

# BRIEFLY



Miss World finalists from Lebanon Clemence Ackhar, left, and Jamaica Christine Straw, right, walk along the beach near the Mahe beach hotel in Seychelles, Sunday, ahead of Thursday night's pageant — AP/UNB photo

**Dengue fever claims 336 in Vietnam:** 336 Vietnamese have died from dengue fever this year, more than twice the figure for all of 1997, a Health Ministry official said yesterday. AFP says from Hanoi. The number of deaths rose 2.2 times while the number of infections nationwide soared 236 per cent over the whole of 1997 to 191,740 cases, the official said, blaming adverse weather.

**Opposition leader killed in Iran:** An Iranian opposition leader and his wife were assassinated at their home in the Iranian capital Sunday, state television reported, AFP says from Tehran. Daryoush Foruhar, a former labour minister and his wife, Parvaneh, were killed in their house in eastern Tehran by unknown assailants. Police have launched a manhunt for their killers.

**Vietnam flood toll rises to 91:** Flooding caused by heavy rains in central Vietnam has now claimed 91 lives, and local officials said yesterday the number was expected to rise as they receive more reports. AP says from Hanoi. The floods affected several hundred thousand people in one of Vietnam's poorest regions. No damage estimate was available, but it was believed to be in the tens of millions of dollars.

**Airplane crash kills one in US:** One person was killed and another seriously injured when a Cessna light aircraft crashed into a school cafeteria, narrowly avoiding a group of students, AFP says from Oakland, California. The accident occurred as the plane tried to make an emergency landing on Castlemont High School's football field Saturday.

**Blast kills 7 women in China:** An explosion at an illegal fireworks factory in central China's Henan province killed seven women workers aged 16 to 22, an official newspaper said yesterday. AP says from Beijing. The November 16 blast destroyed six workshops at the Xuliu Firecracker Factory in Xuchang city, about 700 km south of Beijing, the Beijing Morning Post reported.

## Anwar Ibrahim's trial resumes

**KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 23:** The politically charged corruption trial of ousted deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim resumed Monday amid a national outcry against foreigners accused of supporting him, reports AP. The Malaysian government had recessed Anwar's trial so it would not interfere with last week's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit of 21 Pacific Rim leaders.

The weeklong pause, however, only intensified the global spotlight focused on the Southeast Asian country and the government's treatment of the former No 2 leader. US Vice President Al Gore, sitting in for President Bill Clinton at the APEC summit, expressed support for Anwar's anti-government reform movement.

## Palestinian prisoners in Israel begin hunger strike

**JERUSALEM, Nov 23:** Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails began a hunger strike on Sunday in protest at Israel's refusal to free them under a new peace deal and accused the Palestinian leadership of neglecting their cause, reports Reuters. Fatah prisoners in Megiddo Prison have started today an open ended hunger strike. It will spread to other jails' a Fatah detainee in Megiddo, one of several Israeli jails told Reuters by telephone. He said they would take no food.

Angry prisoners belonging to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fatah faction threatened to stop backing peace moves if they were not released. It was not immediately clear how many prisoners were observing the strike.

## N Korea denies infiltrating spy ship into S Korea

**SEOUL, Nov 23:** North Korea on Monday denied infiltrating a spy boat into South Korean waters last week, calling the allegation and anti-North smear campaign, reports AP. A suspected North Korean spy boat crossed the fog-shrouded buffer zone into South Korean waters off the west coast early Friday but sped away after South Korean marines fired at it.

South Korean military investigators concluded that the boat had attempted to land or ferry back espionage agents in South Korea. They believed the boat's mission was thwarted before it reached shore. The loudmouthed intrusion incident is a product for premeditated anti-North smear campaign of the bellicose elements of the puppet military who seek tense inter-Korean relations and showdown, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said.

## Lewinsky's story on internet

**LONDON, Nov 23:** Producers of a television documentary about Monica Lewinsky announced that a book about her will be published on the Internet a few hours before the documentary is broadcast Monday, reports AP. The book, "Monica Lewinsky: Behind the Myth," will be available on the Internet for a fee. The documentary of the same title will be broadcast by A and E Networks, the cable channel, on Monday evening.

