

Workers asked to prepare for polls

Rao reasserts authority over Cong after Sonia's broadside

BRIEFLY



Mother Teresa receives a banquet from a schoolgirl on her 85th birthday at the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta Saturday. Nobel Laureate Mother Teresa mourned the victims of a train disaster in India six days ago as thousands gathered to celebrate her birthday. — AFP/UNB photo

Ex-Irish PM tries to end deadlock: Ireland's former Prime Minister Albert Reynolds said Sunday that Northern Ireland's paramilitary groups should be allowed to join peace talks without surrendering their arms. AP reports from London.

Instead, disarming should be a condition for implementing measures agreed during the talks. Reynolds said in an interview with GMTV's Sunday programme.

Dole's popularity declines: Leading Republican presidential challenger and Senate Majority leader Bob Dole lost support among voters in August, according to a new Time Magazine/CNN poll. AFP reports from Washington.

The Kansas Senator drew 35 per cent support for his bid in the 1996 presidential election according to the Time/CNN poll of 800 people released Friday, that compared with 42 per cent a month earlier.

S Koreans welcome clear skies: South Korea welcomed clear skies Sunday after four days of torrential rains that killed at least 41 people and flooded tens of thousands of hectares (acres) farmland. AP reports from Seoul.

The unseasonable rains were also believed to have wrought havoc in communist North Korea.

Kurd factions clash in N Iraq: The Kurdistan Democratic Party claimed Sunday that a rival Kurdish faction from Turkey has launched widespread attacks on its bases in northern Iraq, seeking to wreck a US-sponsored peace pact. AP reports from Nicosia, Cyprus.

The KDP said the guerillas of the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, which is waging a bloody separatist campaign against the Turkish government, were driven off after severe fighting with "considerable casualties."

Malaysian police detain 314: Police Sunday said they detained hundreds of people in a three-hour sweep to prevent crimes during the Independence Day holiday season. AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

The detainees, between the ages of 17 and 40, were taken in raids ending early Sunday morning. Police Superintendent Abdul Hamid Hussin said. Independence Day is August 31.

Southeast Asia's drug lord held: A drug lord regarded as the man behind one of the biggest heroin trafficking syndicates in Southeast Asia has been arrested, a report and Malaysian police said Sunday. AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

Police said confirmed they had arrested a man in connection with drug trafficking during a raid on a hotel Thursday in Kuala Lumpur but declined to elaborate.

Israel lifts closure on West Bank: Israel Sunday lifted a six-day-old closure on most of the occupied West Bank imposed over a suicide attack on a bus in Jerusalem, but the PLO-ruled Jericho enclave remained sealed off, the army said. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

Security sources said Israel was putting pressure on the PLO to hand over two Muslim militants linked by Israeli authorities to suicide bombings against the Jewish state. A military court in Jericho sentenced the two on Saturday to long prison terms.

5 die in US as sea plane crashes: Five people died on Saturday when a single-engine sea plane hit a car and skidded into a cafe crowded with tourists on an island off the east coast of the United States. Reuter reports from New Shoreham.

Witnesses said the pilot of the plane tried to land on a strip of water about 300 metres offshore, touched down briefly apparently realising he was out of room and tried to resume full flight. The plane failed to gain altitude and instead slammed into a car.

30 die in Chinese road mishap: Thirty people were killed and 22 injured, 13 of them seriously, when an ageing farm truck they were riding in collided with a tractor and crashed into a ditch in the south China province of Hunan, a local newspaper reported. Reuter says from Beijing.

The accident happened on August 22 in Guiyang county, the Hunan Daily said in a copy received in Beijing yesterday.

Mild quake shakes C Japan: A moderate earthquake measuring 4.6 on the Richter scale jolted Central Japan yesterday, but no damage or injuries were reported, the Meteorological Agency said. AFP reports from Tokyo.

The epicentre of the quake, which occurred at 2.32 pm (0532 GMT), was 70 kilometres (43.4 miles) underground in the southern part of Ibaraki prefecture, north of Tokyo. There were no fears of tidal waves, the agency said.

French actor Depardieu awarded: French actor Gerard Depardieu was awarded the Grand Prix Des Ameriques at the Montreal Film Festival Saturday for his contribution to cinema. AFP reports from Montreal.

Depardieu who just completed work on his latest movie 'Bogus' starring US Actress Whoopi Goldberg and directed by Canadian filmmaker Norman Jewison, was given the prestigious prize for his exceptional contribution to film.

