

Sharif greets Vajpayee for polls victory

ISLAMABAD, Oct 9: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif congratulated his Indian counterpart Atal Behari Vajpayee on his election success on Friday and called for the resumption of peace talks between the rival nuclear powers, reports Reuters.

In a telephone call to Vajpayee, Sharif said the election result was "a vote of trust and confidence reposed in his party besides being a tribute to his personal qualities of leadership," a Pakistani government statement said.

It said Sharif proposed resuming the dialogue that was launched by Vajpayee's historic bus trip to the Pakistani city of Lahore in February, but halted in the summer by the two-month confrontation in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir.

"He (Sharif) went on to say that the two countries needed to revive the Lahore spirit and restore the Lahore process with a view to framing policies based on the understanding reached in Lahore," the Pakistani statement said.

"The prime minister also reaffirmed his desire that Pakistan and India should establish good neighbourly relations," it added.

The statement quoted Sharif as telling Vajpayee: "Let us join hands to give our people a bright and prosperous future."

3-point plan for peace in East Timor

DILI, East Timor, Oct 9: The head of the multinational force in East Timor on Saturday outlined a three-point plan to stabilise the territory and integrate militia fighters and the anti-Indonesian resistance into a new government, reports AFP.

Major General Peter Cosgrove urged pro and anti-independence fighters to seize what he called "a golden opportunity" to take part in a "progressive laying down of arms."

But he warned that the process would not happen overnight, and that the international force would not lower its vigilance against militia attack.

Meanwhile, 195 more East Timorese refugees flew back home on UN chartered aircraft Saturday from West Timor, some to emotional reunions in Dili, bringing the total number of returnees to 368.

UN officials said that despite fears that an Indonesian government registration system was endangering would-be returnees among the 260,000 displaced people in West Timor, they hoped to speed up the process.

In Geneva Sadako Ogata, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said she hoped the pace could be speeded up to 1,000 returnees a day, and officials here said ships might soon be pressed into service to bring the refugees home.

In Kupang, the West Timorese capital, a truckload of refugees from the border town of Alambua turned up at the airport and pleaded to be taken to Dili on one of the planes, but left peacefully after they were told how to take part in the repatriation program.

"I think it is going to snowball, once word gets around the camps," UNHCR spokesman Fernando del Mundo said.

In Dili, Cosgrove said that in his plan disarmament would be linked to "progressive and selective introduction into government service of those elements which by their trust in laying down of arms have shown that they wish to participate in the nation building."

He said the third part of his plan involved "progressive reconciliation between those warring parties who are in fact at the heart of the dispute."

Cosgrove said he presented his proposals to pro-independence Falintil chief of staff Taur Matan Ruak in a meeting on Friday, but had as yet received no response, and that the offer was extended to the militia.

But he added that he would push ahead with talks with Falintil even if the militia decided not to join the talks.

"I can't afford to sit on my hands when there is one party willing to talk and the other party willing to use the gun."

"Here is a golden opportunity to get in on the ground floor of negotiations. This is something the militia ought to seize," he said.

He said he was ready start immediate "talks about talks," because he expected the process to lead to "substantive achievement."

