

Indian fashion designer gets 59 years jail for rape

AP, Los Angeles

Indian American fashion designer Anand Jon Alexander was sentenced Monday to 59 years to life in prison for sexually assaulting aspiring models he lured to Los Angeles.

Alexander, 35, showed no reaction as Superior Court Judge David Wesley said Alexander should be incarcerated as long as possible for preying upon young girls and women. Alexander was convicted in November of 14 counts including forcible rape. He was found not guilty of four felonies, and jurors could not reach a verdict on three counts.

"Alexander has showed no remorse for his actions," the judge said.

Iran ready for new round of nuclear talks

Says top negotiator

AFP, Tehran

Iran's top nuclear negotiator said yesterday the Islamic republic has updated its package of proposals linked to its controversial atomic programme and is ready for fresh talks with world powers.

"The Islamic republic's package of proposals is updated and ready and will be presented (to world powers)," Saeed Jalili, who also heads the country's Supreme National Security Council, told reporters.

"We hope a new round of talks will be held," Jalili said. "We think we can form talks and new cooperations for peace, justice and development in the world."

He said the package would be directed at the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - Britain, China, France,

Russia and the United States -- plus Germany.

The six world powers are to meet near Frankfurt on Wednesday to look into harsher UN sanctions against Iran.

Jalili's announcement comes a day after French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned of further sanctions against the Islamic republic if it failed to negotiate with world powers.

Jalili said Iran was ready with a "revised" package, which was updated taking into consideration last year's global developments, which included the economic recession and the Georgian crisis.

International pressure is mounting for a new round of tougher sanctions against Iran if it refuses to return to talks over its nuclear programme amid long-held suspicions it is working to develop atomic

weapons.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said in April his government would offer world powers an updated version of a one-year-old proposal for talks about its nuclear programme.

Iran's previous proposal in May 2008 offered to engage in negotiations without preconditions on issues including its nuclear programme, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and cooperation to combat terrorism and drugs. It was proposed in the form of a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Jalili said on Tuesday the 2008 proposal "considered resolving issues that the international community suffers from. That package suggested that group cooperations be formed for common concerns."



PHOTO: AFP

Iranian MPs gather around President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's nominated defence minister, Ahmad Vahidi (C), after he delivered a speech in parliament in Tehran yesterday. Iranian MPs strongly backed Vahidi in the face of Argentine demands he be arrested over a 1994 Buenos Aires bombing.

News in Brief

Fiji suspended from C'wealth

BBC ONLINE

The Commonwealth has suspended Fiji after it refused to bow to demands to call elections by next year.

The 53-member group of nations cited the Pacific island country's lack of progress towards democracy.

Fiji had ignored the demand for elections by October 2010, indicating it would stick to its own "roadmap", which sets out elections in 2014.

World's 1st cloned wolf dies

AFP, Seoul

One of the world's first two cloned wolves has died from an apparent infection, a professor who produced the clones almost four years ago said Tuesday.

Snuwolf (Seoul National University wolf) was found dead on August 26 at Seoul Zoo, Professor Shin Nam-Shik of the university told journalists.

Israeli ex-ministers start prison terms

AFP, Jerusalem

Two former Israeli ministers started serving prison terms on Tuesday after being found guilty of corruption in two separate trials, the prison service said.

Former finance minister Avraham Hirshon started a five-year sentence in a prison in northern Israel after a court last May found him guilty of embezzling one million dollars from a rightwing trade union between 1998 and 2005.

