UN should be democratised says the President

NEW DELHI: President K R Narayanan today said the United Nations should be “democratised” and be made “more responsive” to the concerns of the developing countries. “It needs no doubt to be democratised... The UN should be rendered more responsive to the concerns of the vast majority of its members, that is the developing countries,” Narayanan told the Ambassador-designate of Italy Benedetto Amari when he called on the President to present his credentials at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. “The Security Council needs to be made more representative of the present membership of the UN and today’s political realities,” he said, according to a Rashtrapati Bhavan release. Supporting “an enhanced role” for the world body in development and development co-operation dialogue, he said “any effort to increase effectiveness of the organisation depends on the ability to resolve its financial crisis”. “There is, therefore, a need to further invest more political will and resources in this institution,” he said. The Ambassadors-designate of Belgium and Sudan, Guy Trouveroy and Abal Muhmood Jalal Mohammed respectively, also presented their credentials to the President, the release said. Accepting the credential of the new Belgium envoy, Narayanan said India considered the European Union as a major economic partner.

Cyclone a national calamity

NEW DELHI, OCT 10: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Saturday said the Centre has decided to treat the super cyclone which slammed the Orissa coast on Friday as a “national calamity” and announced the release of Rs 100 crore from the National Fund for Calamity Relief besides giving an advance support of Rs 200 crore. This Rs 300-crore package is in addition to the Rs 250 crore released to the state government by the Prime Minister after his recent visit. “This would help the state government in its relief, rescue and rehabilitation operations. In addition, all departments and agencies of the Central Government have been fully engaged in relief and rescue operations,” Vajpayee said. At least 10 million people have been affected in eight districts of the state whose entire coastal area has been severely hit, Vajpayee told reporters after over a 90-minute special meeting of the cabinet to take stock of the calamity. “Such has been the destruction and disruption of communications that the state government has not yet made any preliminary assessment of the loss to human life and property,” he said. He appealed to the public, voluntary organisations and others to provide relief generously to the cyclone-hit people and help in their early rehabilitation. Rescue and relief operations by Indian Air Force planes and helicopters were stalled by inclement weather for the second day today as Orissa remained cut off from the rest of the world. Telecom links were totally snapped by the natural calamity putting a lid on the awesome trail of death and destruction. The links were likely to be restored by late Saturday night with some workable facilities, Minister of State for Communications Tapan Sikdar told reporters in Cuttack. Dr S R Khalsi, Deputy Director General in charge of the cyclone warning centre at the headquarters of the meteorological department, briefed the cabinet about the super cyclone. He said the system had now weakened into a cyclonic storm with wind speed of 80 km per hour and was static over 200 sq km of area. He said the system was located 50 km inside the land and 30 km north-east of Bhubaneswar. It may take another 24 hours to weaken further and move with its direction difficult to predict.

State sets up panel on eco reforms

MUMBAI, OCT 9: Prompted by the funds crunch in the State, the Democratic Front Government has set up an expert committee on economic reforms and resource mobilisation. Meanwhile, portfolios of ministers would be announced on Sunday, Deputy Chief Minister Chhagan Bhujbal said on Saturday. Bhujbal told newsmen that he and Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh would hold a meeting early Sunday to take a final decision on dropping of six ministers from the 61-member ministry and allocation of portfolios. Vilasrao Deshmukh told The Indian Express the committee, comprising “non-government experts”, will advise the government on financial reforms, control of wasteful expenditure and financial discipline. Deshmukh said soon after he took over the reins of the State, he asked top bureaucrats to prepare a white paper on the financial situation. “I think the white paper is half-way through and will most probably be presented before the next Cabinet,” Deshmukh said. The main purpose of presenting the white paper was to take the people into confidence before initiating steps to restore normalcy. “As the head of the Democratic Front Government, I am duty-bond to explain to the people the economic mess created by the erstwhile Sena-BJP rule. We will have
Seaweed Resources and their Culture in Lakshadweep

Gulshad Mohammed and A.K.V. Nasser

Plants are the real producers of both the land and the sea. They are capable of generating complex organic substances from simple inorganic compounds dissolved in water. Without marine plants and synthesizers of food, development of marine animal life would be impossible. An important feature of marine vegetation is its lack of variety when compared to the numerous forms characterizing the terrestrial vegetation. This deficiency of plant variety in the sea is also in striking contrast to the wide diversity of marine animal life. However, the most primitive of the plant groups known as the algae are well developed in the sea. Among the algae, those that are visible to the naked eye are higher algae called seaweeds.

The distribution of seaweeds in the oceans is limited by the availability of light and the presence of a suitable substratum for attachment. Due to these limitations, seaweeds are mostly seen in shallow waters attached to hard substratum like rocks or reefs. Seaweeds are classified into green, brown and red algae based on the colour of the pigments present in their cells. Some green algae are covered with calcium carbonate and may contribute to the formation of lime deposits. The brown algae includes the prominent seaweeds that grow to notably large size and popularly known as "kelps". They are the giants among the seaweeds and form marine forests that provide food and shelter to a variety of fishes. Though small in size, the red algae show much more diversity of form than the brown and they are also more abundant. They may occur in abundance in depths less favourable to most of the green and brown algae, and in the Mediterranean, they have been reported from depths of 130 m.

Seaweeds have many important uses. The oldest use of seaweeds are as food for men and as fodder for animals. In China, Japan, Malaysia and Western Pacific Islands, seaweeds are highly sought after as food. They are eaten raw as salads or cooked as vegetables. Fresh or processed seaweeds are used in the preparation of pickles with vinegar, soup, porridge and also for garnishing the dishes. Green and red algae are rich in proteins. Algae also contain an abundance of nearly all vitamins and are a rich source of many of the minerals required in human nutrition. Algae is one of our richest biological source of iodine.

Hypnea

Seaweeds are excellent fodder for cattle and poultry, as animals appear to digest them better than human beings. Because of the presence of vitamins, minerals and trace elements in significant amounts, health of the domestic animals is improved when seaweed meal is added to daily rations. Seaweeds are used as manure in coastal areas as they contain high amounts of water soluble potash and other minerals which are readily absorbed by plants. Algin and agar-agar are other products obtained from seaweeds which are colloidal carbohydrates accumulated in the cell walls of brown and red algae. They are used in food, confectionery and diary industries as gelling, thickening and stabilizing agents in the preparation of sweets, gellies, jams, ice-creams etc. These seaweeds extract play an important role in pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries as emulsifiers and gel formers.

Contd....col. 1 page 6
Other uses of agar-agar and algin are in the preparation of adhesives, textiles, insect sprays, paints and as liquor purifiers and material for dental impression moulds.

GRACILARIA (AGAROPHYTE)

Japan, Korea and China are the major seaweed producing countries of the world. The geographic distribution of seaweeds indicate that they cover a wide area and found in Chile, Japan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Brazil, Madagascar, Vietnam, Philippines, North Korea, South Africa and India. (to be continued)