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CHILE / CHARGES MAY FALL UNDER AMNESTY LAW

Pinochet's lawyers appeal indictment

SANTIAGO (CHILE), DEC. 3. Lawyers for Gen. Augusto Pinochet on Saturday appealed his indictment on homicide and kidnapping charges, claiming the former dictator has been "subject to irregular and arbitrary acts."

In the appeal filed at the Santiago Court of Appeals, the lawyers argued that Judge Juan Guzman indicted Gen. Pinochet without even questioning him first.

"Gen. Pinochet has been denied the right to state his case," said Mr. Fernando Barros, a top member of Pinochet's legal team.

Friday's indictment, which angered Gen. Pinochet's followers and delighted his foes, came as a surprise, because Justice Guzman himself had ordered Gen. Pinochet to undergo mental tests to determine whether he was fit to stand trial. The tests have not yet begun.

Justice Guzman charged Gen. Pinochet in connection with the 'Caravan of Death,' one of the most notorious cases of human rights violations during his 1973-90 reign.

The caravan was a military party that killed 73 political prisoners in various cities shortly after Gen. Pinochet led a 1973 coup that ousted socialist President Salvador Allende.

Justice Guzman filed homicide charges against Gen. Pinochet for 55 of the victims whose bodies have been accounted for, and kidnapping charges for 18 others who remain missing.

Plaintiffs, human rights activists and relatives of the victims claim the members of the caravan acted on orders from Gen. Pinochet.

Justice Guzman also ordered the 85-year-old Pinochet placed under house arrest, a measure that can be implemented only after Gen. Pinochet has been formally notified of

his indictment. That is expected to happen on Monday or Tuesday.

Gen. Pinochet remained on Saturday at his heavily guarded countryside residence in Los Boldos, 120 km southwest of Santiago.

The General faces 187 criminal complaints stemming from human rights abuses during his long reign. Justice Guzman last August succeeded in having him stripped of his con-

gressional immunity paving the way for the indictment he issued on Friday.

The indictment adds to a series of legal setbacks for Gen. Pinochet since his arrest in October, 1998 in London. He was released in March on health grounds and returned to Chile. He suffers from diabetes, has a pacemaker and has been hit by three mild strokes in the last two years. — AP

THE HINDU

4 DEC 2000

3 1 600 2 00

Fox plans to win over Zapatista rebels

OAXACA (MEXICO), DEC. 3. On his first full day as Mexico's President, Mr. Vicente Fox, scored a major political victory on Saturday, bringing to the negotiating table a band of rebels who had frustrated his predecessor for six years.

As Mr. Fox toured Mexico in a victory lap after defeating the party that has ruled the country for 71 years, word came from the southern jungle that the elusive ski-masked leader of the Zapatista rebels, Subcomandante Marcos, would restart peace talks with the Government. The rebels had walked away from the table four years ago.

Immediately upon taking office, Mr. Fox made ending the 7-year-old revolt for greater Indian rights by the Zapatista rebels a priority, sending an Indian rights bill to Congress for approval and ordering troops to withdraw from sensitive spots in Chiapas.

"The Zapatistas have accepted dialogue. There's a new attitude, a new way of thinking," Mr. Fox said at a rally on Saturday night in the northern city of Monterrey. "Let's have dialogue." But amid the good news, there were reminders that the challenges facing Mr. Fox are enormous.

About 10,000 teachers, labourers and poor Indian farmers marched down the tourist-filled, cobblestone streets of Oaxaca on Saturday to demand justice and aid and to disrupt what was supposed to be a feel-good victory celebration with Indians.

The protesters were stopped by a police line about a block from the plaza where Mr. Fox spoke to a smaller crowd to stress his commitment to Mexico's poor and Indians.

"I am always open to listen," Mr. Fox told protest leaders who were brought into the plaza to meet him. "There is no need for violent demonstrations or blocking streets," he said though the protest appeared to be peaceful.

Mr. Fox vowed to concentrate development efforts in Oaxaca and other poor, heavily Indian states in Mexico's south, and to treat Mexico's Indian people with greater respect.

"We can close our eyes to infamy — to the rule of bosses, to discrimination, to public and private policies that have tried to marginalise Indian communities — but that is unacceptable," said Mr. Fox, who was accompanied by the Venezuelan President Mr. Hugo Chavez.

The 6-foot-5 president sailed like a ship through a sea of much shorter men and women in traditional Indian clothing who



Marcos of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation at a news conference in La Realidad, Chiapas, on Saturday. — AP

swarmed him, hugging him, frantically passing letters appealing for help.

Mr. Fox has pledged to combat poverty with a national micro-lending programme, and to channel the revenues from a growing economy into improving education and health services.

He told the crowd his economic programme "is not meant to achieve successful statistics. It is going to be an economic project to improve the life of each person." Mr. Fox also signed an agreement with the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Mary Robinson, to promote human rights in Mexico.

The protesters organised by local teachers unions claimed that Mr. Fox's economic policies threaten public health and education and do nothing to help the poor. Demands ranged from greater funding for schools to lower prices for cooking gas.

"We do not believe in his speeches, in his pretty words," said a 39-year-old Mixtec Indian teacher.

"We are going to be a thorn in his side until our problems are solved," said another teacher.

About 20 masked men and women carrying pistols and automatic rifles appeared in nearby Nazareno Etla on Friday night to say they would continue to fight against Mexico's capitalist economic system despite the moves toward dialogue with the Zapatistas.

They said they were members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of the People, one of several groups that have broken off from the Popular Revolutionary Army. — AP

THE HINDU

4 JAN 12 2000

5 DEC 2000

511 Make-belief moves?

MANY IN the Opposition believe that the happenings in Peru of the last several weeks are part of a drama carefully scripted by Lima's strongman, Mr. Alberto Fujimori.

At first it was the sight of the President leading a group of track commandos and sniffer dogs in search of his one time spymaster, Mr. Vladimiro Montesinos. Then, even as the hunt was on, there was a "rebellion" involving a disgruntled Colonel and a handful of his supporters. Was this a stage-managed diversion to cover up the failure to track down Mr. Montesinos, critics of Mr. Fujimori ask.

If not a planned diversion, the rebellion portends serious trouble for Mr. Fujimori who just managed to get a third term of office and was forced to say he was stepping down, in the face of a scandal involving his former intelligence chief, some four years ahead of his term next July. According to the present scheme of things, elections have been called for April 2001.

For a person who has been in the centre of things for the last decade, ruling Peru with an iron hand and solid determination, Mr. Fujimori has been in deep trouble over the last six weeks, something he has been unable to shake off as easily as he is

accustomed to. It all began in September when his former spymaster was caught on video offering a bribe to a Congressman to support the President.

The allegations all along were Mr. Fujimori had been using the intelligence wing to keep a tight control on the polity, including the military, the political opposition and the media; and even the justice system in Peru. Official Lima has been denying all these allegations. The bribery scandal forced Mr. Fujimori's hand to the extent that he offered to resign next year, call for elections and not run for elective office. But the big question is if Mr. Fujimori will use the present crisis to hang on for more time. Supporters of the President are convinced that he has pulled the country away from the brink, especially in his determination to stamp out the rebellion involving Leftist guerillas.

The high-profile drama did not end with the agreement to hold elections. Mr. Montesinos fled to Panama but failed to get asylum there and after a brief self-imposed exile returned to Peru — and vanished. Hence the "hunt" in which the President himself got involved. Sceptics see the manhunt in different terms. "We have to think of the most incredible thing that could happen... Fujimori knows where he

(meaning Mr. Montesinos) is and is protecting him," says the retired Army General, Mr. Jamie Salinas. One of the arguments has been that Mr. Fujimori's 'hunt' for his spy chief is nothing more than a sham to convince his detractors that the break with Mr. Montesinos is final.

The flip side of this is in the political implication of a genuine rebellion — that even after a shake-up of the top military brass, Mr. Fujimori is not in control of this critical institution. Many in Peru and elsewhere are not fully convinced about the shake-up of the military for the reason that the old faces have been retained in different posts. Among other things, a genuine rebellion would seem to signal dissent within the armed forces.

Many in the Opposition believe that the happenings in Peru of the last several weeks are part of a drama carefully scripted by the President, Mr. Alberto Fujimori, writes SRIDHAR KRISHNASWAMI.

The leader of the military rebellion sees it differently, certainly not as a pawn in the hands of Mr. Fujimori or in any elaborate scheme that involves shielding Mr. Montesinos. According to the mutiny leader, Lt. Colonel Ollanta Humala, he and his small band of soldiers will not lay down arms until Mr. Fujimori resigned and Montesinos is arrested. In the view of Lt. Col. Humala, Mr. Fujimori was re-elected by fraud and the top military commanders are corrupt.

The saving grace for Mr. Fujimori is that the mutiny which started off with the rebels capturing a copper mining town on the border with Chile is tapering off. The Government forces not only rescued an Army General taken captive but also "freed" most of Lt. Col. Humala's troops, leaving the young dissident with no more than a handful to continue.

The political crisis in Lima has naturally had its fallout on the economic front as the Fujimori Government is trying to convince the international economic community, including the International Monetary Fund, that the political uncertainty was at best a temporary phenomenon. Lima has been urging the IMF to continue supporting Peru with funds and not cut off loans in view of the ongoing crisis.

But the last six weeks has already taken a toll, economic analysts and forecasters are maintaining. The scandal, call for elections, and the military rebellion in southern Peru have given investors enough apprehension that Mr. Fujimori is not in control. To top it all, Lima has revised the 2001 growth forecast from an estimated 4 per cent to between 3 and 3.5 per cent.

The rapid pace of political developments in Peru has an ongoing interest in the United States. The Clinton administration which has been quite wary of what has been taking place in Lima since the last election has had essentially two things to say. First, the outward relief that Mr. Fujimori is in control and has the loyalty of the armed forces. Second, is the expectation that he will stick to the OAS-backed reform process that will eventually lead to free and fair elections. "What we are mostly concerned about is seeing a transition, a democratic transition, to another round of elections; that those elections be free and fair," the White House remarked.

THE HINDU

5 NOV 2000

Bitter champagne

WHAT MAY have hastened President Alberto Fujimori's departure was the indignation felt by the Peruvians about the way he announced his resignation in Japan. It was a feeling of outrage which prompted the Congress to turn it down and, instead, choose to oust him from power, declaring him morally unfit for office. The change of fortune has been abrupt for, till early this year, the pliant Congressmen had never thought they could touch the country's imperial presidency. It was Mr Fujimori's arrogance and his 'pizza and champagne' style politics which earned him the sobriquet of 'Emperor'. In 1990, Peruvians had voted him to power not because he had something radically different to offer, but because of their belief that Japan would underwrite Peru if it was run by a 'chino'. It was also a result of the Peruvians' disillusionment with traditional leaders.

To be fair to Mr Fujimori, his economic reforms stemmed Peru's downhill drift and his containment of Maoist guerrilla violence made him immensely popular. The people put up with his populist policies and autocratic style as also his bitter public rows with his wife Susana Higuchi. Despite suspending the Constitution and dissolving Parliament in 1992, and his brutal police operations, Peruvians returned him to power yet again in 1995. By that time, however, he had begun to lose much of his sheen and should have retired from public life. Instead, he manipulated the system and got himself elected for the third time. Today, Peru seems to have returned to square one. The economy is in ruins and the people have lost hope. Their current hero is Alejandro Toledo who forced Fujimori into a second round and then boycotted the final ballot after accusing him of fraud.

Valentin Paniagua, the new interim President, has done well to appoint former UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar as the new Prime Minister. No one perhaps expected Mr Fujimori to retire in such disgrace. But his tragedy may prove to be Peru's hour of triumph. Latin America has changed over the years. While a democratic renaissance has swept across the continent, people are no more tolerant of institutionalised corruption. A few years ago, Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello was impeached. Mexico too has shed its one-party rule. The Peruvian example will go a long way in further consolidating Latin America's democratic gains.

THE HINDUSTANIAN TIMES

25 NOV 2000

Purge in Peru

49-17
26/11

MR. ALBERTO Fujimori could have planned it better except that time was not on his side. And when push came to shove the one-time strongman of Peru, who ruled the country for ten years with an iron fist, did what all dictators do when the endgame is in sight — he fled. Mr. Fujimori he went to his ancestral home in Japan where he still has roots and then pretended that somehow he was “stepping down”.

Mr. Fujimori thought that there was a graceful exit after faxing his resignation from his hotel room in Japan. But lawmakers back home sacked him instead. The language of the “sacking” on moral grounds was such that it perhaps rules out any future re-entry into politics.

That Mr. Fujimori could have spared Japan and its beleaguered leaders one more anxiety is a different matter. Or perhaps he felt Tokyo “owed” him for the successful operation against Tupac Amaru rebels involved in a hostage situation in Lima at the Japanese Ambassador’s residence in 1997. Japan’s leaders will be in a bind if Peru decides to demand the handing over of Mr. Fujimori to answer some questions — his diplomatic passport runs out in March 2001. The former President, whose parents emigrated from Japan to Peru in the 1930s, still has family in Japan. Aside from a son living there, Mr. Fujimori’s brother-in-law is Peru’s Ambassador to Japan.

Whether all these connections will be enough to get him off the hook remains to be seen. Mr. Fujimori has denied that he had anything to do with a suspected \$58-million laundered cash scandal involving his former intelligence chief, Mr. Vladimiro Montesinos. The big question is whether Japan will be giving political asylum to Mr. Fujimori under one pretext or another but not exactly terming it that way.

But clearly the focus in Peru, the continent and elsewhere is on the future. The high drama and the theatrics that went on for some weeks with Mr. Fujimori in battle fatigues “looking for” his former spymaster also faded into insignificance.

Few really took at face value Mr. Fujimori’s promise of fresh

elections next year and the firm offer of finally stepping down. The scandal that basically boiled down to Mr. Montesinos being caught on videotape trying to bribe a Member of Congress could not be contained in spite of all the smartness of the ex-President. And given that he had manoeuvred a third five-year term, there were enough apprehensions about Mr. Fujimori’s political pronouncements.

Peru’s political landscape is heading for change and the consensus is that it is starting off in the proper direction. The 64-year-old new President, Mr. Valentin Paniagua, is a highly respected person and the leader of a small centrist Party who has no personal ambitions. Mr. Paniagua, who shot into the limelight after two of Mr. Fujimori’s Vice-Presidents backed down, is apparently not eligible to run in the upcoming elections.

One of the first smart moves

made by the new President is the appointment of the former United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, as the country’s Prime Minister. Having Mr. de Cuellar in a prominent position, the argument goes, will serve the purpose of sending the correct message internationally as also in winning back a measure of respect internally. Mr. de Cuellar lost a Presidential election bid in 1995 running against Mr. Fujimori.

But a lot of focus will be on the domestic aspect and on what Mr. Paniagua will or will not be able to do. Internally, there is the expectation that he will bridge the political divide. And then there are a whole lot of institutions crying for change. For a long time, detractors of Mr. Fujimori have been calling for a total revamp of the court system and for cutting off the influence of the military. Above all, there have been pressures on Lima to come out with better

accountability on human rights.

But analysts are also saying that the trend must be maintained in the sense that other personalities who have little or nothing to do with the past must be involved in nation-building.

Overall what is being emphasised is that given the current economic and political situation in Peru what is needed is a smooth transition to a fuller scheme of things.

Mr. Fujimori is not without his supporters. Many believe that he was instrumental in turning around Peru which was literally a shambles following persistent insurgency. He dealt with insurgents ruthlessly but over a period of time the popularity was wearing off to the point that Opposition lawmakers were openly questioning the motives and the methods.

The transition has all the credibility it requires, but the challenges faced by Mr. Paniagua are by no means small; and heading the list is the economy which is said to be in deep trouble. The new acting President has said that he was going to renegotiate the payment of the \$28 billion debt in a way that would factor in the “economic and social capacities”.

When push came to shove, Mr. Fujimori did what all dictators do — he fled.
SRIDHAR KRISHNASWAMI on the change of guard in Peru.



Peru's new President, Mr. Valentin Paniagua, and (inset) his predecessor, Mr. Alberto Fujimori... change at last.

Fujimori in mysterious pre-dawn trips to military bases

FROM ALEJANDRO SCRUTTON

Lima, Oct. 30 (Reuters): President Alberto Fujimori, leading manhunters for both his former spy chief and a renegade army group, made mysterious pre-dawn trips today to military bases amid fears he was struggling to control crisis-torn Peru.

Accompanied by 30 special forces police armed with machine guns, Fujimori drove off just past midnight to Peru's military airport before returning to the presidential palace. No reason was given for the trip.

Yesterday, more than 50 rebellious army soldiers calling for Fujimori's resignation took over a mining town in southern Peru before disappearing into the Andes mountains with an army general and three mine workers held hostage.

It was the latest bizarre twist in a six-week-old drama that has included Fujimori calling elections early and leading a hunt for fugitive former intelligence chief Vladimiro Montesinos, who returned to Peru last week and challenged the President's grip on the armed forces.

The military uprising - which showed no signs of having spread today - came a day after Fujimori fired his armed forces chief and three other top generals, all Montesinos' loyalists, in a bid to strengthen his grip on power.

In southern Peru, cable television showed army search patrols leaving a military base near the cold and wind-swept Andean town of Puno in a hunt for the army rebel soldiers. The army said it had sent out helicopters to pursue the army group.

Fujimori was closeted with his new army chiefs yesterday and

has made no comment on the uprising. Public criticism of the military rebellion was lukewarm, fueling speculation the President may not be in full control of events. The situation has been murky since Montesinos, who handpicked Peru's military brass when he was one of Fujimori's top aides, returned to Peru a week ago. Rebellious Lt. Col. Ollanta Humala, 38, who led the uprising with his brother, said he considered Fujimori's crisis-torn government illegitimate and demanded the jailing of Montesinos and a purge of the army leadership.

