

International

2 key allies threaten to withdraw support

Vajpayee govt in trouble

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: India's shaky 4-month-old ruling coalition was under pressure Monday from two key allies threatening to pull out their support to the right-wing government, reports AP.

It would take the withdrawal of both allies to actually bring down the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government, which is seen as unlikely. But the threats underline the fragility of the multiparty alliance and the difficulties of managing an 18-party coalition.

On Monday, the All-India Anna Dravida Munetra Kazhagam, a powerful party in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, gave Vajpayee two days to accept its position in the dispute over sharing the water of the Cauvery River with other states upstream.

Jayaram Jayalalitha, chief of AIADMK, rejected an accord brokered over the weekend by Vajpayee with the leaders of the

four concerned states. Jayalalitha told reporters in Madras, the capital of Tamil Nadu, the accord left too many loopholes allowing the neighbouring state of Karnataka to siphon off more than its share of the water.

Jayalalitha warned her backing could not be taken for granted. The AIADMK and its southern allies control 30 votes in Parliament, which are key for the survival of the Hindu nationalist-led coalition government.

The second threat came last week from the Akali Dal in the northern state of Punjab, which controls eight parliamentary seats.

The party, which represents the Sikh community, wants the government to change the planned borders of a new state to protect Sikh landowners in India's biggest state, Uttar Pradesh.

The BJP controls 179 seats and its allies 84 in 525-seat

Parliament. Eight independents also support the coalition government.

The Akali Dal fears that when Uttar Pradesh is divided to create a new state, rich Sikh farmers would lose their land. The new state is expected to restrict the land ceiling limit to 3.5 acres (1.4 hectares) per person, against the existing 31 acres (12.5 hectares).

Prakash Singh Badal, a top party leader and Punjab state chief minister, is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in a couple of days to discuss the dispute.

Until last month, Jayalalitha has been pressing Prime Minister Vajpayee to dismiss the state government in Tamil Nadu state, controlled by her rivals, blaming them for the deteriorating law and order situation and seeking political vendetta by registering corruption cases against her.

India has had two general elections and four prime ministers in the past two years.

Troops kill 9 militants Strike paralyzes Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, Aug 10: A general strike to protest against the killing of a top Muslim separatist leader by Indian security forces paralyzes cities across the strife-torn Indian state of Kashmir today, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, a police spokesman said the security forces had continued their offensive against the militants overnight Sunday, gunning down nine militants in separate operations.

Life in the summer capital of Srinagar ground to a halt, as banks, schools, local businesses and government offices closed, with employees fearful of travelling to work.

Streets were almost deserted of traffic and pedestrians, as armed security personnel patrolled key areas to prevent any demonstrations.

Eyewitnesses said complete and partial strikes were observed in other towns and cities across the Muslim-majority state, following the strike call Sunday by the All Party Hurriyat (freedom) Conference — an umbrella group of around 30 Muslim secessionist and political organisations in Kashmir.

