

Junta forces Suu Kyi back to Yangon home

YANGON, July 30: Myanmar's military government admitted Thursday it ended a six-day roadside standoff with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi by forcing her back to her Yangon home, reports AP.

The government had no choice but to take the initiative to break the standoff by sending her to Yangon, government spokesman Col. Hla Min, said at a press conference.



Described by colleagues as ill and running low on food, the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner was driven back to her compound by a military driver who took the wheel of her white Toyota Mark II sedan as it sat parked on a bridge outside the capital, according to US government officials.

She arrived back in Yangon about 10:20 pm (1450 GMT) Wednesday.

Speaking in Sydney, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Suu Kyi "was all off a sudden taken in her car by a military driver back to Yangon and thereby forbidden from exercising a basic human right, which is the ability to travel freely in your own country. This is an unacceptable violation of human rights."

American officials accompanying Albright in Australia, said their information came from on-the-scene diplomats in Yangon.

Albright said the move by the government "will only contribute to the further isolation of Burma." Myanmar is also known as Burma.

Affair with Lewinsky Clinton to testify Aug 17

WASHINGTON, July 30: President Bill Clinton will testify next month in the investigation into his alleged affair with a former White House intern, his lawyer said Wednesday, reports AP.

"In an effort to achieve a prompt resolution of this entire matter, the President will voluntarily provide his testimony on August 17, 1998 to the office of independent counsel," said attorney David Kendall.

The President's testimony will be videotaped at the White House with his legal counsel present, Kendall said.

Taliban agree to hold talks with UN

KABUL, July 30: Afghanistan's hardline Taliban militia Wednesday agreed to hold talks with the United Nations on all issues including the recent expulsion of foreign aid groups from Kabul, a senior official said, reports AP.

Planning Minister Qari Din Mohammad said the Taliban authorities had received a UN request for dialogue.

"We are ready to talk with the United Nations on any subject, including the issue of the NGOs," he told reporters.

However he refused to say if the Islamic militia would reverse its decision to relocate foreign non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the dilapidated building of the Kabul Polytechnic Institute.

"We have been always flexible. It is flexibility that we have told them to move to the polytechnic compound," he said. A UN official confirmed the request for a meeting.

The United Nations wants to discuss "a range of issues, including the humanitarian situation which is linked with the NGOs," the official said adding the meeting would take place in Kabul after the Taliban authorities agreed.

PPP opposes move to resume talks with India

ISLAMABAD, July 30: The main opposition Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has strongly opposed the move for resumption of talks between New Delhi and Islamabad as decided by prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Atal Behari Vajpayee in Colombo, reports IANS.

"It's a point-scoring game by Vajpayee, and Sharif should be aware of it," PPP's Senator Iqbal Haider alleged. He said there was no use in continuing or resuming talks with India unless it agreed to third party mediation.

Haider said his party would strongly oppose any move to "sabotage" the Kashmir issue under the garb of "futile talks." He alleged that New Delhi, aware of the internationalisation of the Kashmir dispute in the newly nuclearised South Asia, was keen to resume talks without any specific framework.

Troops kill 14 Tamil rebels in Lanka

COLOMBO, July 30: Government troops ambushed and killed 14 Tamil Tiger guerrillas in the northern jungles while the military remained on high alert during a summit of South Asian leaders in Sri Lanka's capital, officials said Thursday, reports AP.

Thirteen rebels were killed on Wednesday near the guerrilla-ruled town of Mankulam in Kilinochi district, which has been besieged by military troops for nearly a year, the military said in a statement.

Another guerrilla also died in an ambush in the northern Mannar district on Wednesday, the statement said.

No incidents were reported in Colombo, where the police are maintaining a strict vigil.

Arafat tells OIC meeting Israel's Jerusalem policy ruining peace process

CASABLANCA, Morocco, July 30: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat charged Wednesday that Israel's Jerusalem policy risks inflaming the region and destroying the peace process, reports AP.