The rebels took over the strategic copper mining town of Toquepala, near the Chilean border and more than 690 miles southeast of Lima. After a peaceful occupation of the 3,000-inhabitant town, they drove off, heading northeast to a military garrison near Puno high in the mountains near Lake Titicaca and the border with Bolivia.

Many members of Peru's opposition, including lawmakers, saw the uprising as proof of all that was wrong with Fujimori's 10-year hardline rule.

"A Gesture Of Dignity,"

splashed opposition newspaper Liberacion across its front page.

"There's quite a bit more sympathy for this (rebel) commander than I would have thought," Rospigliosi said.

Other political analysts and legislators condemned the uprising, saying it would only upset plans for elections called for April 8, 2001.

Latin America has a checked history of insurrection by middle-ranking officers, sometimes with far-reaching consequences. In Ecuador in January, army rebels occupied Congress,

sparking a bloodless coup.

Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, who was elected president in 1998, was the leader of a failed rebellion in 1992. Commentators have said Humala's "romantic adventure" smacked of Chavez's style.

Military analyst Enrique Obando said the crunch would come when the army search squads caught up with the insurgents.

"Normally, support (from other soldiers) comes when there's an order to confront them and they refuse to shoot," Obando said.

3 1 OCT 2000

THE TELEGRAPH

WORLD BRIEFS

Pak firing kills 4

LAHORE, Oct. 30. — Four unidentified men fired on a prayer meeting of the banned Ahmadi sect of Islam in Punjab province, killing four people and injuring 12. — Reuters

Quit call for Estrada

MANILA, Oct. 30. — Eleven business groups in Philippines today demanded President Joseph Estrada's resignation over the gambling payoff scam. — AP

Kyrgyz President

BISHKEK (Kyrgyzstan), Oct. 30. — The Kyrgyz President, Mr Askar Akayev, has been re-elected, winning 74.3 per cent of the votes polled. — Reuters

Bangla storm row

DHAKA, Oct. 30. — Weather officials were criticised today for failing to correctly forecast a weekend cyclonic storm in which 32 people reportedly died. — AFP

Peru army gears up to face revolt

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

57-9 31/10

LIMA, Oct. 30. — The Peruvian army mobilised troops in the country's far south to suppress a revolt by a Lt-Col and some 50 soldiers, who took control of a copper mine, army sources said.

Leader of the rebel group, Lt-Col Ollanta Humala Tasso, said in a statement broadcast by radio stations that President Alberto Fujimori was no longer a legitimate ruler. Calling on other soldiers to join his revolt, Lt-Col Tasso also denounced Mr Fujimori's former secret police chief, Mr Vladimiro Montesinos.

The changes in the top command of the army, navy and air force on Saturday had not eliminated Mr Montesino's influence, the rebel officer said.

An army helicopter and trucks carrying troops left the towns of Tacna and Arequipa in pursuit of the rebel soldiers, who had moved on from Toquepala to make for highlands further east.

Military sources said there was no reliable information on the whereabouts of Lt-Col Tasso and his associates. The officer was known to have left Toquepala with a bus belonging to the copper mine company and with three mine employees as hostages, army said.

Around 100 people gathered in two peaceful demonstrations in the capital to express support for the rebel officer. Lt-Col Tasso, head of anti-aircraft artillery unit 501, said in his broadcast statement that Mr Montesinos should be brought to trial.



Alberto Fujimori: challenged

THE STATESMAN

31 OCT 2000

Castro and Clinton ^{V V}mak

DESIKAN THIRUNARAYANAPURAM
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, Sept. 8. A day after Mr Fidel Castro called the USA a "hegemonic superpower", the Cuban leader and the US President made history of sorts on Wednesday.

During a luncheon for world leaders that ended in a group photo shoot, the two long-time adversaries were thrown together for a brief moment. They shook hands and exchanged a few words, before going their own ways.

This was the first time the leaders have spoken to each other. And according to some diplomatic experts, this was the first time since Mr Castro took power in Cuba in 1959 that he has shaken the hand of an US President.

Confirming the chance encounter, a White House official told Reuters: "As the President was preparing to leave the lunch, Mr Castro



Mr Fidel Castro

approached him. They had a brief exchange of words. I would not characterise this as a

substantive encounter." Asked if this signified a thaw in relations, the official said it did not change the concern the USA has about the absence of democracy in Cuba.

Addressing the UN Millennium Summit on Wednesday, Mr Castro said: "The principle of sovereignty cannot be sacrificed to an abusive and unfair order that a hegemonic superpower uses, to try to decide everything by itself. That Cuba will never accept."

The USA and Cuba have four decades of enmity that began with Mr Castro's Communist revolution that took over the US interests on the island, and hit crisis points at various times, notably the Cuban missile crisis and the Bay of Pigs misadventure of the Kennedy era.

With the end of the Cold War and Mr Clinton's policy of engagement, the rhetorical war between the two nations has

ebbed. The Elian Gonzalez case triggered a propaganda war of sorts in Cuba, but was more the US ad-

THE STATESMAN

23 SEP 1998

Exit Fujimori

IN RECENT months President Alberto Fujimori, Peru's strongman, found himself in the headlines for all the wrong reasons. Ever since he decided to foist himself on the country as President for the third term by manipulating the voting system, nothing seemed to go right for him. Opposition candidate Alejandro Toledo created the first tremors when he pulled out of the elections, hurling accusations of serious voting irregularities. Unfazed by such charges, Mr Fujimori went about his business for some time. But the revelations of a bribery scandal involving one of his most trusted lieutenants have now forced him to quit. Peruvians had earlier given considerable support to his flamboyant 'pizza and champagne' style of politics because of successful economic measures and for containing the Shining Path guerrilla movement.

However, Mr Fujimori's methods were too dictatorial for him to remain popular for long. In 1992, he suspended the Constitution and dissolved Parliament — an act which came to be known as the 'self-coup'. And yet, he retained some amount of public support by transforming Peru from a country known for economic mismanagement and Maoist guerrilla violence to one of the few economic success stories of Latin America. However, he built a political system which eventually ran out of steam. Economic success and the fading rebel threat provided no justification for his disregard for democratic norms. However, Mr Fujimori's tragedy may prove to be Peru's triumph. Peruvians are seemingly keen to make democracy work. Today, Latin America is fully democratic. From Mexico to Chile civilians are in power. Even the banana republics of Central America have shed their autocracies.

One reason for Mr Fujimori's departure is the pressure kept on him by the Organisation of American States on the matter of resignation after international and regional monitors complained that the May 28 election did not meet even the minimum standards of fairness. Only two Latin American heads of State attended Mr Fujimori's inauguration. His autocratic style was seen by most observers as a throwback to the Latin American dictatorships of the Sixties and Seventies. The better part of Mr Fujimori's legacy, however, need not be undermined. Peruvians must ensure that there is no return to the dark night of terrorism. It can be said with some degree of certainty that Mr Fujimori's resignation is another step in strengthening Latin American democracy.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 SEP 2000

H9-16
2/79

Peru political crisis worsens

9-Central & Latin Am

LIMA (PERU), SEPT. 19. The whereabouts of Peru's intelligence chief grew murkier amid conflicting reports of his arrest, deepening the mystery about the man at the centre of Peru's growing political crisis and raising questions about the government's stability.

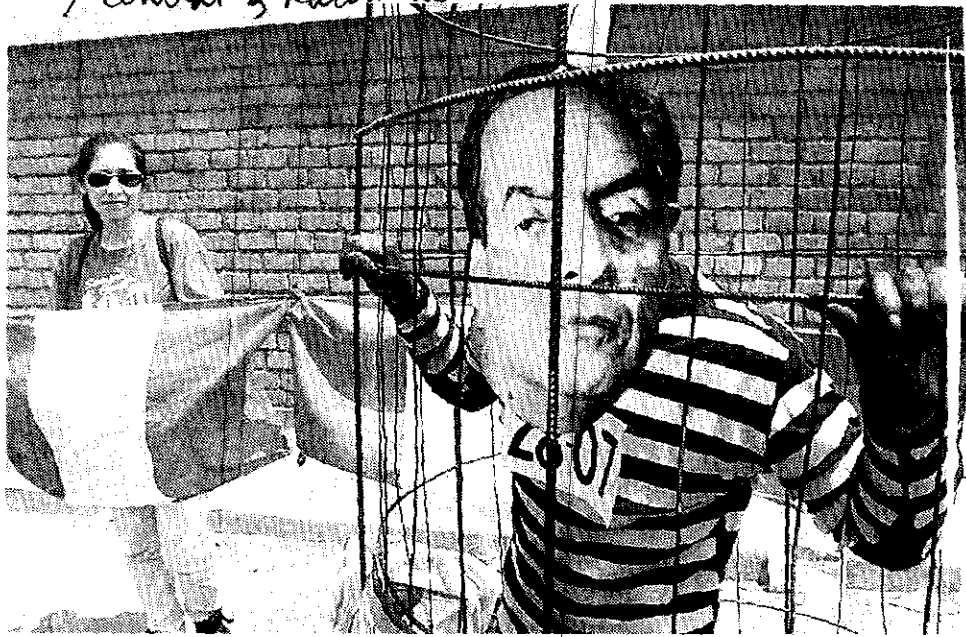
Meanwhile, pressure increased on the President, Mr. Alberto Fujimori, to step down quickly following his stunning announcement late Saturday that he would call new elections — in which he would not be candidate — amid a bribery scandal involving the spy chief, Mr. Vladimiro Montesinos.

In front of 10,000 cheering supporters in a downtown Lima plaza, the Opposition leader, Mr. Alejandro Toledo, called on Monday for the immediate formation of an emergency government and the arrest of Mr. Montesinos.

"There cannot be a healthy democracy in Peru with Montesinos free," Mr. Toledo told the crowd. Between choruses of "The dictatorship will fall," he demanded that new elections promised by Mr. Fujimori be held within four months — not the six to eight months top government officials have suggested.

Dozens of protesters, including Opposition legislators, formed outside the offices of Montesinos' National Intelligence Service in Lima, demanding his arrest. They scuffled briefly with police after they tried to push their way into the military complex. But overall, Peru's barracks and streets remained calm.

The Justice Minister, Mr. Alberto Bustamante, on Monday denied local news reports that Mr. Montesinos had been detained, saying the military was not holding the elusive spy chief, who for a decade has helped Mr.



A man wearing a mask depicting Peru's intelligence chief, Mr. Vladimiro Montesinos, stands in a cage during a demonstration as another holds a Peruvian flag outside the Las Palmas Air Force base, headquarters for the National Intelligence Service, in Lima, Peru on Monday. — AP

Fujimori run roughshod over Peru's democratic institutions.

Peru was thrown into political turmoil last week after the release of a videotape allegedly showing Mr. Montesinos bribing an Opposition lawmaker to support Mr. Fujimori.

The video was widely perceived as powerful evidence that Mr. Fujimori and Mr. Montesinos had pressured or bribed Opposition legislators to join his party's bloc following May's vote in which Mr. Fujimori was re-elected but lost his majority in congress. — AP

THE HINDU

20 SEP 1990

I'm still in control of govt, says Fujimori

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LIMA, Sept. 20. — The Peruvian President, Mr Alberto Fujimori, made a public appearance late yesterday, dispelling rumours that he had lost control of the government after announcing three days ago that he would cut his term short, call early elections, and refrain from running for office.

The embattled President announced he would remain in power till 28 July next year. "The announcement of early elections does not mean I am resigning immediately," Mr Fujimori said at the government palace. He denied the armed forces were putting pressure on him to push for-

ward the elections.

"There is no power vacuum. There is stability, tranquility and freedom of assembly and speech in the country," Mr Fujimori said.

The President has faced a hurricane of criticism from around the world ever since he was elected to a third term in office in May, in a round of balloting widely seen as tainted.

The attacks peaked when a video tape showed Mr Vladimir Montesinos, head of Peru's secret police, paying a \$15,000 bribe to an opposition legislator to cross over to the Fujimori faction.

The broadcast last Thursday sparked a controversy that resulted in Mr Fujimori whit-



Mr Alberto Fujimori

ting his five-year term down to 12 months, and the announcement that the national intelligence service would be dismantled.

THE STATESMAN

21 SEP 2000

Fujimori unmoved

49-16
6/8

ONLY THE extraordinarily naive would have thought that Peru's strongman, Mr. Alberto Fujimori, would cave in to the threats of the Opposition and not go through with his third term inauguration; or in the aftermath of the violence that left six dead would go running for cover.

Unfazed by the violence and accusations from the Opposition and mild protests from within the hemisphere, Mr. Fujimori went about his business. He brought in a new Cabinet, threw his weight behind his intelligence service and did what he normally does — blame the Opposition for the violence, deaths and instability.

"Peru has been shaken for months by this group wreaking irrational destruction and violence in the streets and carrying out an international campaign to undermine and destabilise their country," Mr. Fujimori charged, making the point that the "pseudo-leadership" of the Opposition can "only guarantee chaos and violence".

But the World Bank economist turned Opposition leader, Mr. Alejandro Toledo, was quick to blame the Government for the violence. "Lima was a battlefield but they were fighting people who had nothing. Fujimori hid behind his tanks and guns because he doesn't have the people's support," Mr. Toledo charged.

Saying that he was cheated in the April elections, Mr. Toledo pulled out of the run-off in May; and the Opposition in Peru has since charged that the Government used large-scale intimidation to force several members of Congress to switch loyalties so that Mr. Fujimori could have a working majority in Parliament.

The latest standoff — if one may call it that — came as a result of last week's violence that saw a Government building housing a national bank set ablaze killing six security guards trapped inside. Mr. Toledo maintains that the intelligence arm led by the feared Mr. Vladimiro Montesinos placed at least 100 agents in the crowd of thousands to foment trouble.

Political analysts have said that the latest demonstrations against Mr. Fujimori have been

Unfazed by the violence and the accusations from the Opposition, Peru's President, Mr. Alberto Fujimori, goes about his business for a third term. SRIDHAR KRISHNASWAMI takes a look.

the largest since the 1990s. And at the same time the response by the Government has also been along similar lines. A decade ago Mr. Fujimori unleashed a campaign of terror against the Maoist Shining Path guerrillas. This time around, it is the Opposition. What this means, analysts say, is that everytime Mr. Fujimori has his back to the wall, he turns around and presents himself as the "symbol" of stability. In fact, the Government in Lima has been doing just that now and with remarkable success.

The Opposition in Peru has a problem: despite having one of the worst human rights records, Mr. Fujimori is popular. In the 1990s he successfully fought the Shining Path; he pulled Peru out of a near civil war; and has

had success in setting the economic house in order. The reach of the intelligence and the military arms may be frightening, but Mr. Fujimori has used them effectively to come to grips with the narcotics and illegal cocaine trade.

The last reason is perhaps one of the most compelling ones for the Clinton administration to go soft on Mr. Fujimori. After the Presidential election of April and the runoff in May, Washington made all the usual and expected noises on democracy, violence and the rule of law. But the turnaround was also quick and not surprising to say the least. The noise was also there from the Organisation of American

States, but has subsided over a period of time. Now there is the feeling that whatever "negotiations" are going to take place between Mr. Fujimori and the OAS, it is largely going to be on the former's terms.

In the face of the latest violence, the Clinton administration has been careful in its choice of words. On the one hand it has expressed regret at the loss of lives and condemned the violence saying that it has no place in a democratic process. On the other, Washington has expressed disappointment that Mr. Fujimori made no specific promises of reform in the areas of human rights and the judiciary in his inaugural speech.

The expectation had been that the Peruvian strongman would use the occasion of his controversial third term inaugural to say something about the kind of political dialogue that will be in place. Instead Mr. Fujimori focussed a large part of his speech on the economy; and here too was quite short on specifics. Critics are saying that the President's addressed looked more like an election speech, not an inaugural address.

It is highly unlikely that Mr. Fujimori is losing much sleep over what the Clinton administration or the OAS has said. In fact, all indications from Lima point to a toughening of a stand, internally and from a political and law and order point of view.

Supporters of Mr. Fujimori are squarely blaming the Opposition for the unrest and deaths and the Head of the Government's Judicial Reform Commission has been quoted as saying that Mr. Toledo could face charges.

From a propaganda point of view, Mr. Fujimori could not have had it better. Television footage in Lima apparently constantly shows burning buildings against the background of funeral music for the slain security guards. With much of the media under Government control — or manipulated by it — this is the kind of scene that Mr. Fujimori and his officials would want the people to witness.

The bottomline message: the Opposition on the rampage and the Government trying to stem the rot.



Peru's President, Mr. Alberto Fujimori... tough stance.

THE HINDU

76 06 2000

Change in Mexico

THE VICTORY of Vicente Fox of the Right-of-centre National Action Party (PAN), over Francisco Labastida of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in the Presidential elections marks the end of an era in Mexican politics. The country, which experienced the first revolution of the 20th century even preceding the Bolshevik upheaval, was being run all these years as a centralised single party state dominated by the figure of the President. The outgoing President even had the power to anoint his successor whose main job was to protect his predecessor from prosecution. The main obstacle to a genuine democracy was the PRI which governed the country for the last seven decades, blurring the difference between the party and the state. But now a dramatic change has taken place and the country can finally be said to have become a multi-party democracy.

The transformation may have come because this year's election was by far the cleanest in history. The PRI machine, which virtually stole the 1988 election from Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and demonstrated its strength again in 1994 that brought Ernesto Zedillo to power, failed to manipulate the system this time. Ever since Mexico joined the US-led North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, the hold of the ruling party has weakened. Today, as many as 11 states within Mexico (out of 30) have opposition governments. It is worth noting in this context that Latin America's democratic advance since the Eighties has been quite impressive. Incumbent administrations have yielded office to elected opponents in countries as diverse as Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay and the Dominican Republic, in some cases for the first time.

