

India's deployment of N-arms to cost \$ 16 b

NEW DELHI, Aug 22 : India's deployment of nuclear weapons, as envisaged by its recent "nuclear doctrine," will cost at least 700 billion rupees (16 billion dollars) over the next three decades, a senior official said Sunday.

Bharat Karnad, member of the National Security Advisory Board who was involved in preparing the draft nuclear blueprint, said the cost "is eminently reasonable and affordable."

"According to a study published soon after the May 1998 nuclear tests, the cost of having between 350 to 400 nuclear weapons distributed over a triad (air, sea and land) would be about 700 billion rupees over 30 years," Karnad told the Times of India daily.

"In a worst-case scenario -- of trade embargoes, international credit cut-offs and other punitive measures -- economists believe it will work out to ten

times that amount," he said.

Karnad told AFP the cost might appear "unaffordably large," but is "less than 6.7 percent of the India's 1996-97 Gross Net Product."

"If the economy grows at seven percent every year then in 2030 the total cost will be just 0.7 percent of the Gross Net Product," he said.

"You will have to put the figure for nuclear weapons programme in this perspective and it appears eminently reasonable and affordable," Karnad said.

India's draft "nuclear doctrine" envisaged a weapons programme that would produce a land, air and sea-based nuclear deterrent.

The document would have to be approved by the government that emerges from next month's general elections.

China, Pakistan and the United States have all voiced concern over the publication of

India's draft "nuclear doctrine," R. Chidambaram, chief of India's Atomic Energy, was quoted by the Times of India as saying India had full capability to provide technological back-up to the nuclear blueprint.

He said the scientific data that emerged from the nuclear tests "closely matched the calculations we had made by computers" and that "is an indication of our capabilities."

"Research and development capability and technological expertise ... will enable India to maintain a credible nuclear deterrent as enunciated in the doctrine," Chidambaram said.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said Saturday his government was for a broad national consensus on the nuclear doctrine.

Vajpayee told reporters in the southern state of Kerala that there was a "public demand" and the need for a "clear doctrine" after India's capability to make nuclear weapons.



An Indonesian Muslim collects (R) money from fellow devotees in the yard of the Al-Azhar Mosque in Jakarta Sunday during a mass prayer for Aceh and Ambon people as the violence continues in those provinces. Some 2000 Muslim youths from different groups gathered for an end to ongoing violence in the riot-torn eastern city of Ambon and in the troubled western province of Aceh. — AFP photo

Death verdict to MQM men Security alert in Karachi

KARACHI, Aug 22 : Security has been tightened in Karachi after an anti-terrorism court handed the death penalty to two Pakistanis for the 1997 killing of four US oil company executives, police said Sunday, reports AFP.

Paramilitary troops and police had been deployed in sensitive areas and were patrolling in armoured vehicles amid fears of a possible backlash, provincial police chief Rana Maqbool told AFP.

The police have been put on alert to make sure nothing goes wrong after the conviction," Maqbool said.

Two men belonging to an influential ethnic political party, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), were sentenced to death here Saturday.

Judge Hussain Bux Khoso found Ahmed Saeed and Mohammad Salim guilty and sentenced them to hang.

Americans Ephraim Egbu, 42, Joel Enlow, 40, Larry Jennings, 49, and Tracy Rittie, 41, along with their Pakistani driver, were ambushed and gunned down in Karachi on November 12, 1997.

MQM, which represents Urdu-speaking migrants who came from India after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, has condemned the verdict as an attempt to tarnish the party's image in the eyes of the international community.

The party has admitted the convicts were party activists but denied they were involved in the murders.

A party leader and senator Nasreen Jilani said lie-detector tests on the accused by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had cleared the two men.

A senior police official said a two-member FBI team had also investigated the case and recorded statements from the accused.