Arafat, speaking at the start of a two-day meeting by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference's (OIC) Al Qods (Jerusalem) Committee, accused Israel of "the expulsion and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians" in Jerusalem and the "changing of the city's Arab-Muslim identity."

"Israel is leading the big and final battle for Judaization," Arafat said at the start of the meeting, the 17th since the group was formed in 1979.

"It will lead unavoidably to the total destruction of the peace process and will inflame the region," Arafat said.

Officials and delegations from 16 nations were attending the session at the royal palace of King Hassan II, hoping to voice a clear warning to Israel and find ways to oppose Israel's Jerusalem policy.

There were suggestions here that another objective was to present a united viewpoint to encourage the United States to bring more pressure to bear on Israel.

But it was also a time for questioning.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa chided the gathering. "We don't apply our own resolutions," he said. "How is Israel to respect international resolutions if we don't respect our own?"

He was apparently referring to a resolution at a 1997 Al Qods meeting calling for a reevaluation of existing Arab relations with Israel.

The king dismissed the comment. "We are here to talk about the Judaization of Al Qods," Hassan II said.

He offered an ominous assessment in his opening address.

"We wanted the problem to be political with a political solution," Hassan II said. "But in the face of the evolution of the internal Israeli situation, it risks becoming religious."

The Palestinians claim east Jerusalem, which Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast War, as capital of a future state and Israel's decision in June to extend Jerusalem's municipal services to West Bank Jewish settlements has angered Palestinians. They accuse Israel of violating the Israeli-Palestinian accords by unilaterally making decisions on Jerusalem's future.

The plan, approved June 21 by the Israeli Cabinet, also calls for the annexation of suburbs

inside Israel to ensure the Jewish majority of 70 per cent in Jerusalem, where Palestinians hope to set up the capital of a future state.

"Israel wants to turn east Jerusalem into a small Arab quarter inside a large Jewish town," said al-Sharaa shortly before the session began.

"The city of Jerusalem isn't just a Palestinian city. It is the city for all Muslims in the world," said Fayal Hussein, in charge of the Jerusalem issue for the Palestinian Authority.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said the session "must give a clear message to Israel."

He lamented that there are "no serious negotiations between Arabs and Israel" at the moment.

The United States has proposed Israel withdraw from 13 per cent more of the West Bank as a way to revive talks stalled since March 1997 when Israel began building a Jewish housing unit in traditionally Arab east Jerusalem. Israel has far refused.

The Jerusalem Committee is made up of Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Niger, Guinea, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Senegal and Syria.

US hails first Indo-Pak talks since N-tests

WASHINGTON, July 30: The White House on Wednesday welcomed the first India-Pakistan talks since their rival nuclear tests in May but cautioned that more will be needed to bridge their considerable divide, reports AP.

"We are encouraged that the two prime ministers are meeting. We hope that they will directly address those things that can limit tensions on the subcontinent," spokesman Michael McCurry said.

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Indian counterpart Atal Behari Vajpayee met Wednesday in the Sri Lankan capital ahead of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit.

"We imagine that they will review positions that they have taken in the past but there will have to be much greater dialogue before they can resolve all the disputes," McCurry said. The two leaders were expected to discuss measures aimed at reducing tensions between the two neighbours since the surprise nuclear tests that triggered fears of a deadly arms race and international sanctions.

US President Bill Clinton had planned to visit the two countries in November, but the tests have put that trip in question. Clinton is pressing for India and Pakistan to sign a test ban treaty and may use the visit as leverage.

A White House spokesman PJ Crowley said Clinton would likely make his decision after

his Russia-Ireland visit in September.

"The president ultimately will make a judgement based on how helpful the trip will be to move them back from the situation they find themselves in," he said.

Early polls likely in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, July 30: A senior official of the ruling party said Thursday new elections could be announced any time and allies of the party should be prepared to face voters, the national news agency reported, says AP.

Although no election date has been fixed yet, the 14 component parties of the Barisan National coalition should get ready, said Mohamed Rahmat secretary-general of the coalition and Malaysia's information minister.