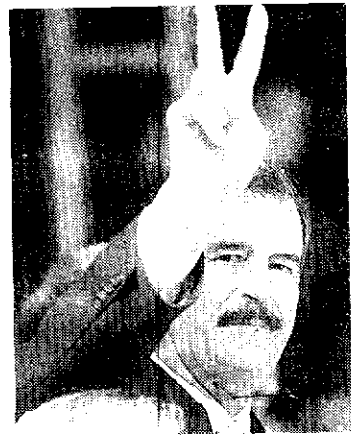
A remarkable feature of Latin America's democratic renaissance is the failure of nearly all coup attempts in recent years to overthrow civilian governments. The region has also changed from being regarded as the fuse of a debt bomb to being a powerful magnet for global capital. The advent of genuine democracy in Mexico will further consolidate the continent's democratic achievements. There is of course no single model. If Peru's Alberto Fujimori is suspected of manipulating the electoral system and if Venezuela's Hugo Chavez is seemingly always winning, it is due largely to Latin America's reckless flirtations with populism and relative lack of experience with democratic norms.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Opposition gains in Mexican poll

MEXICO CITY, July 3. The candidate of the Opposition National Action Party, Mr. Vicente Fox, on Monday won Mexico's presidential elections in a stunning victory that ended the ruling party's 71-year hold on the presidency.

The victory in Sunday's vote



The presidential candidate of Mexico's Opposition National Action Party, Mr. Vicente Fox, flashes the victory sign after winning the election, in Mexico City on Monday. — AP

was almost unthinkable for many in Mexico, where the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI in local parlance), has been synonymous with the Government — and even the nation itself — to millions of supporters and detractors alike.

With 22 per cent of the official count tallied, Mr. Fox had 47 per

cent, the PRI's Mr. Francisco Labastida had 32 per cent and the leftist candidate, Mr. Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, had 16 per cent.

Official projections of the final count also showed Mr. Fox the winner. The results herald enormous political and social changes for a country where nobody alive had ever seen a governing party lose a presidential election.

Mr. Fox assured Mexicans there would be a calm transition. "From today forward, we need to unite. We have to work together to make Mexico the great country we have all dreamed of," he said. He called yesterday a "historic day for the country".

The President, Mr. Ernesto Zedillo, said election officials' preliminary results "are sufficient and trustworthy enough to say that the next President of the republic will be Vicente Fox."

Moments later, ruling-party candidate Mr Labastida effectively conceded defeat, saying: "The citizens have made a decision that we should respect, and I'll set the example myself."

Victory celebrations broke out at PAN headquarters immediately following the release of the poll results, while silence reigned at PRI headquarters. The PRI has been Mexico's ruling party without interruption since it was founded in 1929, making Mexico the oldest one-party Government in the world. PAN also swept the simultaneous regional elections, according to reports. — AP, DPA

AP Wirephoto

AP Wirephoto

Putin for unified C. Asian stand against Taliban

Fred Weir
Moscow, July 5

AF-14 67

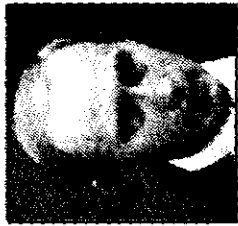
PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN used a summit meeting with Chinese and Central Asian leaders Wednesday to press for a more unified stand against international terrorism and for measures to isolate the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Mr. Putin travelled to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, on Wednesday for the fifth meeting of the Shanghai Five, a top leadership forum that focuses on Central Asian security issues.

Also attending the one-day summit were

Chinese President Ziang Zemin, and heads of the other member governments of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan. Uzbek President Islam Karimov is present for the first time, as an observer.

"The first months of Putin's presidency were aimed at forging a coherent Western policy, now he is turning to Asia," says independent political analyst Nikolai Zuybov. Minister Igor Ivanov told journalists at the summit, "Along with denouncing terrorism, our countries are coordinating efforts in



the main themes he will be pursuing".

Number one on Mr. Putin's list of concerns is international and cross-border terrorism, which he has blamed as a major aggravating factor in the separatist rebellion in Chechnya.

"During the five years of the Shanghai Five's existence, the situation in the region has grown much worse, not better," Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov told journalists at the summit. "Along with denouncing terrorism, our countries are coordinating efforts in

establishing cooperation to help each other against the aggressive actions of extremist organizations," he said. "Our goal is to create a comprehensive set of mechanisms that will work for all members of the Shanghai Five". Kamikaze truck bombings against Russian troops in Chechnya in recent days have killed dozens and raised the spectre of a long, Middle East-style terrorist war facing Russia in the rebellious Caucasian republic.

Mr. Putin was also slated to meet with Jiang Zemin to discuss bilateral issues and their joint opposition to a US-sponsored anti-missile defence scheme, which they fear could upset the global strategic balance.

HD-17
7/7

Castro honours Elian's father

HAVANA, JULY 6. The Cuban President, Mr. Fidel Castro, yesterday led a patriotic homage to the father of shipwreck survivor Elian Gonzalez, saying the 6-year-old boy's return last week was the most emotional moment of his revolutionary life.

In a ceremony honouring Mr. Juan Miguel Gonzalez, Mr. Castro compared the custody saga with other decisive moments in his political life such as the 1959 Cuban Revolution and the 1961 defeat of a U.S.-backed invasion at the Bay of Pigs.

"In none of those occasions during our struggles did I experience such intense emotion as when, upon the opening of the doors of the small plane that brought them from the United States...I saw emerge...the figures of Juan Miguel and Elian," the 73-year-old Cuban leader said in a speech.

"A small boy and a humble Cuban father, whom few people knew just a few months ago, were returning transformed into giant moral symbols of our fatherland. At that moment, I thought how great is our people, how invincible a just idea." Mr. Castro, who stood beside Gonzalez as he spoke to a 5,000-strong gathering at Havana's Karl Marx Theatre, was giving his first public speech since last week's end of the bitter

and highly-politicised, 7-month battle over Elian.

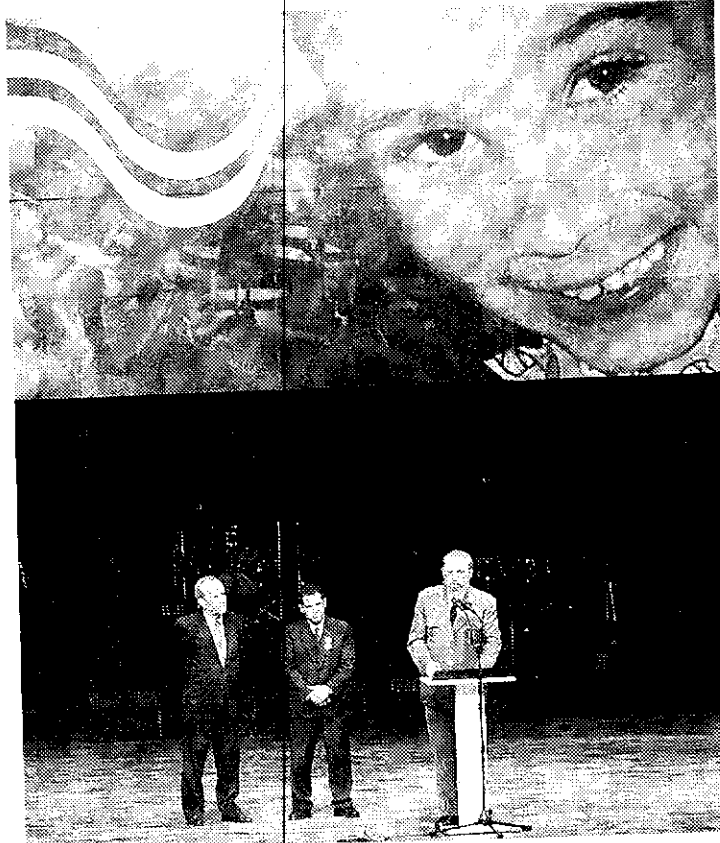
Meanwhile, a shy but joyful Elian was seen riding his bicycle in his hometown and splashing in a pool at a nearby resort as state television aired some of the first images of the boy since his return to Cuba a week ago.

With soft music playing in the background, last night's video clips chronicled part of the surprise visit Elian and his family made on Tuesday afternoon to Cardenas, where the child was born and raised. On the streets of the small port city, scores of residents cheered as a bus carrying the family drove by.

The 6-year-old was shown curiously rummaging through his clothes and toys at the homes of his paternal and maternal grandparents. He looked thrilled to find a pair of inline skates, which he tried on over his bare feet and skated a bit down a hallway.

At his school, Elian was greeted by his classmates, and a teacher leaned down to show him pictures and something written in a book.

The clips were shown shortly before Mr. Juan Miguel Gonzalez received one of Cuba's top civilian awards for his "heroic behaviour" during his fight to bring his son Elian back to Cuba. — Reuters, AP



The Cuban President, Mr. Fidel Castro (right), speaks below a billboard of Elian Gonzalez, as Mr. Juan Miguel Gonzalez (centre) and Cuba's National Assembly President, Mr. Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada, stand by, in Havana on Wednesday. — Reuters

THE HINDU

7 JUL 2000

Cuba shows first images of Elian's visit back home

Top honour for father J M Gonzalez

Havana, July 6

A SHY but joyful Elian Gonzalez was seen riding his bicycle in his hometown and splashing in a pool at a nearby resort as state television aired some of the first images of the boy since his return to Cuba a week ago.

With soft music playing in the background, last night's video clips chronicled part of the surprise visit Elian and his family made on Tuesday afternoon to Cardenas, where the child was born and raised. On the streets of the small port city, scores of residents cheered as a bus carrying the family drove by. The six-year-old was shown curiously rummaging through his clothes and toys at the homes of his paternal and mater-

nal grandparents. He looked thrilled to find a pair of inline skates, which he tried on over his bare feet and skated a bit down a hallway at his school. Elian was greeted by his classmates, and a teacher leaned down to show him pictures and something written in a book. The clips were shown shortly before Elian's father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez, received one of Cuba's top civilian awards for his "heroic behaviour" during his fight to bring his son back to Cuba.

Gonzalez had tears in his eyes when Cuban President Fidel Castro pinned the Carlos Manuel de Cespedes medal to his dark suit after a two hour ceremony at the Karl Marx Theatre.

The ceremony was attended by about 5,000 people. (AP)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Elian to stay in US for at least 3 weeks

Miami, June 2: Cuban castaway Elian Gonzalez, at the centre of a politically-charged legal battle, looked set to stay in the United States for at least three more weeks after a court ruled on Thursday he was not entitled to a political asylum hearing.

The wrangle over the 6-year-old boy appeared headed for further legal proceedings after the ruling by the 11th US circuit court of appeals in Atlanta.

The court's verdict dealt what could be a definitive blow to efforts by Elian's passionately anti-communist Miami relatives to prevent his father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez, from taking him home to communist-ruled Cuba.

Attorney-General Janet Reno said that if the relatives did not take any legal steps within 14 days, Elian and his father could return to Cuba a week later.

"Elian remains in his father's care but he and his family will not immediately depart the United States. The injunction put in place by the 11th circuit will remain in effect until the court's mandate in this case is issued," she told a press conference.

Elian has been the focus of a tug-of-war since he pitched up in Florida last November after a shipwreck in which his mother and 10 other would-be migrants drowned.

He was sheltered by his great-uncle, Lazaro Gonzalez, and other Miami relatives until April 22, when federal agents raided their house and seized him at gunpoint to reunite him with his father, who had flown from Cuba. For the last five weeks, he has lived with his father, his step-mother, half-brother and playmates in the Washington DC area. (Reuters)



MISSING ELIAN: Marisleydis Gonzalez, Elian Gonzalez's cousin who acted as his mother during his Miami stay, speaks to the media as her father Lazaro Gonzalez looks on after the 11th US circuit court of appeals' decision was announced in Miami on Thursday. (AP)

Cuba demands return, calls protest

Havana, June 2: Cuban President Fidel Castro's government, unhappy a US court ruling on Thursday has not paved the way for an immediate return of shipwreck survivor Elian Gonzalez, announced plans for a massive protest march on Friday.

The government said half a million Cuban mothers would march mid-morning on the US diplomatic mission in Havana to demand the boy's return to his Communist Caribbean homeland and an end to the six-month-old custody battle.

"Our people have the right to demand the immediate liberation and return of all of them to Cuba," said the latest of various official statements during the day. It was referring to Elian, 6, his father and other family members, who are currently living in Washington.

"We will not cross our arms in the face of the prolongation of the injustice and the crime. We will double our fight to show the world our repudiation and our protest," added the Cuban statement, read on state TV in Mr Castro's presence.

Havana has acknowledged the thrust of the Atlanta tribunal's lengthy ruling — that the boy is not entitled to a political asylum hearing — strengthens its demand for Elian's return, according to the will of his Cuban father. But the Castro government has objected strongly to some "worrying elements" in the ruling that it calls "concessions to the Mafia" — Havana's term for anti-communist Cuban American groups fighting for Elian to stay in the United States. (Reuters)

The Economic Times

3 JUN 2000

Elian ruling gives push to Cuba battle

PRESIDENT Fidel Castro's government, unhappy that a US court ruling on Thursday has not paved the way for an immediate return of shipwreck survivor Elian Gonzalez, was said to have announced plans for a massive protest march on Friday.

The government said half a million Cuban mothers would march in the morning to the US Diplomatic mission in Havana to demand the boy's return to his Communist Caribbean homeland and an end to the six-month-old custody battle. "Our people have the right to demand the immediate liberation and return of all of them to Cuba," said the latest of various official statements during the day. It was referring to Elian, 6, his father and other family members, who are currently living in Washington.

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A Cuban-American woman in Miami reacts to the verdict sitting in front of posters showing Elian Gonzalez with his mother — AFP photo

to some "worrying elements" in the ruling that it calls "concessions to the Mafia" — Havana's term for anti-communist Cuban American groups fighting for Elian to stay in the United States. These include the description of Elian's US great-uncle and would-be guardian Lazaro Gonzalez as "a close friend" and the continuation for 14 days of an injunction barring Elian from leaving the country. "Today, we have a ruling that still gives rights and prerogatives to an impostor who has defied orders of the authorities of the country where he lives," the statement said. "For the victim of just six years of age, there is beginning a possible chapter of arbitrary actions and the possibility of a cruel and interminable wait be-

fore being able to return to the breast of his closest relatives," it added. Havana has from the outset demonised Lazaro Gonzalez as the main "kidnapper" of Elian. The 14-day continuation of the injunction has allowed the great uncle, and other US relatives, time to seek access to Elian and try legal measures to prevent his return to Cuba.

On the streets of Havana, Cubans were pleased at the court's basic backing of Elian's father's position, but urged US authorities to seize the moment to end the protracted dispute. "It's excellent, fantastic, this decision. What we need now is for them to bring the boy here, back to us," said security guard Diego Jimenez, 59.

In Washington, Elian's father

said he was pleased with a federal court's rejection of an appeal to give the boy a US asylum hearing, which now opens the door for his return to Cuba. "I am very happy with the decision from the court," said Juan Miguel Gonzalez in Spanish in a brief statement to reporters. The father also expressed his desire to return to Cuba with Elian. "I would hope that this would come to an end and finally go back home together with my son and my whole family and that this delay does not continue unnecessarily," Gonzalez added. However, the ruling granted the Miami family 14 days in which to appeal, and barred the boy's return during that period. US Attorney General Janet Reno, who said she was "pleased" with the court's ruling upholding an earlier Immigration and Naturalization Service decision on the asylum hearing, said the boy could return to Cuba seven days after the 14-day period ended.

The father's lawyer, Gregory Craig, stating that the latest decision marks the third time that US courts have ruled in favor of Elian's return to Cuba, urged the Miami relatives not to introduce further appeals that would prolong the case. "Elian's relatives in Miami say they are concerned about his future. But their love and their concern are best expressed by calling a halt to this battle," Craig said.

— Agencies

INDIAN EXPRESS

- 4 JUN 2000

HD-17
18/6

Loser losing steam

Clinton & America
Latin America

PERU MAY be headed for a third round of high drama — just maybe. After making a lot of noise in the first round of the presidential election and pulling out of the run-off at the last minute, the main Opposition leader, Mr. Alejandro Toledo, is threatening to fill the streets with at least four million demonstrators in the run-up to the swearing in of Mr. Alberto Fujimori on July 28.

But even if it is a controversial third term for him, the strongman of Peru is not going to lose sleep over Mr. Toledo's threat. In fact, for all the noise made in the aftermath of the run-off election, Mr. Fujimori hardly gave any indication of getting away from his life-style just because there was a semblance of pressure from outside. In many ways, things could not be better for him.

From the beginning Mr. Fujimori has been claiming that his election as President is valid, in that the process was transparent and known long before the verdict had been announced. The last-minute withdrawal by Mr. Toledo meant that many either stayed away from balloting or had the papers marked invalid. Officials in Lima and the President have been saying the electoral outcome could not be labelled as a coup by any stretch of imagination.

But some campaign strategies of Mr. Fujimori were suspect as, for instance, borne out by the widespread allegations of abuse of the official media and the free help of the military, especially its intelligence arm.

However even critics of Mr. Fujimori have reluctantly conceded that what Mr. Toledo did — pulling out at the last-minute — was something erratic and said it was better to go along with Mr. Fujimori and apply subtle pressures for change.

The confirmation of Mr. Fujimori as the third term President may have been controversial, but it has been expected all along. Granted that there were pockets of opposition which were plainly disillusioned with the goings-on, but by and large there was a feeling of the Opposition leaders not really having been honed in to the ground realities.

In the aftermath of the run-off election, Mr. Toledo may have been successful in pulling major crowds on the streets of Lima and neighbourhoods, but the numbers could not be sustained. Worse, in a country where the military plays such a strong role, the game was up when this institution refused to budge.



Mr. Alberto Fujimori... The Peruvian strongman has the last laugh for all his widely-condemned reelection.

And all the noise made by the international community, led particularly by the United States and others in Latin America, suddenly quietened.

