

## International

Priyanka's poll campaign for her mother in Amethi

AMETHI, Sept 10: A nostalgic Priyanka Gandhi yesterday took Amethi parliamentary constituency by storm as she recalled fond memories of her father Rajiv Gandhi in her maiden speech at rallies in support of her mother and Congress nominee Sonia Gandhi, reports PTI.

For me, it is a journey down the memory lane. I had come quite often here along with my father when he represented this constituency for two terms, Priyanka said addressing rallies on her own for the first time without the presence of Sonia Gandhi.

Priyanka arrived here a day ahead of Sonia Gandhi who is scheduled to file today her nomination from Amethi twice represented by her husband.

I know this constituency had remained neglected all these years and I want you to support my mother who would file her nomination, Priyanka said at rallies of Congress workers in Jais and Gauri Ganji assembly segments for Amethi Lok Sabha constituency.

Appealing to the voters to really behind her mother, Priyanka told them you are the strength of this constituency and you have to ensure her victory with the highest margin.

I shall be camping here for quite some time to mobilise support for my mother, she said adding Amethi Ki Shaan Ko Phir Se Likhna Hai (we have to re-write the glory of Amethi).

### US blasts BJP, other religious organisations

WASHINGTON, Sept 10: In a surprise development, the United States through a State Department survey yesterday launched a sharp attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the RSS and other Hindu organisations for their attitude towards religious conversion and non-Hindus, reports PTI.

The global survey on religious freedom like the one on human rights to be mandated by the Congress. The survey, however, does not hold the central government but some of the militant organisations responsible for the recent attacks on Christians and Muslims and obstacles to religious conversions by Christian missionaries.

It acknowledges that the constitution of India provides for freedom of religion and that the government respects this right in practice.

It finds that tension between Muslims and Hindus and to a lesser extent between Hindus and Christians continues to pose a challenge to the concepts of secularism, tolerance and diversity on which the state was founded. In addition, governments at the state and local levels only partially respect religious freedom.

The report says that the BJP, which headed a coalition government is an "offshoot" of RSS, which "espouses a return to Hindu values and cultural norms."

Members of the BJP, the RSS and other affiliated organisations have been implicated in incidents of violence and discrimination against Christians and Muslims.

The BJP and RSS express respect and tolerance for other religions, but the RSS in particular opposes conversions from Hinduism and believes all Indians should adhere to Hindu cultural values. The BJP officially agrees that the caste ambivalence about this, the report said.

Most BJP leaders, including Prime Minister A B Vajpayee and Home Minister L K Advani, are also RSS members, as are the chief ministers of the state governments in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, it said.

### Beijing confirms war games

BEIJING, Sept 10: China announced for the first time Friday that it had successfully carried out air, ground and naval landing exercises earlier this month, in the wake of Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui's assertions of statehood, reports AFP.

The military exercises took place at the start of the month on the coastline of southern Guangdong province and Zhejiang province close to Taiwan, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Although the wargames were widely reported in Hong Kong media, China had so far not confirmed they had taken place.

The successful exercise showed how the PLA has improved its joint military combat capacity and the success of its modernisation drive and how it is ready to defend the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and to crack down on any separatist acts, the agency reported.

The exercises were overseen by General Zhang Wannian, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission, China's highest military body. Zhang blasted Lee's remarks in July that relations between China and Taiwan should be conducted on a "state to state" basis.

Zhang warned Lee Teng-hui that he who plays with fire will get burnt, Xinhua reported.

China, which regards Taiwan as a renegade province, has refused to rule out the use of force to reclaim the island if Taiwan ever formally declares independence.

# UN begins evacuating staff from E Timor

## US suspends military ties with Jakarta

JAKARTA, Sept 10: The UN on Friday was evacuating about a handful of staff from its besieged East Timor headquarters as Indonesia risked becoming a pariah state by spurning foreign peacekeepers, reports AFP.

US President Bill Clinton told Jakarta to stop the carnage in East Timor and was followed by New Zealand in suspending military ties with Indonesia.

Australia also cancelled joint military training activities with Indonesia and said it was reviewing its defence ties with Jakarta. But it went further by accusing Washington of not doing enough to support demands for an international peacekeeping force.

