

International

Opinion poll

Vajpayee most popular leader

NEW DELHI, Oct 15: One year into the job, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee is still the most popular leader in the country, according to an opinion poll published today, reports Reuters.

Nearly 70 per cent of the 827 Indians surveyed in the poll rated Vajpayee's performance in office as ranging from good to excellent, the poll published by the Hindustan Times said.

Only seven per cent of those polled described the 73-year-old Vajpayee's year in office as poor.

In contrast, barely a quarter of voters polled approved Sonia Gandhi's track record as head of the main opposition Congress party, around 74 per cent of voters said the Italian-born Gandhi's performance ranged from very poor to average.

The poll surveyed people across the four big cities of New Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. The responses were obtained through street-corner interviews and the people selected were in the age group 18 to 50.

Vajpayee, whose coalition government took office last October, marked the anniversary recuperating from knee surgery in a Bombay hospital.

The poll found 48 per cent of those polled said the 23-party coalition government's overall performance ranged from good to excellent. Only 13 per cent said its track record was poor, despite escalating violence in Kashmir and a slowing economy.

The poll was not all positive for the coalition. It found about 40 per cent of voters thought the National Democratic Alliance's handling of the economy ranged from poor to very poor.

Six US nationals killed in Mexico plane crash

TIJUANA, Mexico, Oct 15: Six US nationals died when the small private plane in which they were travelling crashed at Ensenada, northern Mexico, local authorities said Saturday, reports AFP.

At a press conference, municipal police commander Jesus Velez identified the victims as Michael Cala, Mervin Webster, Elen Goldsenn, Edith Lowster, Debra Wayne and Drya Caen.

The victims were all members of the humanitarian organisation Air Doctors, on their way to speak to local mayor Daniel Quintero, to discuss rural health assistance programmes, Velez said.

He said death appears to have been instantaneous.

The plane crashed less than one kilometre from the runway at Ensenada Military Air Base.

The aircraft was travelling to Ensenada from San Ignacio, after initiating its journey in San Felipe, according to air base commander Sergio Escobar. All three towns are in the Mexican state of Baja California.

Myanmar closes universities

BANGKOK, Oct 15: Myanmar has closed several universities in the capital Yangon after anti-government posters were found on their walls, opposition radio said today, reports AFP.

The government shut Dagon university and teacher training colleges under the emergency act, said the Democratic Voice of Burma, an opposition radio station, transmitted from Oslo and monitored in Bangkok.

The closure of the Dagon schools, located in a suburb of Yangon, occurred after police found wall posters about opposition to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)'s education system and administrative machinery, it said.

The SPDC is the official name for the Yangon junta, which reopened Myanmar's universities last month after a suspension in the wake of a 1996 student uprising.

Myanmar's universities have been sporadically closed since a popular uprising in the summer of 1988 threatened to topple the military regime.

Egypt prepares to host crucial summit to end ME violence

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt, Oct 15: Egypt prepared today to host a vital summit aimed at stopping Israeli-Palestinian violence amid few illusions about its success, as Lebanese Hezbollah guerrillas stoked the tension further by claiming to have captured a senior Israeli officer, reports AFP.

Hezbollah chief Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah said in Beirut, "The Islamic resistance has succeeded in taking prisoner an Israeli officer with the rank of colonel in a complex operation whose details will be given later."

The Israeli army said it was trying to verify the claim. On October 7 Hezbollah snatched three Israeli non-commissioned officers in an ambush in the disputed Shebaa Farms area captured by Israeli from Syria in 1967 but claimed by Lebanon.

The move sparked threats of retaliation by Israel, which held Lebanon and Syria, the main power-broker in Beirut, respon-

sible. Nasrallah said Thursday that Israel must free all Arab prisoners it holds to obtain the release of the three soldiers.

Sunday's announcement by the Iranian- and Syrian-backed Hezbollah came as Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat prepared to meet at this Egyptian Red Sea resort on Monday.

