

International

120 held to stop uprising in Myanmar

BANGKOK, Aug 14: An opposition group of exiled Myanmar students claimed Saturday that the country's military regime has taken 120 people into custody over the past two weeks to thwart a revolt that dissidents have called for Sept 9.

The All Burma Students' Democratic Front, composed of students who fled Myanmar after an uprising 11 years ago was crushed in bloodshed, also claimed that a virtual curfew had been imposed in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, and other places since last week.

The claims came a day after Myanmar's government announced that it had foiled an alleged plot by the students, ethnic rebels, die-hard communists, drug traffickers and the party led by Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to instigate a mass uprising next month.

The government claimed that four people, including two ABSDF leaders and two mid-ranking members of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, had been arrested and said anyone engaged in the plot was subject to "severe punishment."

Opposition groups have been urging a new uprising for Sept 9, 1999 — or 9-9-99 — and claim the date is auspicious. Many people in Myanmar, also known as Burma, take numerology very seriously, though nine is usually associated with former military强人 Ne Win.

There was no immediate government comment on the ABSDF's claims. A week ago, exiles marked the 11th anniversary of the beginning of the last uprising — Aug 8, 1988, or 8-8-88. But Myanmar was quiet as it was last year on the 10th anniversary.

Meanwhile, the government said that two people who had helped arrange peace deals with breakaway factions of an ethnic rebel group, the Karen National Progressive Party, had been ambushed, tortured and killed by KNPP loyalists July 31.

The pair, identified as Phrae Moe, 56, and Hla Din, 57, were said in a press statement to have been instrumental in persuading 100 KNPP members to reach a peace settlement with the government last month.

EU concerned at conflict in Dagestan

HELSINKI, Aug 14: The European Union (EU) expressed its deep concern on Friday over the conflict in Russia's southern province of Dagestan, fearing a further escalation of the fighting, reports Xinhua.

In a presidential statement released here, the EU condemned the seizure of several villages by the armed rebel groups and the rebels' proclamation of an independent Islamic State of Dagestan.

The EU reaffirmed its support for the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, calling upon the Russian authorities to "use proportionate force" to restore order in Dagestan, which has "already been deeply affected by a poor socio-economic situation."

Fighting between the Islamic militants and Russia's federal forces erupted on August 7 in this mountainous, multi-ethnic region in Russia's North Caucasus region.

The EU meanwhile expressed worries about the fate of civilians in the region and that of a considerable number of refugees fleeing the area, urging the conflicting sides to respect universal human rights and humanitarian law.

Suharto hospitalised again

JAKARTA, Aug 14: Former President Suharto has been admitted to a Jakarta hospital with a stomach illness less than a month after he suffered a stroke, one of his lawyers said Saturday, reports AP.

A lawyer Syamsul Hadi said Suharto, 78, was admitted to the Pertamina Hospital on Friday night.

"He complained of a stomach problem last night and was taken to the hospital. The doctors are looking after him. So far as I know he is okay. But I don't know enough to be specific," Hadi said.

Hospital workers, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Suharto was examined at its intensive care unit for about one hour and half on Saturday morning.

He was then taken to a private room on trolley wearing an oxygen mask.

No further details were immediately available. Three of Suharto's six multimillionaire children were at the hospital Saturday.

Suharto, who is fending off allegations of massive corruption during his 32-year iron-fisted reign, suffered what doctors and family said was a mild stroke on July 20. It reduced some of his body movement and slurred his speech.

He discharged himself 10 days later and had been recuperating at his central Jakarta home, which is equipped with a private clinic.

Suharto came to power in 1966 one year after his troops crushed what he claimed was a communist coup attempt against founding President Sukarno, who died under house arrest in 1970.

Delhi rejects Washington's contention

Sharif warns India against 'atrocities' on Kashmiri Muslims

ISLAMABAD, Aug 14: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif warned India on Saturday against what he called its atrocities on Muslims in the disputed Kashmir region, saying this protracted problem threatened peace, reports AP.

"Indian forces are killing innocent Kashmiris. We cannot remain silent on the Indian atrocities," Sharif said in a speech to mark the 52nd Independence Day of Pakistan.

Pakistan, carved out of British-India on Aug 14, 1947, was at the brink of a war with its rival neighbour when Indian forces were battling the Muslim militants who captured mountain heights in Kashmir's Kargil area in May.

But the threat of a full-scale war between the two nuclear powers was averted following international pressure that forced Pakistan to appeal to the militants to vacate their positions in July.

Sharif said Pakistan tried to ease tension with India "but if war is thrust upon us, we will give a befitting reply," he said, adding that the threat of a war could only be removed after the

solution of Kashmir dispute.

Sharif also paid tribute to the soldiers killed in fighting against India on the Kashmir border during recent tension, saying that they wrote "history with golden letters."

