

Nepali Congress may expel G P Koirala today

KATHMANDU, July 26: The ruling Nepali Congress is likely to expel acting Prime Minister Gijra Prasad Koirala, forcing a split and adding to the country's political crisis, party officials said today, reports Reuter.

They said a twice-postponed meeting of the party's 27-member central committee had been re-scheduled for Wednesday and was likely to vote to expel Koirala for recommending the dissolution of parliament without consultation.

"The majority is in favour of taking action against Koirala," said one high-ranking party official, who asked not to be named.

A vocal section of the Nepali Congress which came to power in Nepal's first democratic elections for three decades in

1991, was incensed when King Birendra accepted Koirala's advice to dissolve parliament earlier this month.

The acting prime minister made the recommendation after 36 Congress members stayed away from a key parliamentary vote on July 10, which Koirala's government lost, forcing him to resign.

The King asked the Koirala to head a caretaker government until elections in November.

The leftist opposition is pressing for a national government to oversee the run-up to the polls, alleging elections under Koirala's supervision could not be free and fair.

The acting prime minister is fighting back against the dissidents and told a press conference on Monday he

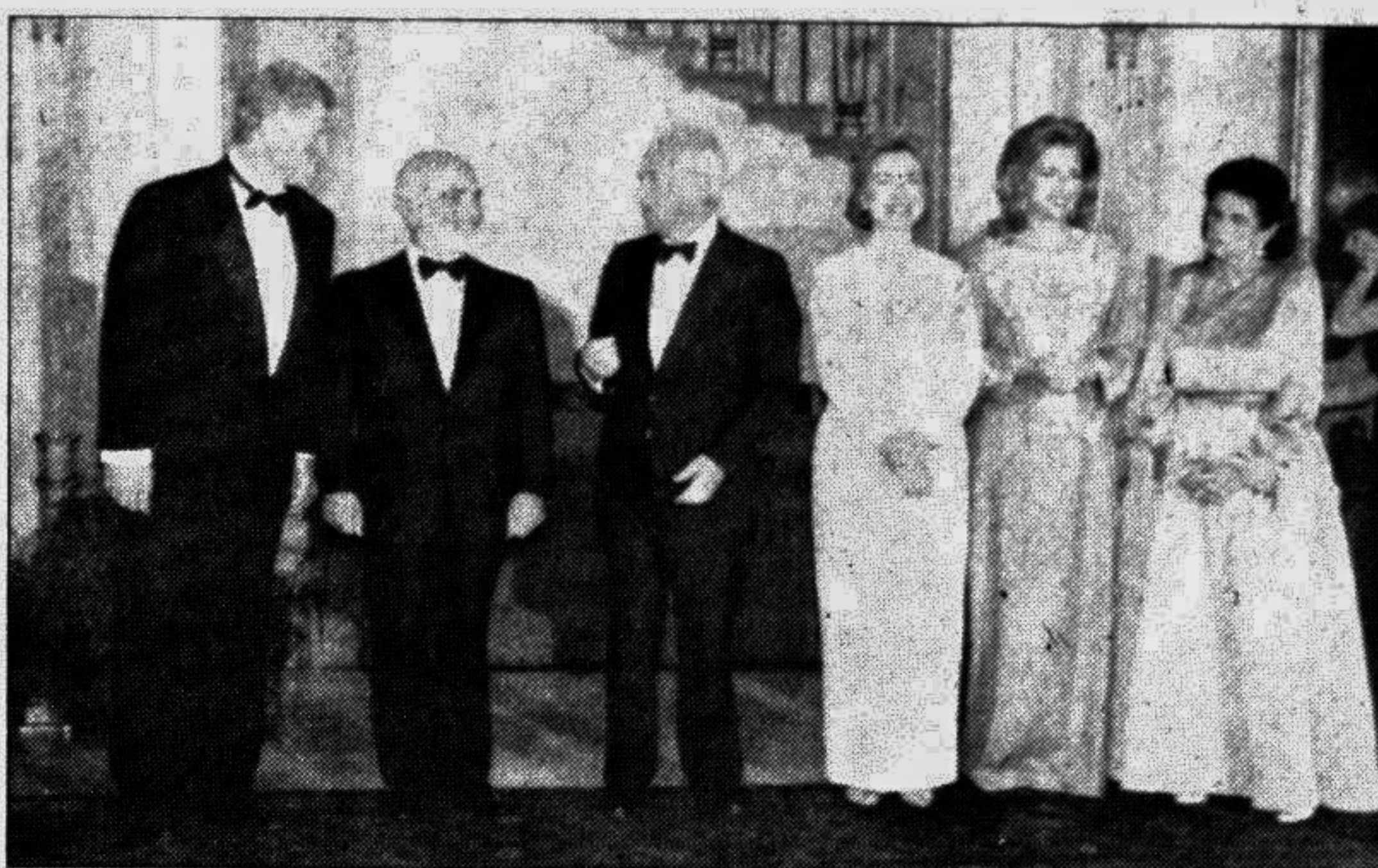
would not accept a central committee decision to expel him.