The summit will also bring in US President Bill Clinton, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordan's King Abdullah II.

The aim is at least to stop fighting between Israelis and Palestinians which has claimed more than 100 lives following the September 28 visit by Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon to a disputed site in Jerusalem held sacred by both Jews and Muslims.

Though Barak and Arafat yielded to intense international pressure and agreed to attend

without pre-conditions, they have not dropped their respective conflicting demands.

Arafat continues to insist on an international inquiry into the causes of the violence, while Israel says it will only accept a limited fact-finding exercise.

Clinton said the summit's central objective would be to stop the violence and agree "on a fact-finding mechanism concerning how this began and how it can be prevented from happening again, and find a way back to dialogue and negotiations."

He urged Americans Saturday to pray for the success of the conference, while admitting that "ending the violence and getting people of the Middle East back to dialogue will be hard after what has happened."

"We should be under no illusions," Clinton added. "The good news is the parties have agreed to meet and the situation appears to be calmer, but the path ahead is difficult."

The attempt to salvage the

Middle East peace process comes as Clinton's stature as a peace broker begins to wane.

His status and power will effectively be eclipsed with the US presidential election on November 7, when his successor is elected - despite the fact his mandate does not expire until January.

While the West Bank and Gaza Strip maintained their relative calm of the past few days, Israelis and Palestinians were both preparing for failure.

The Israeli army said it was implementing an emergency six million dollar plan to bolster defence of Jewish settlements in the West Bank over fears of Palestinian attacks.

As Barak chaired a pre-summit cabinet meeting, his principal advisor Danny Yatom warned that if the Palestinians revived their plan of declaring an independent state Israel would no longer be bound by any ceasefire accord reached at Sharm el-Sheikh.



Palestinian rally organisers, with the help of the New South Wales Police Force, attempt to hold back demonstrators trying to storm the US consulate in Sydney yesterday. The protest was organised by an umbrella grouping of local Palestinian, Arab and Muslim organisations in response to the crisis in the Middle East. --AFP photo

Saudi plane hijackers surrender in Iraq, all passengers freed

BAGHDAD, Oct 15: The hijackers of a Saudi Boeing 777 demanding reforms in Saudi Arabia surrendered without a fight to Iraqi authorities, leaving all the 104 people aboard to walk free and unharmed, but said today they still had a bomb on the plane, reports AFP.

Iraqi state TV, meanwhile, said the released passengers from Saturday's hijacked Jeddah-London flight, including 40 Britons, an American and a Saudi prince, would spend the night together with the crew at a Baghdad hotel.

In a bizarre twist, the hijackers - although under arrest after a three-hour standoff before the releases - told reporters the affair was not over and that they were still wanted to "negotiate".

"I have a detonator in my pocket which I can activate to trigger a bomb placed on the plane," one of the two, circled by Iraqi police but looking relaxed,

said at Baghdad's Saddam International Airport. The hijackers declined to give their names but Iraq said they were both Saudis.

"They threatened to blow up the plane and the threat is still valid," interior ministry official Tahar Jalil Habbush said in the control tower.

The other hijacker, concealing part of his face with a scarf, said their aim was "to demand justice and equality in Saudi Arabia" and called for an inquiry into alleged corruption and human rights abuses in the kingdom.

They also denounced "the presence of the US and British armies" in Saudi Arabia, echoing a common theme of anti-Riyadh hostility in Baghdad.

The hijackers said they had treated the passengers well during their seven-hour ordeal. "We treated them like brothers," one of the two told journalists.

Ahead of the release, British

Foreign Secretary Robin Cook deplored "this act of terrorism" and demanded the safe release of the passengers, who were being put up along with the crew at the Rashid Hotel, Baghdad's best.

Saudi authorities had said just after the release that arrangements were made through a third party - in the absence of diplomatic ties - for them to return to the Red Sea city of Jeddah overnight.

Iraq's Transport Minister Ahmad Murtaad visited the passengers in the hotel used for foreign envoys, businessmen and journalists, inviting them to phone their families back home.

