC

US officials made 'dangerous threats' against Iraq's integrity

BAGHDAD, Dec 1: Iraq complained on Monday in a message to UN Security Council President Peter Burelligh that senior US officials had made "dangerous threats" against Iraq, the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) said, reports AFP.

In his letter, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Said Al-Sahhaf "warns against dangerous threats by senior US officials against Iraq, its security and its integrity," the agency said.

"These threats are a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and international legal principles," the Iraqi minister wrote in the missive carried by INA.

Sahhaf also asked the Security Council "to discuss and give priority to this dangerous matter."

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan issued a warning of his own Monday to Iraq, saying President Saddam Hussein will have to face up "very quickly" to a military strike by the United States and Britain if a new crisis breaks out over UN weapons inspections.

Military strikes against Iraq were only narrowly averted in mid-November when Saddam, in a last-minute decision, resumed cooperation with UN disarmament inspectors.

Nobel laureate calls for release of HR activist in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 1: Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jose Ramos Horta on Tuesday called for the release of an outspoken Malaysian human rights activist arrested during an anti-government demonstration, reports PTI.

"I demand that the Malaysian police immediately release Tian Chua and all those arrested at the pro-reformasi demonstration," Ramos Horta said in a statement faxed from Sydney, Australia.

Tian was arrested Nov. 21 soon after a demonstration by supporters of jailed former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim.

Tian, Chairman of the opposition Coalition of People's Democracy, had been picked up by police for protesting against the government Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad and demanding political reforms.

Tian won a bail appeal Monday. But as soon as he walked out of the courthouse police arrested him again.

On Tuesday, Tian appeared at a courthouse in his Kuala Lumpur neighbourhood of Petaling Jaya. The Judge did not charge him with a crime, but ordered him to be held for five days while police investigate possible charges.

The judge also ordered that Tian be taken to a hospital for treatment of asthma.

Quake death toll rises to 25 in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Dec 1: The death toll from a powerful earthquake that hit a remote island in Indonesia rose to 25 on Tuesday as rescue teams searched for more victims and survivors, officials said, reports AP.

The magnitude 6.5 quake hit Mangole island on Sunday night, destroying buildings and houses and triggering landslides.

Strong aftershocks continued to rock the island Tuesday, hampering rescue efforts and frightening villagers.

Initially six people were reported killed on the island, about 1,900 kilometers (1,180 miles) northeast of Indonesia's capital, Jakarta.

Karim Samana, a local government official contacted by telephone on Mangole, confirmed the toll jumped to 25 after reports were received from isolated villages. At least eight were still missing, he said.

"Rescue teams are looking for more possible victims in remote areas. The toll could rise further," said another official Wahab Konoras in a telephone interview from Ternate, the capital of North Maluku regency.

Several officials denied unconfirmed reports that the toll had already climbed above 30 dead.

BRIEFLY

Djibouti president in Libya: Djibouti's President Hassan Gouled Aptidon flew to Libya on Monday for talks with Muammar Gaddafi in violation of a UN flight ban. Libyan radio and UN officials said, AP reports from Cairo. Aptidon's arrival in Libya follows visits by the presidents of Gambia and Congo and by Louis Farrakhan, head of the US Nation of Islam. A UN flight permission is required to fly to Libya. UN officials said Monday in New York that none of the officials obtained such permission. Aptidon flew into Libya's coastal city of Sirte from Paris where he attended a French-African summit, said the radio report which was monitored by the British Broadcasting Corp.

Truck accident kills 13 in India: At least 13 people were killed and 16 injured when a truck carrying rocks overturned yesterday in the southern Indian state of Karnataka. Press Trust of India reported, AFP says from New Delhi. Seven children were among the dead, PTI said. The accident occurred when the driver of the lorry lost control while trying to avoid a collision with another vehicle.

Annan welcomes Cambodia govt: UN chief Kofi Annan on Monday welcomed the formation of Cambodia's coalition government under the premiership of Hun Sen, AFP reports from United Nations.

Hun Sen secured on Monday an overwhelming vote of confidence for his coalition government with arch rival Prince Norodom Ranariddh, ending months of political deadlock. In a statement issued here, Annan also expressed his desire "to see Cambodia resume its full role in the family of nations."