NEW DELHI, Aug 27: Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao reasserted his authority over the ruling Congress Party this weekend after a broadside from former leader Rajiv Gandhi's widow, telling workers to go and prepare the country for general elections, reports Reuter.

Rao told a meeting of Congress members of parliament on Saturday, the last day of the session, that they should "go to the people and educate them on what the Congress government has done during the past four years," a party statement said.

Rao told the meeting he expected the investigation into the assassination of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi by a Tamil suicide bomber in May, 1991, to be completed by December.

Gandhi's widow, Sonia, in a speech in his old constituency of Amethi on Thursday, criticised the slow pace of the probe. In a thinly veiled attack on Rao, she said the party should follow the principles set out by her husband.

The speech set of another round of soul searching by members of Congress, which is at a low ebb following a series of state election reverses and bitter internal struggle that led to a faction breaking away in June.

With general elections now only months away — the government has said it will call them by April — and Congress facing the prospect of a severe drubbing at the polls, many party members are casting around for a new impetus.

There had been wide speculation that Sonia Gandhi would use the Amethi speech to declare her entry, or that of her son Rahul, into the political arena.

But the tentative nature of her approach appears to have backfired, allowing Rao to take back the initiative and

begin to fire his party into preparing for the election.

It was not a political statement, merely emotional blackmail. The Statesman newspaper commented on Sonia Gandhi's speech.

"She must be told plainly that to be constantly reminded that her husband and his mother died for the country is getting tiresome," it said.

A group of middle-ranking Congress legislators who had been reported to be planning to visit Sonia Gandhi to pledge their support after the Amethi speech apparently abandoned the idea, fearing the gesture would be wrongly interpreted.

Rao told the meeting of Congress members of parliament "the party would prepare for the elections, including selection of the candidates, sufficiently in advance", deftly reminding them that their futures were in his hands.

"Who gives tickets to candidates for the election? Is there any reason why they should antagonise the party president at this juncture?" The Pioneer quoted a Congress veteran as saying.

"Why should any Congressman get the wrath of Narasimha Rao then by clamouring at the gates of 10 Janpath (Sonia Gandhi's residence)", he added.

The prime minister told the parliamentary party meeting that members should highlight the pro-poor emphasis of his administration, a theme that is becoming one of his major campaign planks.

The issue also gave him a chance to rebuff Sonia Gandhi's speech.

"He stressed that the government had not deviated from the policy of the party, laid down by Nehru and pursued by Indiraji and Rajiv Gandhi, namely upliftment of the poorer sections," the party statement said.

Wu criticises Hillary's visit to China

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug 27: Human Rights activist Harry Wu criticised Hillary Rodham Clinton's planned visit to China in a radio interview on Saturday, saying it would show the Chinese government that nothing it did mattered, reports Reuter.

If Mrs Clinton went over there, whatever she did in Beijing, first of all the Chinese win. They win a victory, Wu said in an interview with San Francisco Radio Station KCBS.

Even if we arrest Harry Wu, whatever we did, it's OK that's very strong signal. They can use it in their propaganda, said Wu, who was expelled from China on Thursday soon after being convicted of spying and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Kashmiris offered cash rewards for surrendering arms

NEW DELHI, Aug 27: Indian authorities are offering cash rewards for arms and ammunition surrendered by Muslim guerrillas in the state of Kashmir, a newspaper reported today, says AFP.

Militants who give themselves up will get 8,000 rupees (270 dollars) for every machine-gun and rocket-propelled grenade they surrender, and 5,000 rupees (170 dollars) for each assault rifle, the Times of India said.

The Kashmir administration will also pay 2,000 rupees for a radio set, 1,000 rupees for a pistol, revolver or remote control device, and half that amount for every kilogram (2.2 pounds) of explosives.

Grenades will fetch 200 rupees a piece, the Times added.

Winnie blames apartheid govt for separation

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 27: Winnie Mandela believes the apartheid government destroyed her marriage, a Johannesburg newspaper reported Sunday. Her attorney said she would fight President Nelson Mandela's attempt to divorce her, reports AP.

The Sunday Independent quoted Winnie as saying she was the target of a smear campaign by South Africa's former white minority rulers that opened a rift between her and Nelson Mandela. Mandela was elected president last year in historic all-race elections that ended apartheid.

A former government security agent has come forward in recent months to say he manufactured accusations of infidelity and criminal offenses against Winnie.