Author Simon Gullien said his book is based on information from several sources including Lewinsky's former lawyer, another White House intern, a Washington journalist who dated Lewinsky, and her closest friend. Last week, British publisher Michael O'Mara, announced that Lewinsky had signed a deal with Princess Diana's biographer, Andrew Morton, for a tell-all book about her affair with President Clinton.

# FM says Iraq has handed over all relevant information to UN

**BAGHDAD, Nov 23:** Iraq's foreign minister accused UN arms inspectors of "a savage campaign ... of disinformation" in their quest for more documents about the country's banned weapons, reports AP. The minister, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, said Sunday Iraq has already handed over millions of papers to monitors and claimed that no more files exist.

"Anything relevant to the work of disarmament, we had already handed over," he said adding that Iraq has given 2,188,020 pages of documents to UN Special Commission and International Atomic Energy Agency monitors since weapons inspections began in 1991.

Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said some documents in question are long lost and accused chief weapons inspector Richard Butler of trying to create a pretext to continue sanctions or allow the United States and Britain to attack. Aziz told reporters that "Butler has asked for a series of alleged documents ... that do not exist." "It is quite provocative if you want to dig in the whole archives of the government of Iraq, which might take decades," he said.

## FM says

**US National Security Council spokesman David Leavy said the Iraqi comments were "insufficient" and called for Iraqi cooperation. The documents have emerged as a new flashpoint in the dispute between Iraq and the United Nations since Baghdad reversed its ban on weapons inspections and allowed monitors to return last week. The decision averted military action, but forces remain in the Persian Gulf. Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations, Nizar Hamdoun, said Sunday his country would answer by Monday the Security Council's questions about the disputed documents. In an interview with ABC television, Hamdoun noted that Iraq faces the problem of trying to prove the negative, to prove that something is not existent. I think it's almost impossible. Aziz accused Butler of trying to block a comprehensive review that the UN Security Council has pledged to undertake once inspectors declare that Baghdad is in full compliance with their demands. Among the documents that Butler is seeking is an air force inventory that UN inspectors saw last summer but were not allowed to take. Al-Sahhaf said this issue had been addressed in a letter to Butler by Riyadh al-Qaisi, the deputy foreign minister. The official Iraqi News Agency carried the text of the letter Sunday. Al-Shhaf added that, "We are witnessing again a savage campaign ... of disinformation." He said that if Butler "is a fair man, he should be satisfied."**

In the letter, Al-Qaisi acknowledged for the first time that the air force log sought by Butler contains an inventory of chemical weapons the Iraqi army used from 1983-1988. He told Butler that Iraq will only show his inspectors "the relevant part" of the document, and that this had to be done in the presence of UN envoy Prakash Shah. Al-Qaisi said Butler was asking for diaries of high-ranking Iraqi army officers. He said the papers were either destroyed or had already been given to inspectors and were no longer in Iraq's possession. The weapons inspectors must certify that Iraq has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction before UN Security Council sanctions on the country can be lifted.

The meeting with Derek Fatchett, a minister at the Foreign Office, was to be the first of what officials expect to be a series of briefings. The United States and Britain have recently pledged publicly to help opposition groups in their efforts to overthrow Saddam and install a democratic government in Iraq. The United States announced last week that it had help talks with Ahmed Chalabi, head of the London-based opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress. The US Congress has also approved a \$97 million aid package to offer support to Iraqi dissidents.

British officials said they would not be offering large amounts of cash or military aid, but instead would focus on finding common ground among the groups. London is one of the main centres for Iraqi exile and opposition groups. The opposition groups maintain they are a key source of information on Saddam's government and critical to any rebellion against Saddam. The Iraqi National Accord, a dissident group based in London, provided British authorities with a detailed list last week of Saddam's international spy network, according to The Sunday Telegraph.