"Such decisions need to be endorsed by the general council," he said in reference to the 615-member council where Koirala believes he has a majority.

"I will make efforts till the last minute to keep the party united and take it to the polls," he said.

Supporters said Koirala did not want to be seen to provoke a split, but was prepared to form a new party if necessary.

He put pressure on the central committee by making a radio broadcast on Sunday, calling supporters to come to Kathmandu for "consultations" at a major meeting on Thursday.



US President Bill Clinton (L) talks with Jordan's King Hussein (2nd L) and Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (3rd L) while First Lady Hillary Clinton (3rd R) speaks with Queen Noor of Jordan (2nd R) and Israeli First Lady Leah Rabin prior to a dinner hosted by the Clintons at the White House on Monday. — AFP photo

Ruling party pledges land for Lankan army if voted to power

COLOMBO, July 26: Sri Lanka's ruling party today unveiled its manifesto for next month's parliamentary elections, promising sweeping welfare measures and gifts of land to security forces, reports AFP.

President Dingiri Banda Wijetunga's United National Party (UNP) said it would set up a 10 billion rupee (204 million dollars) fund to train unemployed people, if it was returned to power in the August 16 ballot.

UNP General Secretary Gaminini Jesekera said the party would give agricultural land to military personnel currently battling separatist Tamil Tiger guerrillas in the island's northern and eastern regions.

The eventual cost of the measure was, however, not immediately clear, with the strength of the military estimated at just over 100,000 men.

The 48-page manifesto made no clear proposal to end the ethnic bloodshed in the

embattled regions where Tigers are leading a campaign to establish an independent state called Eelam.

The right-wing UNP, which has remained in power since winning a landslide victory in the 1977 general elections, also pledged to continue with the constitution it introduced in 1978, with an executive president as head of state.

The opposition has vowed to scrap the 1978 constitution and revert to a Westminster-style parliamentary government.

Political analysts expect a close battle between the ruling UNP and the main opposition People's Alliance at next month's vote to elect 225 members to the legislative assembly.

Reuter adds: The party manifesto released at a news conference said "a review of effectiveness of the executive presidency as a political and administrative system establishes that it has been of undoubted benefit to the people." Constitutional Affairs

Minister K N Chooksy said some modifications would be made to the system but the president would remain as chief executive.

The manifesto, in which the party dealt with a series of issues including the economy and the Tamil separatist revolt, is an amended version of a draft prepared two weeks ago.

In that draft, the UNP had suggested scrapping the presidential system in force since 1978 and returning to the previous Westminster-style system in which parliament is supreme and the president is only a ceremonial figure.

UNP sources said opinion was divided on the issue and it was later decided to stick with the current system.

The manifesto also pledged to continue free market policies with more incentives to economic growth, and to find a political solution to the Tamil separatist revolt that has killed more than 30,000 people since 1983.

7 militants shot dead in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, July 26: Indian troops shot dead seven Muslim separatist guerrillas when they tried to enter the northern state of Kashmir from neighbouring Pakistan, an army spokesman said today, reports AFP.

The seven were among a group of 30 to 40 militants who were fired at by the soldiers on the border in Kupwara district late Monday, the spokesman said. The others escaped.

Troops recovered seven AK-47 rifles, two sniper rifles, 33 grenades, one Universal machine gun, a grenade launcher and two radio sets from the site, the spokesman said.

