



THE TIMES OF INDIA

A Thought for Today

Everything is perfect coming from the hands of the Creator; everything degenerates in the hands of man.

— ROUSSEAU

Beastly Neglect

There was a time when tigers were shot for sport, when Jim Corbett was a hero, and the 'Maneater of Champawat' was a heroine. The Lady had killed over 400 human beings till she was shot by Corbett. Yet, it was an honourable death; a fight in the open between man and beast. And Jim Corbett was an honourable man: He killed only to save human lives. Indeed, as far back as 1935 he'd sounded the warning bell that unless tigers are protected India would soon lose this magnificent animal. Tiger poaching is banned now, but poachers have assumed other, deadlier, forms. They now kill with neglect and the lethargy of unconcern: And tigers die ignominious death from curable disease, in cages where they're put on display for our epistemic gaze and entertainment. It is a shame that our country, which boasts the largest tiger population, has such a callous and inefficient wildlife babudom. The Nandankanan case shows how the so-called experts have virtually no knowledge of the animal, the diseases it gets and the precautions to be taken when it is given medication. It is shocking that even after one tiger had died of trypanosomiasis the authorities followed the most perfunctory preventive procedures. Without any proper diagnosis, tigers were given Berenil injections which, the authorities now admit, could have caused their death. It is like giving insulin injections to everyone in a family with one known diabetic. It is a terrible example of quacks parading as doctors, or worse still, real doctors transformed by laziness into quacks.

Tragically, there is a clear demarcation in our country between conservationists and zoo-management — two groups which should ideally complement each other. The government's Project Tiger, in collaboration with the World Wide Fund, has committed experts, but they have almost no coordination with the ill-informed zoo authorities. Animal keepers are so poorly paid that there have been cases where they've been known to steal meat meant for the big cats to feed their own children. Our zoos do not have the skilled managers and vets who are essential for captive animals, and the infrastructure in the zoos is pathetic. The first thing that should have been done when the first tiger was infected was to have isolated the animal. This was specially necessary because Nandankanan houses white tigers, known to be extra-susceptible to infections. Again, the fact that the tigers were given injections without any diagnosis shows the lackadaisical approach to animal health in our zoos. But, there is a lesson here for all of us. Our outrage perhaps has more to do with our love for the royal tiger and less with our concern for animals. Other, less attractive, animals die routinely in our zoos and the viewing public is as much to blame. Chocolates, fruit and even plastic packets are routinely thrown at animals in spite of strict regulations. Cages are too close to the visitors and animals are harassed into anger for obscene prurient fun. It would be good if we turn the anger inwards and look at ourselves. It's only then that we'll learn to see beauty in life and not wish life only for the beautiful.

Araam for Gupta

This might just be a temporary reprieve for Ram Prakash Gupta. But for now, he remains chief minister thanks, largely, to the TINA factor — 'there is no other alternative'. Demands for his head, hitherto subdued, became raucous after the drubbing the BJP got in the UP panchayat polls. It was said that Guptaji's baniya lineage had cost the party votes, both among the upper castes and OBCs. At one time, Kalyan Singh had helped the BJP make inroads into the amorphous OBC vote-bank: With Kalyan out, the party desperately needed a charismatic 'backward' leader to keep the BJP's vote-share intact. In fact, party assessments suggest that even the most loyal supporters of the BJP — Brahmins and Rajputs — were pretty miffed by the party's

The Libera

Economics for an Urk

By SAUVIK CHAKRAVARTY

WE, the Indian liberals, are extremely serious about delivering a tough challenge to the socialists who have monopolised our democracy. In a democracy, all citizens are assumed to have the intellect to rule themselves, and are, therefore, given the power to elect their representatives. Thus, democratic parties must appeal to the intellect of the voter. This, the present-day socialist parties do not manage. This is fatal for democracy. It is here that liberalism comes in.

We possess an USP. Unlike the socialist establishment which believes in the population problem, we hold that human beings are, in Julian Simon's words, the ultimate resource, because they all possess the human mind. This mind is uniquely gifted with the ability to trade, and this forces all human beings to naturally specialise in the market economy. This, the division of labour, is the basis of wealth production. It is natural to us humans. If you asked a class of children what they want to be when they grow up they will say: actor, dancer, policeman, diplomat, journalist. None will say: I want to be self-sufficient.

The division of labour is maximum in an urban area; and densely populated dots on the map are all quite rich. This is because, in these urban centres, it is easy to find a specialised niche in the market economy: you cannot be a dentist, plumber, or taxi-driver in the vacant countryside. Thus, just as ants build anthills, human beings build cities and towns. We liberals, therefore, see the future of India as highly urbanised: we aim to see each dot on the map, each strange name in the STD codebook, becoming a boom town.