Some of the passengers told journalists they had been unaware of the hijacking until they landed and that the whole incident was violence-free.

The passengers were first bussed to the main airport terminal where officials tried to comfort two women, one British, who

was crying, and a Saudi who was trembling.

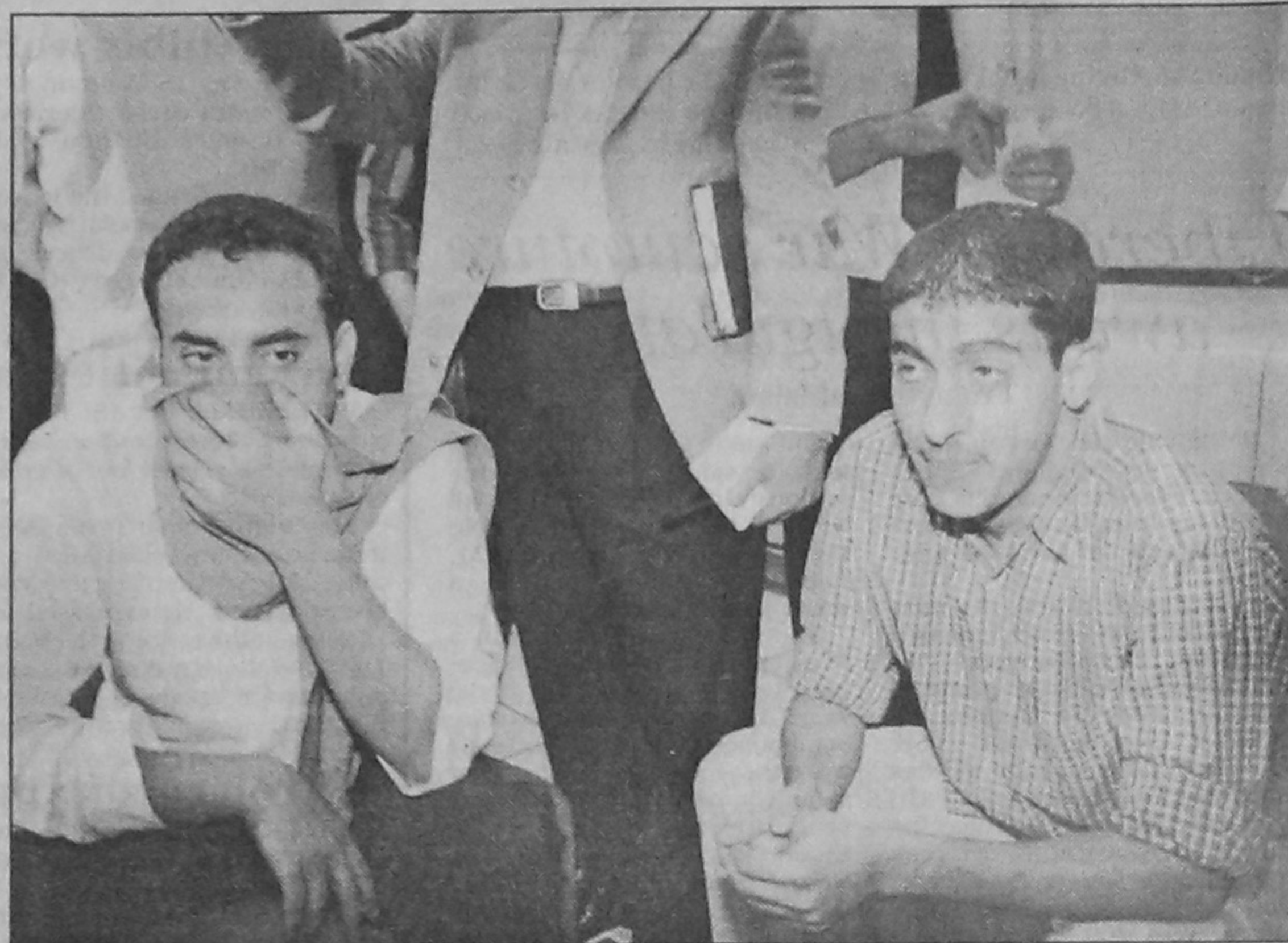
"Do not be afraid, you are in Saddam Hussein's Iraq and are reassured you are in safety," an Iraqi official said.