However he warned that it

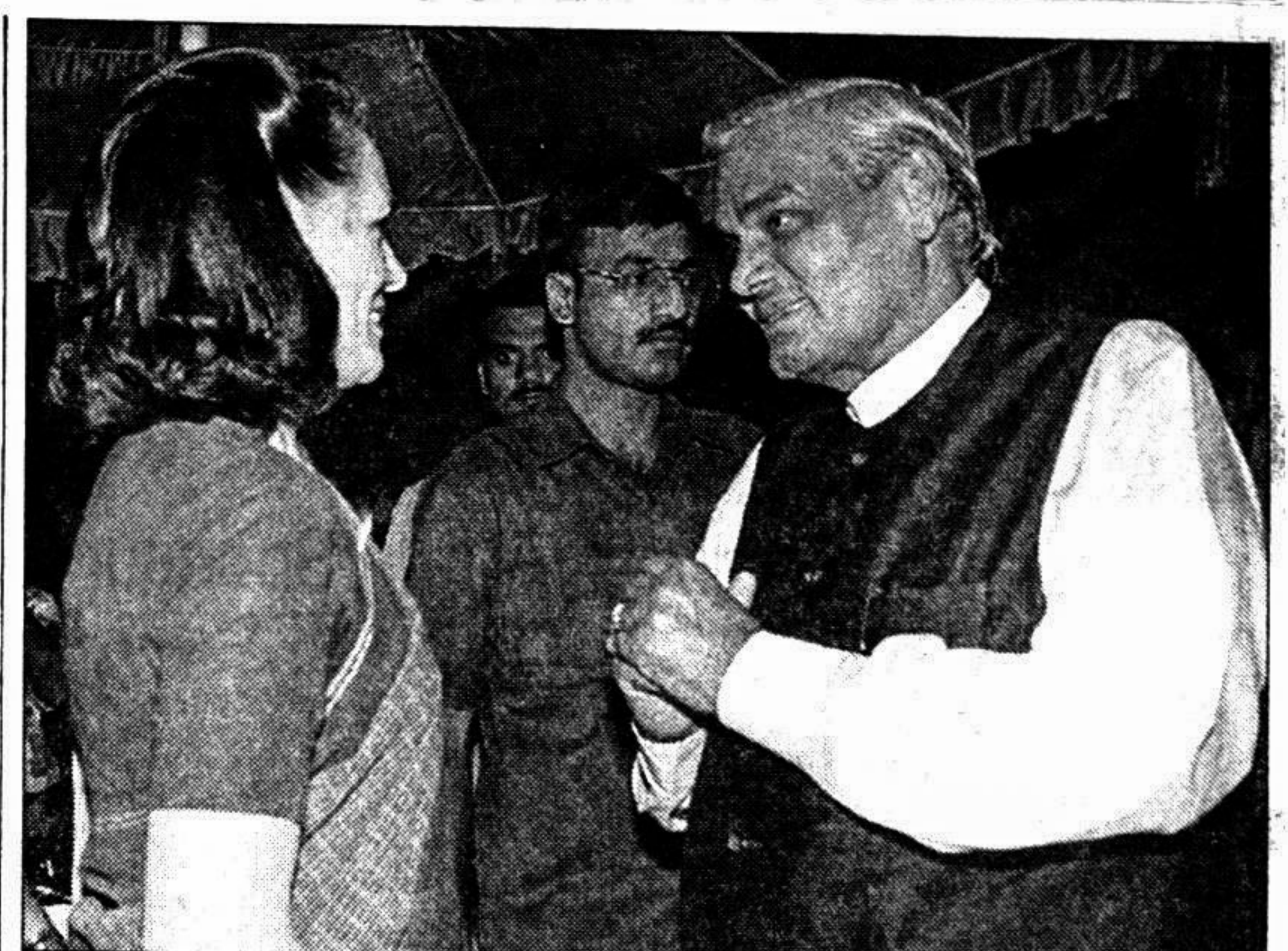
would be wrong to expect immediate progress towards disarmament and reconciliation less than two months after East Timor was engulfed by militia violence.

"I have pointed out that the disarmament process is not an event to be knocked over in a day, a week, in a fortnight."

Cosgrove has told ABC radio in Australia that he had made "offer to the militia through the Indonesian military, which is widely blamed for setting up and arming the militia."

Most militia members fled across the border into Indonesian West Timor after the arrival of the Interfet troops ended their murderous rampage that followed an August 30 vote for independence.

Militia leaders in the Indonesian province have threatened to launch a guerrilla campaign against the Australian-led force. This week saw the first firefight between peacekeepers and the militiamen.



Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee chats with opposition leader Sonia Gandhi during a reception at the Indian Air Force chief's residence on the occasion of Air Force Day on Friday in New Delhi. Though Sonia's Congress (I) Party was routed in parliamentary elections, she took her seat in parliament with one of the highest margins in the country. — AFP photo

Documents CIA may have played role in killing of US reporter in Chile

WASHINGTON, Oct 9: The CIA or other US intelligence agencies may have played a role in the murder of American Charles Horman in 1973 by Chile's secret police, according to US State Department documents made public Friday, reports AFP.

"US intelligence may have played an unfortunate part in Horman's death," said a declassification report dated 1976.

Horman's death inspired the Hollywood film "Missing," which starred Jack Lemmon and Sissy Spacek.

CIA spokeswoman Anya Gulscher read a statement denying any role of the agency in Horman's death.

"CIA played no role in the death of Mr. Horman," she said.

Asked about the documents released, Gulscher stated, "I can't speak to State Department documents. Whoever was reviewing them obviously drew that conclusion."

President Bill Clinton, speaking in Ottawa, urged the release of CIA files on its involvement with the regime of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet.

"We ought to... just keep releasing documents," Clinton said during a joint press conference with Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien. "I think you're entitled to know what happened back then and how it happened."

