

### Indian population to cross 1b by century-end

NEW DELHI, Nov 21: India's population will cross the one billion mark by the end of this century if the present birth rate continues for the next six years, said the registrar-general of India, R. M. Vijayananni, reports Xinhua.

# Congress seeks guru's blessing to win polls

HYDERABAD, Nov 21: India's ruling Congress Party, predicted to lose key southern state elections, is seeking help from a popular Hindu cult chief to help swing its fortunes, Congress campaigners said, reports Reuter.

Baba has the power to do the needful. Sai Baba has a worldwide following and is one of India's best known gurus.

The campaign trail with a visit to Tirupathi, the holiest Hindu Shrine in southern India.

the two southern states as being to their advantage. They believe that Rao would have to put more effort into reviving Congress in the north if he suffered setbacks in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

party in Karnataka. In Andhra Pradesh, pollsters say the regional Telugu Desam party could keep power, with the BJP taking votes from Congress.

has drawn flack from India's Chief Election Commissioner T. N. Seshan, who last week demanded the resignation of Welfare Minister Sitaram Kesri for alleged violation of election codes.

### Malaysia may send more troops to Bosnia

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 21: The Malaysian cabinet is studying a plan to send more troops to Bosnia following a decision to withdraw peacekeepers from Somalia, Defence Minister Najib Tun Razak said today, reports AFP.

## BRIEFLY

**Rabin-Arafat meet on Thursday:** PLO leader Yasser Arafat is to meet Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Thursday in Spain, a Palestinian official said on Sunday, AFP reports from Gaza City.

**Crosby in critical condition:** David Crosby of the rock group Crosby, Stills and Nash received a new liver on Sunday in a seven-hour operation and was in critical condition, AP reports from Los Angeles.

**Rabin goes to ROK Dec 14:** Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin will visit Seoul on December 14-17 for the first summit between an Israeli and South Korean leader, the presidential office said yesterday, AFP reports from Seoul.

**Tunisian FM to visit Seoul:** Tunisian Foreign Minister Habib Ben Yahia will visit Seoul tomorrow through Friday to discuss the situation on the Korean Peninsula and improve bilateral ties, the Foreign Ministry said Monday, AP reports from Seoul.

**Seminar on Pacific culture:** An international seminar on safeguarding the cultural heritage of the Pacific islands opened yesterday at the territorial museum of Noumea in New Caledonia, officials said, AFP reports from Noumea.

**Clash marks Mexican Rev Day:** Police and indigenous groups clashed in the impoverished southern state of Chiapas on Sunday as Mexicans marked the 84th anniversary of the beginning of their revolution, AFP reports from San Cristobal De Las Casas.

**4 newsmen asked to leave E Timor:** The government on Monday ordered four Western journalists to leave the troubled province of East Timor, where they were covering pro-independence demonstrations, AP reports from Dili.

**20 hurt in Canadian train fire:** As many as 60 passengers were injured when a train heading to Montreal from Toronto hit something on the tracks and caught fire, AP reports from Brighton.

**IRA admits shooting:** The Irish Republican Army (IRA) on Sunday admitted responsibility for the fatal shooting of a postal worker in Northern Ireland on November 11, AFP reports from Dublin.

**Quake hits East Indonesia:** An earthquake jolted a far east Indonesian province early Monday, destroying 12 houses and injuring at least 28 people, officials said, AP reports from Jakarta.

**Russia launches 3 satellites:** A Proton rocket carrying three Russian satellites blasted into space from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in northern Kazakhstan, AP reports from Moscow.

**Indians in Fiji scapegoat:** Fiji's leading ethnic Indian politician said Monday that repetition of the "monstrous lie" that his people controlled the Pacific nation's economy is comparable to the Nazi "big lie" propaganda tactic, AP reports from Suva, Fiji.

**Seminar on water pollution:** A three-day seminar began in Bali yesterday to brief specialists from 12 Asia Pacific countries on how to use mussels to measure water pollution levels, AFP reports from Tokyo.

**Jaw stuns Taiwan TV viewers:** A rightist running for mayor in Taipei stunned television audiences Sunday when he charged that Taiwan's president plans to declare the island's independence before 1997, AFP reports from Taipei.

### Former Pak MP, brother held on drug smuggling charges

PESHAWAR, Nov 21: The police here yesterday arrested an alleged narcotics smuggler who is also wanted by the United States authorities on drug-related charges, officials said, reports AFP.