The biggest blow to Mr. Toledo was not the sudden switch by the Clinton administration, which swung from the extreme position of condemning the outcome of the run-off vote to a lukewarm

Mr. Fujimori's third-term presidential election may have been controversial, but the Opposition has not been honed in to the ground realities. SRIDHAR KRISHNASWAMI narrates the high drama in Peru.

posturing. A blistering condemnation of Lima by the administration would have jeopardised the cooperation between the two capitals in combating narcotics and drugs trafficking.

The real blow to Mr. Toledo may have come from Peru's own backyard, from nations tired of any meddling by the U.S. in the hemisphere and their being wor-

ried about its implications for themselves.

For all the fuss that was expected to be made at the Windsor, Canada meeting of the Organisation of American States, Ecuador summed up the feeling when its Foreign Minister said: "May he who has a perfect democracy cast the first stone".

The bottom line to some in Latin America was the fear of their going overboard in reacting to the outcome in Lima when their own track record was at best dubious. Mr. Fujimori could not have had it better.

In fact, Mr. Fujimori himself took the cue from the post run-off developments and stressed that he was going to put in place mechanisms to further bring about and strengthen democracy. And the Organisation of American States, from where independent observers refused to oversee the electoral process, will send a mission led by the Canadian Foreign Minister, Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, to explore ways of "bolstering" democracy.

The spotlight in the next few days will continue to be on both Mr. Fujimori and Mr. Toledo, on the latter in the context of his threat to flood the streets with protestors during the swearing-in ceremonies.

The Opposition leader hopes that the masses will finally back his charge of a patently fraudulent election. However, at this point of time, it is unlikely that protestors alone will change the evolving scheme of things.

A shot in the arm for Mr. Fujimori is that the military broke with tradition and has formally recognised him as its supreme commander for another five years. The politically smart President-elect not only accepted the military's recognition but went on to give a spin to this endorsement: "I consider this recognition of my position a full expression of the subordination of the armed forces and the national police to civil power."

The unexpected move by the armed forces is yet another setback to Mr. Toledo and a reminder to him and his supporters of what can be in store for them if things get out of hand on July 28 or in the preceding days. In endorsing Mr. Fujimori, the military has not only signed on the President's political agenda but has given the unmistakable signal that it is behind him. So much for Mr. Toledo's claim that a segment of the armed forces is becoming increasingly discontent with politics creeping into the institution.



A student protester in Lima... Can the Opposition sustain its momentum?

THE HINDU

18 JUN 2000

Elian sends greetings to Castro on Father's Day

REUTERS
HAVANA, JUNE 18

ELIAN Gonzalez, the Cuban boy still living in the United States seven months into a bitter political fight over his future, has sent a Father's Day greeting to Cuba's communist leader Fidel Castro.

Elian's signature headed a letter from him and his entourage of family and friends in Washington, wishing all Cuban fathers — and especially Castro — a happy day.

"On this Father's Day, we want to send an affectionate greeting, and a well-deserved kiss, to all of you especially to one father whom we love dearly for his unrivaled teachings and his infinite love for us, our com-

mander-in-chief," said the letter, published on Saturday a day ahead of Father's Day, which is celebrated on June 18 in the Americas.

The letter, in the ruling Communist Party's daily newspaper *Granma*, was also signed by Elian's own father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez.

He has been seeking the six-year-old's return since Elian was rescued at sea off Florida in November following a capsizing that killed his mother and 10 other illegal Cuban migrants.

Castro, 73, is famously secretive about his personal life, but is known to have several children.

He fought for custody of his first child, 'Fidelito', or 'little Fidel', in the years before he came to power in a 1959 revolution.

INDIAN EXPRESS

19 JUN 2000

USA to ease food, drug curbs on Cuba

REUTERS

WASHINGTON, June 27. —



Mr Fidel Castro

51-9 28/6
The USA, in a historic shift of policy, will allow unfettered sales of food and medicine to Cuba for the first time in 40 years under a compromise brokered by Republican leaders in Congress today.

The legislation marks a sea change, politically and economically, in US sanctions imposed in the early 1960s in hopes of isolating President Fidel Castro.

Reached overnight, the agreement could clear the way for congressional approval of calls by US farm and business groups to exempt food and medicine from unilateral embargoes. "It's a good, hard-fought agreement," said a spokesman for House of

Representatives Speaker Mr Dennis Hastert.

Cuba would be the major beneficiary, but the legislation would put into law similar steps already taken by the Clinton administration for Iran, Libya and Sudan.

A White House spokesman said President Bill Clinton did not oppose "allowing things like food and medicine to go to Cuba as long as it is for the benefit of the people, not the benefit of the Castro government". However, he said the White House believed the proposal interfered with the President's power to conduct foreign policy.

In a concession to Cuban-American groups and conservative lawmakers, the legislation would prohibit US government financing to help Cuba buy American grains, livestock, animal feed or medicine. The legislation also would deny Cuban exports access to the US market.

28 JUN 2000

10-16
Elian back where he 'belongs' 2076

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JUNE 29. Forty-one minutes after the injunction requiring his stay in the U.S. expired, the chartered jet carrying Elian Gonzalez, his father Mr. Juan Miguel Gonzalez and step-mother took off from the Dulles International Airport to Havana, Cuba. Minutes later, a second plane carrying Elian's friends and his teacher also took off, bringing to an end an international custody battle that saw crass politicking on both sides of the Florida Straits.

The U.S. Supreme Court refused to oblige Elian's relatives living in Miami, Florida, who wanted to take custody of the Cuban boy. Minutes after the Supreme Court ruling, Elian and his entourage living in an affluent section of Washington D.C. got ready to go home, and in the minds of many, to where he really belonged. In a brief statement, Elian's father said he was extremely happy to go home. He thanked the American people and the Government for their support and said his stay in this country had allowed him to meet "beautiful and intelligent" people.

The month of June was not good for Elian's Miami relatives. A Federal Appeals Court only reinforced an injunction requiring the Gonzalez family to stay put in the U.S. until the courts settled the matter. The real blow came not from the Supreme Court but from the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta. A 12-judge panel last week unanimously rejected the asylum appeal and said it would not entertain any more petitions. Since the Supreme Court did not act on the issue, the stay order expired on Wednesday at 4 pm. Legal analysts have long maintained that the Miami relatives were skating on thin ice in moving the Supreme Court as the odds were stacked against them. The apex court hears only about one per cent of what has been disposed of at the Appeals Court level.



ADIEU TO THE U.S.: Mr. Juan Miguel Gonzalez and his son, Elian, wave as they board their plane at the Dulles International Airport on Wednesday. — AP

Also, the Government did not request the Supreme Court to review the constitutionality of a particular law because of the conflict of opinion in the lower courts.

The Clinton administration has expressed relief at the outcome and with good reason. From the beginning, it has backed the Immigration and Naturalisation Service on the Elian case. The Attorney-General, Ms. Janet Reno appeared to go out of her way to settle the case amicably without having to resort to the use of force. Only when all options appeared closed, did Federal Mar-

shals storm the residence of the Miami relatives on April 22 to "secure" Elian and return him to his father.

Many believe that the Elian case would not have dragged on so long if it had not involved Cuba and a 50-year obsession with its President, Mr. Fidel Castro. Politicking took centre-stage with the Cuban-American community, national and local politicians determined to keep Elian away from "communist" Cuba and Havana whipped up the anti-American hysteria conveniently using Elian Gonzalez as the rallying point.

The streets of Miami were quiet

with grief that things had not gone as expected. But politically, there will be a price to pay. It remains to be seen how much the Vice-President, Mr. Al Gore, stands to lose electorally. Mr. Gore had broken ranks with the Clinton administration to argue that the Elian case must be settled in the family courts.

Low-key affair

AFP reports from Havana:

Hundreds of Elian's erstwhile classmates from his hometown of Cardenas waved Cuban flags and chanted his name as the private Lear jet which brought the young boy and his family from Washington yesterday taxied to a halt at Havana's Jose Marti airport.

Relatives poured onto the tarmac and took turns hugging the boy in emotional scenes that were carried live on Cuban television as a band played the national anthem. But as expected, the public celebrations were short-lived with Elian, his father Juan Miguel, wife Nersy, and their infant son Hianny quickly climbing into a white Lada and speeding off at the head of a convoy of cars and buses.

The family was taken to an undisclosed location for a reunion with other family members before settling into a complex in a Havana neighbourhood for a so-called adjustment period, according to Cuban authorities. There the young boy will be shielded from the glare of the international spotlight while he concentrates on his studies, according to a plan mapped out by Cuban officials in consultation with Elian's father.

In marked contrast to the huge orchestrated rallies held in Havana and other Cuban cities during the bitter international custody battle, Elian's homecoming was subdued and low-key. Cuban officials urged people to celebrate his return "in their own homes or with neighbours without taking to the streets on a wave of enthusiasm," which would not be appropriate at this time, they said.

THE HINDU

30 JUN 2000

Elian's back in Cuba after months of drama

REUTERS
HAVANA, JUNE 29

CUBA'S most famous boy, Elian Gonzalez, was restarting life on Thursday in his Communist-run Caribbean homeland after his return from the United States at the end of a seven-month custody dispute with Cold War overtones.

The six-year-old shipwreck survivor was spending the night with his father and some classmates in a seaside Havana house that will be his home and school for the next few weeks during what Cuba's government called his process of "readaptation".

Cuban security forces blocked access to the house, in the upscale Miramar district, which has been specially prepared to receive the motherless boy and his entourage before they return to their provincial hometown of Cardenas on the northern coast.

Cardenas, or the modest house where he lived with Miami relatives after his sea-rescue.

But it is nowhere near as luxurious as Elian's two most recent residences in the Washington area, where he was temporarily housed following the dramatic April 22 reunion with his father after US agents seized him from his Miami relatives' home.

Elian disappeared from public view after he arrived, shy but smiling, at Havana's Jose Marti international airport. His return to Cuba was broadcast live across the nation Wednesday evening. Hundreds of children cheered "Elian! Elian!" on the runway, and emotional relatives hugged, kissed and hoisted him onto their shoulders.

The Cuban government said he enjoyed a private reunion with relatives and friends at an undisclosed location in Havana, before returning to the house.

The return of Elian, whose per-

sonal tragedy unleashed a bitter family feud and another flashpoint in the turbulent history of Cuba-US Relations, is a major political victory for President Fidel Castro's government.

Castro personally supervised an unprecedented patriotic crusade to bring home Elian, mobilising millions in rallies across the island.

On arrival, Elian was lifted out of the plane by his father Juan Miguel Gonzalez, a 31-year-old tourism worker who, with Castro's backing, left Cuba for the first time in his life to travel to the United States and seek his son's return.

The boy, who survived a November 1999 shipwreck that killed his mother and 10 other illegal Cuban migrants, sat on his father's knee and waved as he was driven from the airport in a white Lada, a common car on the Communist-run island.

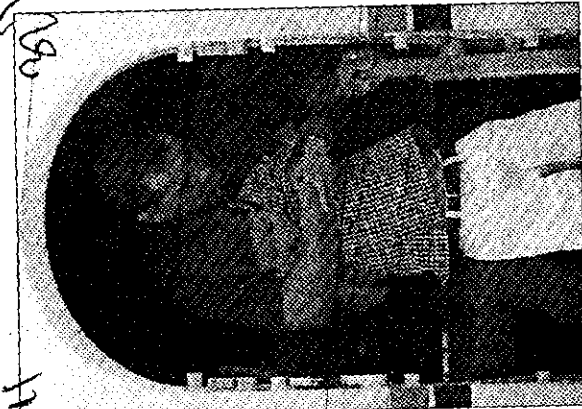
To prevent the boy from suffering "excessive emotions, tiredness or bother", there were no street cel-

ebrations or other mass mobilisations planned, a Cuban statement said. Foreign media were kept away from the boy and were only allowed to record his arrival from an airport roof. The government said that according to plans worked out with his father, Elian would likely spend between two and three weeks in the Havana house. After that, he will enjoy a week's holiday before returning to Cardenas.

Elian's departure, carried live by all major US television networks, came hours after the US Supreme Court rejected an emergency request by the boy's Miami relatives seeking to keep him in the United States.

The court also turned down an appeal seeking a political asylum hearing for Elian.

The court's action ended bitter legal wrangling over the child's fate in a politically charged case that began when he was rescued by two fishermen from the ocean off Florida on US Thanksgiving holiday last November.



Elian arrives with his father at Havana airport late on Wednesday — AFP

The freshly painted house, complete with swimming pool, is a good deal grander than Elian's humble former home in a potatoled street of the provincial Port

Curtains on the Elian saga

DESIKAN THIRUNARAYANAPURAM
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

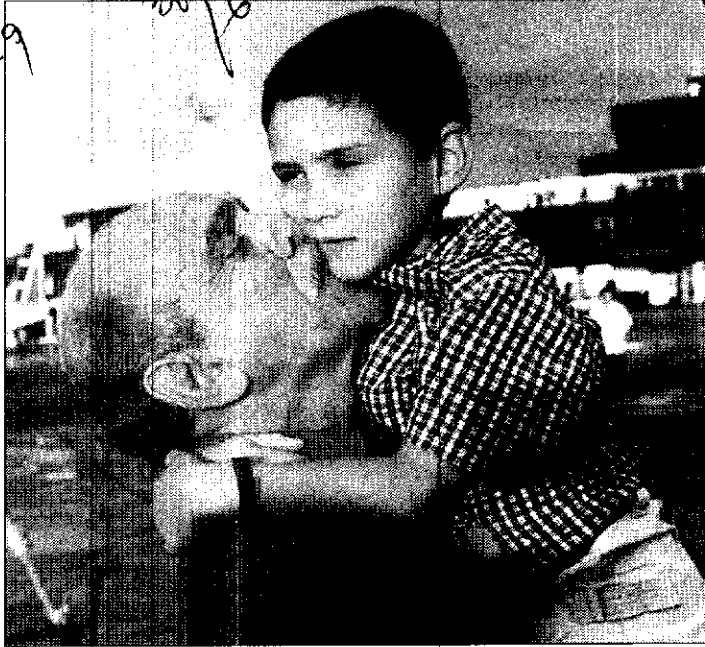
WASHINGTON, June 29. — Elian Gonzalez flew home to Havana yesterday, five hours after the USA's top court refused to hear an appeal by the Miami relatives that would have kept him here.

The 6-year-old boarded a chartered plane with his family and a group of Cuban classmates after the court-stipulated stay on his exit expired at 4 p.m.

The apex court's move triggered sorrow and anger in Miami's Little Havana neighbourhood, where Elian spent five months since November. The relatives wept in disappointment; Cuban immigrants gathered outside their house and vented anger at the media. One TV cameraman was hit in the head with a chair.

The press conference by the relatives' lawyers was not attended by Elian's great-uncle Lazaro and his daughter Mari-sleysis, said to have acted surrogate mother to the boy.

Elian was met at Havana air-



Elian gets a kiss from his grandfather on arrival at the Jose Marti Airport in Havana on Wednesday. — AP/PTI

port by weeping relatives, including four grandparents and hordes of children from his school, all waving Cuban flags. Mr Fidel Castro was absent.

After hugging his great-grandmother and greeting his friends, Elian drove off with his family to an undisclosed location.

Coup bid foiled in Paraguay

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REUTERS

ASUNCION, May 19. — Forces loyal to a fugitive coup leader tried to topple the Paraguayan government, driving tanks through the centre of the capital and blasting a hole in the Congress building before being persuaded to lay down their arms and be arrested, the government said.

The rebels took control of the barracks at 7 p.m. yesterday but the revolt was over by 2.30 a.m. today.

The situation is now under control. We will relentlessly apply the law to all those who have violated the Constitution, President Luis Gonzalez Macchi told a local television channel before dawn.

Retired colonels and low-ranking officers who support former coup-plotter Gen. Lino Oviedo, seized control of the army's biggest armoured unit, helped by guards at the base on the city outskirts, defence minister Mr Nelson Argana said.

For the third time in four years, Paraguay's weak democracy has been threatened with a relapse into military rule. Each time Gen. Oviedo, a former army chief, has been at the

centre of events and each time USA, Brazil and Argentina have exerted pressure to ensure that democracy survives.

"This is just the beginning. We have the constitutional right to rebel against tyranny," Col.(retd.) Vladimiro Woronicki, a known Oviedo supporter, said as he was led away under arrest after the revolt ended.

An anonymous rebel officer had read a communique over the radio calling for Mr Gonzalez Macchi to step down to allow an immediate presidential election.

Security forces arrested a lawyer, a congressman, five retired officers and at least 25 soldiers. The head of the police, Mr Casto Guillen, was fired.

The Congress speaker, Mr Juan Carlos Galaverna, said documents found on the rebels showed that they had planned to kill him and the President.

Mr Gonzalez Macchi, former Senate chief, took over as President last year after Mr Raul Cubas resigned after a week of violence following the assassination of vice-president Mr Luis Maria Argana.

The USA and Paraguay's larger neighbours have condemned the revolt.

THE STATESMAN

2 MAY 2000

Gore steps in, Castro ups the ante

Miami, March 31

CUBAN AUTHORITIES upped the pressure for Cuban castaway Elian Gonzalez to be handed back to his father, as Vice President Al Gore waded into the international custody battle.

In a major departure from the White House, Vice President Al Gore yesterday said he supported a bill before Congress that would grant the Cuban boat boy permanent residence in the United States.

Meanwhile Cuban President Fidel Castro raised the stakes in a tug-of-war drama over shipwreck survivor Elian Gonzalez.

Elian's father wants his 6-year-old son, who survived a migrant smuggling voyage to the United States in which his mother died, back in Cuba, but Cuban exiles back the boy's Miami relatives who are under pressure to give him up if they lose a court appeal for Elian to be given political asylum.

The four-month custody battle revolves around whether the boy should grow up with his father in Castro's Communist Cuba or with his relatives in the United States.