China detains 5 dissidents: Chinese police have detained five dissidents, including veteran activists Xu Wenli, in an apparent crackdown on efforts to set up an opposition party, a human rights group said Tuesday, AP reports from Beijing.

Police took Xu away from his home in Beijing on Monday evening. More than 20 police officers also searched his home and seized a computer, a typewriter, a fax machine, an address book and more than 1,000 pages of documents, the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said.

Bomb hurled on Taiwanese boat: Taiwanese police shot a Chinese fisherman in the leg after he and other crew members hurled dynamite at a Taiwanese patrol boat, police said on Tuesday, AP reports from Taipei.

Fisherman Lin Chuanshou, 25, was in fair condition after being hospitalised with a bullet wound on the Taiwanese-held Matsu island group. Matsu marine police chief Tsai Yu-chien said. Four other crew members of the boat who dove overboard to avoid capture were rescued and being held at military police headquarters on Matsu, Tsai said.

34 miners killed in China: A deadly explosion in an underground mining operation in southwest China killed 38 mine workers and left six missing, media reports said yesterday, AFP says from Beijing.

The Beijing Evening News said an explosion on Sunday at the Laibin coal mine, some 260 km from the Yunnan provincial capital of Kunming, injured an additional 18 workers. There were 80 workers on duty at the time of the explosion. Mining explosions kill an average of 10,000 workers each year in China.

Bush arrives in Kuwait: Former US president George Bush arrived in Kuwait yesterday on the second leg of his Gulf tour, the official KUNA news agency said, AFP reports from Kuwait City.

Bush arrived from Saudi Arabia and is expected to meet Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah and Crown Prince Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah, the agency said. The former president will also visit the 3,500 US troops stationed in Kuwait, mostly at Camp Doha.



Models display clothing by French designers at the BMW Haute Couture & Lifestyle fashion show in Cairo on Sunday. — AP/UNB photo

Hun Sen seeks entry of his country into ASEAN

PHNOM PENH, Dec 1: Prime Minister Hun Sen pushed Cambodia's case Tuesday for entry this month into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, saying the country had met all the conditions, reports AP.

"I strongly hope there won't be any reasons to leave Cambodia out of the regional framework, because we have fulfilled everything we and our friends have required," Hun Sen said at a ceremony introducing his trusted adviser, Hor Nam Hong, as the new foreign minister.

But Hun Sen spoke as Singapore's Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar, currently the chairman of ASEAN's standing committee, effectively ruled out Cambodia's chances of being admitted before a Dec 15-16 summit in Hanoi.

Jayakumar said he had no plans to convene an urgent meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers and said the Hanoi meeting would focus on the economic slowdown affecting the region, not Cambodia.

Parliament endorsed Hun Sen's new government Monday, taking Cambodia a long way toward regaining international legitimacy lost when Hun Sen ousted his co-premier, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, in a coup last year.

Cambodia's seat in the United Nations has since been vacant and its entry — just weeks away at the time of the coup — into ASEAN suspended. ASEAN comprises Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

ASEAN was deeply involved in efforts to return a semblance of democracy to Cambodia and helped engineer the return of Ranariddh from abroad to lead his royalist party in new elections in July. Hun Sen's party narrowly won.

The opposition alleged fraud and violence and held up formation of a new government until Ranariddh, citing international pressure, agreed to a compromise earlier this month.

UNGA demands full implementation of Bosnia peace accord

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 1: The UN General Assembly demanded full implementation of the Bosnia peace agreement and called on all parties to hand over all those indicted for war crimes to an international tribunal, reports AP.

Without a vote, the assembly on Monday adopted a resolution which underlined that international assistance for Bosnia remains conditional on strict compliance with the Dayton peace agreement and subsequent obligations, including cooperation with the tribunal.

The tribunal at the Hague in the Netherlands was set up by the UN Security Council in 1993. At least 20 war crimes suspects remain at large in Bosnia, including the wartime Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, and his military commander Ratko Mladic. While Russia supports the international tribunal,

Moscow's Deputy Ambassador Yuriy Fedotov said his government opposed any military or police actions to capture suspected war criminals.