It is here that we engage our potential supporters in what Thomas Sowell called a conflict of visions. As opposed to the socialist states' vision of an India of villages, we propose an India of 400 Singapores. This vision is supported by valid economic theory which is put across so simply that even little children can understand it. We believe that the rural development charade engaged in by the socialists is part of the politico-bureaucratic spoils system. The socialist states planners and administrators, the so-called intellectual-moral elite, have failed precisely in this area. They have kept the villages poor and they have ruined all the cities and towns. They have

manufactured permanent p

Our recent history shows the liberal vision is achieved: we look back at colonial times and see vigorous urban development. Many new cities came up, countless hill-stations. The process was simple: first build the city, then link it up with the surrounding areas. Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Delhi were the cities, and each link was made into a road to develop new urban centres. Shimla-Mussoorie belt near the Darjeeling-Shillong belt, Calcutta and the South Indian stations around Bombay, Madras. Liberalism drove a remarkable urban boom.

In a letter that survives, the directors of the East India Company advised their man in Fort St. George (modern Chennai): Make your element a mart for all nations that is how God Almighty created

IN BRIEF

- Division of labour is the basis of wealth production
- This is maximum in an urban area
- We need a liberal state that invests in public goods like roads and law and order
- Urbanisation is an antidote to poverty
- A liberal party is the need of the hour

promised to make Jerusalem great. We plan to do exactly this, for each one of India's Singapores. May we be marts for all nations. May every villager oppressed by caste, other factions and superstitions move to a city, settle down, and participate in the division of labour. To achieve our vision, we need a liberal state that invests in public goods: especially roads and law and order. We do not need a state that invests money in a spoils system producing cars but not roads. The absence of roads is what has destroyed our urban potential. The National Capital Region is a good example. Adequate links to the surrounding towns have not been vested in, so all migration is focused on the main city. Thus Delhi bloats and gets overcrowded while satellite towns do not develop. The socialists are happy with this situation. They control the supply of land. The MRTS under construction

Call of Ro...

Vision an Civilisation

tion does not link Delhi with a single outlying town.

In London, after the war, the first housing development project came up in Stanmore, over 100 kilometres away. The state responded by extending London undergrounds jubilee line all the way to Stanmore. In this way, land was colonised, there was no central overcrowding and poor people could find affordable quality housing. We liberals believe we can do the same here. Rent control is the only cause of slums. With road and rail connections colonising space, a vibrant market for cheap rentals could be encouraged. This would solve the slum problem. The socialists have engaged a demolition man, but they have no real cure to India's urban problems. They merely want to exploit the situation.

Indeed, the socialists are totally clueless. At the 1998 Economic Editors Conference, the head of India's Planning Commission said that his greatest desire was to see that no villager would move to a city. What about the division of labour? How is wealth produced? Human beings are propelled to do what is economically rational: to obtain gains and avoid losses. If millions are moving out of thinly populated countryside and into crowded cities there must be some rationale explaining this. It is glaringly evident, in this case, that they profit from participating in the greater division of labour in the cities. If you really want to help the poor, you should see urbanisation as a friend that will help you. This, the socialists have not seen. The NDA government promised to invest 60 per cent of its total outlay on rural development. This money will be spent by district magistrates and eaten up by politicians.

The Bombay High Court must take a quick decision on the PIL filed by Minoo Masani's followers. A liberal party is the need of the hour. Man is a creature of reason, and liberalism offers a way out of this government of unreason. Socialism is a failed ideology worldwide and it is ridiculous that India should remain, by Constitution, a socialist country. In its heyday, Masani's Swatantra Party had over 60 members in the Lok Sabha. Today, we could do much better. For we have a vision, and we have economics to back it. So sleep with one eye open, you socialists. We liberals are coming.

Make Pleasing Music Despite the Noise

By C S SHAH

WHILE universal harmony finds expression in the sweet music of nature, in the silent movements of the sun and the moon, the stars and the galaxies, global chaos expresses itself in the noises made by saber rattling and nuclear threats. It is reflected in the documentaries, seminars and speeches in the United Nations, parliaments, colleges and schools. These noises become never ending arguments and even turn into lawsuits. We swamp ourselves in an attempt to extract the meaning of these noises and voices.

These voices raise questions — some clear, some unclear. Identifying with the ego, they touch agreeable or discordant notes and become voices of praise or insult, of joy and sorrow. Some respond to these by remaining indifferent; others by blaming the sufferers themselves. The poor are left to suffer in silence so that the ego-tranquillity of the privileged is not disturbed.

A few are happy to avoid the chaos and some even try to pretend they don't exist, seeking refuge in alcohol and drugs. Others are silent about their inability to fathom the meaning of these noises and shut themselves within four walls. Still others try to drown this din and bustle by creating louder noises of their own: noises of discos and dances, of self analysis and criticism, of opinions and advice.