The Grand Dragon of the Michigan Klu Klux Klan (L) addresses the crowd as another Klan member looks on during a KKK rally Saturday in downtown Cleveland, Ohio, as part of the KKK's effort to spread their message of segregation, hate and intolerance toward black gays and Jews. Although the rally coincided with the start of the city's annual Black Family Reunion and the Cleveland Brown's first home game, the meeting, in front of a crowd of fewer than 300, remained calm with no arrests or disruptions. — AFP photo

Saudi King 'deeply moved', won't attend son's funeral

DUBAI, Aug 22 : Saudi King Fahd was "deeply moved" by the death of his eldest son but will be unable to attend the funeral, due to take place in Riyadh on Sunday, a diplomat told AFP.

The king will not come to Riyadh, because the doctors have said he is unable to make the journey in these circumstances -- he was deeply moved with grief, the Gulf-based Arab diplomat said, asking not to be named.

The ailing 80-year-old monarch is currently in the Spanish resort of Marbella in his first visit outside the kingdom since 1994.

He heard of his son's death through his brothers, Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz, the governor of Riyadh, and Prince Abdelrahman bin Abdul Aziz, deputy defence minister.

Turkey turns to living as hope for survivors dwindles

IZMIR, Turkey, Aug 22 : As chances of finding survivors dwindled by the hour and the death toll continued to mount, Turkey's embattled authorities on Sunday began to concentrate on the living, reports AFP.

Government officials, under strong criticism for inefficient coordination of a massive rescue effort, appealed to people to stop sending food and clothes, calling instead for either cash donations or medical, sanitary and earth moving equipment.

A statement early Sunday by the earthquake crisis center here said 12,040 people had been killed and 33,495 injured in the powerful tremor, which measured 7.4 on the open-ended Richter scale and devastated Turkey's heavily populated, industrial northwest in the early hours of August 17.

Some of the foreign rescue workers who poured into the area were beginning to wrap up their efforts. A Swiss team among the first to arrive on August 17 said it was returning home after having thus far found 12 survivors and about 80 bodies.

"Statistically," said Francois Imay, a doctor with the team, "48 hours after an earthquake, it is considered that half of the people buried underground have died."

But he added: "There are no rules, everything depends on the conditions."

The conditions in Izmir, he said, were aggravated by the extreme heat, which hovered regularly at around 40 centigrade (104 Fahrenheit).

The weather cooled off somewhat Sunday as clouds gathered over the stricken area,

but rescue workers were worried that the rains forecast by meteorologists would make their jobs more difficult and life hellish for survivors who have been camping in the open.

Labour Minister Yasar Okuyan said efforts would now concentrate on setting up sanitary facilities and housing for survivors, mostly in the form of tent villages.

Newspapers said there were plans to lodge survivors in gymnasiums, youth hostels and holiday villages and homes in the area.

The crisis center in Ankara, coordinating requests from the stricken provinces, appealed for "cash donations in particular" in addition to earth moving equipment, generators, cranes and compressors.

Sonia wrestles with 'foreigner' tag

NEW DELHI, Aug 22 : The foreign roots of India's Italian-born opposition leader, Sonia Gandhi, are casting a lengthening shadow over next month's general elections, reports AFP.

The Hindu nationalist party of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee is stepping up its campaign against Sonia, arguing that someone who only took Indian citizenship in 1983 is unfit to rule the world's largest democracy.

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, tipped by opinion polls to win a clear majority in the September-October elections, has already pledged to enact legislation barring foreign-born nationals from holding high office.

But analysts question just how damaging the "foreigner" tag will prove to the 52-year-old widow of former premier Rajiv Gandhi and her 114-year-old

Congress party.

Sonia herself remains, at least in public, relatively unfazed by the issue which has already triggered a damaging split in her own party.

In a television interview broadcast on Friday, Sonia insisted that she had completely severed her foreign roots, and that she was an Indian in every sense.

"I don't feel one bit Italian," she said. "I feel completely Indian. I love India. I love the people here. India is in my heart."