Security forces had taken up positions in darkness around the rain-soaked airport as the plane touched down late Saturday.

The plane was hijacked in Egyptian airspace, and later headed for Syria after overflying Cyprus.

Cypriot civil aviation said the plane was at first denied entry to Syrian airspace but permission was later granted. The pilot said the hijackers had asked to go to Baghdad, chief operations officer Costas Orphanos told AFP.

A member of the Saudi royal family, Prince Bandar bin Mohammad bin Saad bin Abdel Rahman, was also on the plane and would return to Jeddah first with the rest of the passengers.



The alleged hijackers of a Saudi Arabian Airlines Boeing 777 with 111 people aboard, mostly British passengers, are presented to the press by Iraqi authorities at Baghdad airport on Saturday. AFP photo

Lankan opposition seeks court order for repoll

COLOMBO, Oct 15: Sri Lanka's shaky coalition was headed for uncertainty today as the main opposition said it was seeking a court order for a repoll in the violence-affected central province, reports AFP.

The main opposition United National Party (UNP) said it was seeking a writ cancelling Tuesday's elections as violence and vote rigging had seriously affected the final result.

There were no clear winners from Tuesday's vote, but President Chandrika Kumaratunga's People's Alliance emerged the largest single party and cobbled together a coalition on Friday with the help of two minority parties.

The European Union poll monitors as well as other local monitoring groups had singled out the central province which returned 24 members to the 225-member parliament as the most affected by malpractice.

The elections chief Dayananda Dissanayake announced he was annulling the vote in 15 polling centres in the central province while virtually cancelling the entire exercise in the Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts.

The two districts are dominated by Tamil Tiger rebels and the poll was not conducted there. But, for the purpose of declaring an official result, the elections

chief excluded the two areas. The opposition UNP which tried but failed to form a coalition on its own on Friday said it was seeking the intervention of the Court of Appeal to have a fresh election in the central province.

"The level of violence directly impacted on the final result," UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe said. "If not for the violence and rigging we would have been in a position to form a government."

The private Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) said the final outcome in 17 polling divisions was "utterly meaningless" because of the extent of ballot stuffing.

Rival militias in Solomon Islands sign peace deal

BRISBANE, Australia, Oct 15: Rival militias in the Solomon Islands signed an accord today ending two years of fighting over access to land and jobs, reports Reuters.

About 70 people have died in the conflict in the former British colony, 1,000 miles northeast of Australia.

The parties to this agreement hereby declare that they renounce, deplore and do solemnly give up violence ... and confirm their respect for human rights and rule of the law," said the accord, signed by Solomon Island militia leaders and by national and provincial government leaders.

Millions queue up for Asia's richest TV game show

NEW DELHI, Oct 15: Asia's richest game show will hit millions of Indian TV screens this month, with a 2.2-million-dollar jackpot that markedly ups the ante in the "quiz show wars" between rival media moguls, reports AFP.

Zee TV, still reeling from rival Star TV's success with "Kaun Banega Crorepati" (KBC, Who Wants to be a Millionaire?), promises a 100 million rupee (2.2 million dollar) prize -- 10 times that offered by KBC -- with its new quiz show that has a tentative launch date of October 23.

"Sawaal Dus Crore Ka" (The 100-Million Rupee Question) will be broadcast three times a week, with contestants required to answer nine questions to reach the pot of gold.

A Zee TV spokesman said the satellite network had received "more than 10 million" calls during an eight-day period last month when it opened its lines to applications from hopeful participants.