A rare soul feels the agony of the afflicted as her own. She puts her sadhana at stake and exhorts herself and her associates to respond to these cries by serving them in distress. Silently, the guru listens to the ear piercing cacophony and, with the smile of a knower, pacifies the confused and chaotic masses. In her heart arises the all pervading and unifying sweet music of the flute: the universal mantra. She gives this valuable mantra to the seeker, and tells the frightened to be unafraid of noises.

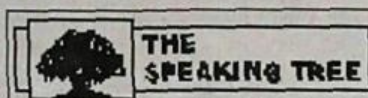
"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The

original sound is trying to express itself through all these distractions and disturbances. Try to understand and rectify the distortions by listening to the sound as mantra. It is the name of God. It is the destiny of every implicit and explicit noise".

The mantra begins to expand. When there is a flood, the waters of the river overflow the banks and spread far and wide, similarly, the awakened mantra emerges not merely from lips, or the tongue, or the throat, but from all directions and all things. It emerges as the *Upanishads*, as science and art. Sometimes it speaks loudly, at other times it silently hints at the subtle bliss all around. Expansion of the mantra involves the spiritual transformation of every object that it touches. The sense organs — not only of hearing, but those of sight, touch, smell, and taste also — become its companion when enlivened by mantra consciousness. Every expression of sound, sight, taste, smell, and touch brings joy and satisfaction.

The mantra is not the product of anyone's brain; rather, the guru sees such eternal mantra and out of love and compassion passes them for the fulfilment of others. She acts as a catalyst, to ignite the flame of spirituality and empathy in all beings. The disciple over a period of time realises that the mantra and the teacher is one blessed and blissful self.

The sound and the noises gradually flow and merge in the silence of prayer. A worshipful attitude brings solace to troubled souls through the constant repetition of the mantra. Many do not believe, a few others are overwhelmed but lack the requisite yearning. Everyone, however, is guaranteed this blessing. The teacher has promised to give the mantra to one and all at the destined opportune time. The jarring notes of disease and suffering, euphoric shouts of victory and success, all would merge in the subtle oneness of the primordial sound: the peaceful expression and name of God, the Om.



Sacred Space

Meditation

Wisdom comes to a man who meditates, acts and lives according to the true eternal laws of Nature.

Rig Veda 10.47.6



We call a city totally literate when each and every person in the city has learned how to read and write. Like that, in the city of your body some people get a turn today to learn, some others get a turn tomorrow... some others the next day... Everyday that you meditate, you culture them. It takes some time to culture all the neurons in the brain. Then they are all cultured to live in bliss.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



Through self evaluation you will develop the skill of reading energy and sensing intuitive guidance. Developing this skill of reading requires daily practice — in times of crisis, even hourly. This simple act of awareness, coupled with conscious commitment to learn from your experiences, will weaken your fears and strengthen your spirit.

Caroline Myss



If you see something along the way that you want to touch with your mindfulness — the blue sky, the hills, a tree, or a bird — just stop, but while you do, continue breathing mindfully... If you don't breathe consciously, sooner or later your thinking will settle back in, and the bird or the tree will disappear.

Thich Nhat Hanh



Reverie is the groundwork of creative imagination; it is the privilege of the artist that with him it is not as with other men an escape from reality, but the means by which he accedes to it.

Somerset Maugham



Let us leave every man at liberty to seek himself and lose himself in his ideas.

Voltaire

ambivalence. Something had to be done. Rumours have it that senior BJP leaders in UP had arrived at a compromise formula that would enlarge its mass-base — it was to be a carefully tailored multi-caste package, with a Brahmin or Rajput chief minister and an OBC deputy. But, such magic formulae might sound wonderful on paper, they are difficult to achieve in the real world. One cannot suddenly inspire bonhomie between leaders who represent real everyday struggles on the ground. UP's electoral past shows that Brahmins and Rajputs have rarely voted together, and it is virtually impossible to unite the two *dwija* castes with OBCs, unless other emotive issues establish temporary ties.