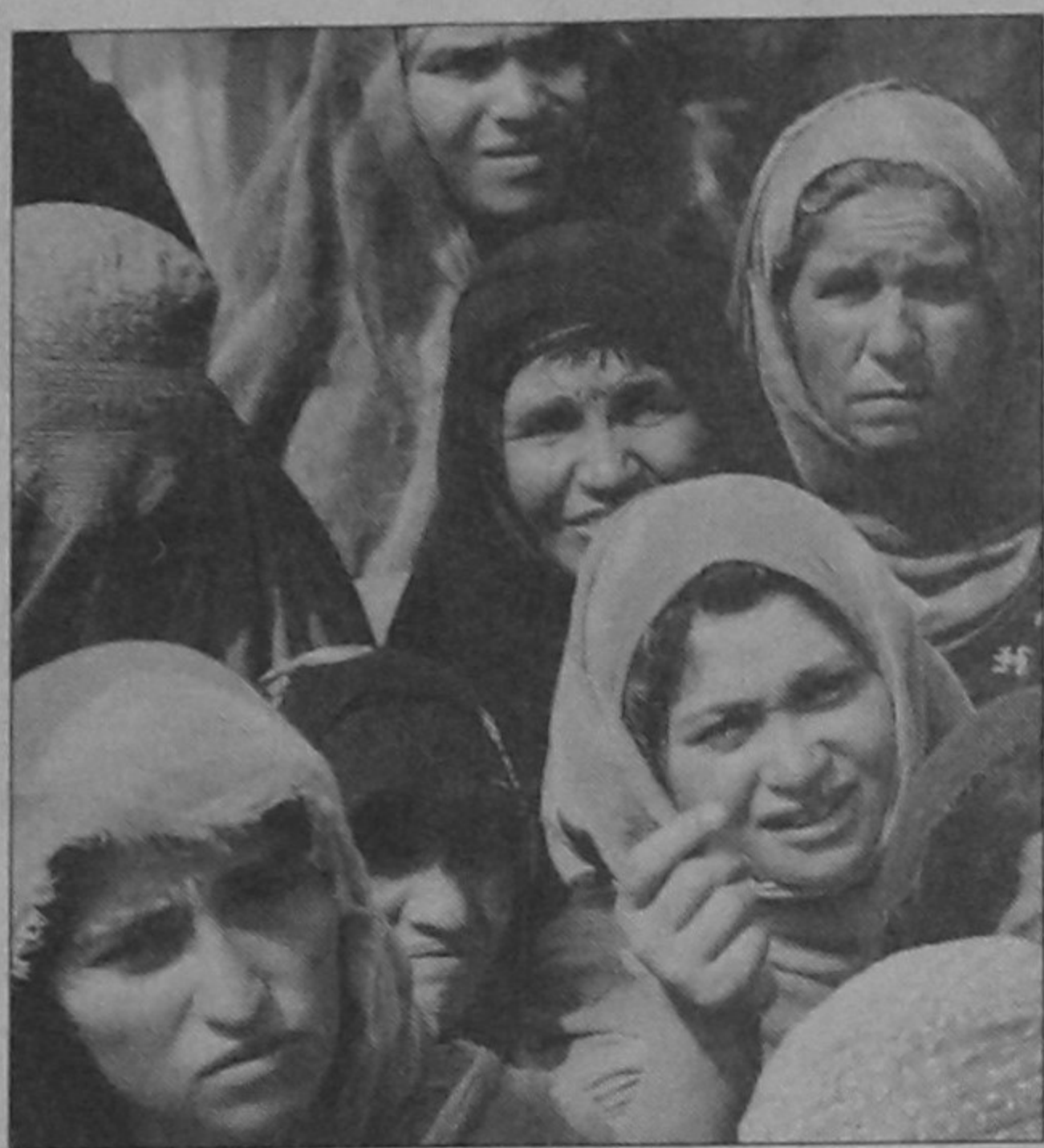


PHOTO: AFP

Displaced Afghan women wait for aid being distributed in the outskirts of Kabul yesterday. Although billions of dollars had been given to Afghanistan in aid, it is still way short of what was needed to rebuild the country.

BJP is paying for 'sins' of leaders: Lalu

AP, Patna

RJD supremo Lalu Prasad yesterday said the present crisis in the BJP reflected that the party was paying "for the sins committed by its leaders".

"The demolition of Babri mosque, Gujarat riots and riots in other places by the BJP had taken a heavy toll of innocent lives," Prasad said.

BJP is disintegrating because of the "curse" of people, he said, adding that the party "will vanish and its leaders will have to face the consequences of their sins".

He reiterated his charge that LK Advani had prevented Narendra Modi from quitting from the post of Gujarat Chief Minister during the Gujarat riots.

"Now see the fate of Advani as a curse has fallen on him and other party leaders for bringing shame to the nation by way of demolition of the mosque in Ayodhya or riots that occurred at all other places," he told reporters.

A state Congress leader Indra Nand Yadav joined the RJD in presence of Prasad at the press conference.

Contender rules out Afghan power deal with Karzai

Western envoys seek way forward on Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul/Paris

Afghanistan's main challenger for the presidency yesterday ruled out the prospect of striking a power-sharing deal with incumbent Hamid Karzai while stepping up accusations of widespread ballot-stuffing.

Abdullah Abdullah, who has accused the state of engineering mass fraud in a bid to secure Karzai's re-election, on Tuesday gathered tribal elders from the south -- which is traditionally seen as his rival's stronghold.