A lawyer for the father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez yesterday, started the process of securing a visa for him and other family members to try to win custody, while the Castro Government said its surprise proposal for a 31-member delegation to take charge of the motherless boy was "non-nego-

tiabile." "It should be absolutely clear. That the presence of the boys, the teachers, the psychologists and the psychiatrists, and the specialist medical personnel needed for the recovery and reinsertion of Elian to his family is non-negotiable," a government statement said.

With Mr Castro making elaborate preparations, Mr Gore broke with the White House by urging Congress to pass a bill to make Elian and his immediate family permanent US residents, a move political analysts said was aimed at securing firm votes in Florida in November's presidential election.

In Miami, the US Government delayed until next Tuesday any move to remove Elian from the custody of his Miami relatives. Talks between lawyers and immigration officials resume on Monday.

"We must take action, here on our own shores, to make sure that Elian's best interests are served," Gore said in a statement. Mr Gore's intervention seemed at least partly motivated by the fear that he would be blamed, along with the rest of the Clinton administration, if the child was returned to Cuba. "From the very beginning, I have said that Elian Gonzalez's case is at heart a custody matter," Mr Gore said in a statement.

Cuban President Fidel Castro said on Wednesday he would send Elian's father to the United States to break the impasse over returning the boy to Cuba. Mr Castro said in an address on television and radio that Elian's father was ready to travel at a moment's notice.



Cuban boat boy

(Agencies)

Cuban boy must be sent back: US Attorney General

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

WASHINGTON, MARCH 31

96-10 C. S. Valer
US Attorney General Janet Reno insisted on Friday that six-year-old shipwreck survivor Elian Gonzalez must be returned to Cuba and said Law Enforcement authorities in Florida should cooperate with the decision.

As tension mounted in Miami, where Elian's relatives are determined to keep him in the United States, Reno's comments lent weight to US threats to revoke his temporary residency and expel him to Cuba. On Thursday, Florida Governor Jeb Bush warned that his State would not cooperate in removing Elian from his Miami home and the Mayor of Miami-Dade county, Alex Penelas, said Reno and US President Bill Clinton would be held responsible for any violence that follows the decision to revoke the boy's residency.

Thousands of Cuban-Americans poured onto the streets of little Havana late Thursday in a show of solidarity with the Miami family seeking to keep the boy in the United States. More demonstra-

tions are expected.

114
Reno said she expected Law Enforcement authorities to cooperate in any move to return the boy, and that the matter would be resolved within the law and in the absence of violence. "This case has been heartbreaking for everybody involved," Reno added. "But we believe that the law is clear: the father must speak for the little boy because the sacred bond between parent and child must be recognised and honored, and Elian should be reunited with his father."

Elián's father wants his son - who survived a migrant smuggling voyage to the US in which his mother died - back in Cuba, but Cuban exiles back the boy's Miami relatives who are under pressure to give him up if they lose a court appeal for Elian to be given political asylum. The four-month custody battle revolves around whether the boy should grow up with his father in Castro's Communist Cuba or with his relatives in the US. A lawyer for the father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez has started the process of securing a visa for him and other family members to try to win custody.

INDIAN EXPRESS

- 1 APR 2000

Cuba boy's father doesn't want to live in US

BY SUE PLEMING

Washington, April 1: The Cuban father of a shipwreck survivor Elian Gonzalez rejected on Friday a US Senate proposal to give his family US residency and his American lawyer said his client had no plans to defect from Cuba.

Lawyer Gregory Craig said Juan Miguel Gonzalez's only goal was to be reunited with his six-year-old son, who is at the centre of a custody war pitting his father against the Miami relatives who say the child must not return to Communist Cuba. "I don't have any basis to believe that Juan Miguel wants to defect or wants to live in the United States. If he does, I hope he has the freedom and I expect he has the freedom to make that choice," said Mr Craig on NBC's *Today* show.

Vice-president Al Gore jumped into the Elian debate on Thursday and broke ranks

with the Clinton administration by suggesting Congress should pass a bill granting the child and his Cuban family permanent US residency status.

Juan Miguel Gonzalez, in an open letter to Senate leaders published in Cuba on Friday, urged the legislators to reject any attempts to push such a plan through Congress. "We want to make it clear that we are not in agreement and we hope the US Senate does not approve the proposal," said the letter, signed by Elian's father and some relatives.

Mr Craig, a prominent Washington attorney who represented President Bill Clinton in his impeachment trial, said that while he had enormous respect for Mr Gore, he did not agree with him on this issue. "It's like offering an Irish patriot the right to become a British subject when there's no evidence he wants that to happen," he added.

White House spokesman Jake Siewert said the President still held the view that politics

should be kept out of the custody case. "The law is pretty clear here and he thinks the law should be carried out," he said. Mr Craig began the process on Thursday to get US visas for Elian's father, stepmother, half-brother and a favourite cousin to be reunited with the boy.

State department spokesman James Foley confirmed that Mr Craig had delivered a letter asking for visas for the Gonzalez family, but he said the US Interests Section in Cuba had not yet received official applications. Mr Craig could not be reached for comment on the status of the visas.

Mr Foley reiterated that any applications from the family would be treated in an expeditious manner and that the US believed the presence of Elian's father would facilitate a "humane, prompt resolution" to the case.

Cuban President Fidel Castro insisted this week that an entire 31-strong delegation, including psychiatrists and half of Elian's

Cuban school class, should be allowed to come to the US to help with Elian's transition to Cuban life. Asked whether the US would consider applications from such a big group, Mr Foley said: "We're not going to pre-judicate or speculate on what we might or might not do in relation to visa applications that we've not received."

Mr Castro's point man on US affairs, Mr Ricardo Alarcon, an ex-foreign minister who is now National Assembly president, has also been named to the proposed delegation. Diplomats said that was a likely sticking point with Washington as Mr Alarcon is a senior member of the ruling Communist Party. Mr Craig added that he did not think that would prevent his client from coming to the US. "What was important, Mr Craig said, was that Elian's father was prepared to stay in the US for the duration of the appeals process as long as he had Elian living with him. (Reuters)

Mr Gore on Thursday endorsed pending legislation on Capitol Hill that would give permanent US resident status to the boy, who was plucked from the Atlantic Ocean last November, triggering a tug of war between competing interests in the US and Cuba.

The bill would also give permanent resident status to the boy's father and other family members now living in Cuba.

In addition, the measure would transfer the youngster's legal case from the Immigration and Naturalisation Service, which favours returning him to his father in Cuba, to a Florida family court. (Reuters)

'Gore's move to grant boy citizenship' is political

Washington, April 1: US vice-president Al Gore found himself in a political firestorm on Friday for backing efforts to give six-year-old Cuban shipwreck survivor Elian Gonzalez permanent US resident status.

While the White House said that President Bill Clinton was not angry with Mr Gore for breaking with him on Elian's legal case, Democrats as well as Republicans charged that Mr Gore was motivated more by his own interests than those of the boy.

"I'm disappointed," Representative Charles Rangel, a New York Democrat, said. "In my opinion, it is purely political," he added.

Representative Maxine Waters, a California Democrat, who wants Mr Gore to back off, had a private conversation with him a day after threatening to drop her endorsement of his White House bid.

Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush Jr. challenged Mr Gore to push further on behalf of efforts to let Elian stay in the US and out of the hands of Cuban President Fidel Castro.

"I hope the vice-president has enough influence to ... sway the President," said Mr Bush Jr., the Texas governor. "It will be an interesting test," he added.

THE ASIAN AGE

- 2 APR 2000

Political pawn

110-16

All this hoopla has very little to do with Elian Gonzalez's well-being or his future and more to do with a 50-year-old obsession with Mr. Fidel Castro.

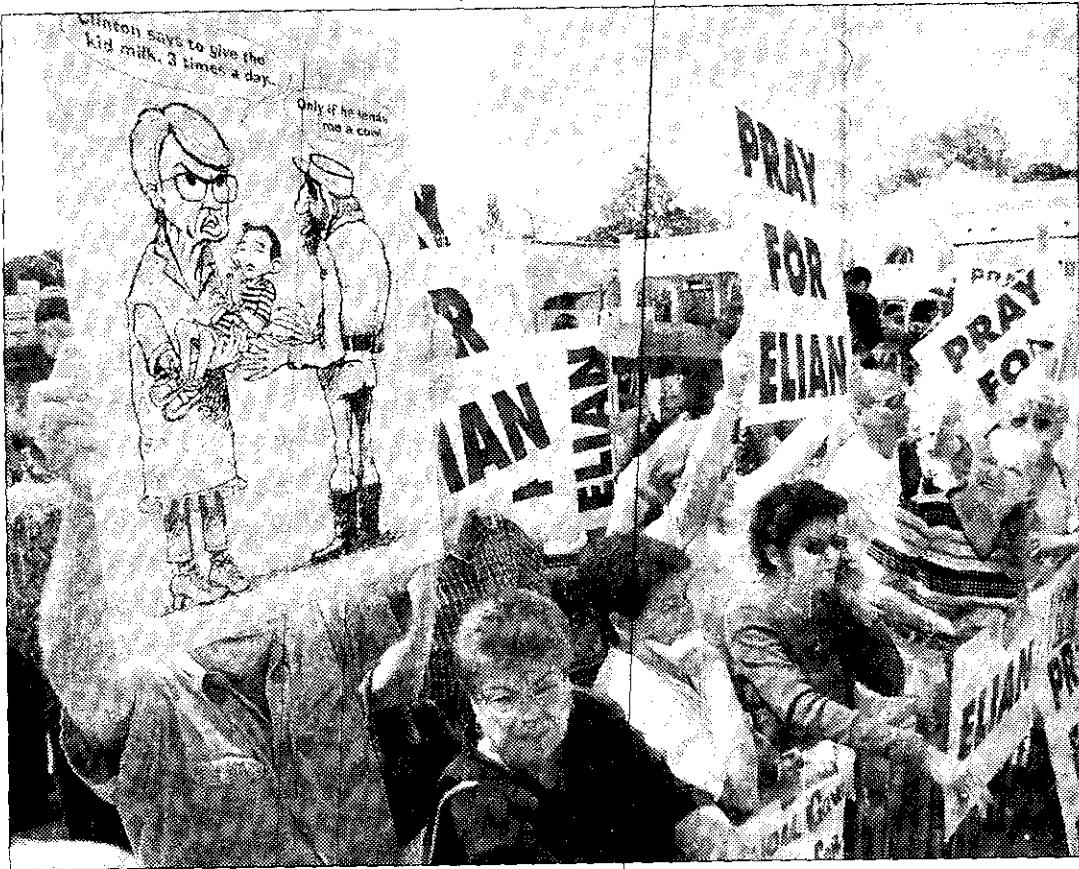
SRIDHAR KRISHNASWAMI
on the Cuban castaway's case.

WHEN ELIAN Gonzalez grows up to be a young man and looks back on when he was six years old he will have some difficulty figuring out which was worse: the trauma of the shipwreck in the Atlantic or being dragged through the political mud in the streets of Florida. But over time the young Cuban will understand that all this hoopla has very little to do with his well-being or his future, and more to do with a 50-year-old obsession with someone called Mr. Fidel Castro.

Talk about third-rate politics played out in an election year in the United States; Elian would have hardly made one or two lines in major newspapers if he had been from any country other than Cuba. But with the rightist anti-Castro elements in full strength in Florida and the politicians, national and local, out to score a few cheap points keeping in mind the vote bank, the ingredients for high drama are all well laid out. Or is it a circus?

Elian is nothing but a pawn in a big game that involves not just nations but also political forces that dot the landscape of the U.S. The Clinton administration, as perceived in many quarters, made the correct decision to reunite Elian with his father in Havana; the Castro Government saw this as a political windfall to get even with the anti-regime Cubans who have fled the country and are now well settled in Florida; and the Cuban exiles declare that they will go the last mile to prevent Elian from either being re-united with his father or heading back to Castro land.

That the anti-Castro forces were willing to go to any extent to prevent re-union is evident from their insistence that the six-year-old go through a



Cuban exiles in Miami stage a demonstration to press their demand that Elian Gonzalez remain in the U.S.

psychological evaluation — that is on the relationship between him and his father who has remarried and has a second son. The sickening part of this ongoing drama is that a truly bizarre environment has been created around Elian, something he hardly understands.

It is not just the anti-Castro exiles in Florida who have whipped up this frenzied atmosphere where people have gone on radio talk shows threatening the President and the Attorney-General with dire consequences if Elian is handed over to his father and taken back to Cuba. Much of the blame should also be laid at the doorsteps of politicians, national and local, who have shown one more time the extent to which they will stoop to get a vote.

It is hardly comforting that Elian has so many prominent personalities lined up behind him with the only "villians" being the President, the Attorney-General and the Immigration and Naturalisation Service. The right wing Republican clatter on Elian was only expected, including from the party's presidential candidate, Mr. George Bush; so too was that from pragmatic Democrats who saw something

and anything to be gained by signing on to the bandwagon.

Not to be left out was Mr. Albert Gore, sitting Vice-President and the Democratic Party's nominee for the presidential elections of November 7. Seeing the possibility of windfall by way of getting the State of Florida in November, Mr. Gore broke ranks with his President and the administration and argued for Elian's remaining in the U.S. Whether Mr. Gore gets Florida this November remains to be seen but his stance earned him a good deal of contempt for it only reinforced the issue's political nature.

One of the issues that will be played out in the next few days is not whether Elian reunites with his father but how this re-union comes about. Justice Department officials have made the point carefully and yet bluntly that the letter of the law will be applied; and privately the word has been passed around that Federal Marshals would indeed be used to enter the home of Elian's relatives if this was the only way to get custody of the boy. And as a sop to the relatives of Elian, the Justice Department has said that it will make sure that Elian and

his father do not leave the U.S. until an Appeals Court has had its last word on the case, expected sometime in May.

The sad part of this re-union is that some in the media have gone to the extent of setting down norms for evaluating the love between a father and his son — whether Elian rushes towards his father on seeing him or waiks slowly and hesitantly. In talking so much about the "interests" of Elian, the various groups and actors have become so wrapped up in their own causes that the larger picture is no longer in sight.

In a sharp commentary in *The Washington Post*, Richard Cohen says, "Some people believe Elian Gonzalez was sent to America for a purpose. They believe that in the sea he was ringed by dolphins who protected him from ravenous fish. They say that in his room an image of the Virgin Mary has appeared. I too think Elian was saved for a purpose, although it is not a religious one. It is to make fools of politicians". And the first on Mr. Cohen's list is Mr. Gore "looking like a caricature of a pandering politician" followed by Mr. George Bush, the Mayor of Miami-Dade County, the Conservatives and Mr. Castro.

THE HINDU

APR 2000

Elian protesters pray for divine intervention

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI, April 9. — Supporters of Elian Gonzalez's Miami relatives maintained their commitment to seeing that the boy stays in the United States but they conceded that their chance of prevailing has diminished.

"The balance is tipping toward the bad," said Mr. Carlos Cadiz (50), who led a vigil yesterday outside the home of Mr. Lazaro Gonzalez, the six-year-old's great-uncle and temporary guardian.

Two events in the past few days led to the pessimism. Elian's father, Mr. Juan Miguel Gonzalez, arrived in Washington on Thursday from Cuba to regain custody of his son. The day after, Mr. Gonzalez's Janet Reno took steps to arrange the custody transfer.

Outside Mr. Lazaro Gonzalez's Little Havana home, as many as 250 protesters gathered last night, with many joining a large prayer meeting. Other people had asked for divine intervention throughout the day but reiterated their promises to form a human barrier if government officials come to take Elian.

"I have one little thread of hope, that God will do something so important that he will have to stay here," said Ms. Ana Teresa Bonzon (50) of Miami Beach.

Some protesters brought battered foam-and-wood rafts and inner tubes to the police barricade in front of the house to dramatize what Cuban refugees go through to come to the USA.

Mr. Miguel Saavedra, president of the Cuban exile group Vigilia Mambisa, announced a caravan through Miami in support of keeping Elian in the USA. "We're going to go out to demonstrate with all the vehicles in support of Elian and in disagreement with the Clinton administration," he said. "The caravan will be called Humanity, Liberty for Elian."

Elian was rescued at sea in November after his mother and 10 others drowned while trying to reach Florida.

In Washington, Mr. Juan Miguel Gonzalez's lawyer told reporters yesterday that a meeting between the father and Mr. Lazaro Gonzalez, his uncle, did not appear likely.

"The first thing that has to happen is Lazaro has to take by the hand Elian Gonzalez and lead him to his father and say, 'Here is my son.' And until that happens it's very difficult to contemplate anything more," the lawyer, Mr. Gregory Craig said.

Miami's Mayor, Mr. Joe Carollo, said he wants the meeting between Elian and his father to take place at a "neutral" site. "I hope a peaceful community," he said yesterday on NBC's Today television show. "There is no need to worry about violence in Miami. The police will keep law and order."

The two fishermen who found the boy floating on an inner tube traveled to Bethesda, Maryland, yesterday hoping to urge Mr. Juan Miguel Gonzalez to let Elian stay in Miami. The boy's father, who is staying at the home of Cuban diplomat, Mr. Fernando Ramirez, was in Washington when they arrived. Mr. Craig said he planned to see them.

THE STATESMAN

10 APR 7

Deadline for Elian handover passes

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, APRIL 13. The showdown between the relatives of the Cuban boy, Elian Gonzalez, and the officials of the Justice Department here is continuing as the deadline of 2 p.m. to hand over the boy passed. The situation appeared tense outside the house of Elian at Little Havana in Miami, Florida. But the crowd is obeying the instructions of the law enforcement officers.

The boy's relatives are said to be moving the Appeals Court in Atlanta for a stay on the orders of the Justice Department to transfer custody. The Clinton administration has said earlier that it will respond in an appropriate fashion. Meanwhile, in Bethesda, Maryland, the father, Mr. Juan Miguel Gonzalez, has not commented on the developments including of a video clip this morning on the national television showing his son saying that he did not wish to go back to Cuba.