He noted that the Dayton accord and the tribunal's statutes clearly stated that any extradition should be carried out exclusively on the basis of cooperation.

The assembly resolution also encouraged all parties to accelerate the peaceful and orderly return of refugees and internally displaced persons to all areas of the country, including those where they would be an ethnic minority.

The resolution, which is not legally binding, condemned all acts of intimidation, violence and killings, including acts designed to discourage the return of refugees. It demanded that such acts be investigated and prosecuted.

House judiciary body may broaden impeachment inquiry on Clinton

WASHINGTON, Dec 1: The House Judiciary Committee may broaden its impeachment inquiry on President Bill Clinton to include his campaign in fund-raising activities in 1996, according to published reports, says AP.

Republican members said they planned to investigate allegations that Clinton may have committed "criminal wrongdoing in raising funds for his re-election campaign." The Chicago Tribune, The Washington Post and The New York Times said today.

The announcement comes as the committee is under pressure to speed up its inquiry into Clinton's efforts to cover up his relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. The panel today will discuss issuing subpoenas to Federal

Bureau of Investigation Director Louis Freeh and Justice Department Prosecutor Charles Labella, the sources told the dailies.

Freeh and Labella had written to Attorney General Janet Reno urging her to appoint an independent counsel to investigate Clinton fund-raising activities but they were turned down.

The judiciary committee will also seek subpoenas to force Reno to produce the confidential memos from Freeh and Labella, which have never been made public.

The committee has received information indicating that the Labella and Freeh memorandums may contain allegation of criminal wrongdoing by the president, said Republican party spokesman Paul Mc-

Nulty.

The committee members did not reveal the nature of the allegations against Clinton who in the past has denied violating any law governing campaign funding activities.

A democratic committee aide called the new subpoenas "absolutely bizarre" that "showed the weakness of the case against Clinton."

It's an impeachment inquiry in search of a crime "aide James Jordan told The Tribune, democrats on the panel are expected to fight the subpoenas, he added.

A White House spokesman on Monday said Clinton was unlikely to accept an invitation by House Judiciary Committee Republican Chairman Henry Hyde to testify about his relationship to Monica Lewinsky.

Secessionists win Quebec polls

MONTREAL, Dec 1: Quebec's pro-independence government was reelected easily on Monday, an outcome that could move Canada closer to another traumatic showdown over secession, reports AP.

The victory was a personal triumph for Quebec's charismatic premier Lucien Bouchard. He plans to call another referendum on independence whenever he feels conditions are right for a separatists triumph.

With half of the 23,000 polling stations reporting, the separatists had 45 per cent of the popular vote, to 41 per cent for the Liberals and 12 per cent for a third party, Democratic Action. The separatists were on track to win about 78 of the legislature's 125 seats, and the Liberals about 46.

It was a slight improvement for the separatists over the last election in 1994, when they won 77 seats to 47 for the Liberals while each receiving about 44

per cent of the popular vote.

Bouchard's main rival was Liberal Party leader Jean Charest, who tried to convince voters that the province would prosper only if the decades-old threat of secession was abandoned.

Charest, 40, became an early favourite when he quit federal politics in March to enter the Quebec race; in English-speaking Canada he was viewed as the potential saviour of national unity.

But despite his family roots in Quebec, he was widely perceived by the province's French-speaking majority as more of an outsider than Bouchard, and less likely to do battle for the province in any confrontations with the federal government.

Bouchard, 59, has maintained high popularity ratings despite overseeing painful spending cuts over the past three years in a drive to erase Quebec's deficit. Among Francophones, he has never lost the

mythic aura he gained when, after losing a leg and almost dying from a flesh-eating disease in 1994, he came back to lead the separatists to near-victory in 1995 referendum on secession.

Though Bouchard has served in the federal Cabinet and federal Parliament, this was the first time he ever ran as a party leader in Quebec. He was appointed premier without an election in 1996 after his predecessor, Jacques Parizeau, resigned following the 1995 referendum.

