

## Tigers overrun police post : 27 killed

COLOMBO, Aug 29: Tamil rebels overran a police post and attacked a village in eastern Sri Lanka early Thursday. At least 27 people, including 20 police, were killed in the fighting, reports AP.

At least seven civilians were among the dead in the pre-dawn attack on the ethnic Sinhalese village of Kudapukuna, about 190 kilometres (115 miles) east of the capital, Colombo.

The military feared the death toll could rise, saying reconnaissance patrols may find more bodies in the surrounding jungles.

The rebels overwhelmed the nearby police post with grenades and machine gun fire. They set the building ablaze before moving on to the village, a military spokesman said.

Residents of the small farming community fled into the surrounding jungles.

Rebel casualties were not immediately known. At least 13 civilians were wounded in the attack and taken to a nearby hospital.

## World meet adopts agenda against child sex

STOCKHOLM, Aug 29: The sexual abuse of children is an "atrocity" that leaves devastating psychological scars on its victims and requires worldwide cooperation to stop, delegates to an international conference agreed, reports AP.

Representatives attending the World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children adopted an agenda Wednesday urging governments to impose harsh punishments for a range of child-sex crimes, including hiring child prostitutes.

Delegates from more than 120 countries were participating in the five-day conference organised by the Swedish government.

Lending urgency to their efforts was the discovery earlier this month of the bodies of two girls allegedly killed at the hands of a child pornography ring in Belgium.

In Germany on Wednesday,

Separatist Tamil rebels frequently attack ethnic Sinhalese villages in areas bordering the northeast, where the rebels are fighting for a homeland for minority Tamils.

Tamil separatist guerrillas say they fate widespread discrimination from Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese population.

More than 45,000 people have been killed since fighting started in 1983.

Thursday's attack was the largest rebel assault in more than a month, with fighting having died down after thousands died on both sides when the guerrillas overran a northern military base.

The army retaliated to the early attack by laying siege to the Kilinochchi, the biggest rebel-held town.

Reuter says: Tamil Tiger rebels overran an isolated police post in Sri Lanka's northeast early today, killing 24 policemen, defence officials said.

A large group of LTTE guerrillas stormed the Kudapukuna police post just

## Democrats renominate Clinton

CHICAGO, Aug 29: Confident Democrats have nominated President Clinton for a second term, embracing Al Gore's portrait of their youthful ticket as America's "bridge to the future."

The vice president said Republican challenger Bob Dole was a good man with bad ideas, reports AP.

At America not just better off, but better," was Gore's description of Clinton's "first-term legacy in his speech before the vote Wednesday night.

"And our strength at home has led to greater respect abroad," Gore said. "Nuclear missiles no longer targeted at our cities. Democracy replacing tyranny in Haiti. Peace replacing war in Bosnia. Leadership toward reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Middle East."

## Govt, MNLF begin final talks to end 26 yrs of war

JAKARTA, Aug 29: The Philippine government and Muslim rebels began a final round of talks Thursday on a pact to end 26 years of fighting that has killed 150,000 people, reports AP.

The two sides say they are prepared to sign a peace treaty Monday after negotiating the final details of how rebel fighters will be integrated into the Philippine military.

"Already, the draft of the final agreement is on the table ready for consideration and adoption,"

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said at the opening session of the fourth round of talks.

The Moro National Liberation Front has agreed to accept more autonomy for Muslim-dominated regions in the south of the Philippines, Asia's only predominantly Roman Catholic nation.

Abut 5,750 rebel fighters are to join the armed forces, while 1,750 others will join the Regional Police Force, according to Indonesian diplomat Hasan Wirayuda, chairman of the peace talks.

## Australia hails China's policy on Tibet

CANBERRA, Aug 29: Australia has said it is unfair to condemn China's record on Tibet as "entirely wrong", adding Beijing has made a great effort to improve health and education in the Himalayan region, reports Reuter.

Australian Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, who is visiting China, made the remarks in a radio interview aired in Australia today.

"It is not wise or fair to ignore the fact that there has, for example, been a great deal of effort injected into improving the health and education of Tibetans by the initiative of Beijing," Fischer told Australian Broadcasting Corp from Shanghai on Wednesday.

Fischer has been cautioned by Beijing officials about a visit to Australia next month by the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama. China regards the Dalai Lama as the leader of a pro-independence cause in Tibet.