Lal Karim, a former member of the Pakistani Parliament, was arrested with his younger brother, Mohammad Yusuf, an official said.

Karim, who hails from the Bajaur tribal area, faces charges of involvement in narcotics smuggling to foreign countries and proliferation of drugs in the country.

His brother is also accused of complicity in drug trafficking in the country.

Pakistan and the US have an extradition treaty but it was not immediately clear if the US will seek to extradite Karim.

Karim is also under investigation for his suspected financial backing of a revolt in the tribal area earlier this month, official sources said. He has been handed to the para-military Bajaur scouts in connection with the investigation, the sources said.

Bajaur, located 210 kilometers (130 miles) from here, was torn by strife when tribesmen demanding Islamic laws took up arms and clashed with the security forces before the revolt was quelled. Many were reported killed.



Miss World 1994 Aishwarya Rai of India poses for photographers a day after winning her crown at Sun City on Sunday. — AFP photo

### Tamil Tigers offer fresh ceasefire

## Kumaratunga to restart talks

COLOMBO, Nov 21: President Chandrika Kumaratunga has sent a message to Tamil rebels to restart peace talks that were suspended after the assassination of the opposition presidential candidate, officials said on Monday, reports AP.

logue, Gunaratne told The Associated Press (AP) in an interview. Kumaratunga, who was sworn in as Sri Lanka's first woman president nine days ago, won a landslide victory in the November 9 voting on a pledge to end the country's 11-year civil war by negotiating with the separatist guerrillas.

off an unilateral six-day ceasefire after accusing the government of not responding to it. The agenda will probably be the same as it was when talks were suspended, added Gunaratne.

## Iranian demonstrators storm Palestinian embassy: 20 held

NICOSIA, Nov 21: Iranian demonstrators on Sunday stormed the Palestinian "embassy" in Tehran demanding its closure in protest over Gaza Strip clashes between Yasser Arafat's police and Muslim fundamentalists, reports AP.

of the mission. Arafat's hands were stained with the blood of Gaza worshippers and for this reason his employees should not be allowed to remain in Iran, the statement said, according to IRNA.

the Yarmouk refugee camp. Supporters of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad chartered "Out of Gaza you go, Arafat, for you have given in to the will of the Israeli government."

### Scepticism over Angolan truce

LUSAKA, Nov 21: The Angolan government and UNITA rebels, fresh from signing an accord to end their ruinous civil war, have expressed hope for a lasting ceasefire despite scepticism at home and abroad, reports Reuter.

### WE WISH THE PEOPLE OF ANGOLA A LONG LASTING PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



From L to R: General Eugenio Manuvakola on behalf of UNITA, UN special representative Aboune Bloudin Beye and Angolan Foreign Minister Venancio de Moura, sign the long-awaited peace accord in Lusaka on Sunday to end almost two decades of fighting. — AFP photo

### 8 soldiers, 20 Khmers die in Cambodian clash

PHNOM PENH, Nov 21: Eight Cambodian soldiers and at least 20 Khmer Rouge guerrillas were killed during a rebel assault on an army post in the country's northwest, a senior government official said today, reports Reuter.

About 100 guerrillas launched the attack last Tuesday on the post in Py Tasek village about 35 km (20 miles) northwest of Battambang, the provincial capital, Battambang's vice governor Nam Tum said.

This is not most serious (recent) attack — but it's the first time we lost eight soldiers, he said.

According to people who were forced to carry (Khmer Rouge) dead and wounded soldiers, they (Khmer Rouge) lost at least 20 fighters in the clash, he said. One rebel was captured in the 90-minute battle.

Tum said he was worried about the fate of villagers who had been ordered by the Khmer Rouge to act as stretcher-bearers to carry their dead and injured.

These who are suspected of serving as government militiamen haven't returned to their homes yet, he said.

Late last month in Battambang province, Khmer Rouge guerrillas executed as many as 46 Cambodian villagers, part of a group of 72 local people who ventured into a rebel-controlled area foraging for bamboo and gravel for road making.

The radio also said the government had ordered its forces to observe a one-week ceasefire in response to an appeal from United Nations agencies.

The ceasefire call was apparently meant to facilitate a medical vaccination campaign currently underway in Kabul and surrounding areas.

Reports from Kabul said more than 40,000 children and women have been vaccinated at the start of one-week operation organised by the Health Ministry with international assistance.

Hekmatyar and the forces of his ally, Uzbek warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostam, have been fighting since January in a bid to topple Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani from power.