Horman, an American left-wing activist who was working in Chile as a freelance reporter, was murdered within days of the September 1973 overthrow of president Salvador Allende in a military coup that brought Pinochet to power.

"At best, (the CIA role) was limited to providing or confirming information that helped motivate his murder by the GOC (government of Chile)," the report added, citing circumstantial evidence.

Wife of Michael Jackson files for divorce

LOS ANGELES, Oct 9: Michael Jackson and his wife Debbie Rowe, have decided to divorce, ending their three-year marriage, a spokesman for the pop star said Friday, reports AFP.

Rowe, 40, filed for divorce in Los Angeles Superior Court and cited irreconcilable differences in their marriage. They have been separated since July 15.

The two "mutually agreed" to divorce, spokesman Howard Rubenstein said.

Divorce papers were filed today. Michael and Debbie remain friends, and they ask that the public respects their desire not to further comment or speculate upon the reasons for their decision," he added in a statement.

The two married in Australia in November 1996 and have two children -- Prince Michael Junior aged two and a half, and daughter Paris Michael Katherine, born April 1998, and named after the city where she was conceived.

Rowe's name first appeared in connection with Jackson in November 1996, when Jackson's agents revealed that she was bearing his child. At the time, they made no mention of marriage.

British press had claimed that Rowe was artificially inseminated, but the couple have formally denied the charge.

But nothing has tarnished Jackson's reputation so much as the accusations of paedophilia that surfaced in 1993. Jackson insisted on his innocence, and settled out of court for an undisclosed sum to put an end to charges that he molested a 13-year-old boy.

Jackson, 41, divorced his first wife Lisa Marie Presley, daughter of the late rock star Elvis Presley, less than a year before he married Rowe. She was also a divorcee and has known Jackson for 15 years.

Pak govt arrests scores of Sunni militants to combat violence

ISLAMABAD, Oct 9: Despite a warning Saturday from Pakistan's radical Islamic groups, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government arrested scores of Sunni Muslim militants to combat relentless religious violence in the country, reports AP.

The government wants to close down madrassas (religious schools) and weaken religious parties to please the Americans," said Tariq Mahmood Madni, a spokesman for the violent Sipah-e-Shahaba Pakistan, or the Guardians of the Friends of Prophet.

His group has been blamed for many attacks in the last one week against Shiite Muslims, who are reviled by Madni's group as non-Muslims. His group also routinely accuses the United States of working against Islam.

"There is an American conspiracy against Jehadi (holy war) groups and religious forces

to prevent an Afghan Taliban-like revolution in this country," said Madni. "But we will resist any attempt to weaken religious parties."

Madni's group is a strong supporter of neighboring Afghanistan's Taliban religious army, which has imposed a harsh brand of Islamic rule in the 90 per cent of the country they rule.

Pakistan however says it has "solid" evidence that religious terrorists, who have killed more than 30 people most of them Shiite Muslims in Pakistan in the last one week, are receiving training in Afghanistan.

Sharif said he wants the training camps closed, a request he has made to the Taliban's reclusive leader Mullah Mohammed Omar. Among those reportedly receiving training in Afghanistan are members of the SSP and Harakat-ul-Mujahideen, formerly called Harakat-ul-Ansar, which was declared a terrorist group by Washington.

"We have made it clear to the Taliban that this is not acceptable to Pakistan," Sharif said.

Pakistan's pro-Taliban religious parties say Sharif's statements represent a major shift in Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan. Pakistan is one of only three countries to recognize the Taliban government.

Madni said Sharif's statements were hypocritical and that the Pakistan government has sent people for training to Afghanistan, particularly Kashmiri militants fighting neighboring India.

"Pakistan had been sending people to Afghanistan for (military) training to prepare them for Jihad (holy war) in Kashmir," he said.

According to the Punjab provincial government at least 70 people have been arrested in

Clinton fails to win Senate backing for CTBT

WASHINGTON, Oct 9: The US Senate pushed ahead Friday with debate on a historic treaty banning nuclear arms testing even as President Bill Clinton pleaded for more time to avert rejection of the pact, reports AFP.

The Senate's Republican Party majority attacked the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) that Clinton signed in 1996 as a dangerous subversion of US defence might and vowed to throw it out soon if given the chance.

Clinton, who has lobbied furiously for the past week in an effort to win Senate backing for the treaty, acknowledged that his efforts had failed and called on the Senate to postpone a ratification vote scheduled for Tuesday.