"During these economically difficult times, we have to retain the present government and give it stronger support so that it could tackle increasingly serious external threats," Mohamed was quoted as saying by Bernama news agency.

Mohamed is the first official to have indicated an early election as Malaysia tries to deal with its worst economic crisis, which is threatening widespread unemployment and rising food prices.

US mediator, leaders of KLA hold talks

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia, July 30: US mediator Christopher Hill held talks today "somewhere in Kosovo" with leaders of the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), ethnic Albanian sources, told AP.

Hill, US Ambassador to Macedonia, is in Kosovo to try to restart dialogue between Kosovo Albanian leaders and the Yugoslav government, which is trying to suppress a KLA-led independence movement in the Yugoslav province.

Albanian politicians also took part in the meeting, they added. They were two advisors of moderate Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova, who heads the Kosovo Democratic League, the province's largest party, and two for the rival Albanian democratic movement.

The sources refused to say what was discussed at the encounter.

Until the most recent fighting this week, the KLA held about one-third of Kosovo and looked like making further advances in its bid for independence.

However, the six-nation contact group on the former Yugoslavia comprising Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Russia and the United States, has declared itself opposed to a further carve-up of Balkan boundaries, mindful of the consequences of the Croatian and Bosnian wars.

It has, however, indicated it backs some sort of renewed autonomy for the province.

Four members of the Yugoslav army were killed in clashes with Kosovo Albanian rebels, the army announced Wednesday in a communique cited by Tanjug News Agency.

Captain Bojan Denic was killed in Prizren region, in southern Kosovo.

Major Goran Ostojic, sergeant Dragan Dusanic and private Rados Cerovic died in the Djkakovica region, in the west.

The fatalities were reported to have happened on Monday and Tuesday, but Tanjug did not give details.

Section on child rights at SAARC Secretariat sought

COLOMBO, July 30: Amid the welter of political polemics and economic charters at the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit, a Sri Lankan parliamentarian is seeking to put child rights high on the agenda, reports IANS.

Jayalath Jayawardana, a prominent member of parliament belonging to the opposition United National Party (UNP), met SAARC Secretary-General Naem U Hasan here to draw "serious attention to our children who will be future leaders of SAARC."

He said the incidence of exploitation of child labour, sexual abuses, malnutrition and lack of education was high in the South Asian region and urged him to form a separate section on child rights at the SAARC Secretariat.

Jayawardana also called for setting up parliamentary lobbies on child rights in other SAARC countries on the lines of the one formed in Sri Lanka and said effective networking among them could help in framing legislation to ensure the protection of children's rights in these countries in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The situation is very, very serious as far as children of the region are concerned," Jayawardana told IANS, "and it is important for legislators in SAARC countries to take up the cause of such voiceless people who don't have trade unions or other lobbies to speak up for them."

Though no proper statistics on children in SAARC countries are available, an estimate gives the number of child labourers alone in the region at 80 million, the bulk of them in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Three years ago, at the New Delhi summit of SAARC Kailash Satyarthi, the chairman of the South Asian Coalition against Child Servitude (SACCS), had accused the region's leaders of being "cruelly silent on the elimination of child servitude, ensuring universalisation of primary education and safeguarding the rights of the child as per the UN Convention."

BRIEFLY

PAF plane crash leaves 6 dead: A Pakistan air force plane crashed in a crowded Karachi neighbourhood Thursday, killing at least six people on the ground, three of them children. At least 25 people were injured, most with serious burns. AP reports from Karachi.

Three houses were set afire immediately after the crash, and flames quickly spread in the neighbourhood of small, one-story dwellings, trapping an unknown number of people. The pilot and co-pilot bailed out before the plane crashed in western Orangi district.

Strong quake rattles Chile: A powerful quake that rattled Chile early Wednesday left two people dead and rocked regions in which half of the country's 14.5 million inhabitants live, police said. AFP reports from Santiago.