He said it was the fourth attempt this week by Muslim militants to try to enter the Kashmir valley from Pakistan.

ME talks on water sharing

OSLO, Norway, July 26: Israel, Jordan and the PLO have agreed during meetings in Oslo on principles for talks on sharing the Middle East's scarce water, Norway's Foreign Ministry said Tuesday, reports AP.

"They signed a document setting certain principles in future discussions," said Arthur Knudsen, a ministry spokesman. He said the talks on Monday were general, not negotiations on specific issues.

The signing came the same day that Jordan's King Hussein and Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin pledged in Washington to end more than four decades of belligerency. Knudsen said the timing was coincidental.

He said officials from the three parties started low-key talks Sunday at a hotel on the outskirts of Oslo and planned to wrap up their session Tuesday.

Agreement on distributing the Middle East's water is widely seen as a key to lasting peace in the region. Israel uses supplies from the occupied territories that Palestinians also need.

Off the Record

Bride barely reaches bridegroom's waist

LIMA: Peru's tallest man married a 23-year-old woman who barely reaches his waist, local television reported Monday, says Reuter.

Margarito Machuay, who is 7-feet-4 (2.23 metres) tall, walked down the aisle over the weekend with Mariene Ramos, a petite bride of 4-feet-9 (1.44 metres), the television report said.

"I am two months pregnant and the doctors say the child is well-developed," a beaming Ramos told reporters who arrived to cover the event in the small jungle city of Tingo Maria, 216 miles (360 km) northeast of Lima.

Machuay's stature caused problems on the way to the municipal office where the wedding took place since he could not fit into the nuptial car.

"It was impossible to make a 2-inch-wide (5cm) wedding ring," a jeweller in Tingo Maria told Lima's channel two television.

Coffee just doesn't taste right

ST. JOSEPH: The coffee just didn't taste right so workers at Wire Rope of America set up a hidden camera to try to find out why. What they found was a co-worker using the coffee pot as a urinal, reports AP.

"I just wanted to break his legs, shoot him or whatever," said Richard Poe, a plant electrician.

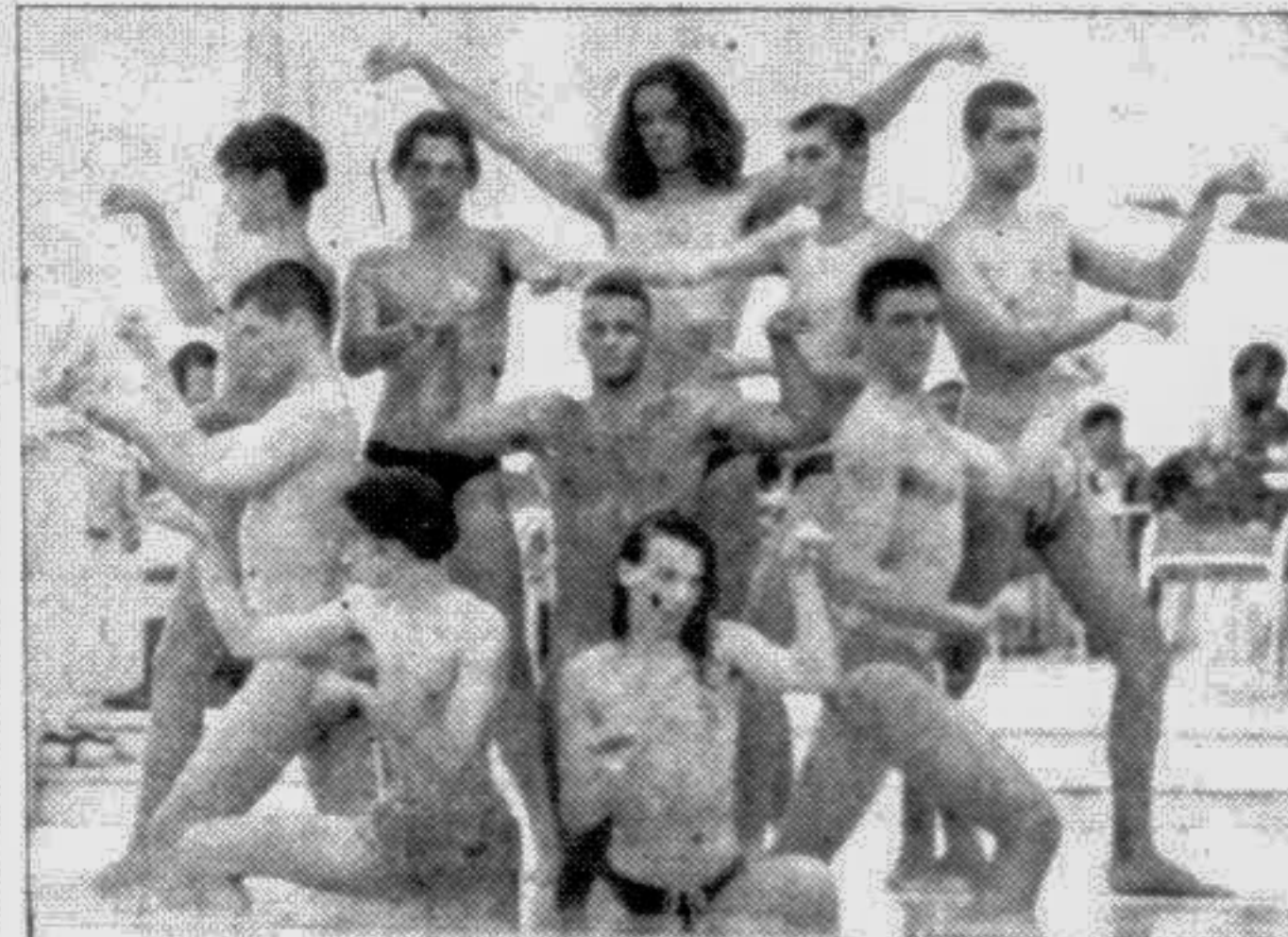
Instead, Poe and his fellow factory workers turned the videotape over to police and company officials. Police in turn gave the tape to Buchanan County prosecutors, who are considering bringing charges. The man's identity hasn't been released.