"I assure you that I'll not strike any deals based on your votes and your rights. I'll not strike any deal for power and position," he told reporters.

With results from nearly half the polling stations announced so far, Karzai leads Abdullah by 45.8 percent to 33.2 percent but still lacks the majority needed to avoid a second round.

Karzai needs 50 percent plus one vote to avoid a second round.

The gradual release of results is due to lead to the announcement of preliminary results between September 3 and September 7, and the final tally on September 17.

But complaints of fraud have flooded in daily to Afghanistan's Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC), which is scrambling to investigate more than 2,500 allegations surrounding the August 20 elections.

Meanwhile, Western powers are sending their envoys to Paris today to chart a course in Afghanistan after a tainted presidential vote and calls from the US military for a new strategy to defeat the Taliban.

US envoy Richard Holbrooke will join counterparts from Britain, France, Germany and the United Nations as partial results from the August 20 vote showed President Hamid Karzai with a narrow lead.

'Restrictions on Pak nuke scientist lifted'

AFP, Islamabad

Disgraced Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, who has admitted leaking nuclear secrets to Iran, North Korea and Libya, said Tuesday restrictions on his movements had been lifted.

Asked if local newspaper reports that the government restrictions had been removed were correct, Khan told AFP: "By the grace of Allah, yes."

In February, a Pakistani court declared Khan a free man, five years after the reputed father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb was effectively put under house arrest for operating a proliferation



network.

Last Friday, the 72-year-old Khan complained to a high court that his movements were still being restricted by the government's security arrangements on his behalf. The court ordered the government to respond to Khan's claim on September 4.

Koreas restore regular cross-border traffic

AP, Seoul

North and South Korea restored regular traffic across their heavily fortified border for their jointly run industrial park Tuesday in the latest sign of improved relations between the two, officials in Seoul said.

The North's state radio station, meanwhile, quoted leader Kim Jong Il as saying that the US should abandon its "hostile policy" toward the North and sign a peace treaty with the communist nation to reduce tension on the peninsula. His comments echoed statements he has made in the past. Pyongyang Radio didn't say when Kim made the remarks.

The US fought with South Korea in the 1950-53 Korean War that ended in an armistice,

leaving the North and South still technically at war. About 28,500 American troops are stationed in South Korea as deterrence against the North.

US State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said Monday he had no comment on the matter.

The resumption of regular traffic between the neighbours for their joint industrial park in the North was the latest indication of efforts by Pyongyang to reach out to Seoul and Washington, after months of provocations that included nuclear and missile tests.

The North had severely restricted traffic across the border since December. The clampdown affected the flow of goods and personnel to and from the factory park in Kaesong.

PM reaches

FROM PAGE 16
Shaposhnikov, Deputy Chief of Protocol of Geneva Canton Dominique Louis, Representative of the Swiss Federal Government, Geneva, Jurg Lauber and Bangladesh Ambassador in Geneva Md Abdul Hannan were present on the occasion.

Hasina and her entourage drove in a decorated motorcade to Grand Hotel Kempinski, where the Bangladesh delegation will be staying during the tour.

Earlier at 8:40am (Bangladesh time) in the day, Hasina and her entourage left Dhaka on a flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines and reached at Geneva International Airport at 6:10pm (Bangladesh time).

The passengers on the aircraft apprised the PM of various sorts of mismanagement in operating flights of the national airlines while she was moving around talking to the passengers.

They sought immediate effective steps from the government to remove all "problems and complexities" regarding the flight service of the national flag carrier.

The PM gave a patient hearing to the passengers and assured them of taking necessary steps to improve the air travel facilities.

She deplored that Biman Bangladesh Airlines, as all other sectors of the country, has been ruined due to "misrule and corruption" of the last BNP-Jamaat government.

"But our government is very sincere to develop the national carrier's service. Inshallah, we'll be able to bring back the lost glory of Bangladesh Biman through modern planning and programming," she said.

Meanwhile, The PM's programmes at the climate

conference will begin with delivering her statement tomorrow noon at the Geneva International Conference Centre.

On the day, Hasina is also scheduled to have a bilateral meeting with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at Palais Des Nations at 5:00pm. Besides, Helen Clarke, administrator of the UNDP, will also call on the premier at her hotel suite.

On Friday, the PM will co-chair the high-level segment of the day's programmes of the conference.