Zee is reportedly negotiating with Bollywood movie queen Madhuri Dixit to anchor the show, as a counter to the charisma of KBC's Amitabh Bachchan, India's biggest film

star.

Since KBC's launch on July 3, only one participant has won the 10 million rupee jackpot, but the sums on offer and Bachchan's charm have sent the show's ratings into the stratosphere.

Zee TV, which claims a viewership of 5.5 million Indian households, says the size of the jackpot on "Sawaal Dus Crore Ka" will put KBC and its movie hero host in the shade.

"We are offering an opportunity to earn 2.2 million dollars and even after taxes, cash in hand will be beyond the wildest dreams of most people," a source from the Bombay-based private network said.

India's average annual per capita income is around 226 dollars.

Zee tried to win back its lost viewership with a game show last month, but its comparatively miserly first prize of 100,000 rupees just did not cut the ice.

The rivalry between Zee and Star have led to copycat gameshows on other TV channels, and reports that Australian media tycoon Kerry Packer's Channel Nine is planning to launch its "Greed" game show in India.

Baraquo crowned 'Miss America'

WASHINGTON, Oct 15: A Hawaiian schoolteacher beat out 50 other contestants late Saturday to be crowned Miss America, arguably the most coveted of US beauty pageant crowns, reports AFP.

Angela Perez Baraquo, 24, of Honolulu, won a 50,000-dollar scholarship that accompanies the title, and now prepares for a whirlwind, year-long "reign" including endless promotional appearances and endorsements.

A devout Catholic, Baraquo is a physical education teacher at a Honolulu elementary school. She said after being crowned that she had hoped merely to finish in the top ten to honour her students and "the people of Hawaii."

During the talent portion of Saturday's competition, Baraquo performed a traditional Hawaiian hula dance.

One of nine children, her parents operate a mom-and-pop pest control company.

Organisers of the Miss America pageant consider it unique because it judges contestants not just on beauty, but also on their poise, ability to answer interview questions and talent.

The contest, held each year in Atlantic City, New Jersey celebrated its 80th anniversary this year by undergoing a makeover, attempting a more up-tempo pace and a hipper look, in an effort to reverse years of declining television viewership.

BRIEFLY

Elections in Serbia Dec 24: Voters in Serbia, Yugoslavia's dominant republic, will go to the polls on December 24 to elect a new parliament, Serbian President Milan Milutinovic announced late Saturday, AFP reports from Belgrade.

Agreement on the date was reached following a fresh round of talks between the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) which backs new Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica, the Socialist Party of former leader Slobodan Milosevic and the Serb Renewal Movement (SPR). But Milutinovic said discussions were continuing on the formation of an interim government.

Voting begins in Belarus: Belarus started voting yesterday in a general election boycotted by the opposition and criticised by Western nations who do not view the poll as democratic, Reuters reports from Minsk.

Voters are to choose from 550 candidates running for the 110-seat lower chamber House of Representatives. The small but vocal opposition in the former Soviet state are boycotting the poll, saying the assembly is powerless and the authorities blocked them from equal access to state-run mass media.



US space shuttle Discovery Japanese Mission Specialist Koichi Wakata (L) talks about the days events on Saturday from the shuttle's flight deck as US Pilot Pam Melroy (R) checks some data. Wakata used the robot arm to install the Z-1 truss to the Unity Module after the crew overcame some minor glitches. --AFP photo

Institute of Food & Radiation Biology

Atomic Energy Research Establishment (AERE)
Ganakbari, Savar, Dhaka.

Sub: Availing Opportunity of Disinfecting Medical Equipment with Gamma Ray

It is notified for information of the manufacturers of medical equipment that, a cobalt⁶⁰ (Co⁶⁰) Gamma Irradiator at the Institute of Food & Radiation Biology, a unit of Atomic Energy Commission at Ganakbari, Savar for disinfecting various medical equipment through latest Hi-tech Gamma Ray system. With this, medical equipment manufacturers are being provided commercial service for 16-18 hours daily. It is requested to utilise this opportunity and obtain the disinfection service with guaranteed safety of gauze, bandage, syringe, needle, giving set, plastic container, medical kits, gloves etc.