During the last two months alone, more than 1,000 people have been killed and more than 20,000 injured in battles for control of Kabul, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

## China to build two N-reactors in Iran

TEHRAN, Nov 21: China is to build two 300-megawatt nuclear reactors in southern Iran, next to another power plant being completed by Russian experts, a senior official said, reports AFP.

Beijing signed an agreement with Tehran in February 1993 for the sale of two 300-megawatt reactors, but there had been no official information on where the reactors would be built.

Mehralizadeh, vice-president of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organisation (IAEO), said a loan of 2.120 billion rials (1.2 billion dollars) had been anticipated for building the two reactors in the port of Bushehr by the year 2005.

According to informed Chinese sources in Tehran, work on the new project had been long delayed for lack of finances.

Iran, which is going through a cash crisis, had asked for a loan from Beijing to purchase the reactors, but China refused, they said.

Mehralizadeh did not say how the problem of finances had been resolved.

The new plant will be built next to Iran's first nuclear power station, which the German company Siemens started building before the 1979 Islamic Revolution but left unfinished.

Work was halted after the revolution and during the 1980-1988 war with Iraq when the plant was bombed. In 1992, Germany refused to resume work on the project, citing the "sensitive" nature of the technology involved.

The official added that Iran planned to complete the first power plant with Russian help and had set aside a credit of 2,000 billion rials (1.1 billion dollars) for the project.

Tehran has repeatedly stated that its pursuit of nuclear technology is solely for civilian purposes.

## UN official in Myanmar to talk HR situation

YANGON, Nov 21: United Nations Undersecretary General Rafeuddin Ahmed has arrived in Myanmar for talks on the human rights situation and other issues, the second senior UN official to visit the country this month, reports AFP.

Informed sources said that Ahmed would discuss human rights in talks with Ohn Gyaw. Diplomats and other analysts said the talks would be the first between the United Nations and the junta.

He is also to meet Khin Nyunt, who is first secretary of the junta officially known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), and other officials, the sources said.

In a short broadcast on Sunday night, official Yangon radio confirmed Rafeuddin Ahmed's arrival, saying only that he was visiting at the invitation of Myanmar Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw.

He arrived four days after the departure of the UN special reporter on human rights, Yozo Yokota, who met junta figures, including Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, and leaders of some political parties.

## Maps help people get lost?

BEIJING: If nearsighted shoppers start going to Tiananmen Gate looking for new eyeglasses or people start trying to order food from the army guards at Mao Tse-tung's mausoleum, blame it on the maps, reports AP.

Maps of Beijing and Shanghai are full of errors like the ones that put the Daming Spectacles Shop on top of the old city gate that faces Tiananmen Square and mislabels the final resting place of revolutionary leader Mao as Yuehsanzhai, a restaurant that specialises in beef and is located down the road from the mausoleum, according to a report in Monday's Guangming Daily.

## Off the Record

**Eating rats — secret of good health?** SHANGHAI: Eighty-year-old Wu Zhenglu can carry 50 kg (110 lbs) on his back and run as fast as young men in his village. The secret of his good health? eating rats, apparently, reports Reuter.

The Liberation Daily on Monday reported that Wu sells rats for a living and has been eating them for decades, with a preference for fresh ones just caught.

Wu lays traps in the homes of his native village in Jiangxi province, South China, and collects the catches, sometimes so many that he has to preserve them with salt for sale during the off season.

## 21-yr ban on dancing goes

TRUMANN: You can drink and shake a leg in Trumann now, but you better keep your fists to yourself, reports AP.

The City Council lifted a 21-year-old ban on dancing at three taverns where alcohol is served. However, Alderman Donnie Taylor warned that the bars could lose their dancing privileges if patrons throw punches instead of kicking up their heels.

Jerry's Tavern owner Jerry Pillow, who proposed lifting the ban, acknowledged that dancing and drinking years ago created problems, including fights. That's all in the past.

## UN official in Myanmar

YANGON, Nov 21: United Nations Undersecretary General Rafeuddin Ahmed has arrived in Myanmar for talks on the human rights situation and other issues, the second senior UN official to visit the country this month, reports AFP.

In a short broadcast on Sunday night, official Yangon radio confirmed Rafeuddin Ahmed's arrival, saying only that he was visiting at the invitation of Myanmar Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw.

He arrived four days after the departure of the UN special reporter on human rights, Yozo Yokota, who met junta figures, including Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, and leaders of some political parties.