

International

Lay down arms, Hun Sen urges opposition troops

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, July 17: With resistance forces retreating before his military onslaught, coup leader Hun Sen sent out peace feelers Thursday urging opposition troops to lay down their arms, reports AP.

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 Uong Huot.

Outnumbered and outgunned, 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 respite and regroup.

Hun Sen's military adviser, Mol Roeup, said the new regime was discussing an end to hostilities.

ties 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 50 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.

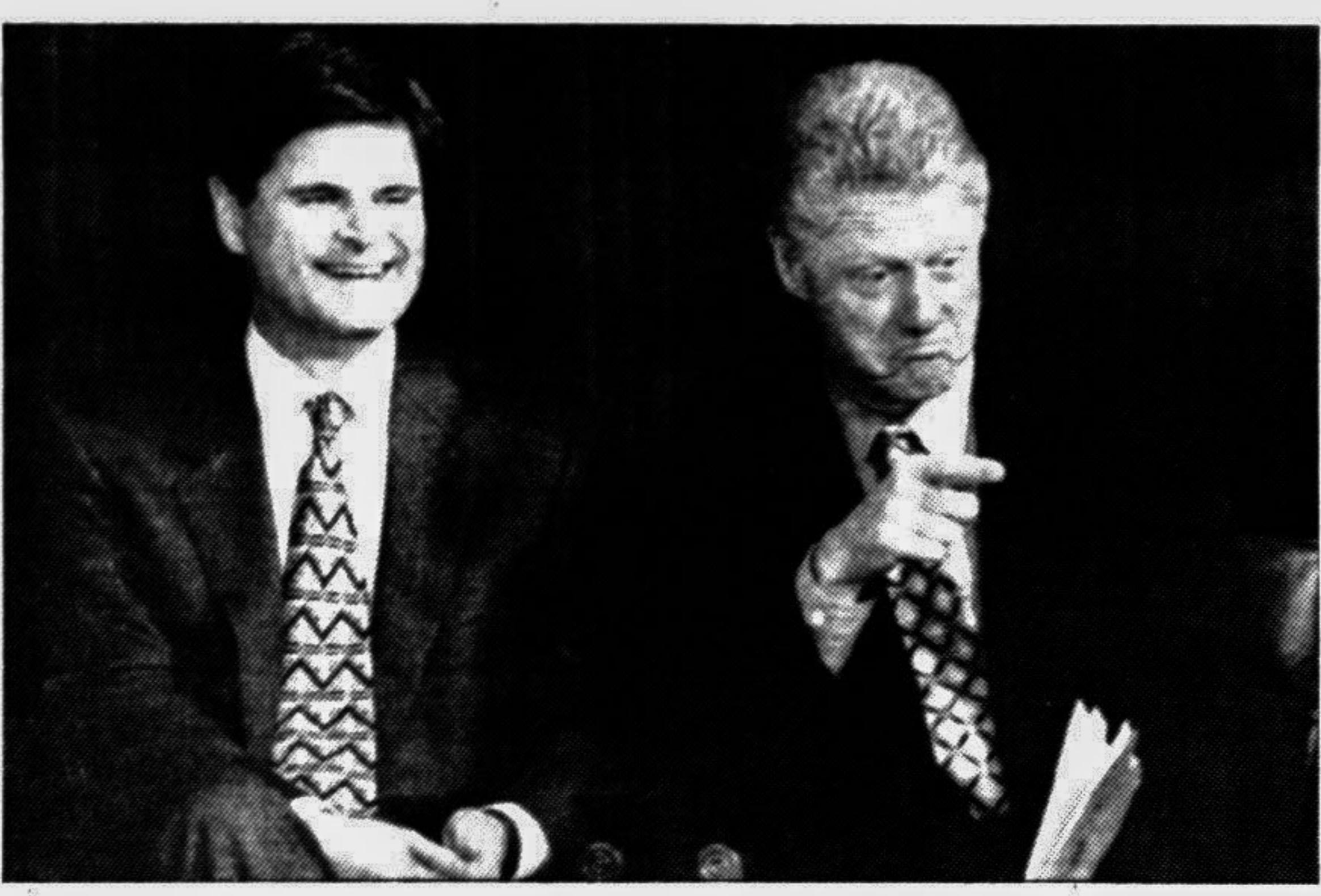
Mad cow disease can jump species, say British scientists

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 ailment acapla a similar brain-destroying neurological disease, is also capable of jumping species, with about the same low frequency as BSE.



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

Philippine army extend truce for talks with MILF

MANILA, July 17: The military said Thursday it is extending a cease-fire for a week to allow government and Muslim rebel peace negotiators to resume talks stalled by a major military offensive in the southern Philippines, reports AP.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front postponed the talks indefinitely after the military mounted offensives in an anti-kidnapping campaign and overran the rebels' second largest camp in southern North Cotabato Province last month.