The 90-second tremor struck at 3:14 am (0614 GMT), reaching 6.2 on the Richter scale and was felt as far as 700 km from its epicentre. Police said the two fatalities stemmed from heart attacks. In the quake's aftermath, three injured miners were rescued after a rockslide hit a gold mine in the city of Petorca.

6 die in Indian plane crash: A propeller aircraft of a government-run airline crashed shortly after taking off from a southern Indian city Thursday, killing all six persons on board, local news agencies reported. AP says from New Delhi.

Alliance Air's Dornier aircraft, with three passengers and as many crew, crashed and burst into flames near a naval workshop in Cochin, United News of India and Press Trust of India news agencies reported.

Protester shot dead in Nigeria: Nigerian police on Wednesday shot dead a man outside an oil industry building during a violent demonstration over oil spill compensation, a senior police officer told AFP from Warri, Nigeria.

Francis Tambo, 28, died Wednesday afternoon after being shot as police fought to control a mob of up to 1,000 youths who went on the rampage outside the government-owned oil industry centre in Warri, in the Niger delta, police area commander Moses Onireti said.

6 die in Moscow building blast: At least six people were killed and five others seriously injured Wednesday when a gas explosion ripped through a nine-storey residential block in Moscow, ORT state television and a fireman said. AFP reports from Moscow.

The building, situated in northeast Moscow, was largely destroyed, and the pile of rubble reached up to the fourth floor. Six bodies were pulled from the rubble but rescuers feared that the final toll could be higher and said they would continue their search throughout the night.

Journalist held in Iran: Iranian police have arrested the managing director of a newspaper that printed an anonymous letter criticising the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, official media reported Wednesday. AP reports from Tehran.

Mohammad-Reza Za'eri of the Khaneh newspaper was arrested for publishing "material insulting the Islamic sanctities and the late Imam Khomeini," the Islamic Republic News Agency reported. The letter, written by an anonymous woman, referred to the 1980-88 war with Iraq.

Tremor hits E Indonesia: A powerful earthquake shook part of eastern Indonesia early Thursday, AP reports from Jakarta.

There were no reports of damage or casualties in the tremor in the remote jungles of the province of Irian Jaya, said Fauzi of the Meteorology and Geophysics agency in Jakarta. Fauzi said the quake had a magnitude of 6.0.

Treasury's parliament may back PM's plan to hold early polls in Apr '99

ANKARA, July 30: Turkey's parliament was expected to give its backing today to Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's plan to bring his coalition government to a premature end and hold early elections next spring, reports Reuters.

A full session of the parliament was to vote on a proposal to invite Turks to the polls on April 18, 1999, more than 20 months ahead of time.

With both government and opposition ready to go to the country, parliamentary observers said the vote, expected some time after 11:00 GMT, was likely to pass easily.

Behind the Conservative prime minister's plan to resort to the ballot box lies a left-wing party that has pushed for early polls in return for shorting up the minority coalition since it was formed last June.

Under a deal struck earlier this year between Yilmaz and left-wing leader Deniz Baykal, the leftists will lend their crucial votes to the coalition until the end of the year when Yilmaz has pledged to step down.

After that the future is more hazy. At issue is the make-up of an "independent government" that would govern the NATO-member country in the run-up to the April polls.

"It's not certain how the problems which will arise when Mesut Yilmaz resigns as prime minister will be overcome," Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Evecit told his party MPs on Wednesday.

"When the time comes, the president, the constitution and the parliament will have to decide," he said.

President Suleyman Demirel has suggested he could upset the interim government plan by refusing to name a new prime minister sought by Yilmaz.

The current coalition was cobbled together last year to replace an Islamist-led government that collapsed under the weight of an army-led campaign of secularist opposition.

Yilmaz has since presided over a legal crackdown on political Islam. The main Islamist party was outlawed, its leader banned from politics and the education system has been reformed to reduce the influence of religion in the classroom.

Iraq could restart N-arms programme if monitoring slackens, warns IAEA

UNITED NATIONS, July 30: The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) once again warned the UN Security Council that while it has no evidence that Iraq has any nuclear weapons materials, the international community should assume that Iraq has kept documents, "specimens of important components," and has a cadre of experts which could re-start its nuclear programme if monitoring slackens, reports US.