Fischer also criticised the position of one of the Dalai Lama's most prominent supporters, Hollywood actor Richard Gere, who is a follower of Tibetan Buddhist teachings.

## China appoints 5 new ministers

China's central government has appointed five new vice ministers, four of whom are replacing three outgoing officials, the official Xinhua news agency reported early Thursday. AFP reports from Beijing.

The State Council appointed Zhang Wule vice minister of the State Economic and Trade Commission, it said. Chen Shining and Wang Xinfang were named vice ministers of the chemical industry, replacing Tan Zhizhou, and Liu Zhijun became vice minister of railways, replacing Guo Lin. Liu Liqin was also appointed vice minister of posts and telecommunications, replacing Liu Pingyuan. Xinhua said.

**Sweets sicken 10 in Bombay:**

Sweets distributed during a religious holiday sickened at least 10 children in the western city of Bombay, a local news agency reported Thursday. AP reports from New Delhi.

The children were admitted to a private hospital in India's financial capital late Wednesday night after they complained of vomiting. United news of India news agency reported quoting unnamed police officials. The children ate milk pudding during a Hindu festival, it said. Details of the incident were not immediately known.

## Gowda distances himself from Bal Thackeray

NEW DELHI, Aug 29: Indian Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda has distanced himself from a controversial Hindu militant leader following anger over a meeting between the two, a newspaper said today, reports AFP.

Deve Gowda, under attack for a private head-to-head with Bombay political leader Bal Thackeray, told the Hindu National Daily newspaper: "Bal Thackeray and I believe in different ideologies."

"My commitment to the ideals of democracy and secularism is abiding. Nobody can make me depart from the principles I believe in."

Thackeray, whose fundamentalist Shiv Sena Party rules Bombay, has been blamed for helping instigate the razing of a mosque four years ago which led to communal riots.

## Women group for cancelling Miss World contest

NEW DELHI, Aug 29: A Indian women's group has called for the cancelling of the Miss World contest which is due to be held in Bangalore in November, the Hindu Daily paper reported today, says AFP.

The All India Democratic Women's Association called on organisers Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Ltd (ACBL) to stage the event the Hindu Daily newspaper said.

Association general secretary Brinda Karat said the concept was used by big business to promote beauty products while reducing women "to mere measurement of body."

The competition is due to be held in Bangalore in November after ACBL signed a seven million dollar contract to stage the event for the first time.

Miss World Jersey Global Co started the contest in 1951.

GROZNY, Russia, Aug 29: Pervaded by death, this has to be one of the bleakest, most wretched places on earth, reports AP.

Block upon block of blackened buildings sit crumpling downtown amid jumbled heaps of brick and concrete. The smell of burnt flesh wafts out of a charred Russian tank destroyed this month as it plowed through the central market. Disheveled war orphans roam the rubble-strewn streets, pillaging for food as machine gun-toting rebel soldiers enforce a fragile peace.

And yet for thousands of residents who have made their way back to Chechnya's capital after fleeing the latest bombardments, no amount of tragedy or devastation can keep them away for long. Grozny is and always will be home.

The competition is due to be held in Bangalore in November after ACBL signed a seven million dollar contract to stage the event for the first time.

Miss World Jersey Global Co started the contest in 1951.

Perched precariously near

## International

US Congressman says

## Zahir Shah's return to power will bring peace

leaders.

He said the combatants in Afghanistan are ready to sit together and accept the former king as the new ruler of the country.

The congressman said Pakistan had a "very significant" role to play for restoration of peace in Afghanistan. The government of Pakistan is very anxious to see peace and stability in the neighbouring country as it would prove a milestone toward a "revolutionary" change in the region, he said.

Earlier, Rohrabacher met in Islamabad with Pakistani President Farooq Ahmed Ali that the Afghan people would welcome the former king, who has been living in Rome since his exile in 1973.

Rohrabacher said he would next travel to Rome to brief Zahir Shah about his talks with Pakistani and Afghan

ravaged country," Leghari said.

An official statement quoted Leghari as saying peace would also "immensely benefit" US businessmen and investors, as large development projects like oil and gas pipelines and rail and road links between Central Asia and the rest of the world via Afghanistan would become possible.