First Lady Hillary Clinton speaks at a ceremony at the Jackson Lake Lodge in the Grand Teton National Park in WY on Saturday marking the 75th anniversary of women's suffrage in the US. Hillary has come under criticism for planning to attend a United Nations Women's Conference in China next month. — AFP/UNB photo

PLO-Israel's differences over status of Hebron may block deal

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip, Aug 27: The Palestinian authority warned Saturday that differences with Israel over the status of the West Bank town of Hebron could block a deal on the next phase of autonomy, reports AFP.

If the Israeli position on this West Bank town does not change, that threatens to block the autonomy accord, said Ahmad Korei, the Palestinian Economy Minister and chief negotiator, after the weekly cabinet meeting.

Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has said the intends to maintain an Israeli military presence in Hebron to protect 400 Jewish settlers who live in the town surrounded by 120,000 Palestinians.

Hebron has been a major flashpoint since a Jewish

settler massacred 29 Palestinians at prayer in February 1994.

Both sides acknowledged on Friday that major progress has been made in the latest round of negotiations to extend autonomy across the West Bank but admitted obstacles remained to a full agreement.

The spread of autonomy involving an Israeli army redeployment outside Palestinian areas of the West Bank transfer of civilian powers and elections to an autonomy council is already 13 months behind schedule.

Israel is ready to withdraw gradually from all West Bank towns apart from Hebron where it wants to retain control to protect the settlers.

We insist that the army redeployment in Hebron be done in the same way as in any other West Bank town, said Nabil Shaath, the Palestinian Cooperation Minister who also accepted that significant progress had been made.

Saeb Erakat, the Palestinian Local Government Minister, said the two sides were also still divided on the question of whether 6,000 Palestinian prisoners should be freed from Israeli jails.

The prisoners and the fate of Hebron will be discussed next week when the two sides negotiators continue their talks.

They have already agreed on transferring civilian powers to the Palestinians in 25 of the 40 spheres that they have been discussing.



Aerial view of the USS Abraham Lincoln flight deck Saturday. The ship is in the northern waters of the Persian Gulf. Around 28,000 US military personnel are in a "very high state readiness" to deter any Iraqi threat to its neighbours, the commander of US Navy forces said Saturday. — AFP/UNB photo

Wars of next century will be over water, predicts WB

NEW DELHI, Aug 27: Many of the wars of this century were about oil, but wars of the next century will be over water, according to a World Bank environmentalist, reports PTI.

The world faces a future without adequate water unless water is used more efficiently and proper investments are made in providing and protecting the resource, Ismail Serageldin, the bank's vice president for environmentally sustainable development says in a report on "toward sustainable manage-

ment of water resources". Under such pressures as population growth, pollution and the rising cost of new supplies, providing clean water poses a growing economic and health challenge, especially to developing countries.

The bank estimate 600 billion dollar must be spent over the next 10 years on water-related investments around the world. Most of this amount will be raised by the countries themselves but 60 billion dollar must come from abroad for the develop-

ing world, says the report.

The bank will lend 30 to 40 billion dollar.

Some 80 countries with 40 per cent of the world's population already experience water shortages that threaten their agriculture, industry and health.

A billion people lack access to clean drinking water in the developing world and 1.7 billion do not have adequate sanitation facilities. Dirty water causes 80 per cent of the disease in developing countries and kills 10 million people a year.

Lack of clean water and proper sanitation system can also trigger economic disaster. Peru's recent cholera epidemic caused by contaminated water resulted in an estimated one billion dollar loss in revenue from agricultural exports and tourism in the first 10 weeks of the crisis. The loss was more than three times the amount Peru invested in water supply and sanitation during the 1980s.

The report identifies three factors putting pressure on earth's water supply. First, is the rapid population

growth, especially in urban areas estimated to climb from 5.6 billion today to 8 billion in 2025. This will bring a greater demand for food and hence for irrigation. At the same, the demand for water by households and industries, further stimulated by economic growth, is rising.

The second factor is supply of good quality water is being contaminated through pollution originating from domestic wastes, industry, agricultural chemicals and mismanaged land use thus

decreasing the amount of water available.

About 95 per cent of the world's sewage is poured straight into rivers and other water flows, where it is joined by growing amounts of industrial wastes.

Thirdly, engineering and environmental costs of developing new water sources are much higher than those of sources already tapped. For many cities, the cost of water provided by future projects can be two to three times the cost of current supplies.

Off the Record

Greedy daughter

LILLE, France: A French woman kept her late mother's body secretly at home for eight months, hiding her even from other members of the family, apparently so that she could keep on cashing her pensions payments, police said Saturday, reports AFP.

Luceenne, the official beneficiary of the pensions payments, who had lived like a recluse in the family home for three years, died last November at the age of 79.