The Hindu nationalists think differently.

After Sonia announced that she would be running from a safe Congress seat in southern India, the BJP promptly urged voters to reject her on the grounds of her foreign background.

Colombo holds talks with Delhi Lanka shelve peace plan

COLOMBO, Aug 22 : Sri Lanka has shelved a power-sharing plan aimed at ending the island's drawn out Tamil separatist war following the failure to win opposition support, for it, political sources here said Sunday, reports AFP.

Ruling party legislators said the government had hoped to present the political package before parliament this month but the assassination of a co-author of the draft had dealt a final blow to the entire process.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga who first unveiled the peace plan in August 1995, told a rally of her ruling People's Alliance (PA) that ending the drawn out war and restoring peace would be a priority next year.

Kumaratunga came to power

in August 1994 offering a "hand of friendship" to the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The rebel group abruptly pulled out of a truce by attacking navy gunboats in April 1995.

In just over three months Kumaratunga announced her devolution proposals which seek to turn the country into a de facto federal state in all but name but the guerrillas have rejected the plan wholesale.

Ruling party sources said the President's address to her supporters, broadcast live over national television and radio, made it clear the government was keen to end the war and implement the peace plan next year.

Kumaratunga urged the main opposition United National

Party (UNP), the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the leftist JVP, or People's Liberation Front to support her efforts.

Meanwhile, India and Sri Lanka have conducted defence talks amid fears Tamil rebels were organising arms shipments along the waters dividing the two countries, press reports here said Sunday.

Sri Lanka Defence Secretary Chandrananda de Silva led a high level team of navy, air force and Foreign Ministry officials to three days of talks with their Indian counterparts in New Delhi, the Sunday Times said.

Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerrillas were believed to be smuggling arms to the island's north-eastern regions.

India threatens to dump truce pact with tribal militants

GUWAHATI, India, Aug 22 : The Indian army on Sunday threatened to suspend a two-year-old ceasefire pact with tribal guerrillas in the north-eastern state of Nagaland after three militant leaders were killed by a rival faction, reports AFP.

An army statement said the killings involving warring factions of the outlawed National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) might lead the government to "intervene" and to peace talks breaking down.

"No government can remain a silent spectator and the security forces will not abdicate their responsibility of trying to prevent violence," the statement said.

"This intervention may put

paid to the ceasefire and with it hopes of finding a peaceful solution to the political problems of Nagaland."

A rival faction of the rebel outfit Thursday shot dead three top militant leaders, including General Secretary Dall Manjor, near Nagaland's state capital Kohima.

Since the ceasefire deal was signed in August 1997, 314 NSCN militants have been killed while 237 others have been kidnapped, the army said.

"Today fratricidal conflict constitutes the most serious threat to the security and stability of the state," the statement said.

The factions must refrain from using the ceasefire to serve their own petty and vengeful

ends."

Five decades of fighting for an independent homeland by NSCN rebels have claimed more than 25,000 lives.

S.C. Jamir, the chief minister of Nagaland told AFP the killings "could derail the entire peace process."

At least three rounds of peace talks have been held between NSCN leaders and the Indian government, including a formal meeting last month in Amsterdam.

While one faction of the NSCN has joined the peace process, its rival faction is yet to accept the government's unconditional offer for talks, although it has declared a unilateral ceasefire with the army.

'UK security firm offered to assassinate Ocalan'

LONDON, Aug 22 : A private British security firm offered to assassinate Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan for Ankara for 5.75 million pounds (9.2 million dollars), the Sunday Times reported, says AFP.

Aims Ltd, based in Salisbury, eastern England, which has close links to Britain's crack SAS regiment and British security services, proposed to "dispose" of the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), according to the paper.

The proposal to kill Ocalan was made by Aims after it was approached by the Turkish government in 1995 and asked to advise on how best to neutralise him as PKK leader, the Sunday Times said.

