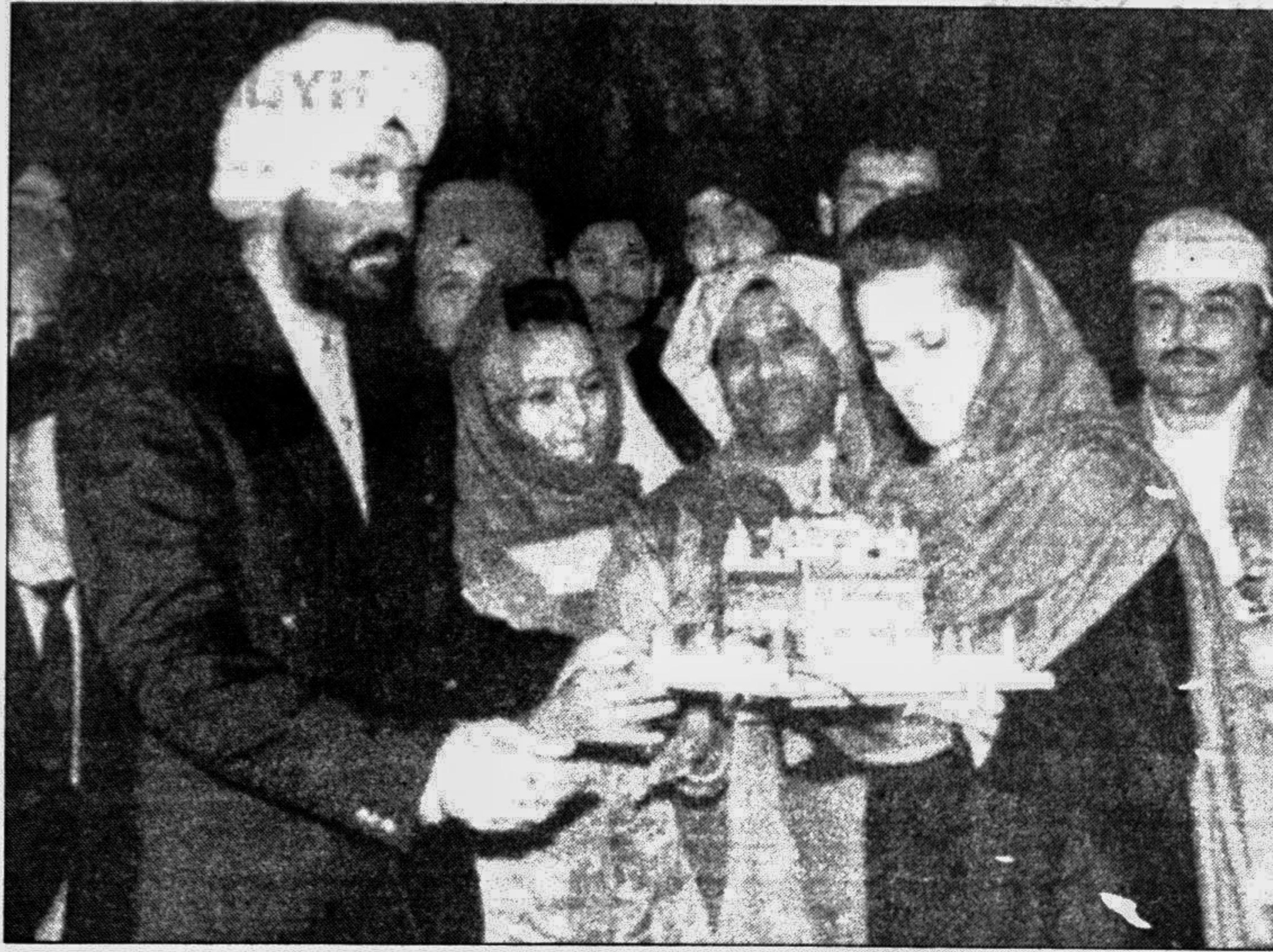


International



Sonia Gandhi, the widow of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, is presented with a replica of Golden Temple, one of the holiest shrines of Sikhs, by a Sikh delegation in New Delhi, Monday. One of the Gurus of Sikhs, Guru Govind Singh, was born on this day. After consistent persuasions from party workers and leaders alike, Sonia has recently agreed to campaign on behalf of the Congress Party for the forthcoming countrywide General elections, and she is expected to hit the campaign trail towards the middle of this month.

