

KSA vows to get back hijackers from Iraq

Saudi plane arrives in London

RIYADH, Oct 16 : Saudi Arabia issued a determined call today to Iraq to extradite two Saudi security officers who used a service revolver to hijack a Boeing 777 carrying 104 people to Baghdad, reports AFP.

"We demand the handing over of the two hijackers," who are being held by the Iraqi authorities, Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz said.

"We will not compromise over their extradition," he vowed during a press conference.

Riyadh would "have recourse to all the established procedures to obtain the extradition of the two hijackers," the prince said, starting with Interpol, to bring the men to justice.

Jordan played the intermediary during the hijacking crisis, the prince said, but Saudi Arabia had no contact nor entered into any negotiation with Iraq, he stressed.

Nayef did praise the "positive" behaviour of the Iraqi authorities who quickly defused the crisis, but he added that had "nothing to do" with a politics or a restoration of diplomatic relations.

Meanwhile, a Saudi plane hijacked and diverted to Baghdad over the weekend landed early Monday at London's Heathrow airport, its original destination, a Foreign Office official said.

The plane landed at 8:44 am (13:44 BST) with 90 passengers on board, 40 of them British, and 14 crew. It had left the Saudi capital Riyadh at 7:43 BST.

The Foreign Office official told AFP that the passengers would be debriefed by police before meeting their families in a secluded area of the airport.

International

Immediate end to violence goal of ME summit

Barak 'fed up' with Arafat

WASHINGTON, Oct 16 : US President Bill Clinton left for Egypt Sunday to attend a Middle East summit aimed at halting violence between Israel and the Palestinians that is threatening to unravel the regional peace process, reports AFP.

Clinton made no comments as he left the White House at 4:20 pm (2:20 BST) accompanied by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and a team of advisors.

The summit begins Monday at Egypt's Red Sea resort of Sharm al-Sheikh. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat are expected to attend, along with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Jordan's King Abdullah II and the European Union's top diplomat Javier Solana.

As far as the violence between Israelis and Palestinians is the

United States' primary goal in the Middle East summit in Egypt, senior US officials said Sunday.

The violence of the last two weeks, in which more than 100 people, mainly Palestinians, have been killed and more than 3,000 injured means that the problem of how to revive wider peace process will be lower down the agenda.

"We do have to try to reduce the violence and take a turn back for a period of calmness, so that we can move back to a peace process," US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told ABC's "This Week" talk show.

For Clinton, the Sharm el-Sheikh summit represents a last-ditch attempt to avert the complete collapse of a peace process in which he has a considerable emotional and political investment, according to analysts.

Now, the pressing problem is what practical arrangements may halt the bloodshed. And new issues, such as the Palestinian demand for an international inquiry, have jostled aside those debated at the Camp David summit in July.

US Middle East special envoy Dennis Ross said on Fox television that if the Palestinians could "do more on their side to prevent the points of confrontation," then the United States would like to see, if possible, that "the Israelis then restrain their use of live fire."

