

Lay down arms, Hun Sen urges opposition troops

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The United States, meanwhile, dealt Hun Sen a serious diplomatic blow by refusing to accept his bid to replace deposed co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh with Foreign Minister Ung Huot.

Outnumbered and out-gunned, opposition forces loyal to Ranariddh are retreating across northern Cambodia. They claim they will make a stand at O'Cheak, 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of the border with Thailand, and they predict heavy casualties.

The resistance forces, who say they are running out of ammunition, hope monsoon rains will soon halt military activity and give them time of rearm and regroup.

Hun Sen's military adviser, Mol Ronup, said the new regime was discussing an end to hostilities with pro-Ranariddh forces along the border. He would not elaborate, but said a senior Hun Sen commander was trying to convince the resistance to lay down their weapons and join the new regime in the capital.

But Sam Rainsy, leader of the opposition Khmer Nation Party that was allied with Ranariddh in elections planned for next year, predicted Wednesday in Bangkok, Thailand, that a long civil war was setting in.

"We will fight back when appropriate, meaning we can choose when and where to hit back," Sam Rainsy said. "For the time being, Hun Sen seems to have the upper hand. But I think a civil war has started in Cambodia."

Things looked more grim in the border zones where any resistance will be based.

Thong Nuoc, a royalist member of parliament, said that two provincial governors, three generals and an admiral loyal to the prince had taken refuge along with 10,000 other people at O'Samach, a tiny salient along the Thai border.

The base, an old royalist stronghold during a resistance war against the Vietnamese-installed government Hun Sen led during the 1980s, now appears to be the current opposition's de facto capital. Thong Nuoc predicted food shortages would arise in a week.

Thailand is tightly restricting border crossings. Six members of Sam Rainsy's party were reportedly jailed by Thai border police at Aranyaprathet, just across from the Cambodian town of Poipet, for illegally crossing.

Sam Rainsy's aides have said 56 members of his party are trapped there, in extreme danger if Hun Sen's forces occupy Poipet. Thailand is believed to be ready to let them enter if fighting actually breaks out.

Hun Sen launched his coup against Ranariddh on July 5, triggering two days of fighting that smashed the prince's forces in Phnom Penh.

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Mad cow disease can jump species, say British scientists

LONDON, July 17: British scientists have come up with the first laboratory proof suggesting "Mad cow" disease can jump species and infect humans, although not as easily or routinely as had originally been feared, it was reported Wednesday, says AFP.

Fears that mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), could infect humans in the form of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) triggered panic 16 months ago that resulted in a European Union ban on the export of British beef a ban still in force.

That ban was based largely on empirical observation of a new strain of CJD which scientists believed, but never proved, had derived from BSE.

The research published in Thursday's edition of the scientific journal *Nature* indicates the BSE altered protein or prion can be passed to humans, but only with great difficulty.

The researchers also found that the sheep-allant acropia a similar brain-destrorying neurological disease, is also capable of jumping species, with about the same low frequency as BSE.

