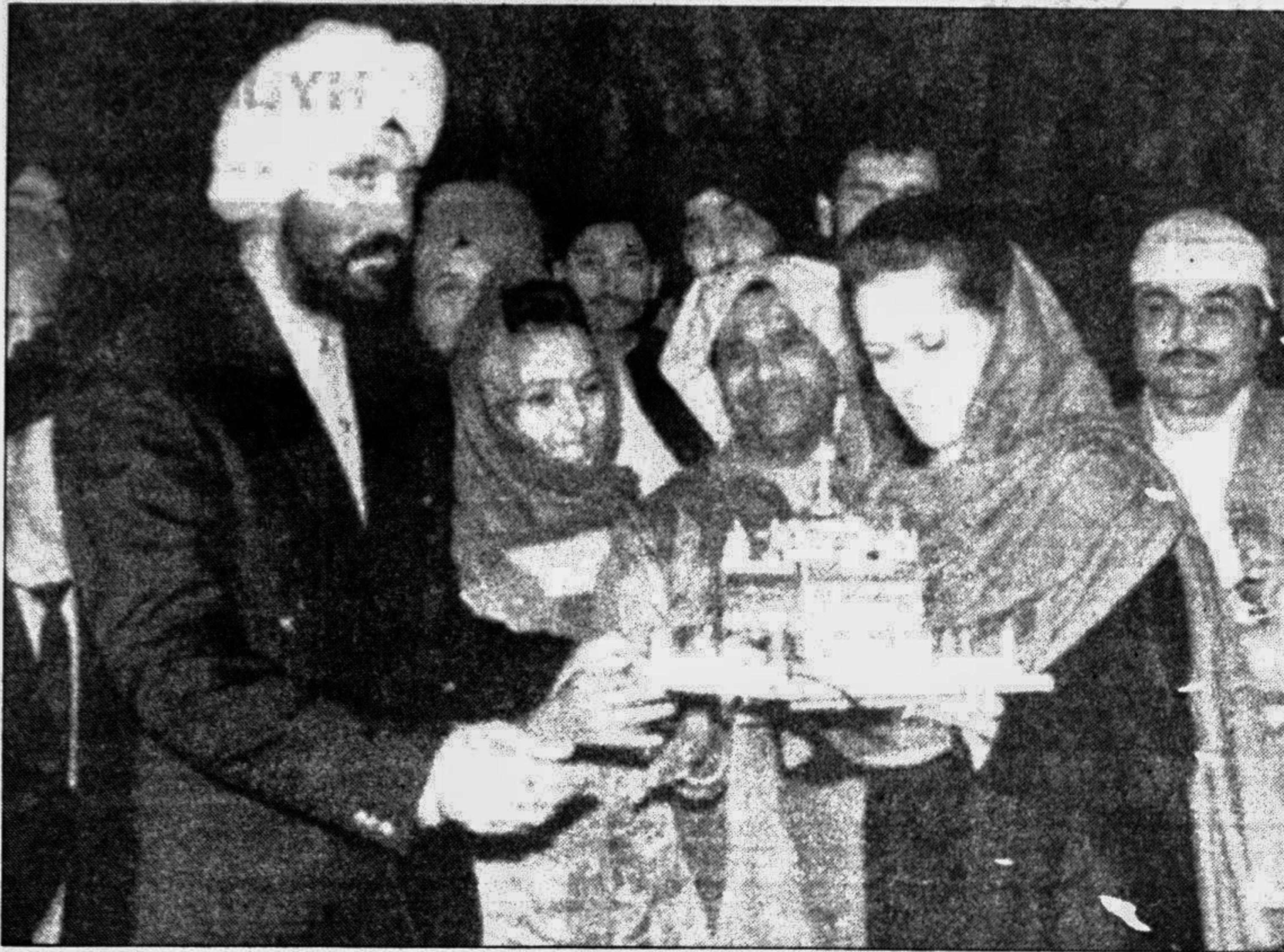


## International



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 Reuters.

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 Orumiyeh 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 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."

### 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

PHNOM PENH, Jan 6: Opposition parties that formed an alliance after last year's bloody coup threatened Tuesday to boycott elections Cambodian leader Hun Sen has called for July if they are used merely to legitimise his rule, reports AP.

In a statement issued from Bangkok, Thailand, where many opponents of Hun Sen fled after the coup, the four parties forming the Union of Cambodian Democrats said they feared an "unfortunate trend" that the elections would be unfair.

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

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 Ranariddh 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 Ranariddh to resolve the crisis.

The party leaders said Tuesday 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

seems to be the unfortunate trend.

Hun Sen has threatened to arrest the prince if he returns from exile and try him on charges, issued by a court under his control, of weapons smuggling and conspiring with Khmer Rouge guerrillas to plot his own takeover.

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.

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

## Parties may spend \$253m for polls campaign in India

NEW DELHI, Jan 6: More than 600 million eligible voters — about 2 and half times the population of the United States. An army of 450,000 election officials. And more than 1 million tons of trash, reports AP.

The details are mind boggling. MS Gill, India's chief election commissioner, said of the polling he will oversee over four days starting February 16 and ending March 7.

"We have to make sure that the elections are peaceful, fair and without much nuisance to the public... and as far as possible, inexpensive," Gill said last week.

The elections, held three years ahead of schedule, were called after the Congress Party withdrew support from the minority coalition of Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral.

The balloting is expected to cost the government 7 billion rupees (177 million dollars) to organise and political parties could spend about 10 billion rupees (253 million dollars) on campaigning.