Pakistan acted with responsibility and showed restraint, he said. "But there is a limit to our patience," he warned.

"I pay tribute to soldiers and officers who were martyred. I also salute the mujahideen for their sacrifices. Their blood will not be wasted," he said.

Islamabad says India shot down the Pakistani plane when it was on a training flight well within its airspace, killing 16 servicemen.

India says the Pakistani plane violated its airspace.

Pakistan and India have already fought two wars over Kashmir — a former princely state, now divided between them. Both the countries claim Kashmir in its entirety.

A third war was fought over Bangladesh which was then former East Pakistan.

"We made an appeal to the mujahideen (holy warriors) to withdraw to ease tension," Sharif said.

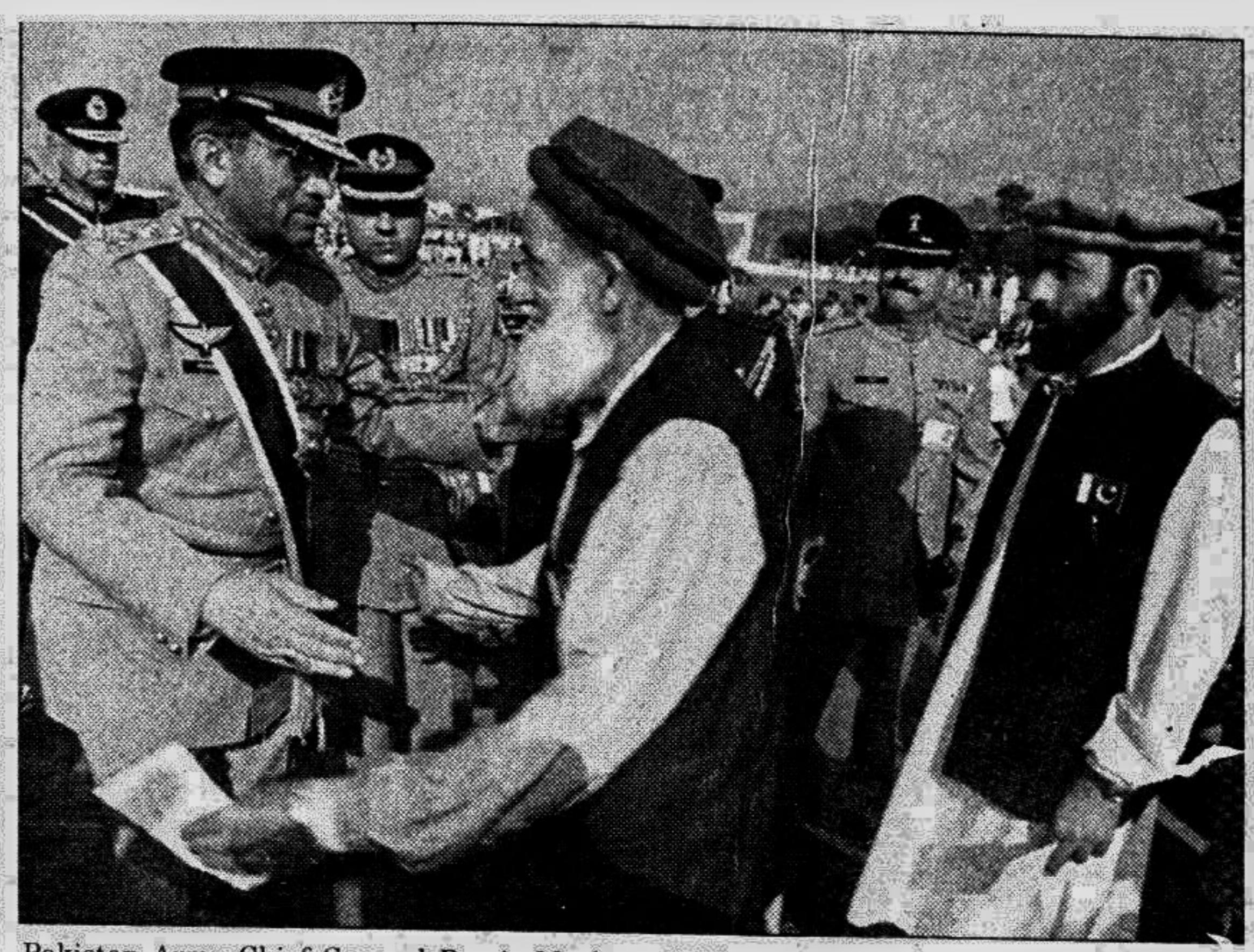
A spokesman of the External

Affairs Ministry claimed that the Pakistani military aircraft was shot down in Kutch area of the western Gujarat state under standard operating procedures after it failed to comply with all warnings and signals.