The President, Mr. Bill Clinton, when asked if Federal Marshals would be sent to fetch Elian, argued that it was best for the Attorney General to handle the situation as it was evolving on a

minute-to-minute basis. Mr. Clinton also made the point that the basic issue was the rule of law and that none of the courts have granted any interim relief. "... I do believe that it is our responsibility to uphold the law and we are doing our best to do that," he said.

In a setback to the relatives on Thursday, a State Family Court has refused to hear a petition, saying that it has no jurisdiction on issues of immigration.

The two and a half hour meeting in Miami on Wednesday between the nation's top law enforcement officer, the Attorney General, Ms. Janet Reno, and the relatives of Elian was said to have been quite productive but ended without any meaningful results. The Attorney General insisted on making her personal attempt to sort out the troubling issue between the boy's relatives and his father who is now in Bethesda for a week trying for the re-union first and later take Elian back to Cuba.

Reuters reports:

The Vatican said today that at the request of the U.S. Government, its embassy in Washington would be available for the handover of Elian.

THE HINDU

14 APR 1998

THE HINDU

140-17 Temporary stay against Elian's transfer 154

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, APRIL 14. In what seems to be a drama with no early end in sight but one in which the Justice Department appears to have boxed itself into, the relatives of the Cuban lad, Elian Gonzalez, have won some more time. As the 2 p.m. deadline for the handover of Elian on Thursday passed and the Justice Department showed little to no evidence of forcing the transfer, the relatives in Miami-Dade county did not wish to take any chances. Apprehensive of use of force, they moved a Federal Appeals Court in Atlanta for an injunction against the boy's transfer to Cuba.

A single Judge in the Federal Appeals Court obliged and ruled that Elian cannot be taken out of the country until such time a ruling is made on the claims of his relatives. But even as officials were saying that this did not prevent the re-union between Elian and his father, Mr. Juan Miguel Gonzalez, the Justice Department is now saying that this may not be sought for another three or four days.

The Federal Appeals Court has also said that the Clinton administration must file its response by later today; and a final ruling on this is not expected until next week. In the streets of Little Hava-

na, outside the home where Elian is staying, thousands of demonstrators cheered wildly as the deadline passed and the injunction issued. Protestors had promised to form a human chain to prevent Elian taken away by Federal Marshals.

Emotionally, the situation is getting a little dicey as accusations are flying all around who

was responsible for the show-down. Relatives of Elian are making the point that they were forced to move in the direction of the courts after going nowhere with the Justice Department.

On the other hand, there is also the argument that delaying the re-union between Elian and his father is doing a great injustice to the emotional stability of the six-

year lad. Meanwhile, in a stepped up war of nerves, the family released a home video that shows Elian pointedly telling his father that he did not wish to go to Cuba.

The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, has argued that he is trying to stay out of the case and has backed the manner in which the Attorney-General, Ms. Janet Reno, has been handling the issue. But Mr. Clinton stressed that the bottomline was to uphold the law and avoid politicising the matter. "... I do believe that it is our responsibility to uphold the law and we are doing our best to do that," he said.

But the Justice Department and the Attorney-General are taking a lot of flak for the manner in which this crisis has been handled. Ms. Reno wished to go to Miami to personally sort out the issue with the family, but is now being taken to task for making a high profile trip without anything tangible in return. More important, the point is being made that for all the tough talk on what would happen when the deadline passed, the Justice Department did nothing. Apparently, the Department which has been heavily criticised for the manner in which it handled other crisis such as the one with Branch Dravidians in 1993 is keen on playing it extremely carefully this time around.



Mr. Delfin Gonzalez, great uncle of Elian Gonzalez, is hugged at his Miami family home on Thursday by a police officer after hearing the news of a court injunction in the custody case involving the Cuban boy. — AP

15 APR 2000

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Face-off in Peru

Peru's President, Mr. Alberto Fujimori, who faces a runoff election in June, is not known to give up his objectives easily. But his opponent, Mr. Alejandro Toledo, has hardly given the impression that his determination is any different.

SRIDHAR KRISHNASWAMI
reports on the confrontation that is building.



THE CHAMPION AND THE CHALLENGER: Peru's President, Mr. Alberto Fujimori, and the Opposition candidate, Mr. Alejandro Toledo.

IN THE end, Peru's strongman, Mr. Alberto Fujimori, seems to have done the correct thing but perhaps not on his own. After squeezing an unprecedented third term out of his Congress, Mr. Fujimori perhaps was forced to think whether he would be politically better off if he faced a runoff election in June rather than claimed victory in last Sunday's Presidential elections and face unrest in the streets.

Needing a 50 per cent plus one vote in the election, Mr. Fujimori fell short by about 20,000 votes; but the fashion in which the voting had taken place was enough for political opponents, especially his main challenger, Mr. Alejandro Toledo, to scream fraud. The main charge was that the incumbent President had used the military intelligence to deliver the goods; this was denied in official circles in Lima.

But Mr. Fujimori now faces an uncertain run-off in June against Mr. Toledo. Sunday's voting showed that although the ruling party maintains a lead in the Congress, there is no longer the absolute majority to ram through Mr. Fujimori's reforms of the future. With 120 seats up for grabs in the Unicameral legislature, Mr. Fujimori's party won 51 seats followed by Mr. Toledo's with 28, the Independents 9 and the rest going to smaller parties. Analysts say that with this kind of an outcome, Mr. Fujimori will have to sit down and "negotiate" with the Opposition on such issues as the budget and reforms.

Known as a tough leader who has ruthlessly put down rebellion in his country, Mr. Fujimori, son of Japanese immigrants, was in many ways forced to scale back when the election results started coming in; what with Mr. Toledo saying he was prepared for unrest in the streets in the face of "gross irregularities" in the polling and counting. Normally quite strong-willed, Mr. Fujimori backed down in the face of international pressure led by the United States.

In fact, Mr. Fujimori faced pressure from Washington even before the voting began when the Carter Centre, headed by the former American President, Mr. Jimmy Carter, argued that the conditions for a democratic vote did not exist. And when Mr. Toledo — who had studied at Stanford University and had worked at the World Bank — argued that he had won 57 per cent of the vote by his count, a run-off seemed better than outright unrest that had all the potential to turn violent. And Mr. Toledo was blunt enough to say that he would not recognise the outcome if Mr. Fujimori was declared elected outright.

Washington — for obvious reasons — does not wish to take credit for "pressuring" Mr. Fujimori; rather the effort has been passed off as a concerted effort by many including the

West and Nations in the hemisphere. But clearly there is disgruntlement in Lima on the manner in which the Clinton administration played its cards. "The greatest harm done to Peru has been the U.S. intervention that has demanded an election result without waiting for an official count," remarked Mr. Fujimori's running mate, the former Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Francisco Tudela.

One argument is that Mr. Fujimori may be a semi-authoritarian ruler, but he is also someone who is politically smart. The perception is that unwilling to be seen as the odd man out in the neighbourhood in the aftermath of the Sunday vote, Mr. Fujimori came to the conclusion that it was worth a run-off in June for he could make it. But what has to be borne in mind is that international attention is likely to be much higher in the June run-off given the rising stakes.

It is not just political uncertainty in Peru that is the focus of attention in this hemisphere. It is more importantly on the impact of all this on the economic front with analysts already coming to the conclusion that the much-needed private investors are going to keep off for some more time. If Mr. Fujimori's initial reluctance to see the writing on

the wall has had its impact on future investments, some have started questioning the political and leadership abilities of Mr. Toledo. The main apprehension seems to be not only that Mr. Toledo has no experience in public office but also about the fashion in which he handled the crisis in the aftermath of the electoral showdown.

Much of Peru's problems are on the economic front and the country has also been a victim of the financial crisis that gripped the Asia Pacific, Russia and Latin America. One survey shows that Peru's economic growth will be second in Latin America after Chile but there are deep problems that need to be addressed — the external debt (of about \$ 29 billion), the stalling growth rate, declining tax collection and the rise in public sector deficit.

In the ongoing test of wills between two populist leaders, the consensus has been that on the economic front Mr. Fujimori and Mr. Toledo are not too far apart in their prescriptions. But the critical test will be on whether they choose a confrontationist path in the weeks ahead. Mr. Fujimori is not the kind of person known to give up his objectives all that easily. At the same time, Mr. Toledo has hardly given the impression that his determination is any different.

THE HINDU

16 APR 2000

Elian, father reunited amid high drama

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, APRIL 22. Elian Gonzalez and his father, Mr. Juan Miguel Gonzalez, have been reunited after four and a half months at the Andrews Air Force base shortly after 9.30 a.m. Little Elian was taken away by force this morning by Federal Agents of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service after the Justice Department decided to put its foot down on the custody issue concerning the Cuban lad. Elian's father has been in this country for the last three weeks waiting for the reunion to take place.

The President, Mr. Bill Clinton, supported the actions of the Justice Department and the Attorney General, Ms. Janet Reno. "The law has been upheld and that is the right thing to do," Mr. Clinton said in very brief remarks. The President said he was extensively briefed on the subject, but the final decision on the manner in which Elian was to be taken away was made by the Attorney General and that he fully supported her on this.

Mr. Clinton was briefed on Friday afternoon and at night around 8 p.m.; and again this morning after the operation.

In Little Havana in Miami, Florida, the six-year-old Cuban boy was "secured" shortly after dawn by armed agents of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service. He was taken to a nearby island for transportation to an Air Force base by helicopter en route to the high-security Andrews Air Force Base near Washington D.C.

10-minute operation

The entire operation, involving some 20 armed Federal



Elian Gonzalez (centre) being removed from his home by Federal officials in a pre-dawn raid on Saturday in Miami's Little Havana neighbourhood. — AP

Agents, is said to have lasted about 10 minutes. At about 5 a.m., the Federal Agents stormed Elian's relatives' home in Little Havana by breaking the front door, grabbed the child and whisked him away to a nearby airport. The armed agents spent less than three minutes inside the house where Elian had been staying for the last four months.

Seeing clear defiance on the part of the relatives, the Justice Department decided to uphold the rule of law, say officials. At a press conference this morning, the Attorney General, Ms. Janet Reno, who has taken a personal interest in the subject, said Elian will remain in the U.S. as ordered by a court.

Defending the early-morning swoop, Ms. Reno maintained that she tried her best to be least disruptive, but in the end was left with no other option as the family in Miami was constantly "moving the goalposts".

Anger, tension

Tensions are rising in Little Havana in Miami-Dade County with minor incidents of violence and disruptions being reported. From a scant crowd of about 50, who were around at the time of the operation this morning, hundreds more have joined since, expressing anger at the manner in which authorities went about achieving their objective. At the time of storming the residence of Mr. Lazaro

Gonzalez, police used pepper gas on the crowd assembled outside.

Little Elian was said to have been snatched from the arms of the fisherman who saved his life in the shipwreck in the Atlantic.

With a white blanket wrapped around him and seen weeping, Elian was carried away by a female agent to a waiting van which then quickly moved away from the scene. At Little Havana, after the initial stunning moments and anger, there is acknowledgement that the Justice Department was indeed preparing for this type of a showdown.

Justice Department
defends action: Page 11

THE HINDU

23 APR 2000

Castro praises US govt, calls Elian seize a 'one-day truce'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CENTRAL AUSTRALIA (Cuba), April 23. — A triumphant Fidel Castro has described Elian's reunion with his father as constituting a "truce" in four decades of rocky US-Cuba relations.

"Today is truce, perhaps the only one in 40 years — one day," the Cuban President told a crowd of about 400,000 people yesterday at a historic sugar refinery. Among the audience were the grandparents of Elian Gonzalez.

"This is a day of glory for our people," he said, comparing the reunion to Cuba's victory over an exile army during the Bay of Pigs invasion 39 years ago. "What day could satisfy everyone more?"

But he noted that the fight for Elian's return to Cuba was not over. "Tomorrow the battle continues," Mr Castro said. He praised the consistency shown by US Attorney-General, Ms Janet Reno, and INS officials in their determination to reunite father and son "even though they were scared" about the



Juan Miguel Gonzalez with son Elian after their reunion at Andrews Air Force Base on Saturday. — AP/PTI

repercussions of their actions.

Mr Castro would not attach importance to the shock that Elian displayed during the early morning raid by armed government agents who spirited him away from the home of his Miami relatives. "That boy cried for three minutes, for something that probably saved his life."

Protests in Miami:

Cubans in Miami continue to be furious. Police beat down rioting demonstrators in Little Havana. As the night wore on and police closed streets and clamped down on protesters, demonstrators poured into surrounding neighbourhoods. The defiant late-night protests mostly stayed calm.

By early today, much of Little Havana appeared deserted after police blocked cars from entering the area and urged pedestrians to leave. On 27th Avenue, the focus of many of Saturday's protests, no cars could be seen — except for police cruisers.

■ More reports on page 9

THE STATESMAN

4 4 APR 2000

Can Elian thaw ties between United States and Cuba?

96-10
7678

THE battle over Elian Gonzalez has made unlikely allies of presidents Bill Clinton and Fidel Castro, raising questions about whether the little Cuban castaway can break the ice between the two Cold War enemies. Washington and Havana insist not. "We don't see any reason why this will change anything," US State Department Secretary James Rubin said flatly. "All this speculation about the effect on US-Cuba relations is just that—speculation". While Castro called Elian's long-delayed reunion with his father on Saturday "a shared victory", he warned it did not signal an end to "the struggle of the Cuban people" against the US "economic war and hostilities." But all the nay-saying comes amid multiplying signs that the Cold War animosity, between the superpower and the tiny island just off its shores, may at last be fading. Clinton began down the rapprochement road in 1998 by introducing some flexibility in the 40-year-old US embargo, allowing direct flights to Cuba and permitting exiles to send money home. That followed the Pope's historic visit to Cuba, which prompted Castro to allow Christmas celebrations. Private US trade missions have been visiting Cuba in increasing numbers and businesses have been



amplifying calls for ending the embargo. Polls show the Americans slowly shedding their dim view of Cuba. An ABC poll taken this month, showed that 47 per cent of Americans now believe the US should re-establish the ties cut after Cuba's 1959 revolution, against just 38 per cent two years ago. And 47 per cent want an end to the embargo, up from 35 per cent in 1998. A Gallup poll found that the number of Americans who had had a "very unfavourable" view of Cuba, shrunk from 41 per cent in 1996 to just 24 per cent in 1999. And little Elian may be the catalyst to more change, experts say. "It has put the two governments on the same side of an issue, they have worked together towards a common objective, and that improves

the atmosphere," said Wayne Smith, a former US charge d'affaires in Cuba. Both of this year's candidates seeking to replace Clinton, Democratic Vice President Al Gore and Republican George W Bush, have backed the Cuban-American community, which sought to turn the Elian battle into a fight against Castro. James Lindsay of the Brookings Institution, a Washington think-tank, agrees that US-Cuban relations are on a "continuum" towards rapprochement, but doesn't see any quick changes. "Bill Clinton, in the final months of his tenure, isn't going to gain much by cosying up to Castro. It just happened in this particular case that their interests aligned similarly," he said.

-AFP

INDIAN EXPRESS

26 APR 2000

26/4 Home in Havana

THE EXTRAORDINARY saga of six-year-old Elian Gonzalez tells us something about today's America. Elian and his mother escaped Fidel Castro's Cuba to enter the United States. His mother died en route and young Elian ended up alone in Miami. Under normal circumstances, there would have been no dispute over what happened next. Had he been an impoverished Haitian, he would have been deported at once as an undesirable alien. But because of his nationality, the six-year old became a hero to Miami's wealthy and well-connected Cuban exile community. For the exiles, the boy came to represent a symbol of resistance to Castro's Cuba.

The easy way out for the US Government would have been to let the exiles keep Elian in Miami. He had relatives in that city and was assured a far better standard of living than the one he has escaped in Cuba. Indeed, this is what many politicians — including Vice President Al Gore, who wants the Cubans to vote for him in October — would have preferred. But the Justice Department took a legalistic view. Elian was too young to decide about his future. That task went to the next of kin. As his mother was dead, it was up to Elian's father to decide whether the boy should remain in Miami or return to Cuba. As Elian's mother had been estranged from his father Juan Miguel and had hoped to give the boy a new life in Miami away from Juan Miguel, it was clear what would happen next. Juan Miguel asked for the return of his son to Cuba and the US Government agreed.

Was this the right decision? All things considered, probably, yes. It is true that Elian would have had a better life (in material times) in Miami and that had his mother survived, he would have been separated from Juan Miguel. But ultimately, when a child is too young to decide and only a single parent remains, it is best to let that parent make all decisions about the child's future. It is to the credit of the US Government that it took this position despite the opposition of the Cuban exiles. One of the advantages of being a President in the last few months of your term is that you can do the right thing rather than the expedient one. Hence, Bill Clinton's support for the Justice Department's decision.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 APR 2000

SOUND BITES

"The facts are facts. Truth is truth. History is history. I always tell the truth. I've fought against Communism all my life."

● Senator John McCain responding to his allegations that the Communists had tortured prisoners of war during the Vietnam War

"I hope the settlement won't ruin this company as it has been an interesting innovator and is an important part of the American technological revolution."
 ● Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush on Microsoft which is currently fighting an antitrust suit

A Little Bit of Elian

The controversial auction website eBay is now marketing the Cuban melodrama



FAMILY NO. 1: Juan Miguel Gonzalez holds his son Elian (left) with stepmother Nancy and Elian's half-brother Hianny, at Queenstown, Maryland



FIGHTING FOR ELIAN: A supporter of Elian Gonzalez waves a Cuban flag on crossed oars in Miami, Florida

attached to a 9-by-5 slab of plywood covered with straw. "I figured dump it while it's hot. It's in the news every day," said the Mt. Laurel, N.J. man, who asked that his real name not be used.

Someone else offered a page from a coloring book titled "Lunch For A Squirrel" purportedly colored by six-year-old Elian himself. It shows a smiling squirrel in a baseball cap staring at a pile of acorns on a picnic blanket. The artist stayed within the lines, used various shades of brown for the squirrel's fur and decided on blue and red for the cap's stripes. Bids for the drawing reached \$202.50 on Friday.