The military says most kidnapping groups in Mindanao are linked to the MILF, which has about 7,000 armed guerrillas.

Army Col. Romero Tolentino said in a statement issued by the presidential office that the cease-fire would be extended from July 15 to July 22.

While visiting southern Tawi Tawi province Tuesday, President Fidel Ramos asked Nur Misuari, a former rebel, to persuade the MILF to return to the talks. Misuari is now gov-

ernor of an autonomous Muslim government.

Misuari met MILF leaders on Monday but the rebels said they would not return to the negotiations until government troops withdraw from areas the MILF formerly held.

The government opened

8 killed in South African violence

DURBAN, South Africa, July 17: Eight people were killed in South Africa's troubled eastern KwaZulu-Natal province during the last 24 hours, Durban police announced today, reports AFP.

Most of the victims were killed by bullets.

Among the dead, an off-duty policeman who died in the country side when attackers sprayed the car in which he was travelling with automatic gunfire, the driver was not killed.

The police gave no motive for the murders and have not yet made any arrests.

peace talks early this year with the MILF, the larger of two Muslim rebel groups, a peace accord with the government last September, ending a quarter-century of insurrection on southern Mindanao Island. Al Haj Murad, the MILF's vice chairman for military affairs, said it would permanently withdraw from the talks if the government launches an offensive against its main camp, Camp Abubakar, in Maguindanao province, about 910 kilometers (570 miles) south of Manila.

Three weeks ago, government troops captured Camp Rajamuda, said to be the MILF's second biggest base, at the height of sporadic clashes between government troops and suspected kidnappers. At least 25 people were killed in the clashes.

The military declared a cease-fire last week to allow Misuari to reach out to the MILF.

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.

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.

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 carpings 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

ing 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 set

tle scores with others. The one

year rule of the UF is giving the

impression that its cons

itants want to jointly com

mit "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

COLONBO, 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.

"Sri Lanka will be the 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, 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.

Off the Record

As he knew too much

LOS ANGELES: The former general manager of the Beverly Hills Hotel claims in a lawsuit that the Sultan of Brunei's brother and others fired him because he knew too much about scums they were running, reports AP.

Kermin Beriker contends he told executives managing the hotel last year that they could increase profits if they stopped "improper, unethical and illegal business practices."

Those practices — which allegedly included profit-skimming and kickbacks — were enforced by the Brunei Investment Agency, which manages the worldwide investments of the Sultan of Brunei, Beriker said.

The lawsuit also contends that the BIA discriminated against black and Hispanic employees and applicants and forced out a union representing hotel workers. Additionally, executives allegedly shipped alcoholic beverages back to Brunei in violation of American law and the religious tenets of the Islamic nation.

Beriker was fired on January 29, a month after making his comments to executives, according to his suit filed Thursday in Superior Court.

Beriker, 61, was general manager for eight years. His suit also contends that he was a victim of age discrimination, and that the executives "maliciously" spread lies about him by saying he had stolen cash from the hotel and accepted kickbacks.

The suit names the sultan's brother, Prince Jefri; the Beverly Hills Hotel Corporation and other related firms and four executives. The sultan is not named because he did not appear to have a direct role in Beriker's termination or other events leading up to it, said Max Factor III, Beriker's lawyer.

Beriker seeks 2.5 million dollars for damage to his reputation plus unspecified punitive damages.

Needle-free injection

NEW DELHI: Researchers at Powderject Pharmaceutical in UK have developed a helium-driven needle-free injection system that fires a powdered drug into the skin at 2,700 kilometres per hour — more than twice the speed of sound, reports PTI.

This injection will use a gas supply system designed by BOC gases, according to a London press release here.

Currently two versions of the system have proved successful in tests. One injects powder from drugs and genes into the skin (dermal powderject) and the other is injected within mouth (oral powderject).

Both rely on a tiny, hand-held disposable cylinder of pressurised helium gas which generates the powder to deliver a six milligramme dose of drug through layers of skin painlessly.



Melynda Duvall (R) and Rosanne Scott (L), wearing bra tops made from lettuce leaves, bite into a veggie hot dog as part of a protest Wednesday by members of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) at the US Capitol in Washington. The protest coincides with the annual American Meat Institute's Hot Dog Luncheon attended by lawmakers, staff and federal agency officials as part of July's National Hot Dog Month celebration.

— AFP/UNB photo

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, 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 Amira 10 days ago, shortly after it put to sea from the Turkish port of Ereli 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 Hedian in Anhui province rushed all its pupils to hospital after they fell dizzy, short of breath and started vomiting shortly after eating breakfast on June 30, the independent Chinese language Ming Dao 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.

Fiji PM confirms deferral of multi-party cabinet

SUVA, Fiji, July 17: Prime Minister Sitiveni Rab