In a report to the Security Council Monday, IAEA said that it has not found any evidence that Iraq has officially abandoned its secret nuclear programme. The report was requested by the United States and others after some council members wanted to acknowledge Iraq's progress and have IAEA stop intrusive inspections.

The IAEA is responsible for overseeing the destruction of Iraq's nuclear weapons capabilities while the special commission (UNSCOM) in Iraq concentrates on Iraq's other programmes that have been banned as part of the Persian Gulf War ceasefire agreement. The Security Council will not lift wide-ranging economic

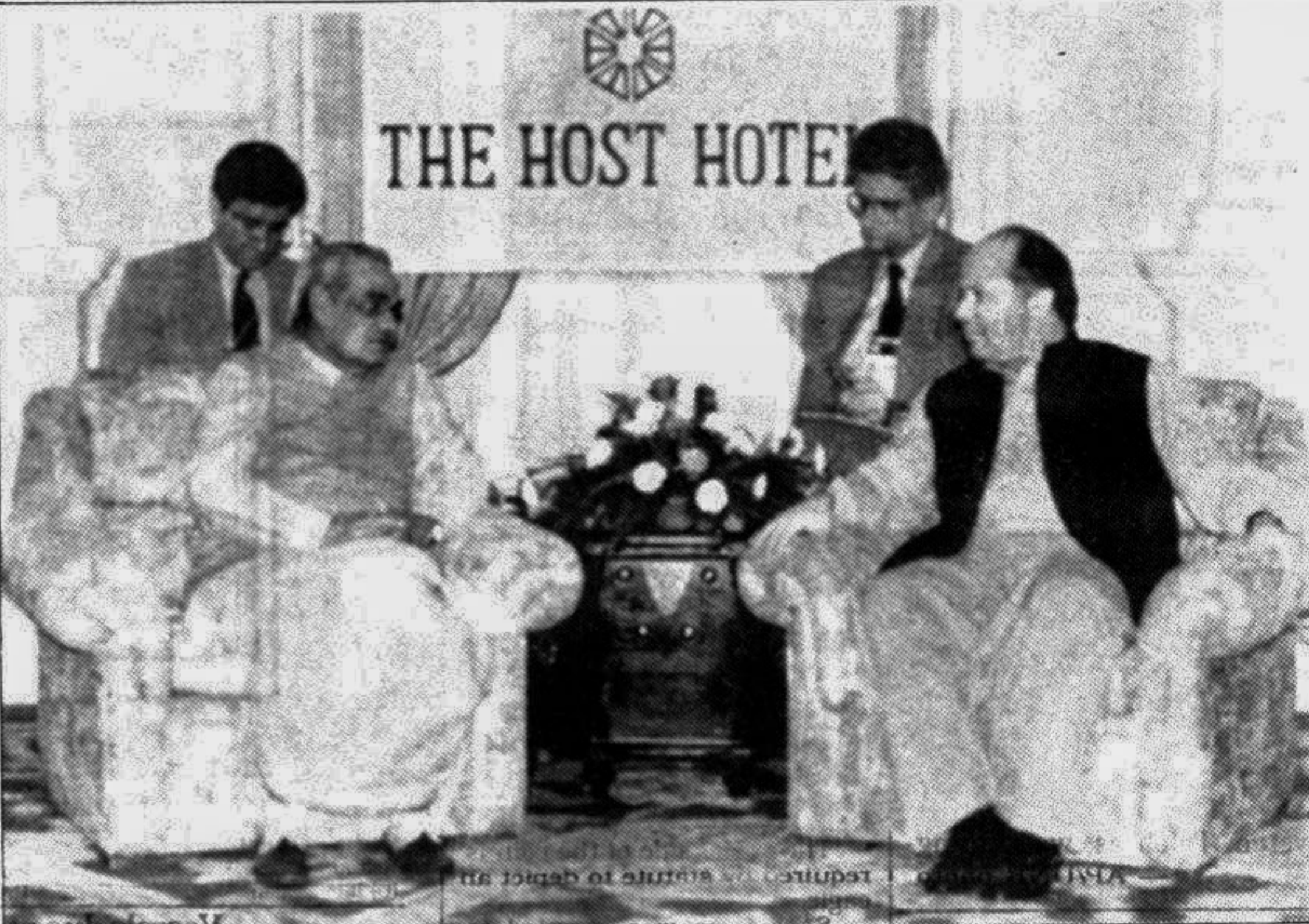
sanctions against Baghdad until it is certain that Iraq has no weapons of mass destruction or ability to re-acquire them.

IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei said in the written report that during talks with Iraqi officials in June and July, Iraq said it "had been unsuccessful in its endeavours to locate verifiable documentation of the abandonment of the clandestine nuclear programme. Iraq reiterated its contention that since no government decree had been issued to establish the programme, no complementary decree had been required to record its abandonment."

The IAEA pointed out that Iraq had made significant progress in weaponisation technologies before the Gulf War.

It is also clear there remains in Iraq a considerable intellectual resource in the form of a cadre of well-educated, highly experienced personnel who were employed in Iraq's clandestine nuclear programme," ElBaradei said.

IAEA said it had to assume "Iraq has the knowledge and technical capability to exploit



Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, left, and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif, right, discuss bilateral issues in Colombo, Sri Lanka Wednesday. This was the first meeting of the two heads of state after nuclear tests conducted by their countries led to regional tension and US led sanctions.

Hun Sen proposes three-sided coalition govt

SIEM REAP, Cambodia, July 30: Strongman Hun Sen proposed quelling Cambodia's latest round of political instability Thursday by creating a three-sided coalition government including two opposition parties that accuse him of winning parliamentary elections by fraud, reports AP.

Hun Sen emerged from talks with King Norodom Sihanouk and claimed he had won royal backing for the coalition, under which he will still hold all the important levers of power.

Though Sihanouk is largely a figurehead, his popularity among many Cambodians and high international profile make him blessing a vital step for Hun Sen to win back international legitimacy and aid lost by ousting the king's son as co-prime minister in a bloody coup last year.

"The king is pleased with the idea," Hun Sen told a news conference. "It will create cooperation in the National Assembly and the government, giving a credible atmosphere for na-

tional reconciliation."

But it was unclear how Prince Norodom Ranariddh's royalist FUNCINPEC or the Sam Rainsy Party would react. Both have threatened to boycott the National Assembly and paralyse formation of a new government, refusing to recognise Hun Sen's apparent victory in Sunday's elections.

Terrorised opposition activists have meanwhile fled from the provinces to the capital, Phnom Penh, as the Hun Sen-controlled police retaliated for their challenges to his rule.

Thomas Hammarberg, the top United Nations human rights envoy to Cambodia, said the international community wanted it stopped.

"It's very important that the political leadership make very clear they will take a strong stance against attempts to settle scores," said Hammarberg.

Many Cambodians disbelieve claims by Hun Sen's party of an overwhelming election victory, but they also put a