World Meteorological Organisation Secretary General Michel Jarraud, Vice-President of Colombia Francisco Santos Calderon and Moritz Leuenberger, minister for environment and former president of Switzerland, will call on her on the sidelines of the conference programmes in the conference centre's meeting rooms on the day.

Bangladesh community in Switzerland will give a reception to the premier at the hotel ballroom at 6:00pm on that day.

Besides, Hasina is scheduled to visit Olympic Museum of Lausanne and Chateau de Chillon and attend a briefing on Swiss Canton System organised by Vaud Canton Office and Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation today.

The prime minister with her delegation is scheduled to leave Geneva for Dhaka on September 5.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Foreign Secretary Mirajul Quayes, PM's Principal Secretary MA Karim, Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad and noted journalist Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, among others, are accompanying the prime minister on the trip.

US won't renegotiate Japan troops deal

AFP, Washington

The United States on Monday ruled out renegotiating a deal on US military bases with Japan's new left-leaning government, which has pledged a fresh look at US forces in its territory.

Japan's incoming prime minister Yukio Hatoyama in the past called for the United States to remove the Futenma Marine base -- long a sore point as it lies in a crowded urban area on the southern island of Okinawa.

But State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said the United States would not revisit a deal finalized just months ago by Japan's long-ruling conservatives that also includes moving troops to the US territory of Guam.

"The United States has no intention to renegotiate the Futenma replacement facility plan or Guam relocation with the government of Japan," Kelly said.

After exhaustive negotiations, former president George W. Bush's administration agreed to dismantle Futenma and shift the facilities to reclaimed land in a quiet part of Okinawa.

Some Okinawan activists -- backed by Hatoyama's Democratic Party while in opposition -- want the United States to get the base off Okinawa completely.

In their platform for Sunday's election, the Democrats said they would "move in the direction of re-examining the realignment of US military forces in Japan and the role of US military bases in Japan."

China urges Myanmar to maintain peace along border

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday urged Myanmar to maintain peace in its remote northwest as refugees who fled clashes between government forces and rebels headed home, following reports the fighting had ceased.

"We hope peace can soon return to the China-Myanmar border and that Myanmar citizens can soon return home," foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu told reporters at a regular news briefing.

"Safeguarding stability along the China-Myanmar border is in the vital interest of the two peoples and is the common responsibility of the two governments."

Thousands of refugees poured across the border into China from Myanmar in recent weeks as government forces launched an offensive in the Kokang region, violating a 20-year ceasefire with the country's various rebel groups.

AFP reporters have since witnessed groups of refugees returning home.

Lessons from Mexico for next wave of swine flu

AP, Mexico City

Mexico is preparing for a second wave of swine flu, looking at what worked and what didn't last spring when it banned everything from dining out to attending school in an effort to control the virus.

As the Northern Hemisphere flu season begins, the rest of the world is also studying Mexico's experience, looking for measures to replicate and costly mistakes to avoid.

So what worked? Public awareness; rapid diagnosis, treatment and quarantine; and a near-compulsive outbreak of hand-washing.

What didn't? Travel bans, school closures, overuse of antibiotics and those flimsy paper face masks that tangled hair, slid down necks and hid the beautiful smiles of this gargantuan city.

When swine flu first flared up in Mexico in April, the government erred on the side of caution, closing schools and museums, banning public gatherings, playing soccer games to empty stadiums and telling people not to shake hands or kiss one another on the cheek. This bustling city of 18 million became eerily hollow.

Mexican health officials say they made the right call.

"Since we were the first country affected by the flu, we didn't know the possible magnitude and severity, so we took measures that we now know can be (focused)," said Dr Pablo Kuri, the health secretary's special influenza adviser.