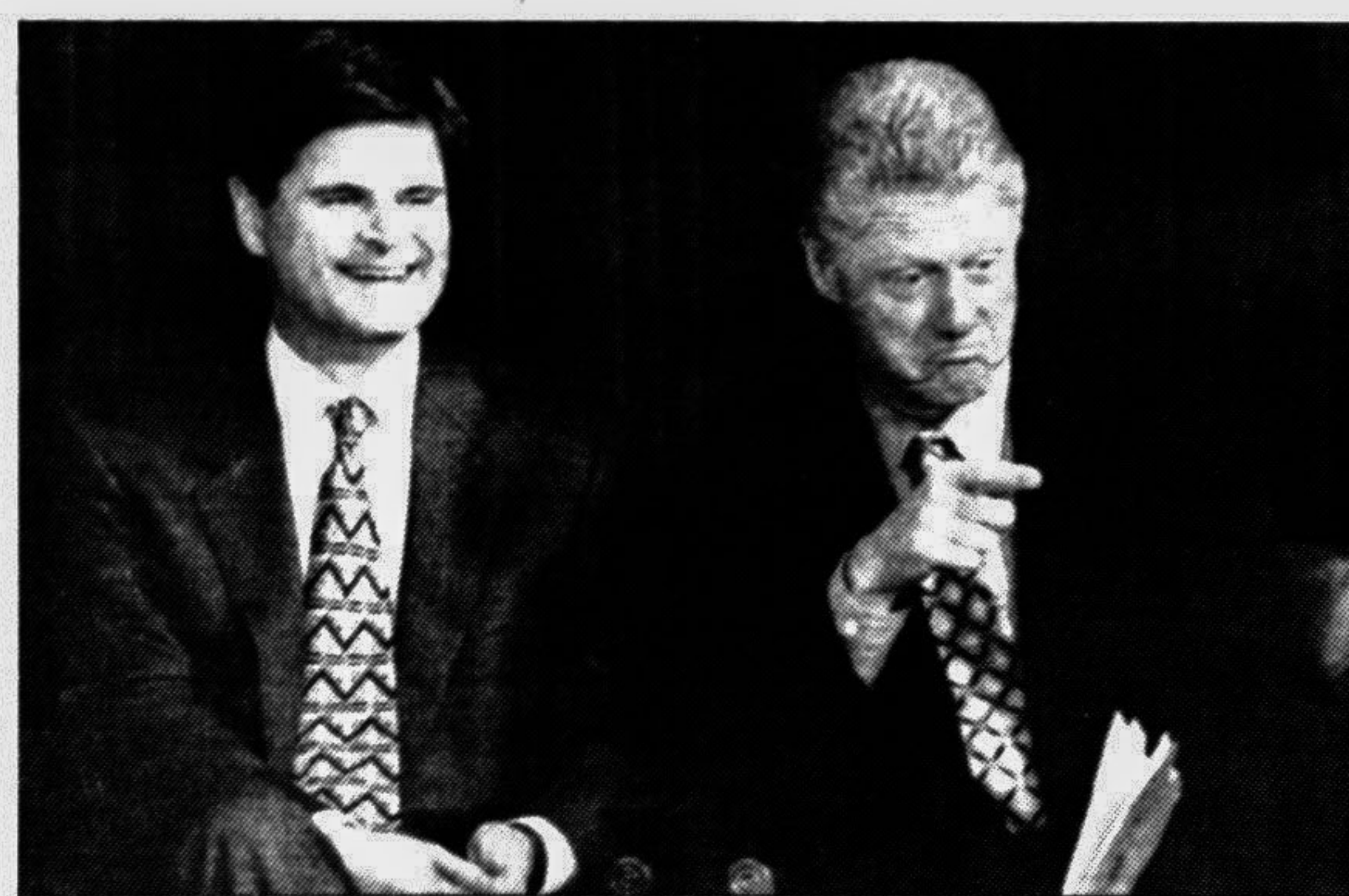
UNC conveys written protest to DPRK over intrusion

SEOUL, July 17: The United Nations Command (UNC) today conveyed a written protest to North Korea over the intrusion of 14 soldiers into the South, Yonhap news agency said today, reports AP.

The UNC spokesman was not immediately available for comment on the report, which said the protest was handed over through the military armistice commission in the truce village of Panmunjom this morning.

"Acts by North Korean soldiers of intruding over the demarcation line on Wednesday is a clear-cut violation of the armistice agreement," Yonhap quoted the protest as saying.

North Korea, said several of its soldiers were wounded in the 23-minute long exchange of automatic weapons, mortar and rifle fire, which followed the intrusion.