—AP/UNB photo

Iranian plane makes emergency landing with 106 on board

TEHRAN, Jan 6: An Iranian passenger plane with 106 people on board has made an emergency landing near the city of Isfahan and all the crew and passengers are safe, the official Iranian news agency IRNA said today, reports Reuter.

It said Iran's air force has joined a search for the plane which had landed near Isfahan, "air force operations to find the stranded aircraft continue."

IRNA did not say when the plane was forced to make the emergency landing, nor did it give the type of the aircraft.

The plane was flying to Tehran from Oroumiyeh in west Azerbaijan province but could not land at Tehran airport due to poor visibility, it was told by the control tower to fly southwards and land at Isfahan airport IRNA said.

The pilot of the aircraft that headed toward Isfahan was unable to land at the city's airport for yet unknown reasons and has reportedly landed on flatlands near the city, it said.

US TV newsmagazines had 696 stories about Diana in '97

NEW YORK, Jan 6: If you think US television newsmagazines could not stop talking about Princess Diana in 1997, you were right, reports AP.

The late princess was the subject of a staggering 696 stories on syndicated and network shows, an industry newsletter reported Monday.

"Extra" alone aired 106 segments after her death, an average of more than two a day during September, according to Video Information Show Report.

The Diana story is going to have life way beyond the interest in her death," said Russ Ptacek, publisher of the report.

"Coverage of Diana is just going to become bigger than Elvis, bigger than Marilyn Monroe."

There were also 80 different stories on the paparazzi's involvement in Diana's life and death, 60 stories on entertainment tributes to Diana and 45 segments on how her princess will cope.

Over 510,000 receive benefit of new social security system in China

BEIJING, Jan 6: More than 510,000 needy people in Shanghai, China's largest city, have received relief with the establishment of a new type of social security system, said today's China Daily, reports Xinhua.

In the last two years, more than 300 million yuan of relief funds have been issued to ensure the minimum living standards for needy residents in the city, the paper said.

Following a large-scale readjustment of economic structure in the past few years, a comprehensive social security system aimed at providing relief for all local needy people is taking shape in the city.

Instead of providing relief only to a few groups of urban poor, like disabled and childless senior citizens, the new system has extended relief to all kind of urban needy people, including an increasing number of layoffs and the rural poor.

Local officials attributed its success to the system, which is composed of an effective mechanism for identification of the poor, a multiplicity of fund-raising channels and management, and clear social division of work by the different agencies and organisations concerned.

Opposition threatens to boycott Cambodian polls

Hun Sen took a share of power by threatening renewed civil war.

Hun Sen and his Cambodian People's Party, which ruled Cambodia as a one-party communist state backed by Vietnam in the 1980s, are now again in control of the country despite military resistance by Ranhiddh supporters along the border with Thailand.

The opposition parties — FUNCINPEC, the Khmer Nation Party led by prominent dissident Sam Rainsy, the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party and the Khmer Neutral Party — have called for negotiations and the return of Ranhiddh to resolve the crisis.

The non-participation of the four parties would deal a serious blow to Hun Sen's efforts to clean up his international image after the coup and win back suspended foreign aid.

The bloody takeover ended a tense dual premiership with Prince Norodom Ranariddh. The prince's royalist FUNCINPEC party had won the UN-organised elections of 1993, but

The party leaders said Tues-

day they would consider withdrawing from the elections if it appeared the polls were "designed only to legitimize the illegal and unpopular regime now in place in Phnom Penh," as

the crisis.

The ailing monarch King Sihanouk abruptly Monday, however, after bending to Hun Sen's view that Ranariddh should be first made to ask for the pardon, tacitly admitting guilt.

Foreign countries have said the polls will not be seen as free and fair if the prince is not allowed to participate.

Ranariddh's conviction in the Hun Sen-controlled courts is virtually guaranteed. King Norodom Sihanouk, the prince's father, had said he would automatically pardon Ranariddh if convicted.

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