The firm offered to track and pinpoint Ocalan, and arrange for his murder. It proposed using former SAS soldiers to

train a Turkish hit squad to carry out the attack in another country, according to the weekly.

The company also presented a "kidnap" option under which a snatch squad would take Ocalan back to face trial in Turkey, said the Sunday Times.

But taking the Kurdish leader back for trial "may not present itself as an option. The simplest, of course, is the disposal of the party in a given area," it reportedly advised in a document submitted to Ankara.

In the event, the Turks decided against an assassination.

The company later was one of two British firms which together with the US Central Intelligence Service (CIA) and the Israeli secret service Mossad helped Turkey snatch Ocalan from Kenya in February, said the Sunday Times.

BRIEFLY

Tropical storm hits HK: A tropical storm swept across Hong Kong Sunday morning, unleashing heavy rains and leaving four people injured after a tree fell over at a temple. AP reports from Hong Kong.

Tropical Storm Sam, packing winds of about 62 kph (38.4 mph), also forced the closure of bridges and suspension of ferry and bus services. The storm was estimated to be about 60 kilometres (37 miles) east to southeast of Hong Kong and was forecast to move northwest at about 18 kph (11 mph).

3 shot dead in new riot in Ambon: At least three people were killed and eight others injured in a new riot in Ambon, capital of Indonesia's Maluku province, on Saturday afternoon, the Antara News Agency reported yesterday, Xinhua reports from Jakarta.

The incident started when large numbers of unidentified people arrived near a market on Tulukabessy Street in Kijang vans and trucks.

British Columbia PM resigns: After months of speculation, the premier of British Columbia Glen Clark resigned Saturday after it was revealed he was under criminal investigation for his role in the approval of a casino licence to a friend, AFP reports from Victoria.

Clark's resignation came one day after news of the investigation was made public, and followed a police raid on the premier's Vancouver home in March.

Pope to visit India Nov 5-8: Pope John Paul will arrive in India for a four-day visit on November 5, a church official said in New Delhi yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

John Dayal, a spokesman for the United Christians Forum, an umbrella organisation of all the Christian groups, said the pontiff would be in the Indian capital to announce the conclusions of a synod on Asia which was held in April-May 1998 at the Vatican.

Afghan scholar offers \$113 reward for head of Clinton

ISLAMABAD, Aug 22 : An Afghan scholar has offered a reward equal to \$113 for the head of US President Bill Clinton, an independent Afghan news agency reported today, says Reuters.