US President Bill Clinton points to someone in the audience as CEO of America On Line (AOL) Steve Case looks on during ceremonies Wednesday at the White House in Washington, DC where Clinton announced his commitment to take steps to make the internet more "family friendly." Since the Communications Decency Act was recently ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, Clinton is seeking input and suggestions to keep the Internet pornography free. — AFP/UNB photo

Indian PM confident of steering govt out of trouble

Mahesh Uniyal writes from New Delhi

Grappling with fresh trouble in his United Front (UF) alliance, Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral was confident that his coalition management skills would steer the nearly three-month old government out of trouble.

But political analysts noted that the latest round of carping by the Tamil Nadu-based Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), one of the alliance partners, had severely undermined the credibility of the 14-party ruling coalition and pushed the country towards a mid-term election.

"I don't think the differences are grave or serious. And I think we will be able to work out a solution to everybody's satisfaction," the Prime Minister told the English language daily, *The Hindu*, in an interview.

"We have been able to work out some sort of a coalition culture. Look at the fact that although the 20 members of the

Cabinet belong to 14 different parties yet every decision has been unanimous. This is not a mean achievement," Gujral added.

The Prime Minister was busy assuaging the angry, southern regional Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) which had threatened to walk out of the government accusing some UF partners of trying to wreck the alliance. The DMK has four ministers in the Council of Ministers, three of them handling key economic ministries like Industry, Petroleum and Surface Transport.

DMK chief and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi's warning to the Gujral government this week was widely seen as aimed at the left parties in the UF who have been gunning for the Prime Minister over Gujral's reluctance to act tough with regional satrap Laloo Prasad Yadav, the Chief Minister of eastern Bihar state.

The left parties are demanding that Yadav's splinter party, which broke off from the Prime Minister's Janata Dal (JD), be kept out of the ruling alliance. They are also unhappy with Gujral's reluctance to force Yadav to step down from office after his implication in an embezzlement scandal in his state.

"Some leaders are concentrating on their personal minimum programmes and have ganged up within the UF to settle scores with others. The one year rule of the UF is giving the impression that its constituents want to jointly commit 'sati' (the obsolete Hindu tradition of widows committing suicide)," the DMK chief said in a statement from the Tamil Nadu capital Chennai.

The UF constituents have been functioning as Opposition parties at the national level for some time. How we perform as a ruling party is being watched by people with interest.

India Abroad New Service

Khamenei calls for crackdown against corruption

TEHRAN, July 17: Iran's supreme leader railed against corruption Wednesday, calling for a campaign against officials misusing public funds, reports AP.

"Some people are intent on creating a new elite class in the Islamic Republic, a new class, which — owing to its contacts, its shrewdness and its access to the sources of wealth — is seeking to exploit public funds through illegitimate means," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told police commanders in a speech broadcast on Tehran radio.

He also called on police to report corrupt officers.

"Offenders should be confronted without any mercy, so that the people who have come to harm because of a particular offense or crime may feel hopeful and optimistic," Khamenei said.

Khamenei and other senior officials allied with him began urging a crackdown on corruption last month. Newspapers and many parliament deputies have joined him.

Khamenei and his supporters could be setting the stage for a crackdown on the rival liberal faction led by President Hashemi Rafsanjani whose government has been dogged by corruption charges.

Sri Lanka plans tougher child rights laws

COLOMBO, July 17: Sri Lanka has long been a haven for foreign pedophiles, but if the government has its way the Indian Ocean island will soon have the toughest child rights laws in Asia, officials said Thursday, reports AP.

"Sri Lanka will be first Asian country to incorporate the rights of children in the constitution," said Justice Minister Lakshman Peiris.

Among the sweeping rights likely to be incorporated into the constitution by the end of the year are "protection from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, degradation, and exploitative labour practices, protection from exposure to physical and moral hazards."

The island's coastal resorts are popular destinations for foreign pedophiles, serviced by as many as 30,000 boy prostitutes under 18 years who wander the sandy beaches, child activists say.

BRIEFLY

Albright to attend ASEAN meet: Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will attend meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Kuala Lumpur next week before visiting Singapore and the State Department said Wednesday, AFP reports from Washington.