There were 5.2 million eligible voters on Monday, and turnout was more than 80 per cent even though this was the fourth province-wide vote in the past five years.

Analysts had suggested that a landslide separatist victory approaching 50 per cent of the popular vote — would lead to pressure from Parti Quebecois militants to hold a secession referendum quickly.

Hospital threatens to sue him if he stays Pinochet is well enough to be discharged from clinic

LONDON, Dec 1: He may have been a high-profile patient, but former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet has outstayed his welcome at the luxurious north London clinic where he has been residing for the past month, reports AFP.

In fact, a spokesman for the Grovelands Priory Hospital warned Monday, if he stays any longer the clinic will consider suing him.

For Pinochet, already facing the threat of extradition to Spain on charges of genocide, torture and terrorism under his dictatorship, Monday was another day to forget.

Last week Britain's highest court, the House of Lords, ruled that he could not claim sovereign immunity as a for-

mer head of state to avoid extradition.

Chilean Foreign Minister Jose Miguel Insulza is on a diplomatic mission to win his release, but judging by public comments by the British government, it is a doomed task.

Then, adding to his woes, came Monday's announcement from the clinic that he was well enough to be discharged, and should leave as soon as possible.

According to today's British press, staff at the clinic are unhappy at the unwelcome attention he has focused on them, and tired of his demands.

He "enjoys a good moan," a source told The Guardian daily, "Grovelands is not a hotel and it is not a secure unit either."

Written apology for wartime aggression China's official media finally reacts to Japanese refusal

BEIJING, Dec 1: China's official media finally reacted to Japan's lack of wartime apology on Monday, expressing "revulsion" at Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi's refusal to offer a full apology during the Sino-Japanese summit, reports AP.

"Until and unless Japan fully realises its past misdeeds and sincerely makes amends, the people of the world, especially former victims, cannot but eye it with suspicion and revulsion," the China Daily said in an editorial.

"How can Japan win the trust of its neighbours when it always sits on the fence in the face of history," it warned.

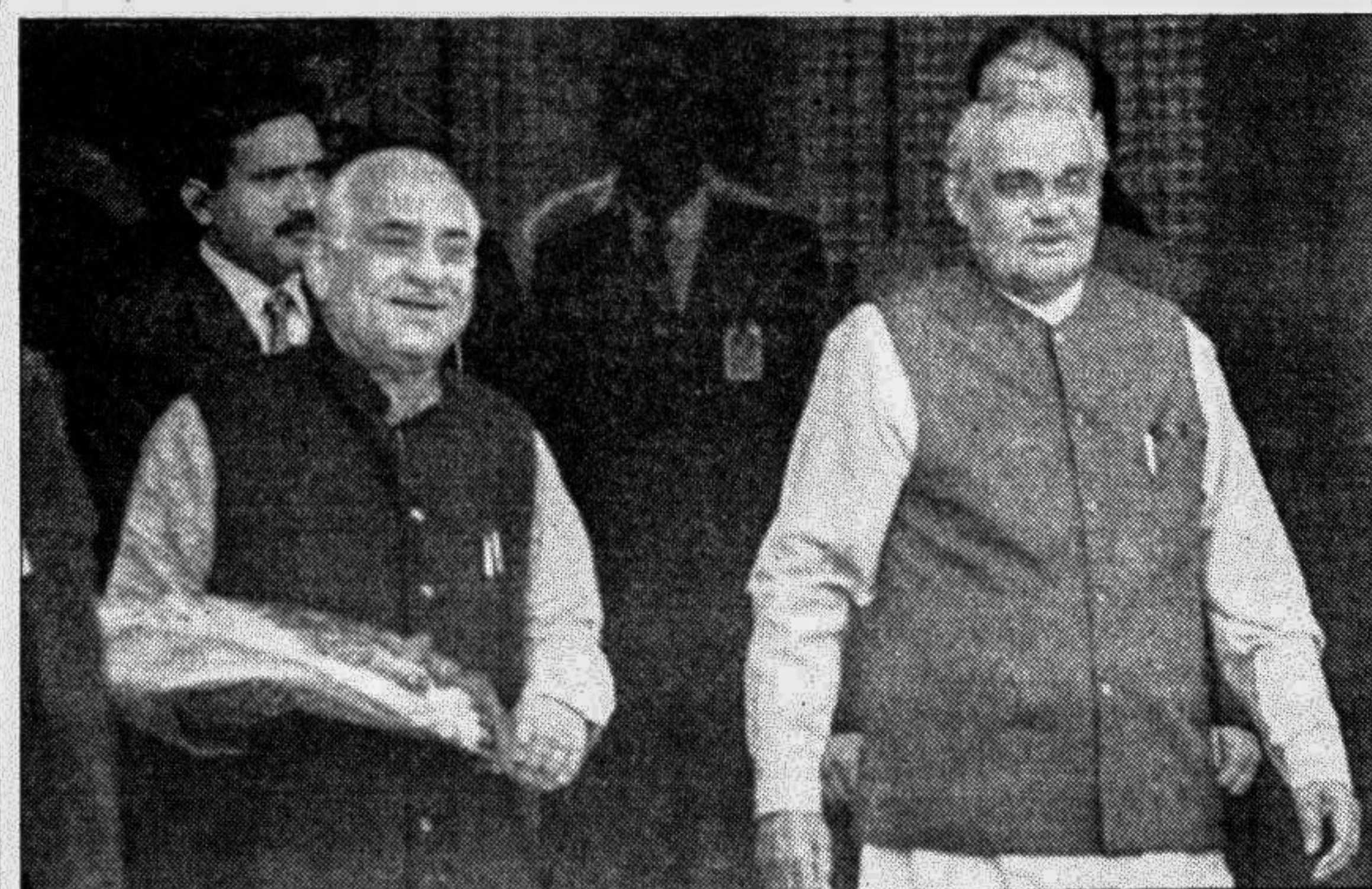
Chinese President Jiang Zemin met on Thursday with Obuchi to hammer out a joint