The document, compiled by Saddam's private secretary, named 20 of the members of Iraqi intelligence service who are posing as diplomats, the newspaper said. The opposition group claimed to have released it to the West before the document was even on Saddam's desk. "Information like this is priceless in the battle to end Saddam's tyranny," Dr. Ayad Alawi, who heads the opposition group, told the newspaper. "It shows that often we know more about what is going on inside Iraq than Saddam. And the more we know, the more damage we can do to him." Alawi also told The Sunday Telegraph that it is important opposition groups know they have the West's support. The Foreign Office stressed, however, that the prime objective on both sides of the Atlantic is to get Saddam to comply with UN resolutions and stick to agreements he made last week to avert the immediate threat of airstrikes.

# Iraqi leaders meet in Britain Dethroning Saddam only common goal of opposition

**LONDON, Nov 23:** While Iraqi opposition groups share the goal of toppling Saddam Hussein, they also are deeply divided along ethnic, religious and political lines, reports AP. Sharing the goal of ousting the Iraqi leader, British officials have invited more than a dozen Iraqi dissident groups for a meeting Monday to settle their differences. The meeting with Derek Fatchett, a minister at the Foreign Office, was to be the first of what officials expect to be a series of briefings. The United States and Britain have recently pledged publicly to help opposition groups in their efforts to overthrow Saddam and install a democratic government in Iraq. The United States announced last week that it had help talks with Ahmed Chalabi, head of the London-based opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress. The US Congress has also approved a \$97 million aid package to offer support to Iraqi dissidents.

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A mob tosses debris on a car they set on fire during rioting in Jakarta Sunday. Deep seated ethnic and religious tensions erupted on the streets of the capital of crisis-ridden Indonesia when mobs of Muslim youths attacked or burned at least four Christian churches and then went on a riot spree. — AP/UNB photo

# Death toll in Indonesia's violence up to 13 Many Christian schools closed after ethnic rioting

**JAKARTA, Nov 23:** Many Christian schools were closed Monday following deadly rioting in which mobs of Muslim youths set fire to churches and attacked Christians, reports AP. Security was heavy in north Jakarta, where soldiers patrolled past churches that were ransacked in ethnic and religious violence on Sunday that killed six people. There were no reports of unrest Monday.

Without elaborating, a prominent Muslim leader said that thugs had carefully planned the riots, the official Antara news agency reported. Abdurrahman Wahid, the head of the country's largest Islamic group, Nadhlatul Ulama, and opposition leader Megawati Sukarnoputri condemned the violence in a joint statement. "We appeal to all people not to believe in provocations, the statement read. We have to be careful with cruel actions made under a religious pretext." The weekend violence came amid Indonesia's worst economic crisis in 30 years. Millions of people now live in poverty as inflation and unemployment rates soar.

Adding to the tension, President BJ Habibie is at the centre of student protest over his plans to change Indonesia's political system, which opponents say fall short of introducing true democracy. Students planned rallies later Monday. The Indonesian Red Cross recovered five bodies of Ambonese who had been slashed with knives and broken bottles. It was not known where the sixth victim was from. About 90 per cent of Indonesia's 202 million people are Muslim, making it the world's most populous Islamic nation. However, religious tolerance is enshrined in the national philosophy. Another report says: Rescue workers on Monday pulled seven bodies from a gutted dining parlour that was burned by Muslim mobs, raising the death toll to 13 from ethnic and religious violence. Muslim residents said they retaliated after rumours that the Ambonese had attacked mosques. "We feel very sad because we're still far from the hope of solidarity between religious communities," said Father Roy Djakarya of the Jakarta Roman Catholic Archdiocese. "Why do we so easily judge rumours without thinking about the truth behind them?"

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# 'Clinton's visit to ROK was productive'

**SEOUL, Nov 23:** US President Bill Clinton left Seoul today after tackling communist North Korea's security concerns and the economic crisis with the leaders of Japan and South Korea during his five-day visit in Asia, reports AP. Clinton's visit to South Korea was important as it reaffirmed the strong alliance between the two countries at a critical time amid fears of North Korea's nuclear programme, officials and news reports said. The summit meeting was productive in that the two leaders reaffirmed the "unshakable alliance" between Seoul and Washington, the English-language Korea Herald said in its editorial.