Yet, the caste equation in UP is only part of the story. The other story is that of Prime Minister Vajpayee's peculiar relationship with other leaders and power centres in the BJP. Ram Prakash Gupta is widely seen as Mr Vajpayee's man, someone who was installed after the prime minister virtually sacked Kalyan Singh. That was the first sign that the BJP began and ended with Mr Vajpayee — almost mirroring the way Sonia Gandhi runs the Congress. Mr Vajpayee has since established that his word is final, from liberalisation to Ayodhya. In the much-celebrated struggle between the RSS and its *mukhota*, the mask appeared to have taken over the body. Vajpayee enabled the BJP to cobble together a coalition, and Vajpayee is the reason the NDA is still in office. But the question is: How long can Mr Vajpayee prop up a government that is clearly nowhere as popular as him? Conversely, will his image not suffer on account of how his government is perceived? Indeed, of late, Team Vajpayee has come in for criticism on a number of issues. Even on the reforms front, the government has been attacked for pushing through its agenda, bypassing the vital process of educating the people. Perhaps sensing that Mr Vajpayee is under pressure, the RSS has become vocal again: At the recently-concluded conclave of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, we once again heard strident voices. A whisper campaign has also started within the sangh parivar on the PMO's overtures to the international community and foreign funding agencies. The struggle for supremacy within the BJP seems to have intensified once again. And one will have to wait — with finger crossed — to see who wins the next round.

Kindred Soul

A few weeks ago a reputed international news magazine featured the elusive and enigmatic North Korean leader Kim Jong Il on its cover. Just a little above the photograph, in bold navy blue print, the magazine ran the ingeniously conceived title-header: 'Greetings, Earthlings'. By portraying Mr Kim as an alien the magazine was not being uncharitable; contrary to what most people believed, it was just being true to its name. For, the consummate 'economist' that the magazine is, it has succeeded in making, in just two words, an editorial comment on Mr Kim — and the state of his country — that would otherwise, have taken many more words to make. The truth is that Mr Kim is not an alien, but that he has grown to become one. As the ruler of a country that has cut-off all contact with its earthly neighbours, Mr Kim has been living virtually in a world of his own. So when poor old Kim suddenly presented himself before the world to meet his South Korean counterpart — wearing an outmoded front-zipped 1950s Mao suit, and shoes with platform heels and a dated bouffon — the world responded with expected bewilderment. And Mr Kim became the prized antique that every collector wanted to appraise. Some chose to compare him to an alien. Some suggested make-overs for him. Others went to the ridiculous extent of even designing an entire wardrobe for him. Most, however, forgot that Mr Kim was only being 'himself'. A character trait that we have now forced into extinction. Indeed our statesmen, and even most of us, take great pains not to be ourselves. However, there was a time, not long ago, when genuineness was celebrated and statesmen were content to appear what they really were. They did not hold up airport runways because they wanted their hair to be coiffured by their favourite hair stylist, or spend oodles of money, hiring image consultants to re-invent their fickle personalities. So important was candour that leaders felt no shame in showing up at Buckingham Palace for an audience with the queen dressed in little more than a loin cloth and a *lathi* in hand. So could Mr Kim be such an anachronism to us because he belongs to this long-forgotten school of statesmen? "Highly unlikely", say most style gurus. Mr Kim, they say, is playing a crafty game. He is using his Mao suit fancy dress to be precisely what he isn't. After all isn't he known to be a jet-setting playboy with a passion for fast cars and pretty girls, they ask?

FIRST it was Sushmita Sen and now Lara Dutta. Both have won the Miss Universe contest and both are daughters of Air Force officers. The Army, though proud of the achievements of fellow officers' children, is nevertheless quite upset. What is it that makes Air Force officers' daughters so eminently successful? Where are our daughters going wrong? This is playing havoc with our morale.

To do my bit to help the Army, I carried out an appreciation of the situation, in classic military style.

Besides genes, the various pictures that go through the mind of a pregnant woman, play an important part in the physiognomy of the child. In such a situation, an Air Force officer's wife tends to think of fighter aircraft — slim, sleek and graceful. The result? A beautiful daughter, if it is a daughter, with the potential to develop the svelte aerodynamic looks of a beauty queen. An Army officer's wife, under similar circumstances, has visions of cumbersome tanks or artillery pieces. These

items, though admirable in war aren't exactly guaranteed to win prizes for good looks.

Another factor is the general demeanour of Air Force officers. I lots flirt with danger and need to be calm and composed. This seeps in their subconscious and they walk a loose-limbed manner, with a smile on their lips and laughter in their eyes. Hence, their daughters, influenced by the ambience at air base, develop personalities that could charm any judge at a beauty bash.

Army officers, on the other hand, always behave as if on the drill square. It's an Army thing. They are stiff and formal and don't smile unless there is a good reason, like senior's insipid joke. As a result of this sombre atmosphere, the daughters learn to unbend and cultivate the poise and charm alien to a drill square, only at a late age. And even then, when discarding the starch, they suffer from a feeling of guilt.

The last factor I considered was the uniform. When an Air Force officer bends over the cradle, he

LETTERS

Manage Our Zoos Better

At a time when there are only a few thousand tigers left on this earth, the death of these magnificent cats in the Nandankanan Zoo in Bhubaneswar is a shocking eye-opener to the utter callousness with which we treat our animals in captivity. A zoo as vast as Nandankanan has only one doctor and no night attendants for the animals and fund constraints have been cited as the cause.