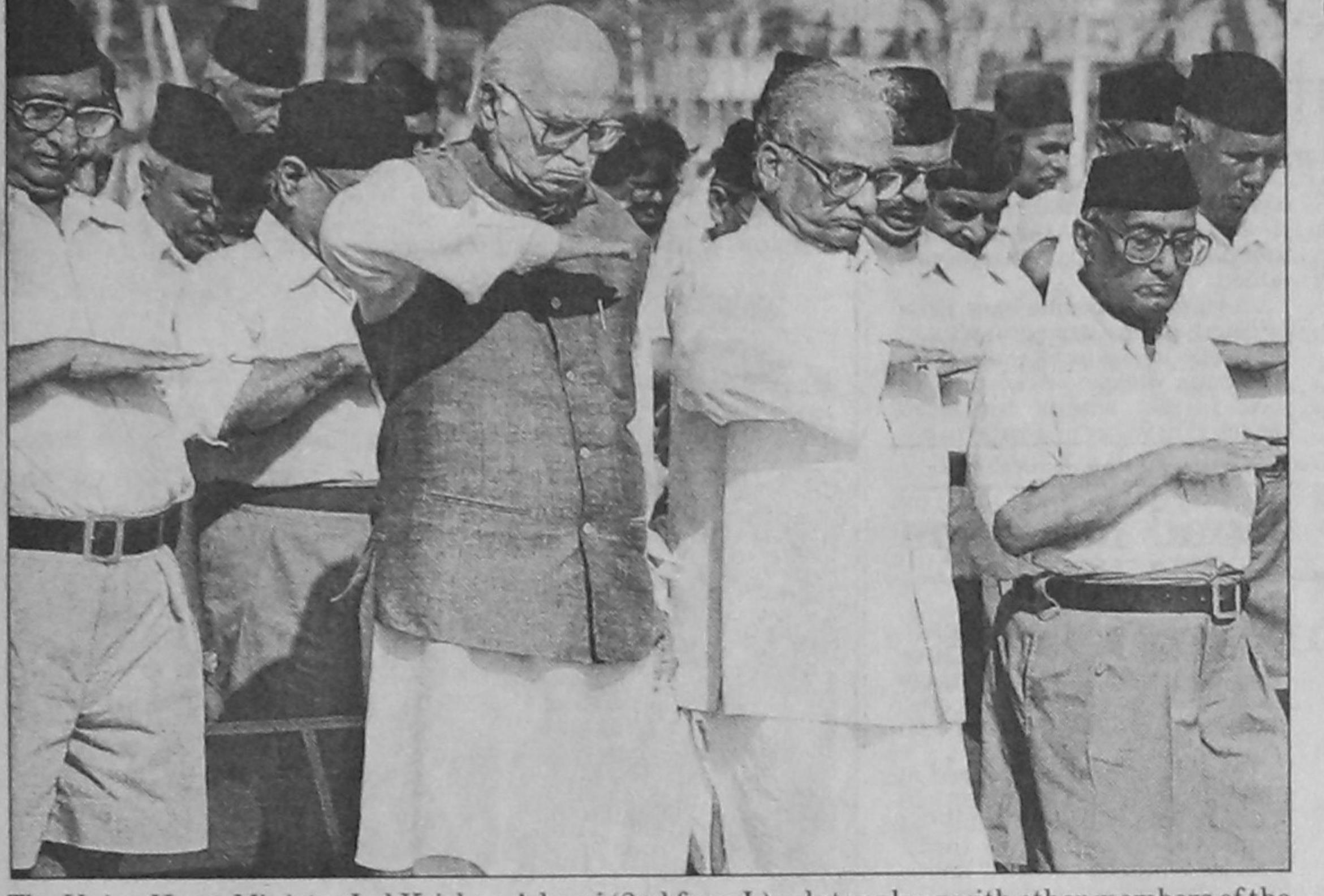
Meanwhile, Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak is "fed up" with Yasser Arafat and believes the Palestinian leader is not ready for peace, a spokesman for Barak said here today.

Personal relationships play an important role in diplomacy," the spokesman, Nahman Shai, said, "and I have the feeling that Barak is fed up with Arafat.



Women and men hold posters on Sunday during the World March of Women 2000 in Washington, DC. Women from over 80 countries came to protest poverty and violence against women around the world.

-AFP photo



The Union Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani (2nd from L) salutes along with other members of the Rashtriya Sevak Sangh (RSS), National Volunteers Corps, during the final day of the 75th anniversary celebrations of the Hindu nationalist group at the Taj Mahal town of Agra on Sunday. More than 75,000 volunteers gathered for the three-day camp to mark the outfit's 75th anniversary - making it the largest gathering in the group's history.

Christians, Muslims reject RSS call to recognise Hindu roots

NEW DELHI, India, Oct 16 : Indian Christians and Muslims Monday rejected calls by a powerful Hindu right-wing group to recognise their Hindu roots, and warned of attempts to subjugate religious minorities, reports AFP.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) said demands by the head of the Hindu nationalist RSS organisation, K.S. Sudarshan, for a "swadeshi" or nationalist Indian Church posed a serious threat to religious freedom.

"Does Sudarshan want the Indian democratic system to be done away with and to follow the Chinese communist dictatorial system of politics where there is no individual freedom and no religious freedom?" said CBCI spokesman Father Dominic Emmanuel.

Sudarshan's remarks were made during a three-day "national defence camp" of the RSS, or National Volunteer Corps, which drew about 75,000 members over the weekend in the northern city of Agra.

In a keynote speech, Sudarshan said Muslims and Christians should acknowledge their common Hindu ancestry as the 21st century would be shaped and dominated by Hindus.

Syed Shabuddin, a prominent representative of the Muslim community, dismissed Sudarshan's comments as merely reiterating the RSS agenda of creating a Hindu theocracy in India.

"The objective of the RSS has been the Hindunisation of the Indian polity. They have always believed that the real India is the Hindu India. So I take these comments in my stride," said Shabuddin, a columnist and former MP.

The representatives of both communities expressed their concern at the presence of Home Minister L.K. Advani at the closing of the camp on Sunday, saying it underlined the links between the RSS and ruling Hindu nationalist BJP party.

"It was stupid and wrong of Mr. Advani to have gone there," Shabuddin said, adding the minister's presence belied BJP president Bangaru Laxman's stated policy of integrating Muslims into the party fold.

The monk said that minor parties were holding the country to ransom and extracting a disproportionate number of portfolios and key jobs in exchange for their support. The government was unstable, he said.

The sentiments of the Buddhist clergy have been echoed by the country's respected Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber officials said members had already begun lobbying both ruling party and opposition figures to win a stable government.

Leading Buddhist monk, Muruthethwe Ananda, said President Chandrika Kumaratunga's People's Alliance (PA) and the main opposition United National Party (UNP) should unite to form a government.

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