Indonesian newspapers continued to report a "bloodless coup" had taken place and said the military was now predominant.

Armed forces chief General Wiranto said the government welcomed international aid for East Timor but again ruled out accepting peacekeepers, after

Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy urged Jakarta to agree to a security cordon to allow aid into the devastated territory.

Wiranto said international aid groups, which have pulled out in the face of terrifying intimidation from pro-Jakarta militias, would be welcome to return to East Timor.

But speaking after a meeting with a senior UN delegation here, he said now was not the "appropriate time" for foreign armed intervention.

Indonesia insists no decision on UN peacekeepers can be made until its new legislature convenes next month to ratify the outcome of East Timor's overwhelming vote for independence on August 30.

As three convoys of UN staff left for the airport in East Timor's capital Dili, pro-Jakarta militiamen and soldiers entered the compound and shots were fired, people inside the compound told AFP by telephone.

The Aitarak (militia) came into the car park ... and started smashing the cars," UN official Rick Curnow told AFP.

They started smashing the car windows. Then they threatened to throw grenades if we didn't give them the car keys. It got tense for a while," he said.

UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) spokesman David Wimhurst said in Darwin, northern Australia, that troops guarding the compound did "absolutely nothing" to stop the attack.

The UN was evacuating about 350 foreign and local workers to Darwin on Friday, and six flights had arrived by early evening.

Up to 80 UN staff, including UNAMET chief Ian Martin, remained in the compound sheltering about 1,000 refugees from militias who have been rampaging, killing and burning since the landmark vote.

One source inside the compound said some UN staff had insisted on staying to protect the refugees.

Pope John Paul II joined mounting calls for Indonesia and the international community to "put an end to the slaughter" and find effective ways to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Timorese population.

But Indonesia stuck to its position that the military, which is now openly complicit in the terror engulfing East Timor, could restore order under martial law.

Television footage has shown soldiers joining militiamen in marching residents out of Dili at gunpoint, to join thousands of others being deported to Indonesian West Timor.

The Australian-based National Council for Timorese Resistance said two truckloads of East Timorese women and children were taken in recent days from refugee camps in West Timor and slaughtered by militiamen.



East Timorese refugees upon their arrival at a transit centre in Darwin following their evacuation from the violence-ridden territory yesterday. The UN said it hoped to evacuate all 171 local staff workers and more than one hundred family members from the UN compound in Dili.

— AFP photo

## Anwar suffering from arsenic poisoning, trial adjourned

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 10: Malaysia's jailed former finance minister Anwar Ibrahim was taken to hospital today after his lawyer said he was believed to have been the target of arsenic poisoning, reports Reuters.

High Court Judge Arifin Jaka adjourned Anwar's sodomy trial after defence lawyer Karpal Singh said a pathologist in Australia had certified that an excessive level of the poison had been found in Anwar's urine.

"We have obtained a pathologist's report from Melbourne which certifies that there is an excessive level of arsenic poison in Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's urine sample," Karpal told a stunned court on the 51st day of Anwar's sodomy trial.

Anwar was sentenced in April to six years in jail for corruption. He says he is innocent and he victim of a plot by political opponents led by Mahathir to sideline him from power.

Karpal said the pathologist's report on Anwar's urine, which the lawyer said had been obtained in August, showed a level

(UKM) on the outskirts of the capital.

Before the trial was adjourned, Anwar told the court he had not been feeling well.

"I'm not feeling any pain or what, but certainly I'm not my usual self," he said haltingly.

"There has been weight loss, hair loss, I think as a result of this."

The judge asked: "Is it worrying you?"

Anwar replied: "Of course, when I saw the report yesterday, I was disturbed. But having gone through what I went through last year, I'm not surprised."

Anwar was sacked by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in September 1998 and arrested later that month after leading thousands of anti-government protesters through the capital.

Anwar was sentenced in April to six years in jail for corruption. He says he is innocent and he victim of a plot by political opponents led by Mahathir to sideline him from power.

Karpal said the pathologist's report on Anwar's urine, which the lawyer said had been obtained in August, showed a level

of 230, far higher than the normal level of three.

"It's a level that goes beyond danger," Karpal said.

"His life is in jeopardy. If he's slowly being poisoned, something must be done about it," he said.