In the meantime, KQTV broadcast a copy of the tape on Saturday.

The man, who Poe said was feuding with other workers, was fired after the July 16 incident. A company official declined to say if the dismissal was related to the coffee pot incident.

The health of factory employees was probably not put at risk, said Richard Biery, the Kansas City health director.

"A healthy person normally puts out relatively noninfectious urine," Biery said. "But from the aesthetic point of view, it's gross."



Split's Zeljko Selak (top C) flexes his muscles as he poses with other entrants after winning the first Croatian men's beauty contest on Sunday in this Adriatic port city and tourist centre. — AFP photo

A fatal pizza delivery

PITTSBURGH: Two teenagers were sentenced Monday to life in prison without parole for killing a pizza deliveryman they lured into an ambush with a late night order. They ate the pizza after they shot him, reports AP.

Dorian Lamore, 16, was convicted June 28 of first-degree murder in the slaying of Jay Weiss, Phillip Fox, 17, was convicted of second-degree murder.

Common Pleas Court Judge Robert Dauer also sentenced the pair to 25 to 50 years in prison, to be served if their life sentences are ever commuted.

Fox tried to say he was sorry, but Dauer cut him off, asking: "Were you sorry then, or just sorry now?"

The youth said his mother was dead and he lived in an abandoned building because he was estranged from his father. But Dauer said that was no excuse.

"People without parents don't all kill people," he said. Weiss' brother, John, also refused Fox's apology, saying: "Sorry isn't going to bring him back."

Puhac, who recovered from an arm wound, testified against the pair. He said Lamore shot Weiss twice through the neck.

BRIEFLY

Floods claim 100 in China:

A second wave of flooding caused by heavy rains has devastated south China's southern Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces, killing at least 100 people and sending food prices soaring as crops rot in the fields, Reuter reports from Beijing.

At least 65 people died in floods in Guangdong, China's light-industrial powerhouse abutting Hong Kong, the official China Daily paper reported yesterday.

The death toll pushed past 35 in adjacent, largely rural Guangxi, struggling for two weeks under severe thunderstorms and high water, China-funded newspapers in Hong Kong reported.

Troops kill 14 in Burundi: Soldiers have killed 14 people in Burundi's northwestern province of Muramvya, Burundi Radio reported on Tuesday, AFP reports from Nairobi.