He deplored that Afghanistan disappeared completely from American and Western television screens after the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989.

Rohrabacher said he hoped that the US would play its role for a just solution in line with the wishes of the Afghan people.

AP adds: After more than three years the strategic Salang Highway that links northern Afghanistan to the beleaguered capital of Kabul opened Thursday.

The US can play an important role for an equitable solution of the Afghan problem and early return of peace in the war

## Off the Record



Diana, Princess of Wales, wearing her diamond and sapphire engagement and wedding ring, leaves the studios of the English National Ballet, in London, following a lunch on Wednesday. One of the world's most glamorous marriages ended Wednesday as the Prince and Princess of Wales, living apart for four years, went their legally separate ways.

### Pantyhose question for Hillary

CHICAGO: First, President Clinton got the boxers-or-briefs question, reports AP.

Now, Hillary Rodham Clinton has gotten a pantyhose question.

Judy Markey and Kathy O'Malley, hosts of the "Kathy and Judy" radio show in Chicago, asked Mrs. Clinton during an interview Wednesday to settle a debate between them: Should underpants be worn under or over pantyhose?

"I would have to give that question a lot more serious thought," Mrs. Clinton replied — an artful dodge her husband might have used two years ago.

"Usually briefs", the president responded then when a 17-year-old girl — utilising a clever softerener "the world is dying to know" — asked him on the cable rock TV channel MTV if he wore boxers or briefs.

### World's biggest food fight

BUNOL, Spain: It's probably the world's biggest food fight, reports AP.

In less than an hour Wednesday, some 20,000 people turned 132 tons of tomatoes into slop, coating the main plaza of Bunol with the blood-red remains of nearly a million vegetables.

The annual Tomatina, or Tomato Festival, began a half-century ago and has been growing ever since. It now draws people from across Spain, and has lately begun to attract foreigners as well.

On Wednesday, the ritual began at 11 am, when men on trucks doused the crowd gathered in Bunol's main plaza with water hoses. Townspeople covered their windows and balconies with huge plastic sheets.

A fever gripped the crowd — mostly young men — jammed shoulder-to-shoulder in the narrow plaza. They began ripping off each other's T-shirts, flinging the shreds into the air.

"Tomato! Tomato!" they chanted, jumping in unison.

Just past noon, the tomatoes came.

Five truckloads of them.

One hundred and thirty-two tons of them.

Nine hundred and twenty-four thousand of them.

Workers on the trucks heaved armloads into the crowd below. Then, as the workers clung to ropes to keep from sliding into the plaza, the trucks dumped their entire loads.

## Asian leaders welcome Chun, Roh's convictions

SEOUL, Aug 29: The treason convictions this week of two former South Korean presidents have resonated across Asia, where growing economies are swelling the middle-class ranks who yearn for more democracy, reports AP.

The events belied a popular Asian notion that bad governments will be forgiven their sins if they help bring their people prosperity.

Some of South Korea's most stunning economic growth came during regimes of the two presidents in the 1980s, as did its transition to democracy. And as it turned out, the new, more democratic system turned around to bite them.

Dissidents hoped the convictions would persuade their own governments to be less autocratic.

In Myanmar, where the military overthrew a 1990 election.

Some observers warned the events might spur the region's tyrants to try to strengthen their grip on power, or at least be more careful.

A headline in Hong Kong Standard read: "South Korea has shown accountancy cannot be ignored."

But Senator Ernesto Maceda, an opponent of late Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos, was doubtful that Marcos' generals and cronies would be brought to justice soon.

Some observers warned the events might spur the region's tyrants to try to strengthen their grip on power, or at least be more careful.

most of them civilians in the Grozny area.

Tens of thousands of residents remain away from the city, likely with relatives in Chechen villages. Others, fearing for their lives — but not enough to leave — subsist in dank basements where the words "People Live Here" are written in chalk on the door as a desperate plea to Russian soldiers to hold their fire.

Remarkably, many of these survivors are old and frail, including many ethnic Russians. They, too, have nowhere to go. Ceasefires bring them not back into the city but back into the daylight.

"Do you know?" one elderly Russian woman asked hopefully Wednesday, approaching a reporter in the street during the sixth straight day of calm since last week's truce. "Is the war over?"

In other neighbour hoods across the battered city, newly returned residents were sure it wasn't. But they were back anyway.