The reaction came in response to official comments from Washington that India had not respected the agreement by shooting down the Pakistani plane and that the incident had taken place at a "highly disputed" area.

Citing article two of the agreement that "combat aircraft will not fly within 10 kilometers of each other's airspace," the spokesman said that the Pakistani aircraft fell well within the rubric of this clause.

He claimed that Pakistani intrusion had taken place in four parts of the border area with the first three intrusions taking place at the border which had been delineated and clearly demarcated and the last intruding deep into Indian airspace.



Pakistan Army Chief General Pervaiz Musharraf (L) receives relatives (C and R) of those killed or wounded in the recent fighting in Kashmir, at Pakistani Independence Day ceremonies in Islamabad yesterday. The country marked its 52nd Independence Day with a flag hoisting ceremony in the capital as President Rafiq Tarar decorated 64 army officers and soldiers involved in the recent 10-week conflict with India. — AFP photo



A group of young East Timorese women read a leaflet promoting autonomy under Indonesia distributed during a pro-Indonesian rally in the East Timorese capital of Dili yesterday. Supporters cheered on campaigners during the rally who were promoting the merits of autonomy under Indonesian rule, on first day of a two-week campaign ahead of a landmark August 30 vote of self-determination for East Timor. — AFP photo

All pregnant women in UK need to have HIV test

LONDON, Aug 14: All pregnant women in the UK are to be offered HIV test in an effort to reduce the rising number of babies born with the deadly virus, reports Xinhua.

The tests are to be recommended to women as part of their routine ante-natal screening, but there will be no element of compulsion, according to local media reports.

The measures, announced on Friday by Health Minister Tessa Jowell, are designed to cut by 80 per cent the number of babies born HIV positive by the year 2002. They are also aimed at improving treatment for women with HIV.

Women known to be HIV positive can take anti-viral drugs during pregnancy to minimize the risk of transmitting the disease to their babies during birth. At the moment, two-thirds of the women who are HIV positive do not know they are infected.

The UK has one of Europe's highest maternal HIV transmission rates.

in a similar attack Beervah in central Kashmir.

More than 80 militants, security personnel and civilians have been killed in a sudden rise in violence in Kashmir this month. Muslim separatists traditionally step up operations before Independence Day on August 15 but this time they have engaged in particularly daring attacks on army and paramilitary encampments.

India says the campaign has been masterminded by the Pakistani intelligence services after the recent two-month conflict along the disputed border between India and Pakistan-controlled Kashmir.

Islamabad denies the charge, although it extends diplomatic and moral support to the Muslim insurgency in Indian Kashmir, which has claimed more than 24,000 lives in the past 10 years. Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, has been the cause of two of the three wars between the world's two newest nuclear powers.

Clinton, Barak discuss ME peace moves over telephone

WASHINGTON, Aug 14: President Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak discussed Middle East peace efforts during a 15-minute telephone call on Friday, the White House said, reports Reuters.

They touched on Israel's talks with the Palestinians and on the possibility of its resuming negotiations with Syria in the conversation, their second this week, National Security Council spokesman David

Leavy said.

Israel has said that it is ready to resume peace talks with Syria, suspended in 1996, and its foreign minister said on Tuesday that he hoped there would be a breakthrough soon.

They talked about the status of the Middle East peace process, both the Palestinian and Syrian tracks, Leavy said, saying they also spoke about how to make Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's upcoming visit to the region a success.

Barak has sought to breathe new life into the Middle East peace process since taking office last month, and he has said he wants the United States to take a less direct role in the peace talks than under his predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Albright postponed her trip by two weeks, until late August or early September, at Barak's request to give him more time to iron out his problems with the Palestinians over carrying out last year's Wye River land-for-security agreement.

Colombian rebels kill 6 civilians

BOGOTA, Aug 14: A rightwing paramilitary group killed at least six civilians in northeastern Colombia and took 70 people hostage as a shield against leftist rebels who drove them out of the town of San Carlos, regional authorities said Friday, reports AFP.

Police and army forces left San Carlos in Antioquia province on Sunday.

A large group of men from the right-wing Self-defense Units of Colombia (AUC) entered San Carlos Thursday afternoon and took dozens of people to check if any of them were guerrilla sympathizers, a city official told AFP by telephone.

The AUC forces then killed five men and one woman before rebels apparently from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) forced them out of the city Friday morning.

Paramilitary troops took 70 people hostage, the city official said, adding that FARC and AUC forces continued to clash in the outskirts of town sometimes near the country's major hydroelectric plants.

Some hostages were loaded into trucks before the paramilitaries fled down paved highways, according to a reporter in the area for Caracol radio.

Ambon violence claims 10 more

JAKARTA, Aug 14: A further 10 people have been killed in Ambon, police said today as the situation in the riot-torn east Indonesian city remained tense, reports AFP.