We have limitless funds to pay the salaries and perks to our deadwood babus and politicians but not enough to offer even wholesome diet to the zoo animals. And funds are indeed a genuine problem, what right do we have to build and run zoos for our entertainment? We might as well seriously consider gradually shipping away all our zoo-bred animals to the zoos of more developed nations such as the US where they will be fed and looked after well. Such an act would do a great service to these wonderful creations of God.

Siddhartha Deb
debsiddhartha@hotmail.com

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Shocking. This one word sums up how I felt after reading that ten Royal Bengal tigers had died after irresponsible zoo keepers had failed to diagnose the disease they were suffering from and had given

them the wrong medication.

Ironically the government spends crores of rupees setting up game reserves to save the tigers from being poached, failing to realise that the real enemy is within. It is not the poachers, but our inept and unscrupulous wildlife officials that the tigers have to be protected against.

Since we don't even care about human lives, I don't expect anybody to be suspended or even reprimanded. In any case as a people we can't bear to see things working smoothly. We are our own worst enemies. Forget nature we have even managed to ruin a sport like cricket. We deserve no better. Perhaps the British were right after all. We definitely need to be civilised.

Rahul Jain, via email

Bad Timing

A hue and cry is being raised about school timings — while some are for the change, others are against it. The education minister should have thought it over before making any changes. The practical difficulties are experienced by the parents, teachers and students; people at the helm of affairs do not experience them.

In states like Maharashtra, Chandigarh and Delhi, students go to school as early as 7 am. At present, this issue has taken a political turn. It's only the politicians who, in the guise of welfare measures, victimise teachers, students and parents and save their vote banks.

Schools, specially in our town

Valley of Victims

new-born daughter sees a vague shape dressed in sky blue. A happy colour. She burps contentedly as she has opened her eyes to a cheerful world. When an Army officer bends over the cradle to see his baby, the poor wretch sees something in drab, olive green. A colour good for camouflage, but rather harsh on a new-born babe. The child starts to bawl as she feels that she has been thrust into a grim world. She thus starts off at a disadvantage. It is hard work to get rid of the conviction that the world is a punishment station. By the time she does so, Air Force officers' daughters are already wearing winners' sashes and crowns.

Instead of worrying about winter warfare clothing, weapons, gun-locating radar, remote-sensing devices and such like, the Army must first tackle the above problem on a war-footing. If officers are dispirited and as a consequence their morale takes a dive, one may as well equip the Army with bows and arrows and save the exchequer a great deal of money.

were functioning from 8 am and 1.40 pm. We found students coming regularly to school. The attendance was perfectly normal. This inculcated the habit of early rising. After school, they had enough time to rest, play and do their homework.

The present timings have made them lethargic and there is no time either to play or complete the homework or rest. The lunch hours of one-hour duration makes the students scurry home and this haste may be the cause of accidents. Moreover, some students skip classes after the lunch break.

The education minister should have thought about its feasibility and practicality. The present timings may be suitable to the students of Bangalore, especially for the school, bus traffic, etc.

Pavana Chandrakant,
Dandeli

An Appeal

My daughter Meena Kumari (8) has to undergo open heart surgery which costs Rs 34,000. I am a watchman and cannot raise such a huge amount. I request philanthropists, individuals, industrialists and social organisations to help me. DDs/cheques may be sent to Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiology, IP/OP No 92208, Victoria Hospital Complex, Bangalore.
C. Nanda Kumar,
Bangalore

Letters to the Editor can be emailed to
lettersbg@indiatimes.com

SRINAGAR: Dr Girija Dhar was principal, Government Medical College, Kashmir, before she became the chairperson of the state public service commission followed by chairperson of the social advisory board. Now she heads the recently formed state commission for women. A Kashmiri Hindu, Dr Dhar is married to a Muslim doctor and she dared to go to a boys college when there was none for women in Kashmir. Breaking through the barriers of religion and gender, Dr Dhar has managed to maintain her individuality and identity as a professional. She spoke to **Ashima Kaul Bhatia** about the commission's role in uplifting the status of women in the strife-torn Kashmir valley where women have become the worst sufferers of violence.

What are the powers and objectives of the state commission?

Most state commissions are subsidiaries of the National Commission for Women (NCW). We are not yet affiliated to NCW. But we do have wide powers. If any rules or laws go against the interests of women, whether in services or any other sphere, if we find that there is a need to modify, rectify or even introduce new ones to safeguard the interests of women, we can do that. As regard the objective, it is mainly to empower women so that they can take their own decisions. For that, have first we to do lot of research work. Collect data on how much we have progressed since 1947, which are the areas that have been neglected etc. Based on this we will decide our thrust areas. We will also be conducting some awareness programmes.