Albright leaves here July 23 for the trip that will also include a brief stopover in Los Angeles State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said. She will attend meetings from July 26 to 29 of the ASEAN regional forum followed by a ministerial conference to discuss security issues, in particular Cambodia, where second Prime Minister Hun Sen has ousted his coalition partner first Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Mexican newspaper publisher killed: Newspaper publisher Benjamin Flores Gonzalez made many enemies with columns that accused people of corruption and involvement in drug trafficking, AP reports from San Luis Rio Colorado.

On Tuesday, Flores was killed in a hail of gunfire outside the offices of La Prensa, a daily paper in this Mexican border city just south of Yuma, Arizona. "There were always death threats against him," said Maria Del Carmen Velazquez, the newspaper's editor. "Here, La Prensa is very strong and we take on very combative issues."

2 feared dead as ship sinks in Turkey: A Turkish ship brought seven of nine people who were aboard a Ukrainian craft that sank in the Black Sea safely to shore Wednesday, the owners of the lost vessel said, AP reports from Sevastopol.

Two crew members were missing and believed drowned. The Ananda Company in Sevastopol lost radio contact with the Amrita 10 days ago, shortly after it put to sea from the Turkish port of Ereğli with the captain, his wife and seven crew members aboard.

23 Shi'ite Muslims held in Bahrain: Security forces in Bahrain have arrested at least 23 Shi'ite Muslims in a crackdown on activists demanding political and social reform, an opposition group said Wednesday, AP report from Cairo.

The Shi'ite activists were arrested Tuesday and Wednesday in Arrad, a village near the capital, Manama, the Bahrain Islamic Freedom Movement said. Police raided houses and rounded up the activists who were participating in a religious procession, the group said in a statement faxed to the Associated Press in Cairo.

Pakistan to hold nationwide census: Pakistan will hold its first nationwide census in 16 years, the government announced Wednesday, AP reports from Islamabad.

The population and housing census will be conducted across this nation of an estimated 140 million people during the last two weeks of October, the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan reported. Officials with the civil service and army will carry out the census, which is to be independently monitored, the report said. Pakistan last held a census in 1981.

Palestinian girl killed in WB: Top Israeli and Palestinian officials met Wednesday in another effort to end their crisis, while angry Palestinians buried another youth killed in a clash with Israeli troops, AP reports from Bethlehem.

The Israeli army, meanwhile, declared Palestinian cities in the West Bank of limits to Israeli civilians for "security reasons." Israel TV said there was evidence Palestinian militants were planning attacks on Israelis. Ashraf Nawadis, 16, who was shot in the head earlier this week, died at a hospital Wednesday in the West Bank town of Ramallah, hospital officials said.

Food poisoning claims 7 in China: Seven young martial arts students died after food laced with rat poison was served to some 130 children at their school in northern China, a report said yesterday, AFP reports from Hong Kong.

Shaolin Martial Arts School at Hexiong in Anhui province rushed all its pupils to hospital after they felt dizzy, short of breath and started vomiting shortly after eating breakfast on June 30, the independent Chinese language Ming Pao daily said. Seven pupils all reportedly aged eight died as a result of the poisoning which was traced to rat poison. Local authorities were still investigating how the toxic substances got in to the food, the report said.

The Bombay violence, during which police shot dead 12 slum-dwellers, is not an incident in isolation, said political scientist Sudhir Hindwan.

"Violence against the lower caste has gone up nearly 80 per cent since independence," said Hindwan, an academic at the Centre for Policy Research think tank.

"More and more, it is between better-off lower castes and their social inferiors," he said.

Chinese legal immigrants facing tough time in HK

HONG KONG, July 17: They come seeking fortune from mainland China, third world economy, to Hong Kong's glittering first world riches, adjusting to change is a tough problem for new settlers in one of the world's most competitive societies, reports Reuters.

Daily, 150 legal immigrants, including children and pregnant women, cross into this East Asian economic hub, with such dreams that they almost expect to find streets paved with gold.