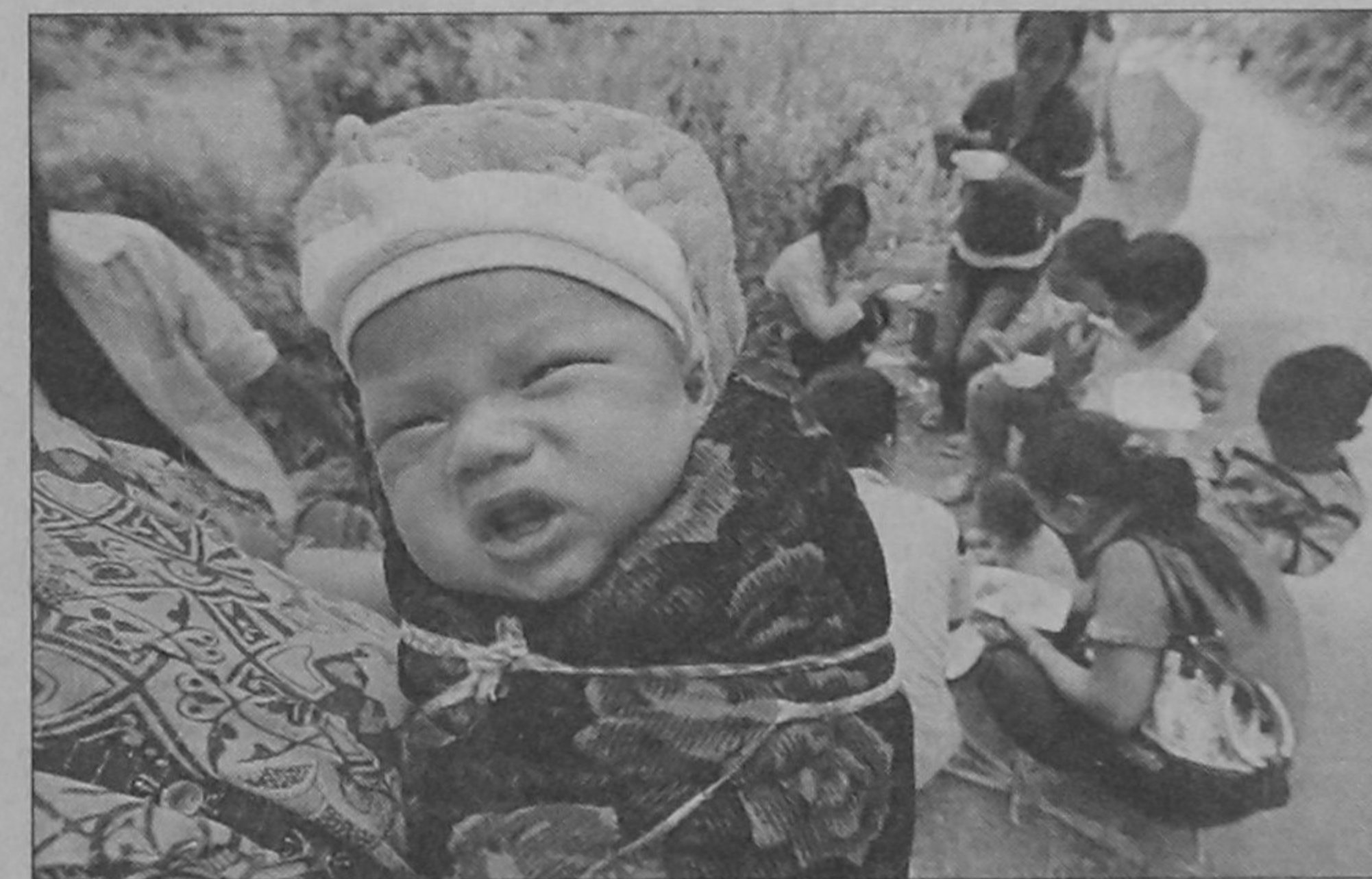


PHOTO: AFP

A group of Myanmar refugees take a break for lunch as they make the trek back home from Zhenkang, in southwest China's Yunnan province yesterday.

Geo-engineering of Earth 'is feasible'

BBC ONLINE

A UK Royal Society study has concluded that many engineering proposals to reduce the impact of climate change are "technically possible".

Such approaches could be effective, the authors said in their report.

But they also stressed that the potential of geo-engineering should not divert governments away from their efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

Such engineering projects could either remove carbon dioxide or reflect the Sun's rays away from the planet.

Suggestions range from having giant mirrors in space, to erecting giant CO2 scrubbers that would "clean up" the air.

Ambitious as these schemes seem, the report concluded that many of them had merit and should be pursued.

The authors stated, however, that some of the technology was barely formed and there were "major uncertainties regarding its effectiveness, costs and environmental impacts".

One of the technologies considered "too risky" was pouring iron filings into the ocean to grow algae which, the authors said, could cause "substantial damage" to marine life and freshwater, estuary and coastal ecosystems.

The study stressed that engineering approaches would only have a limited impact, and that efforts should continue to be focused on reducing CO2 emissions.

"(Governments) should make increased efforts toward mitigating and adapting to climate change and in particular agreeing to global emissions reductions of at least 50% on 1990 levels by 2050 and more thereafter," the authors wrote.