"If someone is trying to get rid of him, it's a shame because this is the very conspiracy we have been alluding to all this while. This person must be brought to book, even charged with murder. I suspect some people in high places, in all likelihood, are responsible for his condition," Karpal said.

Attorney-General Mohat Abdullah, who is leading the prosecution in the landmark case that has divided Malaysia, said it was a serious matter if Anwar was being poisoned.

But he said it was too early to conclude that Anwar was the victim of a government conspiracy, and said the former minister had received food in the court room and was allowed to mingle with family and friends, against the rules.

### 'All nines' bug holds up lottery draw

BEIRUT, Sept 10: Lebanese gamblers were unable to watch the state lottery draw live on television Thursday, after its computer suffered a glitch caused by the four nines in the date, the popular An-Nahar daily reported Friday, reports AFP.

"Several computer experts

set to work immediately, and managed to solve the problem very quickly," the lottery said in a statement.

The results of the draw were issued later in the evening.

The lottery's computer problem was the only one reported in Lebanon.

Worldwide warnings had been issued that the "all-nines" date of the ninth day of the ninth month of 1999 could be misinterpreted by some computers as the "9999" end-of-file command sequence used in some software to bring certain processes to an end.

But the measure targets any non-US entity carrying out such sensitive technology transfers and requires the US administration to report to Congress whenever they occur, it singles out Moscow as a primary culprit.

"Passage (by the full House next week) at this point seems nearly a foregone conclusion," a committee aide said, citing support from leaders of the Republican majority and co-sponsorship by some 220 of the chamber's 435 members.

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The Senate has begun work on a companion bill, the aide said.

It was not immediately clear whether President Bill Clinton would veto a final version, but a State Department official who spoke at the hearing said administration officials "strongly oppose" the measure.

The official warned against creating onerous reporting requirements, saying the department would prefer fighting proliferation rather than writing reports."

Ricky Martin, Lauryn Hill sweep MTV awards

NEW YORK, Sept 10: Lauryn Hill and Puerto Rican musical sensation Ricky Martin outstripped the competition by sweeping up seven out of the 16 1999 MTV awards here late Thursday, reports AFP.

Hill made off with Video of the Year, Best Female Video, Best Retb Video, and Best Art Direction in a Video, while Martin took Best Pop Video, Best Dance Video and the International Viewer's Choice Award.

But Denkash said he will not enter into talks unless the breakaway state he declared in 1983 receives recognition from the international community.

"He hopes to energize the process in the autumn, since a settlement could only be found through negotiations (which could take many forms) between the two sides," Annan's office said.

The brief statement was issued after Annan met Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denkash earlier Thursday.

In June the UN Security Council asked Annan to invite Denkash and Cyprus President and Greek-Cypriot leader Glafcos Clerides to unconditional talks this autumn.

But Denkash said he will not enter into talks unless the breakaway state he declared in 1983 receives recognition from the international community.

"I will not enter negotiations (with Clerides) unless we have equal status," he told Turkish news channel NTV from New York Wednesday.

Annas's office said simply that Denkash "stated his position in familiar terms."

Cyprus has been divided since 1974, when Turkish troops occupied its northern third in response to a coup d'etat that aimed to unite the island with Greece.

Martin dazzled the crowd at the New York Metropolitan Opera with renditions of his hit tunes, "She's All I Ever Need," and "Livin' La Vida Loca."

Madonna won an award for Best Video From a Film for her, "Beautiful Stranger," multi-talented rap star Will Smith took the Best Male Video award for "Miami," and the Beastie Boys took home the Best Hip-Hop Video award.

Faith Slim took two awards for Best Director and Breakthrough Video; Backstreet Boys took the Viewer's Choice award; TLC took Best Group Video; Korn, Best Rock Video, and Eminem, Best New Artist in a Video.

## Arafat approves Israel's WB pullout plan

GAZA CITY, Sept 10: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat gave his stamp of approval on Friday to the first of Israel's three West Bank land transfers

pledged under their break-through peace accord, reports AFP.

Maps detailing the seven per cent of the West Bank to be handed over to Palestinian self-rule were approved by Arafat at a meeting with Israeli officials, his top aide Nabil Abu Rudeina said.

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