This year, the government

raised the amount that candidates can spend to about 1.5 million rupees (38,000 dollars), three times the figure during the 1996 elections.

The earlier figure was unrealistic," said GVG Krishnamurthy, one of the three election commissioners. Candidates routinely filed false declarations that they had not exceeded that amount, but no one was prosecuted.

Former election commissioner TN Seshan was credited with cleaning up Indian elections to a large extent simply by enforcing existing regulations.

He ordered auditors to go through the election books of candidates, had loudspeakers shut off after 10 pm so that Indians weren't bombarded with shouted campaign slogans 24 hours a day, and sent staffers to videotape election rallies to find out if illegal promises were being made or conduct rules being violated.

Gill and his team will continue the reforms introduced by Seshan, who retired last year after six years in office.

Gill has insisted that candidates with criminal records will be kept out. In the last election, 1,500 candidates had criminal records, he said.

Gill also moved to weed out frivolous candidates by requiring candidates to get 50 signatures on nominating petitions to earn places on the ballot. That would prevent contests like the one in the southern state of Tamil Nadu two years ago when 1,033 candidates contested just to irritate the authorities, requiring a ballot paper the size of two newspaper sheets.

About 1 million tons of paper and about half a million tons of plastic are expected to be used in posters and ballot papers and other election materials, laments environmentalist Iqbal Malik.

Election security is tight, especially in the crime-prone states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar where politicians are known to intimidate voters and have their gangs stuff ballot boxes.

### India lodges protest with Lanka over military raid

COLOMBO, Jan 6: India today formally lodged a protest with Sri Lankan authorities over the military raid carried out on the residence here of an Indian woman journalist, reports AFP.

An Indian High Commission spokesman here, Ragesh Sachdeva, said it protested to the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry over Saturday's raid of Indian Express correspondent Nirupama Subramanian's home.

"A verbal complaint has been made to the Director of Publicity in the Foreign Ministry," Sachdeva said.

He said the High Commission would also be formally handing over protest from the Indian Express Editor Sekhar Gupta to Sri Lanka's Media Minister Mangala Samaraweera.

The Foreign Correspondents' Association of Sri Lanka added today it had asked the authorities to ensure its members were not intimidated through military and police raids on their hotel rooms and homes.

### Clinton extends sanctions against Libya for one more year

WASHINGTON, Jan 6: President Bill Clinton extended for a thirteenth year sanctions against Libya that were first imposed by President Ronald Reagan in 1986, reports AFP.

The government of Libya has continued its actions and policies in support of terrorism, despite the calls by the United Nations Security Council, Clinton wrote in a January 2 letter to Congress made public Monday.

In January, 1986, Reagan slapped an economic embargo on Libya and froze all Libyan assets in the United States. The sanctions are rendered null and void if they are not extended each year.

Libya has also been under UN sanctions since 1992 because of its refusal to extradite to London or Washington two Libyans suspected of involvement in the December 1988 bombing of a US passenger plane over Lockerbie, Scotland that killed 270 people.

### Labour govt starts fulfilment of key election pledge

LONDON, Jan 6: Britain's Labour government on Monday launched its overhaul of the welfare state — a key manifesto pledge — aimed at whisking youngsters and the long-term unemployed off welfare and into work, reports AFP.

Today marks the start of a new deal for Britain's young. A new beginning in the war against poverty, and the first step in the modernisation of the welfare state in Britain, Chancellor of the exchequer Gordon Brown said.

Brown opened one of 12 pilot schemes designed to lure people aged under 25 and who have been unemployed for at least six months, off welfare.

The three billion pound (4.8 billion dollar) jobs programme, to go nationwide from April, has been financed by a one-off windfall tax on the "excess" profits of the utility industries sold off by previous conservative governments.

### Croat prison commandant goes on trial for war crimes

THE HAGUE, Netherlands, Jan 6: War crimes prosecutors say he was a small but vital cog in a brutal Bosnian Croat terror machine, reports AP.

Zlatko Aleksovski, a Croat charged with overseeing the murder and mistreatment of Bosnian Muslim prisoners early in 1993, goes on trial Tuesday before the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal.

Through his alleged role as a prison commandant, Aleksovski played a small but significant part in the Bosnian Croat's campaign of terror that drove Muslim from the Lasva River Valley of central Bosnia, prosecutors contend.

Aleksovski, 37, faces a maximum life sentence if convicted of three war crimes charges. He has pleaded innocent.

Prosecutors say he commanded the prison at Kanik near the central Bosnian town of Busovaca from January-May 1993.

### Mao's embalmed corpse back on public display

BEIJING, Jan 6: The embalmed corpse of Mao Zedong, still a hallowed icon of Chinese communism, was back on public display in Beijing today after a long absence, reports Reuters.

After nine months of touch-ups and structural changes, the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall in Beijing's Tiananmen Square quickly respond its doors to visitors.

Long queues formed outside the huge, mausoleum on a sunny winter morning as thousands of Chinese citizens sought to pay their respects to China's "great helmsman."

# পবিত্র ঈদ উপলক্ষ্যে

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**PIONEER**  
**Canon Camera**

**BPL**

ক্রেতা সাধারণকে দিচ্ছে

**বিশেষ ছাড়**

**MITSUBISHI**

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CT-21 AQ1  
CT-25 GL1  
CT-32 AW1  
CT-33 AC2  
CT-37 C1STX  
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MR-17 BDX 7.5 CFT  
MR-20 BDX 9 CFT  
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