In his meeting with the leaders of South Korea and Japan, Clinton said he had "secured pledges of total cooperation in coping with the potentially explosive issue of the north's nuclear programme," it said. Clinton and Kim warned after their summit Saturday that they would not tolerate North Korean nuclear and missile weapons proliferation, while Clinton demanded Pyongyang halt its weapons programmes. New fears have recently been raised that a suspicious nuclear bunker in North Korea may be used for nuclear purposes, amid other reports that Pyongyang may be planning a test firing of its new medium-range rocket. A government official said Clinton's visit to South Korea and Japan had been very "productive" as the three countries reaffirmed their policies toward Stalinist North Korea at a time when "it was much needed." Clinton was welcomed by Guam Governor Carl Guterriez and met with local community representatives and officials from other Pacific Islands. The last visit to Guam by a US president was by Ronald Reagan in 1986.

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# Habibie firm to hold general elections on time

**JAKARTA, Nov 23:** Rebutting allegations that he is maneuvering to stay in power, President BJ Habibie on Monday said he was committed to holding 1999 general elections on time, reports AP. Habibie, who took office in May after riots and protests helped dislodge his authoritarian predecessor and onetime mentor Suharto, has pledged to hold elections in late May or early June.

"I want to reassure the people that there is no plan from my side and the Cabinet to delay the election," Habibie said in a speech to 600 business executives at the state palace. On Nov. 13, the nation's highest legislative body wrapped up a four-day session.

## Fishy murder!

**NEW DELHI, Nov 23:** A couple was killed in eastern India for refusing to share fish with relatives at dinner, the United News of India (UNI) reported today, reports AP. Police were looking for a brother and nephews of the man who was murdered along with his wife following the row at Khagaria town, the news agency said.

on political reforms that was marred by deadly clashes between student protesters and security forces. Students have accused the government of stalling on democratic reform. Habibie, who has said he intends to stand as a presidential candidate, pledged to quit after the election if the 1,000-member People's Consultative Assembly meets and elects a new leader. "The new assembly can elect a new president either a week after, or anytime they are ready," he said. Habibie had originally said the assembly would choose a new president in December 1999, but dropped that plan after opposition leaders urged a more prompt presidential poll. The assembly consists of all 500 Parliament members as well as presidential appointees. Habibie said he had invited students to join a monitoring committee that will ensure a free and fair election. He said he has accepted an offer from the United Nations Development Programme to help with the elections. Offers of help have also come from the United States, Japan, Australia, Germany and France, he added.