The killings occurred in the town of Rutagema late Sunday, according to the report monitored in Nairobi by the BBC. It said an investigation into the killings was underway.

The report did not give any reason why the troops killed the civilians but said those murdered were displaced people who fled ethnic violence in the neighbouring districts of Kiganda and Mbuve.

World population 9b by 2025: The population of the world could soar by three billion people — from six billion now to nine billion people — in 31 years, a population report said on Monday, Reuter reports from Washington.

The Population Reference Bureau, which keeps tabs on population growth, said the new estimate by an Austrian scientist, Wolfgang Lutz, is about 500 million people more than projected earlier by the World Bank and the United Nations for the year 2025.

Lutz's research at Austria's International Institute for Applied Sciences predicts higher fertility in Africa and other developing nations than did the World Bank and United Nations, which partly accounts for his prediction, the Population Reference Bureau, a private organisation said.

Russian plane crashes: A small airplane on a training flight crashed into an eastern Siberian forest, killing both people aboard, officials said Tuesday, AP reports from Moscow.

The Yak-52 one-engine aircraft went down in the Barnaul region 2,900 kilometers (1,798 miles) east of Moscow while on a flight over the weekend, said Marina Rykлина, a spokeswoman for the Ministry for Emergency Situations. Officials are investigating the cause of the crash.

Senate body okays defence budget:

The United States is in danger of losing its military superiority, the chairman of the Senate defence appropriations subcommittee said as his panel approved a budget-pinch spending bill for 1995, AP reports from Washington.

The 243.6 billion dollar in spending for the fiscal year beginning October 1 approved by Inouye's panel is 3.5 billion dollar more than the 1994 budget without taking inflation into account.

Japan urges Myanmar to improve HR record

BANGKOK, July 26: In an unusually strong statement, Japan's foreign minister told Myanmar on Monday that it must improve its human rights record if it wants more Japanese economic aid, reports AP.

Foreign Minister Yohei Kono delivered a "clear message" that Myanmar military government must improve its treatment of political opponents, a Japanese Foreign Ministry official said.

"We are watching very closely what (Myanmar) will do in terms of democracy and human rights matters," he quoted Kono as telling Myanmar Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaaw.

The two foreign ministers are in Bangkok for annual meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Kono also urged Myanmar to release Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi from five years of house arrest, the min-

istry official said.

Suu Kyi led a pro-democracy uprising in 1988 that was bloodily suppressed by the military. Her political party won a subsequent election, but the military government has refused to allow it to take office.

"Japan expects that (Myanmar) will make efforts so that Japan will be able to give economic assistance. But if the situation continues unchanged, then Japan will be unable to increase its aid," the official quoted Kono as saying.

Ohn Gyaaw said he hoped for closer economic ties with Japan, and said his attendance at the ASEAN meetings demonstrated Myanmar's eagerness to show that improvements are taking place, the official said.

The Myanmar foreign minister said Myanmar may be able to begin a dialogue sometime later with Suu Kyi, said the official.



Rwandan refugee children throng a volunteer handing out biscuits at the Goma orphanage in Rwanda on Monday. — AFP photo

Rwandan president urges refugees to back home

PARIS, July 26: Rwandan President Pasteur Bizimungu on Tuesday urged refugees to end their disastrous exile, promising that most "can return with peace of mind." For the others, he promised "transparent justice," reports AP.

"The large majority of refugees did not commit any atrocities," Bizimungu told French radio RTL. The atrocities were committed in their name but those people are mostly innocent peasants.

"Those can return with peace of mind," he said.

An estimated 1 million Rwandans fled west to Zaire during and after a civil war in which ethnic Tutsi rebels drove the Hutu-dominated government from power. An international effort is combating a cholera outbreak that has killed thousands in refugee camps.

Kuwait to Islamise civil law

KUWAIT CITY, July 26: A study on the Islamisation of Kuwait civil law was handed to the council of ministers to make the necessary amendments, a local English-language newspaper said today, reports Xinhua.

The daily Arab Times quoted the State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Abdul Aziz Al-Dakheel as saying that Kuwaiti Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Sabah received the study on Islamising the civil law and referred it to the cabinet to work out amendments.