Will you look into Human Rights violations?

That is a part of our programme. **How can she safeguard her interests?**

She is really trying to create a balance between her different roles. We intend to address this area by empowering her.

How will you implement your programmes, considering the state of J&K's finances?

If the state has created this institution, they might as well provide funds to make it achieve its objectives.

Lot of social issues have emerged during militancy. For example widowhood.

The commission has no direct role in rehabilitation programmes. It is not a part of our function. The state is already running certain programmes for the widows under the social welfare board and the social advisory board. It is through these

agencies and some NGO's who are already working in this area we will address these social issues. Also our empowerment programmes will also be implemented through these agencies.

What are the issues and concerns today's Kashmiri women?

Women in all societies are performing multidimensional roles. She has to perform the role of mother, wife and daughter, all rolled into one. She has to work towards the welfare of her home and family. In Kashmir for a women to perform all these roles has become a difficult task. If her husband or son picks up a gun she has no choice but to protect them. She does not want to go against them. She has to abide by them, at times she does it willingly and at times she is forced to. She has no alternative but to give them food and shelter. On the other hand there are excesses by the security agencies, who punish her for protecting her husband or son. A Kashmiri women really has no choice and is being pushed against the wall. So today her security becomes her prime concern.



"The form of Islam (in Kashmir) is different from the rest of the Muslim countries. This allowed her (the woman) freedom to exercise her choice. So could not relate to the new code as preached by the fundamentalist."

In Kashmir there has never been an organised women's movement. How will you get her involved in your programmes?

This is a dedicated work. One cannot hire people for working for this cause. So one has to look for people or organisations who are willing to take up this responsibility. We will have to network to involve women in our programmes.

Why do you think women have not been able to organise themselves in Kashmir?

At the onset of militancy, women became the prime target of Islamic fundamentalism. The main objective of the militant groups was to bring Islamic changes. Women were asked to behave in a certain manner, adhere to the Islamic dress code, observe purdah. But in spite of all the threats women resisted the impositions. They refused to give in to the sanctions and defied the diktats of the militant groups.

But this was not done in an organised manner. Even before militancy there was no leadership amongst women.

There was really no need for

women to organise themselves and form a collective body. They were already a part of the progressive mainstream. There were no restrictions on a woman's behaviour, education or the vocation she wanted to take up. And why single out women? Where are the men's organisations, apart from the militant ones!

But should not the women organise themselves for peace, raise their voice against the gun?

It is not an easy thing to do. You must realise that it not only women but men too who fear the gun. Nobody wants to be singled out. You might be killed even if you protest against the killing of an innocent person.

Then how did the women manage to resist the purdah?

Because Kashmiri women had already tasted freedom and did not want to lose it. Basically a Kashmiri Muslim is not a fundamentalist. The form of Islam here is different from the rest of the Muslim countries. This allowed her freedom to exercise her choice. She could not relate to the new code as preached by the fundamentalists.

Moreover media exposure also influenced her mind. She saw women elsewhere were wearing the latest designer clothes, so naturally she questioned the restrictions on her.

For redressal of grievances you will have to interact with agencies affiliated to law and security. Do you think it will be difficult?

Yes. Given the kind of situation prevailing in the Valley I wonder how much time they will be able to give to our programmes.

Do you think your being a Hindu will come in your way, especially here in Kashmir?

No, not at all. I have never given thought to that aspect. I have always worked in the interest of women and the larger mankind. Moreover in Kashmir you know what to expect and what are the stakes. It is in Jammu that one has to be cautious. It is a dormant volcano there; one never knows when it will explode.

How much funds have been allocated to the commission?

At the moment we have been given Rs 16 lakh. This is for establishing the office, for the salaries and some awareness programmes. The rest hopefully will come later.

Are women aware of the commission. If yes what kind of complaints are you receiving?

They are slowly coming to know about it. I have been receiving several complaints. They are generally personal, related to marriage problems, but some have come regarding police excesses.

GLOBESCAN

AP-PTI



American child Jafer Ali, 18 months, playing with a nurse in Amman Medical Center in Amman on Thursday, July 6, 2000. Jafer was hit by a shrapnel of a bomb which exploded during a Royal Jordanian flight to Damascus by a hijacker who was killed by the security guards on Wednesday evening.