statement marking the first Chinese state visit to Japan since the two sides reestablished diplomatic ties in 1972.

Jiang had made his priorities for the visit clear — a full apology for Japan's wartime aggression and a strong statement on Taiwan, which Beijing regards as a renegade province.

But he extracted only a partial apology for Japan's aggression, and a weaker statement on Taiwan and spent the rest of his six-day landmark visit hammering home Japan's dark history at every opportunity.

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiromu Nonaka then rubbed salt into China's wounds by saying that Tokyo had already said enough, while Japan's right-wing media accused Beijing of being obsessed by the past.



Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, right, and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Madan Lal Khurana walk into the opening session of parliament on Monday in New Delhi. Vajpayee's wobbly coalition may be in trouble after a resounding defeat at the hands of the Congress Party in assembly elections last week. — AP/UNB photo

'Lack of coordination between party, govt and factionalism are main causes of BJP's defeat'

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: BJP President Kushabhau Thakre yesterday said lack of coordination between party and the government on major policy issues and factionalism were the main reasons for the party's defeat at the hustings, reports PTI.

The amount of consultation necessary between the party and the government on policy decisions does not take place. May be it is due to pressure of work or any other compulsion, Thakre told a private TV channel.

The party has no participation in major decision-making process, he was quoted as saying in a release by "Aaj Tak".

Stating that he was not raising this issue merely because BJP suffered defeat in the just-concluded assembly polls, he said he had expressed similar views at the Ganghinagar session of the party. Let us hope that they (Leaders) will realise this now. My opinion remains the same.

Admitting that factionalism

was one of the reason for BJP's defeat at the hustings, he said inner-party discipline would have to be strengthened and steps taken in that direction soon.

550 Lankans in jails in ME, Singapore

COLOMBO, Dec 1: At least 550 Sri Lankans are being held in prisons in Middle Eastern countries and in Singapore for not having proper travel documents, a junior foreign minister told Parliament today, reports Reuters.

"We are working with our ambassadors and high commissioners in those countries to deal with the problem," Lakshman Kirella said in response to a question.

He said 355 Sri Lankans were currently in Kuwait jails, 85 in Saudi Arabia and 14 in Singapore.