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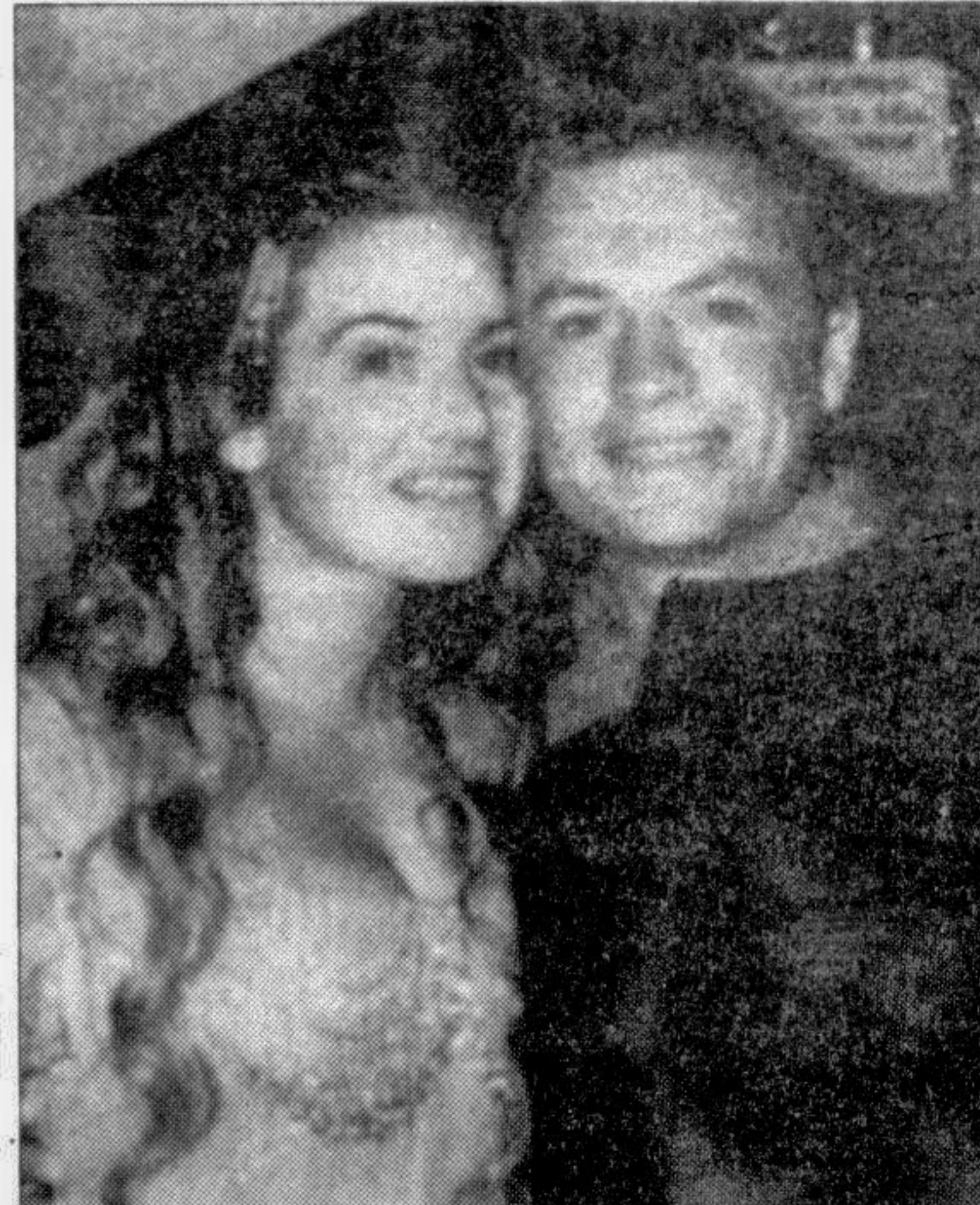
# WHO calls for global initiatives to stop spread of tuberculosis

**BANGKOK, Nov 23:** Global efforts to control a tuberculosis emergency risk failing unless the disease — the top infectious killer of adults — is contained in Asia, the World Health Organisation (WHO) warned Monday, reports AP. Gro Harlem Brundtland, WHO director general, urged governments, donors and international organisations to bring political will to bear in a new, global anti-TB initiative to stop the spread of the disease and prevent more deadly forms from developing. "Our ability to control TB pivots on Asia — now the epicenter of the world," said Brundtland, a former prime minister of Norway. "If we cannot control TB in Asia, we will never stop TB globally."

Brundtland's appeal came in videotaped remarks prepared for the opening of a four-day Global Congress on Lung Disease, bringing together 1,500 lung disease experts from 90 countries. It is the largest such meeting held in Asia in a decade. The WHO fears that the Asian economic crisis could lower living standards and increase the spread of communicable diseases, while state health programmes face funding cuts. Six Asian countries — Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines — account for 4.5 million of the 8 million new cases of tuberculosis illness a year, the WHO estimates. Globally, nearly 3 million of those who become sick with tuberculosis die, making it the worst infectious disease killer among people older than five. Childhood vaccinations for tuberculosis wear off in adulthood. There is no adult vaccine. Though tuberculosis is curable, normal treatment is a six-month programme of taking medicine daily. Many people, especially the poor, stop after a month or so, once they start feeling better. That can leave the strongest TB bacilli still in the lungs, resistant to drugs and ready to infect new people. This multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis — MDR-TB to specialists — costs 100 times more to treat and usually proves fatal. The evolution of drug-resistant tuberculosis is converging with the spread of AIDS, which destroys the immune system that normally prevents tuberculosis infection from developing into illness. The WHO estimates a window of opportunity exists over the next decade to prevent a tuberculosis explosion.