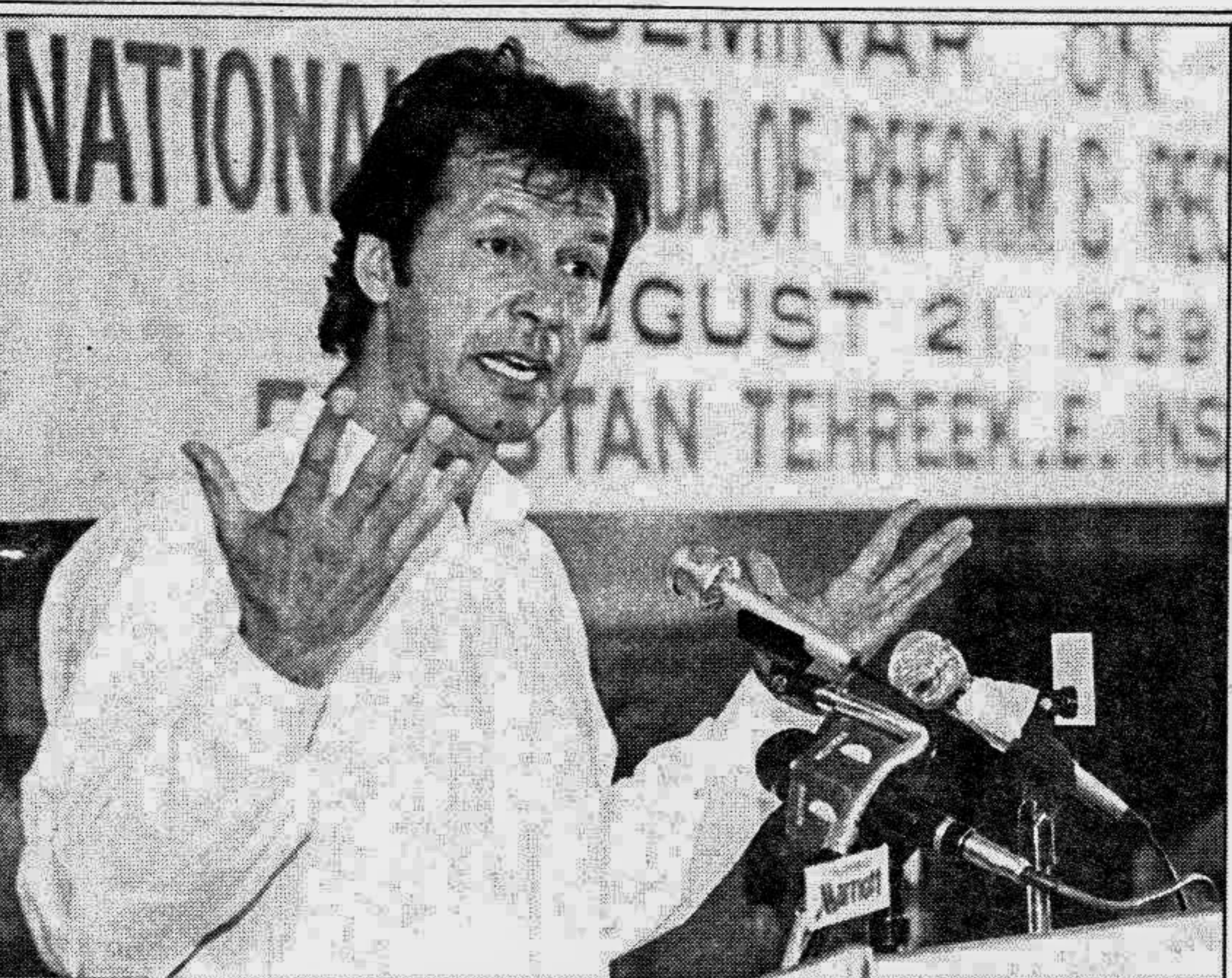
The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost, an Afghan scholar based in Peshawar near the border with Afghanistan, as saying "if anyone kills Clinton I will pay a reward of five million Afghanis (\$113)."

"I think 5 million Afghanis is not that big of an amount, but the price of the American president's head for me is not valued more than this," Dost was quoted as saying.

"If America sets the price of Osama bin Laden at \$5 million then we can set the price of the American president at five million Afghanis," he said.

The United States has offered a reward of \$5 million for the capture of bin Laden, whom it accuses of being behind the bombings at two US embassies in Africa last August which killed more than 200.

It has also been seeking to extradite bin Laden from Afghanistan to have him stand trial in the United States.



Imran Khan, cricketer turned politician, announces his party agenda for reforms and reconstruction in a seminar in Islamabad on Saturday. Imran highly criticised Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif government's policies, especially on Kashmir and demanded his ouster. Imran formed his political party named as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Movement for Justice) after his retirement from cricket. — AFP photo

Indian Christians begin a nine-day protest rally

NEW DELHI, Aug 22 : More than 200 Indian Christians have started a peace march from the eastern port city of Calcutta demanding a federal probe into the gruesome killings of an Australian missionary, a report said Sunday, reports AFP.

The protesters would reach the southern city of Hyderabad, capital of Andhra Pradesh, after a nine-day march to join a Christian rally on August 30, the Indian Express said.