We assure to provide quick, dependable & as per requirement service and affout cooperation.

Please contact:
Anwar Kamal Siddiqui
Director, IFRB, Phone: Office-7701340, 7701341, Res: 8817288
S.I. No. 610/2000
D.F.P-24483-10/10 G-1796

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD

Ferry Division, Barisal

(RHD) Tender Notice

1. Tender Notice No : 15 of RHD, Ferry Division, Barisal.
2. Name of work : As described below.
3. Eligibility of contractor : "A to E" general category contractor of RHD as per financial capacity and territorial jurisdiction.
4. Availability of tender schedule : 1. Executive Engineer, RHD, Mechl. Ferry Division, Barisal/Khulna.
2. Executive Engineer (RHD), Road Division, Patuakhali.
3. Sub-Divisional Engineer, RHD, Mechl. Ferry Sub-Division, Barisal (only office hours. No tender will be sold on the date of receiving tender schedule).
5. Tender receiving officer : 1. Superintending Engineer, RHD, Mechl. Ferry Circle, Khulna.
2. Executive Engineer, RHD, Mechl. Ferry Division, Barisal, Khulna.
6. Last date of selling tender documents : 24-10-2000/9-7-1407 (only office hours).
7. Last date of receiving tender in sealed cover : 25-10-2000/10-7-1407 at 12 Noon.
8. Date and time of opening tender : 29-10-2000/14-7-1407 at 1 PM.
9. Date & time of lottery (if applicable) : 29-10-2000/14-7-1407 at 3 PM.

Gr No	Name of work	Estimated cost	Earnest money
1	Supplying of spare parts for 150/190 kilowatt man engine of Utility/Ferry at Dapdabia Ferry Ghat under Barisal Ferry Sub-Division during the year 2000-2001.	Tk. 4,00,000/-	Tk. 8,000/- As per schedule
2	Supplying of spare parts for 120 HP Hydromaster (New Ford) engine of Utility Type-2 (Imp) Ferry No. 029/97 at Patuakhali Ferry Ghat under Ferry Sub-Division, Barisal during the year 2000-2001.	Tk. 4,99,925/-	Tk. 10,000/-

Md. Saber Ali
Executive Engineer (RHD)
(Mechl) Ferry Division, Barisal

D.F.P-24587-11/10
G-1804



Biman Flight Catering Centre বিমান ফ্লাইট ক্যাটারিং সেন্টার

ZIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, KURMITOLA, DHAKA, BANGLADESH. PHONES: 8914700-4, CABLE: AIRBANGLA, TLX: 642649
DABG BJ, FAX: 880-02-8913006, E-mail: bfcc@bfcc.com.bd

Ref: BFCC/HS/Tender/44/2000/66 Dated: 09.10.2000

Tender Notice No 42/2000

Biman Flight Catering Centre (BFCC) invites sealed tender from the experienced contractor/supplier to the following job.

Sl No	Name of item	Date for sale of tender SKD	Earnest money (taka) (refundable)	Cost of schedule (non-refundable)	Time & date of dropping of tender SKD	Time & date of opening of tender
01	Supply of grocery items	From 15.10.2000 to 26.10.2000	60,000.00	400/-	From 10.00 hrs to 14.30 hrs on 29.10.2000	At 14.30 hrs on 29.10.2000

Schedule of tender along with other terms and conditions may be obtained on request in the official letterhead pad during office hours on payment of cost of schedule from office of the Manager Finance, BFCC, Zia International Airport, Dhaka. Any eligible bidder may participate in the tender.

BFCC management reserves the right to accept/reject any or all tender/tenders and also to change the opening date of the tender without assigning any reason whatsoever. If tender opening day happens to be holiday, the tender will be opened on the next working day at the same schedule time.

D.F.P-24593-11/10
G-1803

Dy General Manager, BFCC