Ambon was "still tense as can be expected, but we have had no report of violence today," Maluku province Police spokesman Major Philip Jekiel said. The 10 were killed in last night's violence. "That is the number of deaths we have checked at the hospital," Jekiel said.

But the Media Indonesia daily said 12 people were killed and at least 10 injured in violence between Christians and Moslems in the Gunung Malintang of South Ambon on late yesterday. The head of the police operational command centre, Captain Marthian Johanis was quoted as saying violence had also erupted yesterday in two other residential areas of Ambon — Aspara Hatice Kecil and Kampung Kolom — with Christians attacking and bombing the homes of Moslems.

Ambon has been torn since late last month by a fresh out-break of violent Christian-Moslem clashes that have now left more than 100 dead and over 400 seriously injured.

Two opinion polls survey reveal Vajpayee set for a big win

NEW DELHI, Aug 14: Riding on the success in swiftly evicting Pakistan-backed Islamic guerrillas from India-controlled Kashmir, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's rightist alliance appears to be heading for a big victory in next month's general elections, said two opinion polls published Saturday, reports AFP.

Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party-led Hindu nationalists alliance is expected to get 44 per cent of the votes, giving it an estimated 332 of 545 seats in the Lok Sabha, the powerful lower house of parliament, said the poll conducted by The Times of India newspaper.

The main challenger, the Congress party and its allies, is expected to win 138 seats, the newspaper said.

Vajpayee's 13-month-old government lost a confidence vote in parliament in April, and President KR Narayanan ordered fresh general elections.

The alliance is expected to get 44 per cent of the votes, giving it an estimated 332 of 545 seats in the Lok Sabha, the powerful lower house of parliament, said the poll conducted by The Times of India newspaper.

The main challenger, the Congress party and its allies, is expected to win 138 seats, the newspaper said.

Vajpayee's 13-month-old government lost a confidence vote in parliament in April, and President KR Narayanan ordered fresh general elections.

The alliance is expected to get 44 per cent of the votes, giving it an estimated 332 of 545 seats in the Lok Sabha, the powerful lower house of parliament, said the poll conducted by The Times of India newspaper.

The main challenger, the Congress party and its allies, is expected to win 138 seats, the newspaper said.

Vajpayee's 13-month-old government lost a confidence vote in parliament in April, and President KR Narayanan ordered fresh general elections.

The alliance is expected to get 44 per cent of the votes, giving it an estimated 332 of 545 seats in the Lok Sabha, the powerful lower house of parliament, said the poll conducted by The Times of India newspaper.

The main challenger, the Congress party and its allies, is expected to win 138 seats, the newspaper said.

Vajpayee's 13-month-old government lost a confidence vote in parliament in April, and President KR Narayanan ordered fresh general elections.

The alliance is expected to get 44 per cent of the votes, giving it an estimated 332 of 545 seats in the Lok Sabha, the powerful lower house of parliament, said the poll conducted by The Times of India newspaper.

The main challenger, the Congress party and its allies, is expected to win 138 seats, the newspaper said.

Vajpayee's 13-month-old government lost a confidence vote in parliament in April, and President KR Narayanan ordered fresh general elections.

The alliance is expected to get 44 per cent of the votes, giving it an estimated 332 of 545 seats in the Lok Sabha, the powerful lower house of parliament, said the poll conducted by The Times of India newspaper.

The main challenger, the Congress party and its allies, is expected to win 138 seats, the newspaper said.

Vajpayee's 13-month-old government lost a confidence vote in parliament in April, and President KR Narayanan ordered fresh general elections.

The alliance is expected to get 44 per cent of the votes, giving it an estimated 332 of 545 seats in the Lok Sabha, the powerful lower house of parliament, said the poll conducted by The Times of India newspaper.

The main challenger, the Congress party and its allies, is expected to win 138 seats, the newspaper said.

Vajpayee's 13-month-old government lost a confidence vote in parliament in April, and President KR Narayanan ordered fresh general elections.

The alliance is expected to get 44 per cent of the votes, giving it an estimated 332 of 545 seats in the Lok Sabha, the powerful lower house of parliament, said the poll conducted by The Times of India newspaper.

The main challenger, the Congress party and its allies, is expected to win 138 seats, the newspaper said.

Vajpayee's 13-month-old government lost a confidence vote in parliament in April, and President KR Narayanan ordered fresh general elections.

The alliance is expected to get 44 per cent of the votes, giving it an estimated 332 of 545 seats in the Lok Sabha, the powerful lower house of parliament, said the poll conducted by The Times of India newspaper.

The main challenger, the Congress party and its allies, is expected to win 138 seats, the newspaper said.

Vajpayee's 13-month-old government lost a confidence vote in parliament in April, and President KR Narayanan ordered fresh general elections.