A spokesman of the United Christian Forum, which is organising the march said the protesters' intention was to spread the message of "love, peace and communal harmony".

An official commission last month submitted a 250-page report to the government on the killings of the Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons.

They were burnt to death last January as they slept in their car in the state's Baripada district.

The main suspect is alleged to be a right-wing Hindu local leader named Dara Singh, according to the commission.

"The act of murdering

Staines and his two children was inspired by Dara Singh and his clout," the document said ruling out the possibility of "any authority or organisation" behind the killings.

Lawyer Gopal Subramaniam, who was involved in the government investigation into the murders, said Singh had organised the mob that killed the missionary. However, he added further investigations were required to determine the exact role played by those implicated in the killings.

Herod Mullick, general secretary of the forum said the Christians could not "cannot accept a report which has given a clean chit to the fundamentalist forces involved in the killings."

"Instead we demand a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation."

A statement issued by the forum also called on voters to elect a "government that can hold secular values of the nation and protect the rights of minorities, particularly Christians."

The statement said Christians "have been targeted by fundamentalist forces for the last 15 months."

India inches towards political power blocs

NEW DELHI, Aug 22 : India's parties appear to be inching towards forming two main power blocs, but chances of a stable government after the September-October elections still seem remote, analysts said today.

"Two power blocs are emerging with a certain amount of uncertainty on how the alliance will endure later on after the elections," political commentator Inder Malhotra told Reuters.

Several regional parties have rallied behind either Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or the main opposition Congress Party of Sonia Gandhi, widow of assassinated former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, to fight the elections

with promises to provide a stable federal government.

The leftist parties have kept their options open, although they appear to be leaning towards the Congress Party.

Congress has ruled India for 45 of the 52 years since independence from Britain and has been led by members of the Gandhi-Nehru political family for 38 of those years.

But early opinion polls indicate that the BJP and its allies will win the mid-term election, the third in three years.

Malhotra said there was a movement towards two loose coalitions, in line with a trend that began in the last elections, but it was difficult to say if this would lead to stability.

Another analyst, Mahesh Rangarajan, said: "We are

moving towards a two-front political system -- BJP, regional parties and local allies on one side, and Congress with some socialist parties and a few others on the other.

"The third group is the left, their allies holding together for long, although they were consolidating their position and presenting a formidable challenge to the Congress Party."

"It is difficult to describe it as polarisation ... they (some of the allies) are old BJP-baiters. It seems we are in for yet another unstable government," Talib said. "Within the coalition and the Congress combination there are cracks."

In April, the BJP-led coalition lost power in a parliamentary confidence motion by one vote after one its biggest allies broke ranks.

But they said the BJP-led alliance would have more room for manoeuvring than after the last elections since it had shed some of its difficult allies, and would not be as vulnerable as during the previous 13-month rule.

Pran Chopra of the Centre for Policy Research said that while the BJP-led alliance had its internal problems, if it succeeded in forming a government after the elections it could expect to last for a longer time since the biggest challenge from the Congress Party would have been overcome.

But Chopra said: "It cannot at the moment be said that we are in a stable situation or moving towards it."

News Analysis

which is tilting towards the Congress."

He said that while the BJP was prepared for power-sharing after the elections, Congress had not moved beyond forging adjustments in seats with lime-minded parties to fight the elections.

Commentator Rashid Talib was sceptical about the BJP and

the allies are old BJP-baiters. It seems we are in for yet another unstable government," Talib said. "Within the coalition and the Congress combination there are cracks."

In April, the BJP-led coalition lost power in a parliamentary confidence motion by one vote after one its biggest allies broke ranks.



A priest jumps over a fire at the Hungry Ghost Festival held by the Chinese community in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday. The ritual of a priest jumping over a fire is believed to help the spirits of the dead be sent to heaven. The festival is an event that the Chinese believe dead spirits roam the streets for a one-month period. — AFP photo