"I have asked them to put it off because we don't have the votes," Clinton said in Ottawa during a joint news conference with Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

"It is clear now that the level of opposition to the treaty and the time it would take to craft the necessary safeguards to get the necessary votes are simply not there."

It was a humiliating climb down for Clinton, who had staked a measure of his legacy in management of US foreign policy on Senate ratification of the CTBT, an unprecedented pact the United States was instrumental in crafting.

There was no immediate comment from Senate leaders on Clinton's request and debate on the Senate floor continued as scheduled.

But key Senate Republicans, notably Majority Leader Trent Lott and Jesse Helms, chairman of the Foreign Relations Com-

BRIEFLY



Newly crowned Miss Palestine Abir Abdullah (R) from Gaza poses with 1st runner-up Samah Ali (C) and 2nd runner-up Georgina Awad (L), both from Jenin, during the first ever Miss Palestine beauty pageant on Friday. Organised by local businessmen, the competition was held in Bethlehem. — AFP photo

Quakes rock Taiwan: An earthquake and more aftershocks rocked Taiwan Saturday following last month's fatal tremor which left more than 2,300 dead, the Central Weather Bureau said, AFP reports from Taipei.

The quake measuring 4.8 on the Richter scale struck at 8:48 a.m. (0648 BST) and its epicentre was 32.5 kilometres (20.2 miles) west of Hualien in eastern Taiwan. It originated 1.1 kilometres underground. The quake came after four other major tremors with a magnitude ranging between 5.1 and 4.2 near the same area on Friday, seismologists said. The Hualien quakes originated from a different epicentre from the devastating 7.6 quake which struck central Taiwan on September 21. More than 11,904 aftershocks have been detected since that quake, which left 2,317 people dead and 8,722 injured. Some 100,000 people were also left homeless.

Extremists kill 16 in Algeria: Sixteen people including eight family members and an army colonel were killed over two days, in five attacks believed to have been carried out by armed Muslim militants in Algeria, reliable sources said Friday, AFP reports from Algiers.

The rampage is the bloodiest since the September 16 referendum in which a majority approved a reconciliation law to grant amnesty to armed Islamists. A group of 10 armed extremists slit the throats of the eight family members Thursday evening in a shantytown on the outskirts of Douaouda, 30 kilometres (12 miles) west of Algiers, the sources said. The father, mother and their six children were killed and their bodies mutilated. A 19-year-old girl was kidnapped, the sources said.

Five executed in Thailand: Thailand has executed five prisoners found guilty of murder, corrections officials said Saturday, AFP reports from Bangkok.

The five men, ranging in age from 26 to 51, were shot dead by firing squad late Friday after their appeals for royal clemency were rejected, officials told. They said it was the largest number of people executed at one time in Thailand. The men were all convicted for murders committed from 1983 to 1996, they said. In July the corrections department said it would suspend executions of death row inmates during the Buddhist lent which continues through October.

Bombing of US embassy Fugitive arrested

NEW YORK, Oct 9: The first fugitive charged with allegedly having a direct operational role in last year's bombing of the US embassy in Tanzania has been arrested, and pleaded not guilty in a US federal court on Friday, reports Reuters.

The defendant, Khalfan Khamis Mohamed, 26, of Tanzania was arrested in Cape Town, South Africa several days ago and turned over to US authorities. He arrived in New York on Thursday night and entered his not guilty plea during a brief hearing before US District Judge Leonard Sand.

A total of 17 defendants, including Saudi exile Osama bin Laden, have been charged for allegedly conspiring to plan attacks on Americans abroad including the bombings of US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya.

At least 226 people were killed and more than 4,000 wounded in the August 1998 embassy attacks, most of them in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. Eleven people died in the explosion in the Tanzanian capital, Dar es Salaam.

Manhattan US Attorney Mary Jo White told a news conference that Mohamed had been living in Cape Town under the assumed name of Zahran Nassor Maulid and had obtained a Tanzanian passport under that name. Authorities said he had a "low-profile" job in Cape Town.

She said he was the first of a group of fugitives charged in the case who have been arrested for "direct operational responsibility" for the bombing at the Tanzanian embassy.

Of the 17 people charged, six defendants including Mohamed are now held in the United States, three are in England and eight, including bin-Laden, remain fugitives.

White said Mohamed's arrest should be a stern reminder to anyone who played any role in the embassy bombings that "law enforcement authorities literally around the world will not stop investigating, searching, capturing and prosecuting until all responsible are brought to justice."