In a report released Monday, the WHO said the best hope of curing patients and preventing the spread of drug-resistant tuberculosis is to get sick people to finish their treatment. The most workable way is called DOTS, or Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course. It means getting someone to physically observe a TB patient take his medication every day — volunteers, health workers, a work supervisor — and monitor their progress until they are cured. The WHO says that more than 100 countries are using DOTS. In the half of China where the system has been introduced, the cure rate for tuberculosis has risen to 95 per cent. Though the system is labour intensive, the World Bank has judged it cost-effective when the costs of drug-resistant TB treatment, lost wages and other factors are taken into account. In many countries, tuberculosis is an invisible problem since it usually affects the poorest people. The affluent are able to afford medication through the six-month period of treatment. But with the drug-resistant strains, that could change — the treatment costs 100 times as much.

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Actress Kate Winslet, star of the oscar-winning movie "Titanic" and new husband Jim Threapleton, at their wedding reception at the Crooked Billet pub in Stoke Row, southern England, Sunday. — AP/UNB photo

# Indian politicians turn to new issues under pressure

**NEW DELHI, Nov 23:** India's politicians traditionally seek votes by appealing to caste and religion. But days before crucial provincial elections, pressure groups are placing new issues onto the political agenda: child labour, health and pollution, reports AP. Over 80 million voters will choose 626 state legislators from among 5,000 candidates on Nov 25 in four of India's 26 states. The vote is being seen as the first test of popularity for the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party since it came to lead the federal government last June. In the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and New Delhi, the BJP will square off against its main rival, the Congress, which led India to independence in 1947 and for most of the years since then. Local parties are contesting the election in the tiny state of Mizoram. But more than ever before, public service lobbyists and voluntary agencies are trying to focus Wednesday's ballot on the kind of core issues that politicians prefer to address with platitudes rather than action. In New Delhi, where air pollution is said to kill one person every hour, candidates read this bold-faced advertisement in Sunday's mass-selling Times of India newspaper: "If you want our votes give us clean air."

The Center for Science and Environment, an environment think tank which published the advertisement, said its office was flooded with calls from hundreds of supporters after the ad appeared. "It's amazing to see the response from common people, from students, professionals, and those from the middle class," said the centre's Anumita Rowchowdhury. Before placing the ad, the center asked the 85 candidates for the Delhi state assembly to sign a pledge to take specific steps against polluting vehicles. Only 22 responded. Chief Minister Sushma Swaraj, whose job in the state government is equivalent to the federal prime minister, was among those who ignored the appeal. The antipollution campaign was backed last week by a call from doctors, who urged aspirants to spell out what they planned to do about citizens' health in filth-clogged cities. Indian studies have found that New Delhi has the world's highest concentration of airborne particles. Carbon monoxide and nitrous oxide levels also are above international limits. One of every 10 children in New Delhi suffers from asthma and one in 10 residents is likely to suffer from cancer, the centre said.

"Politicians who are indifferent should realise that we don't vote for pollution and illness for our children," the advertisement read. "Clean air has votes too." Anti-child labour activist Kallash Satyarthi ran into similar apathy when he urged politicians to take a stand against child labour. "Several politicians, including ministers, refused to sign pledges that they would work against child labour," said Satyarthi, who heads the South Asian Coalition Against Child Servitude, a high profile group which helped make child labour an international issue. India was identified last month by the United Nations as home to the largest number of child workers in the world, with estimates ranging between 40 million and 100 million underage workers. Many children work in farm fields, restaurants, carpet, brick and fireworks-making industries, stitch footfalls or are forced into child prostitution. On Friday, Satyarthi's organisation brought together nearly 1,000 children aged four to 14 in a demonstration at one of the busiest intersections in the capital, as they called on politicians running in the elections to oppose child labour.

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