These are the lucky ones, but even then many face poverty, a struggle to get housing and jobs while their children, equipped with scant knowledge of English, battle to adapt at school.

Scores of others, illegal immigrants, risk their lives in hazardous border crossings by land or sea. Those caught are swiftly returned. The border remains tightly guarded even though Hong Kong has been a

special region of China since July 1.

Children from separated families seeking to rejoin a parent in Hong Kong are sneaked in by smugglers running a lucrative trade in human cargoes past frontier checkpoints.

But controversially Hong Kong, a crowded metropolis of 6.4 million people, plans to deport hundreds or thousands of these youngsters to deter "queue-jumping."

Legal migrants now double, more expected.

The annual intake of legal migrants nearly doubled in two years to 61,000 in 1996, and the pressure is on for a big spurt in numbers now that Hong Kong is a special Chinese region.

China, with 1.2 billion people and the world's largest nation, lags at least 20 years behind its "Pearl of the Orient" region, among the most prosperous cities anywhere.

Fiji PM confirms deferral of multi-party cabinet

SUVA, Fiji, July 17: Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka confirmed Thursday he had deferred his proposed multi-racial Cabinet until after the 1999 election because the two Indian-dominated opposition parties wanted to wait until then, reports AP.

Rabuka proposed last week to invite four Indian legislators from the National Federation party led by opposition leader in the House of Representatives, Jai Ram Reddy, and the Fiji Labour party, led by Mahendra Chaudhury, and one from the Fijian Association Party.

Rabuka told the Fiji Times that to promote unity in the country he preferred that it move into a multi-party Cabinet system immediately after a bill to amend the racially-biased 1990 constitution was passed by Parliament earlier this month.

The 1990 constitution allocated a majority of seats in Parliament to ethnic Indians. The new constitution does not guarantee any ethnic group dominance.

The multi-party Cabinet system is aimed at taking the country back to the parliamentary democracy it enjoyed from independence in 1970 until the military coup Rabuka led in 1987 to oust an Indian-dominated government.

"But I respect the (opposition parties) view that this be done after the next elections," Rabuka said.

Rabuka was referring to a statement made by Reddy on Tuesday when he said that his party, the National Federation Party, preferred to remain in opposition until the next elections.

Reddy had said the focus should now be on discussions on a national coalition to fight the next elections.

77 killed as fighting erupts in Lanka

COLOMBO, July 17: Heavy fighting erupted in northern Sri Lanka where at least 60 Tamil Tiger guerrillas and 17 government soldiers were killed in hand-to-hand fighting, a defence ministry spokesman said today, reports AP.

The fresh violence broke out when the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) mounted an assault against army defences near Nedunkerni on Wednesday, spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe said.

There was close quarter fighting and ground troops estimate that at least 60 terrorists were killed," Munasinghe told reporters here. "Troops successfully beat off the attack."

He said an officer and 16 soldiers were killed and another 27 were seriously wounded in the fighting and placed tiger casualties at over 100 wounded.

There was no immediate word from the LTTE about the latest fighting.

Malaysian, Iranian oil cos to embark on jt exploration

KUALA LUMPUR, July 17: Oil companies of Malaysia and Iran will embark on joint exploration for oil and gas in third countries, Malaysian minister in the Prime Minister's department Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha said yesterday, reports Xinhua.

Malaysia's oil company Petronas and Iran's National oil company planned to conduct such joint exploration in the Commonwealth of Independent States and Africa, the minister said after meeting Iranian petroleum minister Gholamreza Aghazadeh here.

Mir encounters trouble

MOSCOW, July 17: The embattled Mir space station lost virtually all power Thursday when the crew accidentally disconnected in a vital cable, but the three-man team is not in immediate danger, a top Russian space official said, reports AP.

"Today we had a very bad situation, serious trouble," mission control chief Vladimir Solovoyov told a news conference.

But he stressed that the crew was safe and was working to restore power.

Solovoyov said the crew was making routine preparations to repair the Mir