The jar of air is touted as containing smells from Elian's neighborhood including "essences of cigars, tear gas, burning tires, modified by the tears of 1000's of onlookers." The "Little Havana air" comes sealed in a Mason jar,

according to seller Don Dudley of Tarzana, California, who revealed his methods in a phone interview. "I've got a butane torch and some tire rubber," Dudley explained. "I'll just flame up some tires and cigars and wave the jar around. What the heck? Why not? It's eBay."

San Jose, California-based eBay emphasises that it has no control over the legality of the items advertised or "the truth or accuracy of the listings." The site has become a clearinghouse for the American consciousness, as many sellers mix sales pitches with commentary on high-profile events. "It's a very vibrant community on eBay. When interesting news stories break, if there are applicable items relating to the story, they tend to appear and they can be quite humorous at times," said eBay spokesman Henry Gomez.

Web site: <http://www.ebay.com>



A WEATHERED "raft," a page from a coloring book and a jar of air supposedly containing aromas from Little Havana are a samplings of the Elian Gonzalez-related curios available on the eBay auction website. The "100% Genuine Raft Used by Elian!!!" drew more than 30 bids, with a high offer of \$212.50 late on Friday.

The seller claimed he bought it at a government warehouse, and posted a picture of a tubeless tire

that the item won't be released until June 1. US Coast Guard Petty Officer Roger Krass in Miami said he doesn't know what happened to the inner tube on which Elian was found adrift, but he "doubts seriously" that it would be possible to purchase such a thing at a government auction. He said most rafts used by illegal immigrants are destroyed. The seller — whose eBay screen name is "digitalcollectibles" — posted a picture of a tubeless tire

INDIAN EXPRESS

30 APR 2000

Army ignores Govt snub, stands by Pinochet

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
CHILE, MARCH 12

Unfazed by outrage over its support for ex-dictator Augusto Pinochet, the Chilean Army on Friday reiterated its stance in a statement certain to stir further controversy.

The renewed expression of support came just one week after Pinochet's return to Chile and one day before Ricardo Lagos, a long-time foe of the ex-strongman, was to be sworn in as President.

"I want to express the great satisfaction felt by this entire institution over the return home of General Augusto Pinochet...and our willingness to continue offering him any support possible," said General Ricardo Izurieta, Commander in Chief of the Army. Speaking to journalists, Izurieta reiterated his condemnation of what he said was Pinochet's "unjust and prolonged detention abroad".

Pinochet, 84, returned to Chile on March 3 after authorities in Britain decided not to extradite him to Spain because a medical report showed he was unfit to stand trial.

The Chilean Government had



Rights group Mothers in Black protesting against Pinochet — AFP

sharply criticised the military for staging a welcoming ceremony for the ex-strongman, who faces 72 lawsuits in Chile in connection with thousands of deaths.

Pinochet's attorney Ambrosio Rodriguez also criticised the state for joining a complaint against his client. The Council for the Defence of the State had announced it had joined a complaint against Pinochet in the 1973 "caravan of death", a series of summary executions in which 70 political opponents were killed. Rodriguez told

Radio Agricultura that in doing so, the CDE—which represents the legal interests of the state—is taking an active role in giving help to those who want general Pinochet to be condemned".

The attorney also criticised what he said was undue pressure on the courts. "Every day there are people with microphones and megaphones shouting toward the judicial branch," he said. He further said it was unlikely a request to lift his client's immunity would be granted.

INDIAN EXPRESS
13 MAR 2000

110-17 Pawn in a power game

The Cuban youngster, Elian Gonzales, has become a political football in a three-way contest among the anti-Castro exiles, Washington and Havana. SRIDHAR KRISHNASWAMI takes a look at the ongoing controversy.

IF IT had been any other six-year-old tragically or otherwise separated from his parent, the United States Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) would have made sure that the child was sitting in the lap of either the father or the mother at the earliest. In fact, left to the INS, Elian Gonzales would have been doing the same after he was miraculously saved in the seas trying to enter the U.S.

But Elian Gonzales is not just "any other" child. He has the "distinction" of being born in Cuba and that makes all the difference to a group of people in the U.S., whose obsession in the last 40 years has been two things — Cuba and Mr. Fidel Castro. Take this obsession and add the elections of 2000: the result is not just an international tug-of-war taking place across the Florida Straits, but crass politics that can come down to any level.

Elian has been in the limelight since last November when his mother "illegally" left Cuba along with him to seek better times in the U.S.

Unfortunately for the six-year-old, his mother and ten others died in a shipwreck trying to reach American shores; and since then the Cuban youngster has become a political football, not between official Washington and Havana but in a three-way contest among the anti-Castro Cuban exiles in Florida, the administration in Washington and Havana.

The INS kicked off a storm of protests in the U.S. when it ruled that Elian must be reunited with his father in Cuba. Some of this was based on the assessment that Elian was neither an American citizen nor a permanent resident and was too young to seek political asylum.

The ruling — perceived to be the right one in several quarters — was endorsed by the Clinton

administration, much to the dismay of the Cuban exiles and lawmakers who depend on their votes.

In fact, lawmakers, especially from Florida, keen on taking the matter out of the jurisdiction of courts and the INS rushed for the legislative option — the introduction of the Gonzales Citizenship Bill that would grant Elian American citizenship or permanent residency, at least.

At an age when Elian can hardly understand the third rate political circus being played out on either side of the Florida Straits, the Clinton administration is finding itself between a rock and a hard place. In terms of law and the legal aspect surrounding the Elian case the administration is being reminded — and is convinced — that the rightful place for the child is with his father in Cuba.

If there is one thing going for the administration it is that a

majority of opinion polls have shown that most Americans think that the boy should be reunited with his father. And if the momentum for the Gonzales Citizenship Bill died down it was because several lawmakers soon came to realise that their constituents were a part of the mainstream thinking or simply could not care less.

The idea of "thrusting" American citizenship on Elian or perhaps paying the way for a "green card" enabling him to decide for himself his status later did not go down well with ordinary Americans some of whom were appalled that they had to sit out several years for the process to be completed or compared the situation to the plight of others who land in the U.S. after having gone through a similar nightmare in the seas and after having forked out thousands to unscrupulous agents.

But there was a different angle

as well and one that was echoed not just in the U.S. but by countries such as France and Russia. "If Elian were an American boy illegally taken by his divorced mother to another country and she had died in the process, we would have insisted that the boy be returned to his father in the U.S. To attempt to make Elian a citizen defies precedent and puts the U.S. in conflict with international law," wrote a reader in the Letters to The Editor of *The Washington Post*.

For the most part Americans — and to a large extent the authorities in Havana including Mr. Castro — understand that the bottomline is something different; and something very difficult to shake off.

And it has become even more difficult in an election year when there is a race to appease or mollify certain politically active groups. Florida is a State that cannot be wished away.

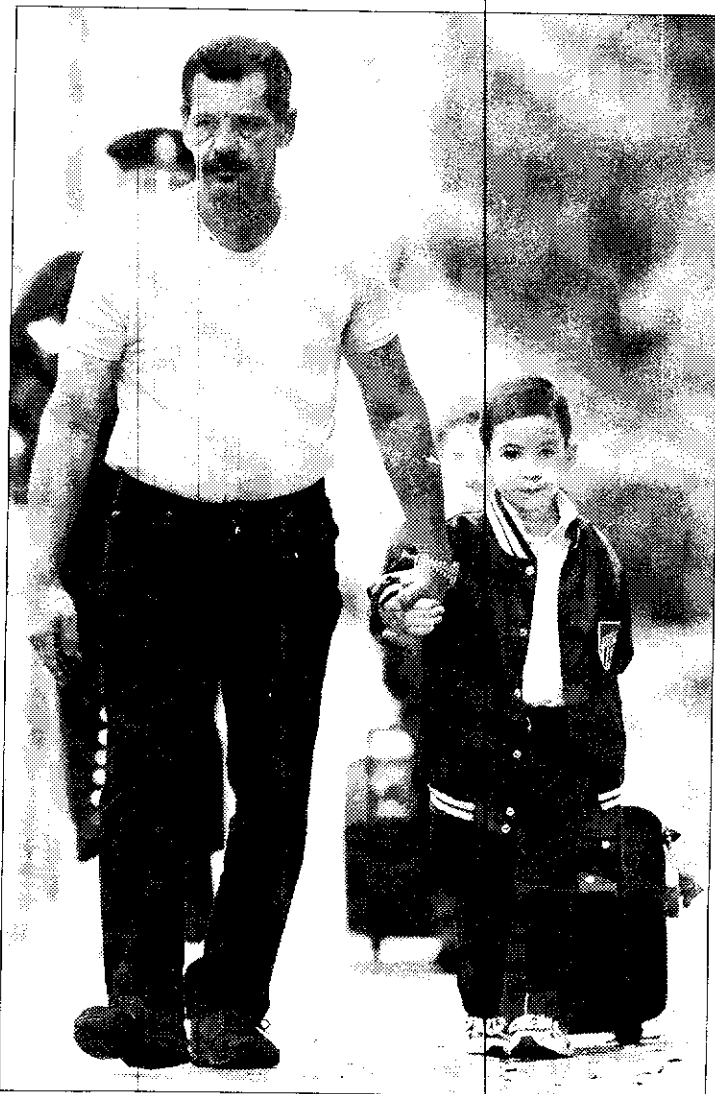
The political compulsions seem stronger in a "national" perspective, if one were to factor in what the leading Presidential candidates of the two parties have said. And in many ways the "national" candidates with an eye on the vote bank in Florida — at the time of primaries or actual voting on November 7, 2000 — have come out looking no better than the local politicians.

The leading Republican candidate, Mr. George W. Bush, whose brother, Mr. Jebb Bush, is the Governor of Florida, has said that if he were in the Senate he would vote "yes" to the Gonzales Citizenship Bill; and other Republican candidates have said that Elian should not be repatriated to Cuba.

The Democratic front-runner, the Vice-President, Mr. Albert Gore, differed with his boss and argued that the case must be appealed in higher courts; but Mr. Bill Bradley opined that he was "reluctant" to second guess the INS.

In all the noise, the Clinton administration is trying not to lose the larger perspective — managing relations with Havana in a changing environment.

For, there is a perception that anti-Castro exile groups are using the Elian case to hang on to their political influence which seems to be on the wane; and there is the growing objection to the continuing unilateral sanctions against Cuba which the American business community feels is hurting only the U.S.



Six-year-old Elian Gonzales with a relative in Miami ... at the centre of a controversy

Panama faces wave of challenge as it takes control of canal

PANAMA took formal control of the Panama Canal on Saturday, ending nearly a century of American jurisdiction over one of the world's most strategic waterways.

In a festive ceremony alongside the canal administration building, President Mireya Moscoso and United States Army Secretary Louis Caldera signed a document formalizing Panama's possession of the canal and a surrounding strip of land that until recently was home to United States military and civilian installations.

"We didn't feel sovereign with this enclave in our heart," said Candelario Rodriguez, a 61-year-old peasant from western Panama. "This has great meaning to us."

The stars and stripes didn't flutter over the ceremony. A 10-man detachment representing the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines lowered it at sundown Thursday and presented it to United States Ambassador Simon Ferro.

"It was a solemn and dignified act," Ferro said. "With the territory come ma-

for challenges. Chief among them is the challenge for a small, developing country to keep the canal viable in a competitive global economy.

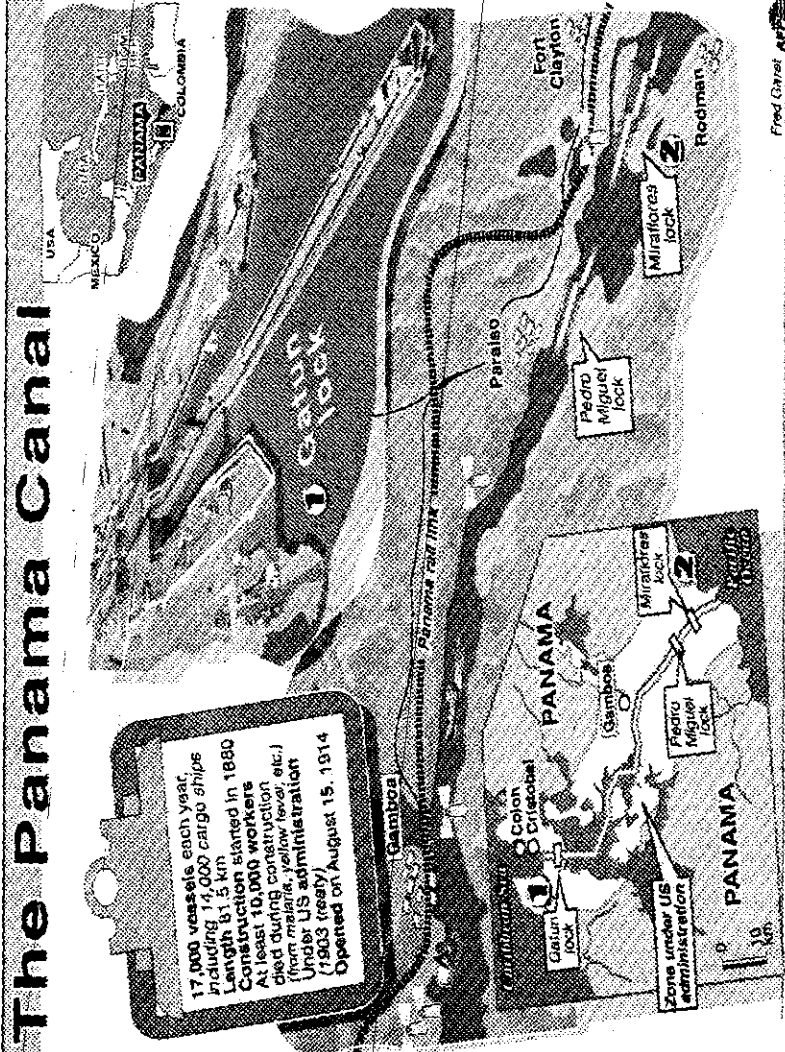
To do so, Panamanian officials will have to resolve a number of dilemmas, ranging from the deforestation that is a threat to the canal's fragile water supply to the probable need to finance and build a multi-billion dollar third set of locks allowing larger ships to pass through.

Many Panamanians fear that once the Americans leave, the canal's efficient, U.S.-trained work force, which is 95 per cent Panamanian, will succumb to the corrupt practices that have been endemic in the country's public administration.

"I'm afraid the politicians will give jobs to all their friends," says Davis Peralta, a retired trucker.

Panamanians have gone to great lengths to build a firewall between their worst instincts and the canal's administration. In 1997, the legislature passed by unanimous vote a legal code that it hopes will protect the canal administration's auton-

The Panama Canal



omy. Among other things, the law mandates that the canal's administrator serves for a fixed term and can't be removed by the president, and that promo-

tions be based on merit rather than political patronage. Some Panamanians said the U.S. had lost yet another opportunity to commemorate the handover as a gesture — not of weakness, but of respect for a smaller nation. "Somehow, I think it would have been nobler to lower the flag at Friday's ceremony," said former Panamanian Foreign

Minister Jorge Ritter.

"I cannot understand the last-minute decision to do this as if it was something shameful," he said. "The U.S. has nothing to be ashamed of in complying with the treaties" for the canal's handover.

It was the latest apparent snub concerning the handover. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at the last minute canceled her visit to Panama for an earlier ceremony on December 14, fueling speculation that the Clinton administration wanted to distance itself from the transfer.

Carping in the U.S. Congress about the handover and doubts about Panama's ability to ensure the canal's security apparently convinced the Clinton administration to avoid a showy display.

December 31 was the deadline for the handover of the canal and all surrounding land under treaties signed in 1977 by military strongman General Omar Torrijos and President Jimmy Carter. The treaties dictated a gradual, 22-year transfer culminating in the handover.

Thousands of jubilant Panamanians attended the ceremony, and greeted with cheers.

the hoisting of Panama's flag over the headquarters.

About 8,000 public high-school students marched from Panama City to Balboa High School, a former U.S. Defense Department school run mainly for Americans in Panama, where they raised the Panamanian flag.

Panama and the U.S. have had a special relationship since 1903, when the U.S. supported Panama's efforts to separate from Colombia.

After Panama gained independence, it signed a treaty with the U.S. for the construction of a canal connecting the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

The U.S. was given 360,000 acres along the canal, which evolved into a military and civilian enclave.

Canal officials said the wayward shouldn't be affected by Y2K problems because of the simplicity of its operation, unchanged since the first step passed through.

The operation, which is electromechanical, can be by one man in case of an emergency, said Francisco Lopez, head of canal technology.

—The Wall Street Journal

U.S.-Cuba 11-18 scramble fighters over Havana 2/1

HAVANA: Cuba and the United States scrambled fighter jets over the Florida straits when an American pilot buzzed Havana illegally to drop anti-Communist leaflets calling President Fidel Castro an "old dinosaur."

A major confrontation was avoided on Saturday, however, as the small Cessna 172, piloted by a Vietnamese-born, 51-year-old "strident anti-Communist", was guided back to Florida unharmed after dumping hundreds of pamphlets on the Cuban capital.

It was the first unauthorised flight into Cuban airspace since Havana shot down two planes flown near the Caribbean island by the Miami-based exile group, brothers to the rescue, in 1996. Four pilots were killed in that incident.

"For this plane to arrive on Sunday out of the blue is shocking," a U.S. official told *Reuters*. Fortunately, everybody behaved properly, and a shootdown was avoided."

The single-engine Cessna flew low across the 90-mile (145-km) sea division to avoid radar detection as it invaded Cuban airspace shortly before La.m.GMT

As the plane circled over Havana, Cuba launched two MIG fighter jets to force it back north towards Florida, U.S. sources said. The U.S. Air force then sent aloft an F-16 to monitor and provide protection as the plane returned.