Citizens and leaders of peace, environmental and religious groups gather to show favour for the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty on Friday during a pro-CTBT demonstration on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. — AFP photo

Polls in Malaysia likely next month

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 9: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad Saturday chaired a pre-election meeting of ruling party leaders and political sources predicted a snap general election next month, reports AFP.

Mahathir himself was silent about the date but said it could be held "any time" and his party was ready.

"We are all ready any time. When I say go, we go. Asia's longest-serving leader said.

He also announced a nationwide publicity "war" against what he called lies and slander by the opposition over the treatment of his former protégé Anwar Ibrahim.

They have accused the government of injecting Anwar with HIV virus. They make these allegations because they think Anwar had AIDS," he told a news conference after a meeting of the Supreme Council of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the main party in the ruling National Front coalition.

The sacking of Anwar as deputy premier in September 1998 and his subsequent jailing has polarised the ethnic Malay community. The election is expected to be Mahathir's toughest test in recent years although the National Front is certain to win.

Claims by Anwar's lawyers last month that the former UMNO rising star may have been poisoned with arsenic while in jail lent new momentum to the opposition. Mahathir again poured scorn on the claim Saturday, saying "this lie must be exposed."

He said a campaign involv-

122 judges suspended for corruption

CARACAS, Oct 9: Venezuelan authorities suspended 122 judges accused of corruption or incompetence including one who has 46 formal accusations of wrongdoing against him, reports AFP.

Authorities said the suspensions Friday represented about 10 per cent of all judges in the oil-rich South American nation, which has been plagued by corruption.

"We are going to protect that fundamental human right of citizens to have a justice system they can believe in and in which they feel respected," said Rene Molina, a member of a special commission which suspended the judges.

The move was part of a "peaceful revolution" being led by President Hugo Chavez to shake up a political and judicial system many say is rotten to the core with corruption and mismanagement.

Payoffs to Venezuelan judges for favorable rulings are common. Most crimes go unpunished and more than half of the 23,000 inmates in the nation's jails have never been tried in court.

Officials say they are investigating some 4,000 formal accusations of wrongdoing against some of the nation's 1,200 judges. Many of the allegations have been collected dust for as long as 15 years in the offices of the National Judges Council that is supposed to investigate them.

The suspensions were pushed through by pressure from a special judicial emergency commission set up by a newly established Constitutional Assembly which is controlled by Chavez supporters.

Politics Pakistani style

ISLAMABAD, Oct 9: Barely halfway through his five-year term in office, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's opponents are already calling for his removal, reports AFP.

Call it politics Pakistani style, but since military rule ended and democracy returned to Pakistan in 1988, not one elected government has been able to finish its term in office.

Opposition politicians seem to operate with only one agenda: to return to power. Governments have an equally single-minded agenda: to hold on to power.

Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto twice served as prime minister and twice was prematurely dismissed by a president on charges of massive fraud, runaway corruption and

News Analysis

economic incompetence. Sharif, too, was prime minister once before. He was abruptly dismissed as well, by the president, and on much the same charges.

Soon after his election this time, Sharif set about to secure his future.

He began by removing the president's constitutional authority to dismiss elected governments, thus removing one threat.

But there still remains the opposition and the army.

In recent weeks the opposition has been clamoring for his resignation, and has formed a grand alliance of 19 parties with a single goal -- to oust Sharif.

Sharif has used a heavy hand to stop their protests, even though the opposition alliance is made up of parties and leaders who received very little of

the popular vote in the last election, including Benazir.

Even Benazir's supporters privately say that most Pakistanis would not give her a third term as prime minister.

Her partners in the alliance also seem politically weak.

They range from right-wing religious parties, who have issued death threats against liberal senators, and a former cricket star, whose party did not win a single seat in the last election.

That still leaves the army, which has ruled Pakistan for 25 of its 52-year history.

For several weeks the front pages of most newspapers were rife with stories of a yawning rift between Sharif and the military hierarchy and speculation that an army-backed inter-

terim government was being cobbled together.

The cause seemed to be Sharif's July 4 visit to Washington and a promise he made to US President Bill Clinton to withdraw Islamic insurgents from Indian-held Kashmir.

It is widely believed that the incursion of militants into Indian-held Kashmir this summer was orchestrated by the Pakistan military, with speculation on Sharif's involvement ranging from barely aware to totally committed.

A statement from Washington that the US administration opposed any "extra-constitutional" change of government in Pakistan seemed to remove an immediate threat to Sharif's government.

But in Pakistan, uncertainty lingers.