Jordanian authorities foil hijacking

AMMAN: A Syrian man demanding to fly to Germany attempted to hijack a commercial flight after it took off from here, throwing a grenade that wounded 15 passengers before he was shot and killed by security officers aboard the plane. The Royal Jordanian plane returned to Amman and landed safely after the midair violence on Wednesday night, said Capt Ahmad Irsheid, Director-General of Jordan's Civil Aviation Department. The plane had been bound for neighbouring Syria. Airport officials said 96 people, including a 12-member crew, were aboard the Airbus 320. The passengers included Americans, Japanese, Syrians, Lebanese, Kuwaitis and Jordanians. The wounded included one Kuwaiti, Lebanese, Syrians and Jordanians, the airport officials said. Information Minister Taleb Rifai identified the hijacker as Mahmoud Rizq Deeb from Syria's Mediterranean city of Tartous. He said he was armed with a handgun as well as the grenade. —AP

31 die in storms

BEIJING: A severe rainstorm on Thursday caused the deaths of eight people in the southwest Chinese city of Chongqing, bringing the total killed by storms in the city over the last week to 31, state media said. The storm hit Chongqing municipality, which covers a large area

Camp David may bring peace between Israelis and Palestinians

WASHINGTON: President Bill Clinton has called a three-way Middle East summit for next Tuesday at Camp David in a high-stakes gamble to seal a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians.

The summit between Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will be aimed at bridging "significant differences" that have led Palestinian and Israeli negotiators to an impasse, Clinton said on Wednesday. Clinton said there was "no guarantee of success" but that both sides agreed they could not make sufficient progress without such a summit and that it was time to call it now because "delay tends to make these things worse, not better." "Action does have its perils, but so too does inaction," the President said in the White House press briefing room.

The parties face a target of September 13 for agreeing to a final peace accord. The issues to be settled are the most complex, including the status of Jerusalem, borders, Palestinian refugees and the future of Jewish settlers in areas

captured by Israel in the 1967 war.

Clinton is working on a deadline of his own. He leaves office in January and would like a Middle East peace agreement to round out his legacy seven years after coaxing Arafat and the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin into a 1993 White House handshake.

Barak, in Paris for talks with French President Jacques Chirac, said he would attend "with a heavy feeling of responsibility". That prompted Israeli Interior Minister Natan Sharansky, a former Soviet Jewish dissident and leader of a key partner in Barak's governing coalition, to announce he would quit the government in protest.

Arafat will also attend, saying the Palestinian leadership welcomed the invitation that reiterated its position "which seeks the success of peace efforts".

But the chief Palestinian negotiator, Ahmed Korei, predicted the summit would fail because "the Israeli position is known and will not change and the Palestinian position is clear and it too will not change." — Reuters

Changes in Israel's Knesset

Two parties that are part of Ehud Barak's day they would leave his government due to policy differences. The changes would leave Barak in the 120-member Knesset. Here are the



Source: Compiled from AP wire reports

Elia's return most emotional for Castro

HAVANA: Cuban President Fidel Castro on Wednesday led a patriotic homage to the father of shipwreck survivor Elia Gonzalez — saying the 6-year-old boy's return last week was the most emotional moment of his revolutionary life.

In a ceremony honouring Juan Miguel Gonzalez, Castro compared the custody saga with other decisive moments in his political life such as the 1959 Cuban Revolution and the 1961 defeat of a US-backed invasion at the Bay of Pigs.

"In none of those occasions during our struggles did I experience such intense emotion as when, upon the opening of the doors of the small plane that brought them from the United States ... I saw emerge ... the figures of Juan Miguel and Elia," the 73-year-old Cuban leader said in a speech.

"A small boy and a humble Cuban father, whom few people knew just a few months ago, were returning transformed into giant moral symbols of our Fatherland. At that moment, I thought how great is our people, how invincible a just idea."

Castro stood beside Gonzalez as he



Six-year-old Elia Gonzalez runs with friends in Varadero on Wednesday. Elia returned to Cuba last week after the US Supreme Court ruled in favour of his father in an international custody battle, allowing them to return home.

With soft music playing in the background, Wednesday night's video clips chronicled part of the

ously rummaging through his clothes and toys at the homes of his paternal and maternal grandpar-

nesset

uling coalition said Wednes-
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s One Israel Party: 26

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AP

Indo-Canadian librarian wins top award

ORONTO: An Indo-Canadian
brarian who has spent 42 years in
e profession, first in India and
ter in Canada, has won the Cana-
ian honour for academic librari-
nship. Kewal Krishnan, who began
is career as a librarian at the state
library in the Indian city of Chandi-
arh where he worked for nine
ears before migrating to Canada,
has received the Outstanding Aca-
ademic Librarianship Award 2000,
which was presented to him in
Edmonton at the Canadian
Library Association Conference by
the Canadian Association of Col-
lege and University Libraries
(CACUL). He is presently working
at the University of Saskatchewan
Library's Technical Services unit
(in Saskatoon).