The study was prepared by the higher advisory committee for the implementation of Islamic Sharia on the civil law, Abdul Aziz Al-Dakheel added.

The committee was formed by the Amir in December 1991 to study all existing legislations in Kuwait and then suggest recommendation on how to make them conform to Islam.

Dakheel said the committee started with the civil law which is the main source for other legislations.

The committee has completed the revision of the civil law and has proposed its amendment to make it conform to the Sharia, the minister said.

He disclosed that among the major amendments proposed by the committee is on Article one that the judges need to rely on Islamic Sharia if there is no clear legal text.

New articles have been added on adopting the Islamic teachings on buying and selling. The amendment proposals are based on the Islamic teachings throughout the law, he added.

The minister said the amendments will be reviewed by the cabinet before referring to the National Assembly for approval.

Catholic church critical of Cairo confce

MANILA, July 26: Jaime Cardinal Sin, the Archbishop of Manila, called on Filipinos today to stage a massive street protest against a United Nations conference on population in Cairo this September, reports AFP.

In a public statement addressed to "parents," Cardinal Sin attacked the Cairo conference as an attempt by wealthy nations to impose a "contraceptive mentality" on poorer countries and charged the government of President Fidel Ramos with collaborating in this effort.

ASEAN, Western allies discuss military aid to Cambodia

BANGKOK, July 26: Southeast Asian nations and their Western allies talked Tuesday about ways of encouraging stability in Cambodia, including military assistance to its year-old government, reports AP.

But Thailand opposed any lethal aid, saying that fighting between the government and Khmer Rouge guerrillas is an internal Cambodian matter, officials said.

Thailand and the five other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are meeting in Bangkok to discuss political and security issues with the group's "dialogue partners" — Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, New

Zealand, South Korea and the United States.

In their meeting Tuesday, foreign ministers from the 13 countries and regions discussed the need for Cambodia's ill-trained armed forces to be "brought up to a much higher level," a New Zealand diplomat said.

ASEAN officials said Cambodia has asked for military assistance and they were considering the request "in a positive sense," said a European diplomat, who also spoke on condition of anonymity. The only discordant voice was Thailand's, he said.

Thailand "wants to draw the line short of arms, ammunition and equipment," said Austr-

alian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Gareth Evans.

Australia has been a strong advocate of military aid for Cambodia, and sent a team of military advisers there last week to assess its needs.

"We are clearly willing in principle to go some distance down this track," Evans told reporters.

Evans said he proposed a programme that would focus on training and support rather than actual supply of weapons.

"There were a number of countries around the table that expressed their support for that kind of approach," he said.

ASEAN so far has maintained a policy of opposing

lethal military aid to the Cambodian government. On Saturday, Thai Foreign Minister Prasong Soonsiri said military aid from outside nations was forbidden by the 1991 Paris Peace Accords that were intended to end 13 years of Cambodian civil war.

But he said there were other ways to help Cambodia's military, such as non-lethal assistance and training. Thailand recently provided Cambodia with several shipments of military uniforms.

Some of the foreign ministers also suggested that Cambodia should be helped in improving its economy and government administration, officials said.

The foreign ministers also gave high marks to Monday's inaugural meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum, an 18-member conference on regional security that used informal discussions as a means of building confidence and closer ties.

"Whole new relationships are developing through the forum," said Hans van den Broek, a member of the EU Commission.

The fact that we were discussing security issues in the presence of Russia, China and the United States is a major political development and augurs well for peace and stability in the region."

The foreign ministers of

ASEAN — consisting of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand — hold meetings each year with allies and other nations in Asia.

This year, human rights issues, though not on the agenda, have framed many of the discussions. Several foreign ministers in speeches Tuesday urged neighbouring Myanmar to release Nobel Prize-winning pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest and restore democracy.

"All of us want to be treated with dignity by our governments," said US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott.

Workers' talks with Nigerian govt fail

LAGOS, July 26: Talks between striking oil workers, unions and Nigeria's military government ended on Monday without an agreement to end the crippling stoppage, reports Reuter.

"For now the strike remains," Frank Kokori, general secretary of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers, told reporters after the meeting in Lagos.

Milton Dabibi, general secretary of the other striking union PENGASSAN, confirmed the strike would not be called off.