Her 52-year-old daughter, the only witness to the death, kept it a secret, carrying a meal into the bedroom each day but eating it herself.

A granddaughter uncovered the deceit on Tuesday, finding her grandmother reduced to a skeleton in her bed. The granddaughter attempted suicide.

The daughter told police she did not want to "sadden" the other with news of the grandmother's death. But police noted that the grandmother had earned a monthly pension of about 5,000 francs (1000 dollars).

Good news for the cycling enthusiasts

EDINBURGH: A bicycle made near the beginning of the century for playwright George Bernard Shaw sold for 530 pounds on Saturday at Scotland's first international cycle auction, reports Reuter.

The 1901 Singer bicycle, specially made-to-measure for the diminutive Irish-born author, went to a British collector.

Shaw was member number 621 of Britain's cycle touring club, which had enrolled thousands of keen cyclists at the height of its popularity before World War II.

The sale by art auctioneers Philip saw record prices for early cycles, with 19th-century 'penny-farthings' heading the list. Most bids came from cycling enthusiasts and collectors who had travelled to Edinburgh for the auction.

A 'facile' penny-farthing expected to make up to 5,000 pounds (7,700) sold for a record 8,820 pounds (13,600) and a rear 'kangaroo' made 8,000 pounds (12,350).

Way to sleep better

LONDON: Israeli doctors said Friday they had found a way to use a natural hormone to help elderly people with insomnia to sleep, reports Reuter.

In a report in the Lancet Medical Journal, Nava Zisapel and colleagues at Tel Aviv University said they gave melatonin specially formulated to be released in the body gradually to 12 people who said they did not sleep well at night.

All reported they fell asleep more quickly and slept more soundly, although they did not sleep for any longer.

The researchers said all 12 seemed to have a deficiency of the hormone, which in most people is secreted at night by a gland at the base of the brain.

Melatonin deficiency may have an important role in the high frequency of insomnia among elderly people," they wrote.

City of centenarians

LIMA: There are 938 centenarians living in the metropolitan area of the Peruvian capital, according to census data published on Saturday, reports Xinhua.

Of these old people, 648 are women and 290 men. 904 of them live in urban areas while 34 in rural areas.

The population over 65 grew 3.3 per cent a year, while those of 15-64 increase 2.8 per cent.

The census was held on July 11, 1993.

Nigeria warned of US retaliatory action

WASHINGTON, Aug 27: President Bill Clinton warned that Nigeria will face retaliatory US action if any of a group of 42 accused coup plotters are executed, the Washington Post reported today, says AFP.

Citing government sources, it said Clinton telephoned and wrote to Nigerian military leader General Sani Abacha urging him not to order the death of the 42 including former Prime Minister General Olusegun Obasanjo convicted in a secret trial last month.

He said any execution would harm Nigerian efforts to boost diplomatic ties with Washington, be scrubbed from a US list of drug-trafficking countries and regain

permission for state-owned Nigeria Airways to fly to the United States.

Abacha was told diplomatic missions to Nigeria by special envoy and former ambassador Donald McHenry could also be stopped, the Washington Post reported.

Relations between Nigeria and the United States have worsened in the past year. The US State Department has accused it of being ridden with corruption, failing to keep promises to fight the heroin trade and systematically abusing human rights.

A highly placed government source told the newspaper that Clinton wanted to stress to Nigeria how seriously Washington viewed the human rights situation there.

Egypt calls for lifting embargo on Iraq

CARGO, Aug 27: Egypt has called for the first time for the lifting of the five-year-old international trade embargo on Iraq in the light of the latest report by the UN official overseeing Baghdad's disarmament, reports AFP.

The Egyptian Middle East news agency quoted Foreign Minister Amr Mussa as saying in Amman Saturday that "the report of Rolf Ekeus confirms that the time has come to lift the embargo against Iraq."

"We can not accept the maintenance of sanctions indefinitely," he added after talks with Jordanian Prime Minister Al-Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker.

Mussa said Iraq's implementation of UN Security Council resolutions, as Ekeus has said, would ease the sit-

uation. Egypt has always expressed concern at the effect of the embargo on ordinary Iraqis, while accusing Baghdad of responsibility for their ordeal.

Western diplomats predict no easing of the embargo before the end of 1996 because of Iraq's continuing crisis of credibility following new revelations to Ekeus on its secret weapons projects, and next year's US presidential elections.

Mussa said on his arrival in Amman Saturday with a message for Jordan's King Hussein from President Hosni Mubarak that Iraq must bear the blame for the suffering of its people.