The U.S. customs service confirmed details of the incident, and said the Cessna's pilot was a "strident anti-Communist" with no apparent ties to Mr Castro's exiled foes in Miami."

Cuban officials were not available for comment, and state media did not mention the incident.

Havana residents said they saw the plane fly over the coast from the north, then along Havana's seafront Malecon Boulevard, before swooping over the old Havana quarter. (*Reuters*)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

- 3 JAN 2000

Elían's return to Cuba stalled

CIA all
Miami, Jan. 8 (AP)— In efforts to prevent Elián González's return to Cuba, an anti-Castro lawmaker subpoenaed him to testify before a congressional committee and one of his Miami relatives sought to become his legal guardian.

Rep. Dan Burton said he subpoenaed 6-year-old Elián to testify before the Committee on Government Reform on February 10, so he remains in the country while the courts consider his case.

About 100 supporters cheered wildly yesterday as Elián — holding the subpoena in front of his face while being held aloft by a relative — appeared outside the house where he has been staying with relatives.

He gave the peace sign before heading back indoors.

But in Cuba, Elián's father was angry about Burton's subpoena.

"What right does that man have?" Juan Miguel González said during a news conference in his hometown of Cardenas. "I am the father of Elián and immigration has said that I am the only one who can speak for him."

why should it be delayed? Who is he? He is no one. I am the father.

why should it be delayed? Who is he? He is no one. I am the father.
Elián was found Thanksgiving Day clinging to an inner tube at sea after his mother, stepfather and eight other people drowned while trying to reach Florida by boat.

The boy was placed with his great-uncle and great-aunt in Miami, but the Immigration and Naturalization Service ruled Wednesday that he must be returned to his father in Cuba by January 14. The decision touched off protests in the Cuban-American community.



Elián González: Small victory

Family spokesman Armando Gutierrez said yesterday's news rejuvenated Elián's Miami relatives, who have spent much of the last two months dealing with the international custody battle.

Burton, the committee chairman, said he "issued a subpoena to Elián González to ensure that no precipitous action is taken until the Florida state court can adequately address the González case."

Cuban boy's custody to father upheld

WASHINGTON: U.S. attorney general Janet Reno upheld a decision giving custody of Elian Gonzalez to his Cuban father and has said any challenge to that ruling must come in federal rather than state court.

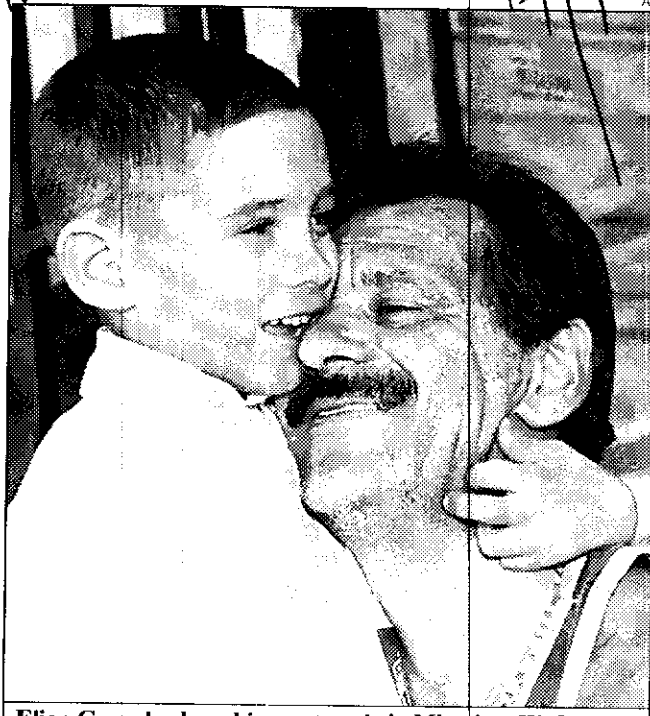
To allow the six-year-old boy's Florida relatives time to challenge the federal decision, Reno on Wednesday wrote to their lawyers that the government is postponing its Friday deadline for turning him over for return to Cuba. She did not give a new deadline or say what steps the federal government might take next to enforce its decision.

Reno brushed aside a state court ruling on Monday that the boy must remain in the U.S. until a March 6 hearing. She said the state court order "has no force or effect" on the Immigration and Naturalisation Service's decision in the case.

"The question of who may speak for a six-year-old child in applying for admission or asylum is a matter of federal immigration law," Reno wrote. The question of who speaks for the boy "remains one of federal, not state, law."

Meanwhile, a survivor of the shipwreck from which Elian was plucked by rescuers has said Elian's mother, Elisabet, gave her coat and last fresh water bottle to the boy as they clung to inner tubes in the seas between Florida and Cuba after their boat capsized, caring for him until they drifted apart.

Recounting Elian's last hours with his mother to a



Elián Gonzalez hugs his great uncle in Miami on Wednesday before leaving for Cuba to join his father.

Miami radio station Wednesday. Cuban migrant Nivaldo Fernandez Ferran broke his silence on the disaster that led to an international custody battle over the boy.

"She just wanted to save her son. 'My son, my son,' she kept saying," Fernandez told Radio Mambi, a Spanish-language radio station linked to the Cuban exile cause. He said seven people who survived the sinking hung on to three inner tubes and tried to keep together.

Elisabet gave Elian her coat and last remaining water, he said. "She asked him, 'Are you cold?' and he said, 'Yes, I'm cold. Mama,' so she took off her coat. She gave him water.

"We all fought to save ourselves, but she only wanted to save the life of her son. ... At every moment she looked after the boy until she lost her life," he said.

Elián did not actually see her die, Fernandez said. The tubes separated during the night and she drifted away in the dark.

"He was very quiet. He never cried," he said. According to the US Coast Guard, seven people died when the boat sank, and seven managed to cling to the inner tubes. But only three — Elian, Fernandez, 33, and a 23-year-old woman — eventually survived.

Under the US' "wet feet, dry feet" policy, Cubans who reach the US are generally allowed to stay, while those intercepted at sea are usually sent home. Hundreds of Cubans are feared to have died at sea attempting to leave the island. (Reuters)

PINOCHET LET OFF

578 But home may not be so sweet 1671

IT appears that Gen Pinochet, responsible for torture, killings and disappearances during one of the darkest periods of Chile's history, should be headed home soon, safe from those who would have him prosecuted for human rights crimes, as requests for extraditing him are failing in a British court. The court cited a medical report which showed him unfit to stand trial, but the report is not available to prosecuting counsel, on grounds of privacy. It is ironic that such extraordinary legal privileges should be extended to someone who made mincemeat of legal and democratic rights in Chile, during his years in power from 1973 to 1990. Pinochet has influential friends in the British establishment, most prominent among whom is Margaret Thatcher who has been vocal on his behalf. According to some sources his report indicates mental and physical illness, but the former diagnosis could apply to many repressive dictators. If Hitler had been captured after World War II, would he have been let off on the ground of insanity?

There is no doubt, however, that the general is physically very ill and may not have long to live. This could account for the indecent haste home secretary Jack Straw showed in bringing to an end extradition proceedings against Pinochet: the British government may not want to have the general die on their hands, complicating relations with Chile. In Chile itself there are now calls to bring him to trial, and the most satisfying outcome, no doubt, would be if he were to be tried in his own country. It is not known, however, whether such calls are merely a ploy to get him back, comparable to Pakistan's assurances of arresting the hijackers of the Indian Airlines aircraft if they set foot on Pakistani soil. Be that as it may, the open voicing of such calls are bound to affect his standing, and increasing testimony about torture and repression during his rule are appearing in the Chilean press. Chile may soon join other Latin American countries and South Africa in beginning to acknowledge terrible authoritarian pasts, and bringing some of the offenders to book. That may have been the most positive outcome of Pinochet's year of confinement in Britain, and attendant publicity putting the spotlight on past abuses.

THE STATESMAN
16 JAN 2000

Lagos new Chilean President

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SANTIAGO, Jan. 17. — Mr Ricardo Lagos has been elected Chile's first socialist President since Mr Salvador Allende. Mr Lagos narrowly defeated Conservative rival, Mr Joaquin Lavin, in a runoff election that focussed more on Chile's economic future than on its violent past.

Mr Lavin, who once worked in the government of the former dictator, General Augusto Pinochet, conceded defeat after voting yesterday, and went to Mr Lagos' campaign headquarters in Santiago to congratulate him. Mr Lagos'

supporters cheered wildly as the two appeared on a balcony and hugged each other with their wives at their sides.

A moderate socialist, Mr Lagos has distanced himself from the radical brand of Marxism espoused by Mr Allende, whose government was toppled in a bloody 1973 military coup led by Gen. Pinochet. Mr Lagos was the candidate of the Centre-Left coalition that has governed Chile since the end of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1990.

Mr Lagos spoke with President Eduardo Frei in a telephone conversation broadcast on television.

"Our coalition guarantees equilibrium and stability for

Chile," said Mr Lagos, whose socialists are partners with Mr Frei's Christian Democrats in the coalition known as Concertacion.

Mr Lavin waged one of the closest races in decades for a Conservative candidate, forcing Sunday's runoff after holding Mr Lagos to a tie in the first round of voting on 12 December.



Mr Ricardo Lagos

"We shouldn't be sad because we had a spectacular number of votes," he told supporters. "And I am confident that in the future, the message of change that we brought into Chilean politics will prevail".

Pinochet trial: Celebrating his victory, Mr Lagos pledged "to heal the wounds that

still remain" from Chile's troubled recent history, while letting justice run its course, adds AFP.

Many of the thousands of supporters listening to his speech yesterday, wanted to see former dictator Augusto Pinochet stand trial. As Mr Lagos pledged that under his government all would be equal before the law, the crowd in Constitution Square here roared: "Trial for Pinochet!"

While Mr Lagos has supported the current Chilean government's demands that the former dictator be sent home rather than face trial in Spain, he has also previously made it clear that he wants Pinochet to face the courts in Chile.

THE STATESMAN
18 JAN 2000

USA nudges Ecuador junta to step down

ASSOCIATED PRESS

QUITO (Ecuador), Jan. 22. — Ecuador's military chief said early today that a three-man provisional junta that took power after a chaotic rebellion had been dissolved and that the Vice President would assume power.

Military chief Gen. Carlos Mendoza said in an interview on Ecuador Radio that he had joined the junta to "prevent bloodshed" and that he had left the presidential palace with rebellious troops after midnight. There was no immediate word on when or if Vice President Gustavo Noboa would assume the presidency. Nor was there any confirmation that President Jamil Mahuad had resigned the office.

Gen. Mendoza said his decision to dissolve the junta came after discussions with US officials. The development followed a confusing whirlwind of events that began yesterday when Indian rebels joined by junior military officers stormed the Supreme Court and Congress demanding Mr Mahuad's ouster.

Gen. Mendoza, chairman of Ecuador's joint chiefs and defence minister since last week, later requested Mr Mahuad's resignation, and the President abandoned the presidential palace.

Scores of heavily armed soldiers in combat fatigues took over the palace and Gen. Mendoza announced late on Friday the formation of a three-man provisional junta consisting of him, an Indian

leader and a former Supreme Court judge. But Ecuador's neighbours and the USA stridently objected, and US officials said any overthrow of the constitutional order would mean a severing of aid from Washington and a boycott by international investors.

Mr Carlos Solorzano, the former Supreme Court judge who was part of the junta, told AP that Mr Mahuad would be tried, although he did not specify for what. Many Ecuadoreans accuse Mr Mahuad of protecting corrupt bankers and officials.

Gen. Mendoza told reporters that the junta did not know Mr Mahuad's whereabouts.

In his only public appearance of the day, Mr Mahuad insisted on TV that he had no intention of stepping down.

THE STATESMAN
23 JAN 2000

Ecuador President ousted in coup?

QUITO (ECUADOR), JAN. 22. Ecuador's military chief said early today that a three-man provisional junta that took power after a chaotic rebellion had been dissolved and that the Vice-President, Mr. Gustavo Noboa, would assume power.

There was no immediate word on when or if Mr. Noboa would assume the presidency. Nor was there any confirmation that President, Mr. Jamil Mahuad, had resigned the office.

Mr. Noboa said he would assume the Andean country's presidency with the support of the armed forces and national police. He told presspersons that, "I have the support of the armed forces and national police." However, the legal basis for his move was not clear.

The military chief, Gen. Carlos Mendoza, said in an interview on the Ecuador radio that he had joined the junta to "prevent bloodshed." Gen. Mendoza said his decision to dissolve the junta came after discussions with U.S. officials.

The development followed a whirlwind of events that began yesterday morning when Indian protesters joined by junior military officers stormed Congress



The Ecuadorean President, Mr. Jamil Mahuad, speaks during an interview at the government palace in Quito, Ecuador on Thursday. Police officers detain looters during a protest in Guayaquil against Mr. Mahuad on Friday. — AP

and the Supreme Court demanding Mr. Mahuad's ouster.

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Gen. Mendoza told reporter that the junta did not know Mr. Mahuad's whereabouts. Earlier, the General said, "We will have the Ecuadorean people's hopes in mind. We will work to help the country, we will work against corruption and so that we are less poor." — Reuters, AP

Chile rolls up red carpet for Pinochet

FROM CLIFFORD KRAUSS

Santiago, Jan. 23: The Chilean government and armed forces have decided that there will be no official welcoming ceremony should Gen. Augusto Pinochet return to Chile in the coming days from London, where he has been under house arrest on human rights charges for 15 months.

The government hopes to discourage strong reactions by both the former dictator's supporters and his detractors on his return, which is expected as early as this week.

After his arrest on a Spanish warrant in October 1998, there were weeks of demonstrations by his supporters as well as by human rights groups that mobilised in support of a Spanish judge hoping to extradite the general to stand trial in Madrid.

But the intensity of the reactions here has subsided through the months of legal procedures, so much so that the news from London that a team of doctors had found Pinochet too ill to stand trial brought little public response.

British home secretary Jack Straw, who is reviewing appeals by human rights groups to release the medical examination results, is expected to announce this week whether the general will return home.

Chile has dispatched an air force Boeing 707 to London and plans to fly Pinochet either to the provincial town of Iquique, where he has a residence, or to Santiago. Officials say the top military commanders will welcome him.

"He is going to have a reception given by the military authorities," said defence minister Edmundo Pérez Yoma, "but there will not be any kind of public ceremony. Most likely he will check into the military hospital for an extensive examination."

Both human rights groups and Pinochet supporters will probably demonstrate outside the hospital. But Congresswoman Isabel Allende, daughter of Salvador Allende, the President who died during the coup led by the general, said she expected a subdued reaction to his return.

"The day Jack Straw announced the examination results," she said, "only 50 people gathered at the Pinochet Foundation. I saw they had 20 people demonstrating outside the British embassy. He's coming back to a different country. The right has washed their hands of him, especially Joaquín Lavín, who during his presidential campaign completely distanced himself from him." Lavín narrowly lost the presidential race last week to Ricardo Lagos, a moderate socialist.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

THE TELEGRAPH

24 JAN 2000

Elian's ordeal takes on mythical halo

WASHINGTON, JAN. 29. The six-year-old boy at the centre of an international custody battle was feted on Friday as an "anti-imperialist" icon in his Cuban homeland and compared to Che Guevara.

The political idolisation of Elian Gonzalez in Cuba, where his picture was carried by thousands of students on a torchlit march through Havana, contrasted with his treatment in Miami, where he is staying with relatives. The boy's rescue from the sea off Florida, where he floated for almost three days after a shipwreck that cost the life of his mother and nine other would-be refugees, has been hailed as miraculous.

Some Cuban-Americans are beginning to speak of the little boy in quasi-religious terms as a representation of the "salvation" of their island home from communism. Back in Havana, where a two-month campaign has been waged to bring Elian home, the regime of Mr. Fidel Castro used the anniversary of the birth of a 19th-century independence fighter as its latest forum for demanding the boy's return. In speeches marking the 147th anniversary of the birth of Jose Marti, Communist Party officials said Elian had become "converted for ever into a symbol of the crimes and injustic-

es that imperialism is capable of committing against an innocent child".

The comparison with Che Guevara, the Argentine guerilla who helped bring Mr. Castro to power in 1959, was made in a front-page editorial in the official daily paper *Granma*. Elian's father, Mr. Juan Miguel, has called repeatedly for the return of his son. Both Mr. Juan Miguel's mother and his ex-wife's mother have been travelling around America, meeting the boy on Wednesday and lobbying members of Congress.

Meanwhile, his great-uncles and cousins in Miami have been taking court action to keep him in Florida. There, his value to political activists in the anti-Castro movement has been augmented by rumours about Elian's survival that have turned the story into a miracle tale. One bystander waiting for a rare appearance of the boy outside the house in Miami's Little Havana district said: "Like God saved Moses from the water, so he saved Elian. God has a purpose for him. That's why he was saved."

Stories about his ordeal at sea have taken on mythical aspects. One circulating among the 800,000-strong Cuban community in Miami is that Elian told the fishermen who

found him that dolphins had warded off sharks as he clung to an inner tube. Campaigners have printed 200,000 postcards with a picture by a local artist showing the boy riding three dolphins beneath a beacon of supernatural light. They are urging locals to send the cards to the White House.

When 100 dolphins recently beached themselves in the Florida Keys, some in Little Havana said it was a protest by the animals against a decision by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) to send the boy home. On Friday, Elian's Miami relatives denied that they had offered to pay the boy's father in exchange for custody of his son. They sought to counter a claim made by the INS as it went to court to fight their federal lawsuit to block Elian's return to Cuba.

The INS cited an interview with Mr. Gonzalez in Cuba last year in which he said the Miami family had offered him money and had pressured Elian to stop him returning to Cuba. A spokesman for the Miami relatives, said: "If they had offered Juan Miguel two million dollars he would have caught the fastest boat in Cuba to come over. We deny it, it is completely untrue." — ©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2000.