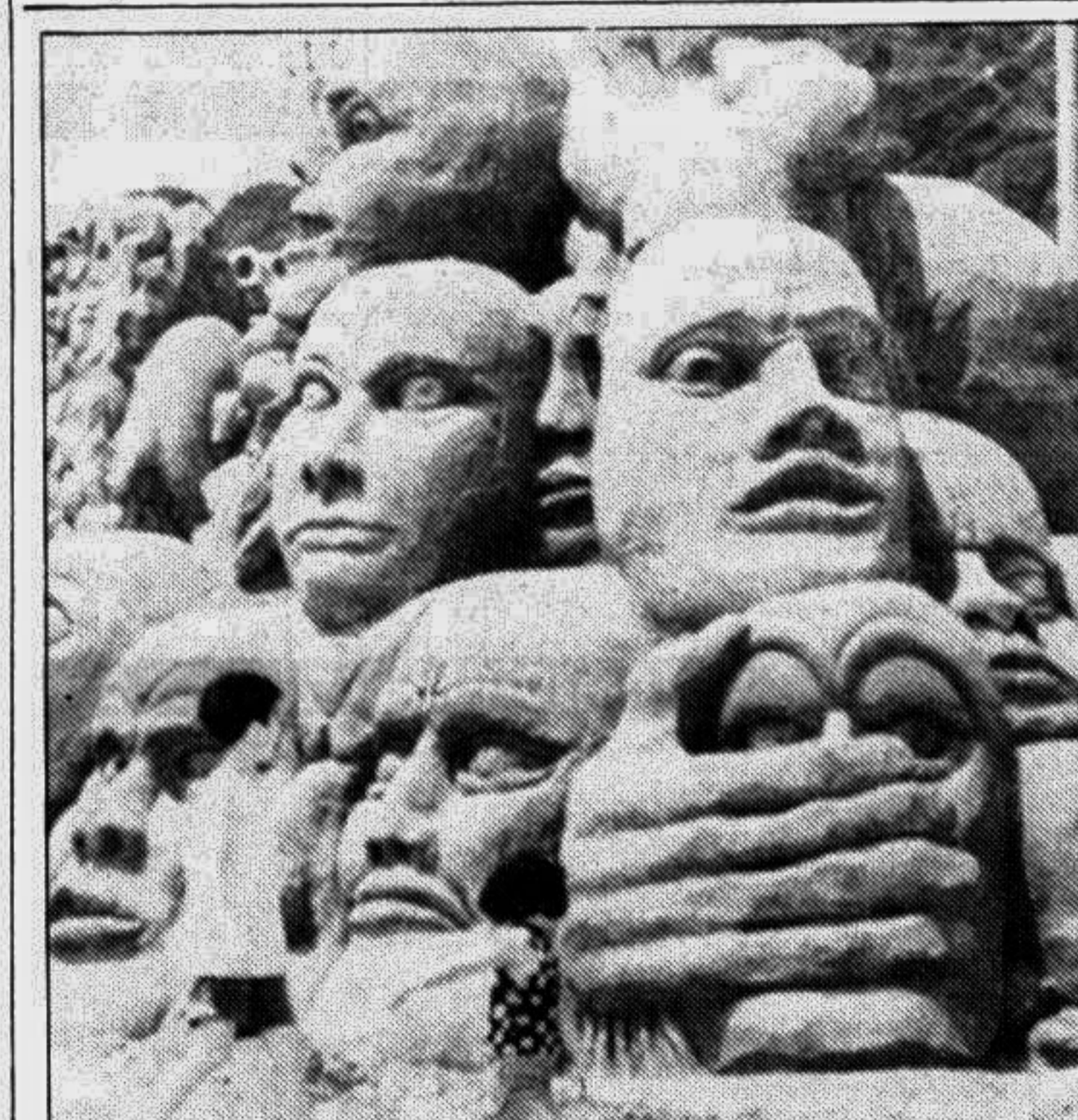
premium on stability after decades of war, the Khmer Rouge genocide of the 1970s that caused the deaths of as many as 2 million people, and last year's coup.

Under Hun Sen's proposal, his Cambodian People's Party would retain control of the key ministries — the security portfolios of interior and defence, finance, justice and foreign affairs. Sharing other ministries would be discussed after final results come in.

The action signalled that Hun Sen — relaxed and confident despite an emergency appendectomy two weeks ago — realises he cannot ignore the opposition but intends to keep all real power.

Hun Sen said that officials of his party have already discussed the idea with FUNCINPEC.

Sihanouk, 75, intends to leave for China for medical treatment once the new assembly and government are seated, Hun Sen said.



Children look at a pile of agonized faces in the sand art compound of the 10th Kamakura Beach Festival in Kamakura, west of Tokyo, Wednesday. About 32 sand arts, including this work entitled "Hell of Rush Hour," created by students of Tokyo University of Industrial Art will be exhibited during the week-long annual event.