The citation said Krishnan, who has
worked as a librarian for 33 years
in Canada, "has made an outstand-
ing professional contribution in
terms of his "research," his commit-
ment to the scholarship inherent
within technical services activities,
and promoting knowledge of serials
management issues to working col-



Dutch Prince Bernhard Jr. kisses his bride Annette Sekreve after civic wedding ceremony in Utrecht on Thursday. Prince Bernhard Jr. is cousin of Dutch Queen Beatrix.

Student's dance skills prove deadly

CARACAS: Jackson Montero
liked to dance and the girls who
were his partners said he was the
best. But his skills on the dance
floor cost him his life when two of
his Venezuelan classmates decided
he was too popular.

Montero (15) was shot five times
Tuesday by two other teenagers in
the central Venezuelan city of
Valencia after a party where he
delighted a number of girls with his
new dance steps, police said on
Wednesday.

"It seems he was too popular with
the girls," police spokeswoman
Odalys Caldera told Union radio.
She said the 15-and 16-year-old sus-
pects, whose envy of Montero's tal-
ents was the motivation for the
shooting, were on the run. —Reuter

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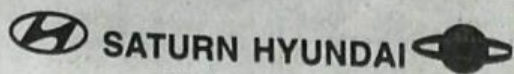


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including the Three Gorges on the Yangtze river, at 8 a.m., the official Xinhua news agency reported. By late afternoon, eight people were dead, three missing and 22 injured across Chongqing's 16 districts. —DPA

at Havana's Karl Marx Theatre. **First images:** A shy but joyful Elian Gonzalez was seen riding his bicycle in his hometown and splashing in a pool at a nearby resort as state television aired some of the first images of the boy since his return to Cuba a week ago.

surprise visit Elian and his family made on Tuesday afternoon to Cardenas, where the child was born and raised. On the streets of the small port city, scores of residents cheered as a bus carrying the family drove by.

The 6-year-old was shown curi-

ents. He looked thrilled to find a pair of inline skates, which he tried on over his bare feet and skated a bit down a hallway. At his school, Elian was greeted by his classmates, and a teacher leaned down to show him pictures and something written in a book. —AP

Bangla army to induct women

Ershadul Haq
DHAKA: Bangladesh announced on Thursday it would induct women in its regular army service for the first time.

An advertisement released in newspapers by the Bangladeshi Army said the government had decided to recruit women in the commissioned rank. The decision will become effective with recruitment of women cadets under the 47th Bangladesh Military Academy (BMA) long course, the advertisement said. An official in the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) told IANS that a few women were

recruited last year in specialised trades of the army and navy but not in the regular service. Currently, the army employs women only in the medical corps.

A detailed advertisement seeking applications from women candidates will appear in newspapers on Friday, Thursday's advertisement said.

Only applicants who have secured second division in the higher secondary certificate (HSC) examination would be eligible to apply. The women must be at least 1.52 metres tall and have a weight not less than 40.82 kg. —IANS

SA Indian businessman to launch AIDS test kit

Fakir Hassen

DURBAN: A leading South African Indian businessman plans to make AIDS tests more accessible and affordable by launching the world's first do-it-yourself AIDS testing device on Saturday.

Vivian Reddy has won the rights to distribute throughout Africa a device that delivers results within 20 minutes.

The Oraquick, which has been tested at the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, U.S. and the University of Natal in South Africa, will be launched by South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma ahead of the 13th International AIDS Conference which begins here on Monday.

"The Oraquick will make it more convenient, accessible and affordable for the public to carry out AIDS tests in the comfort of their own homes with complete confidence," Reddy said.

The device, with a reported accuracy rate of 99.7 per cent, is able to detect anti-bodies in the saliva of a person who has either the HIV1 or HIV2 strain. It consists of a pad

with which the user swabs the upper and lower gums. The pad is then placed in a vial with a developer solution.

Twenty minutes later, a coloured line appears on the pad to indicate that the test has been run correctly. If the person is HIV positive, a second line will appear.

But the project will not end with the testing device. Each unit will also come with a counselling tape which users can play at their leisure and a toll free 24-hour counseling service manned by health professionals has been set up to advise those who test positive.

At the function on Saturday, the deputy president will also launch a new initiative, "Orphan of Aids", which will raise funds to care for the estimated 144 South African children who daily become orphans due to their parents succumbing to AIDS.

Reddy will donate the first 100,000 rands to kickstart the project and a percentage of proceeds from sales of the units will also go to the project. —IANS

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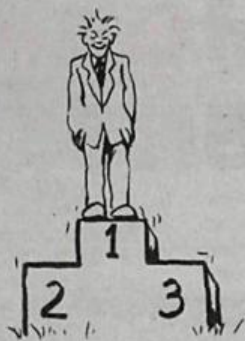
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