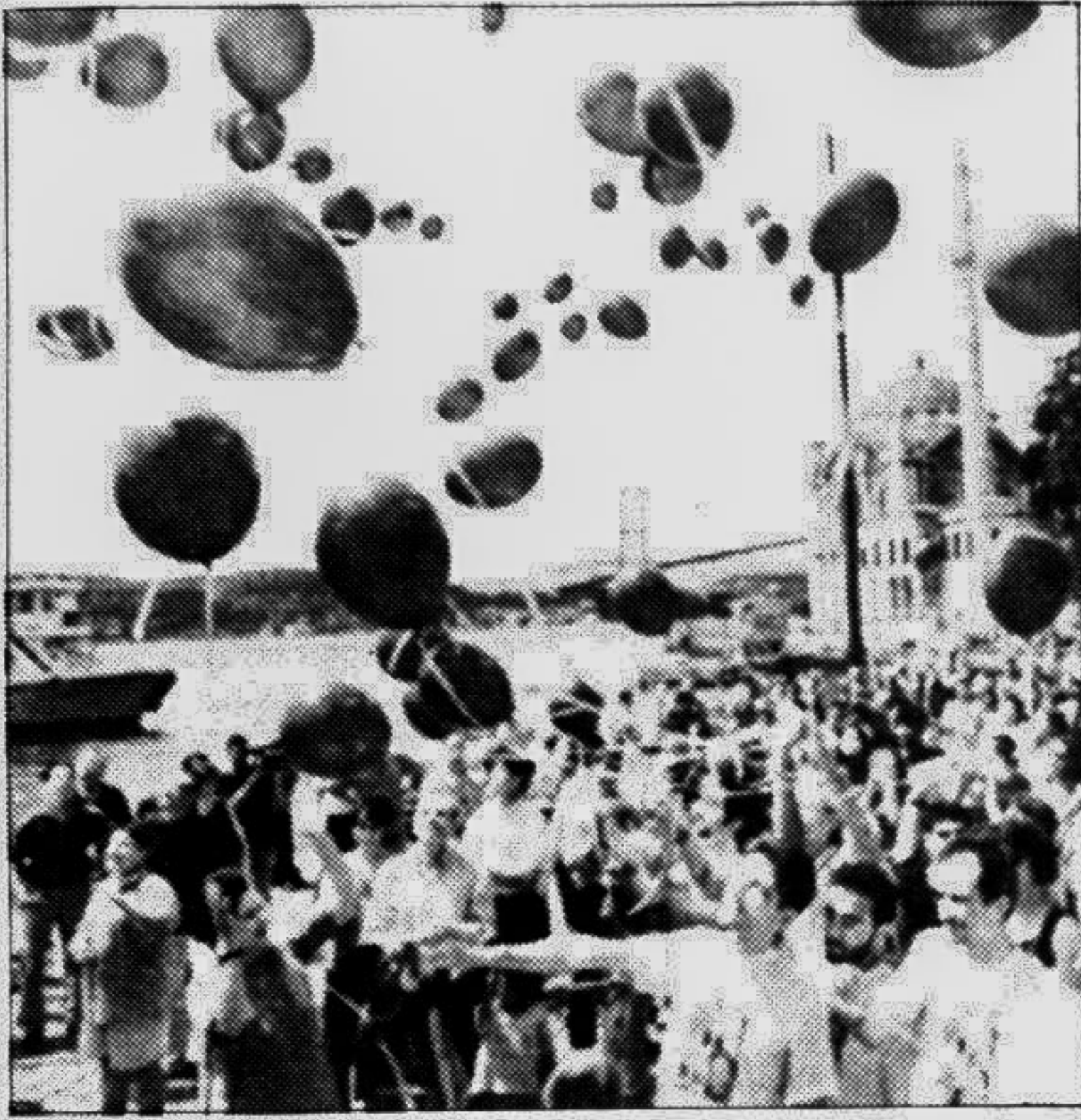
The Freedom Conference fighting for Kashmiri self-rule, called the stoppage to protest the killing of top secessionist leader Ali Mohammed Dar.

Dar, who was deputy commander of the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen, was shot dead along with two other militants in a shootout with police on Sunday morning in downtown Srinagar.

In the latest violence, a six-hour shootout north of Srinagar on the Line of Control dividing Indian- and Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, left seven militants dead, including six foreign mercenaries.

AP adds: Brigadier AK Chopra an army spokesman, said seven suspected militants and three soldiers were killed in fierce clashes in two villages in the Kashmir Valley on Monday. Four of the militants were Pakistani nationals, he said, without offering evidence.

An army major was killed near Zojila pass, 130 km north-east of Srinagar, while trying to defuse an improvised explosive device planted by suspected militants, Chopra said.



A group of Turkish intellectuals set black balloons free to protest the imprisonment of people, mostly journalists, for their opinions in Istanbul's Ortakoy Square Sunday. — AP/UNB photo

9 Naxalites, 3 cops killed in India

HYDERABAD, Aug 10: Nine Naxalites of outlawed People's War Group (PWG) and three policemen were killed in a police gun battle in the dense forests on Andhra Pradesh-Orissa border yesterday, police said, reports PTI.

Two PWG group commanders, three women members and three constables of the Andhra Pradesh Special Striking Force (SSF) were among those killed in the exchange of fire that lasted for seven hours in two spells.

On a tip-off that ultras were holding a training camp in the forest area, the SSF party surrounded the Naxalites' hide-out, police said.

Additional reinforcements were dispatched to the area where fierce exchange of fire took place between police and members of Janjhavati and Nagavalli factions of PWG.

The bodies of nine extremists in olive green uniforms were recovered from the forests along with grenades, fire-arms and ammunition, police said.

Malaysian EC not ready for snap polls Mahathir blames outsiders for rumours of ethnic riot

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 10: Riot rumors that had Malaysians in the capital locking themselves indoors over the weekend were spread by "outsiders," officials said Monday, reports AP.

Information Minister In-formation Minister Rahmat told reporters that "outsiders are purposely spreading lies to sabotage and weaken the country."

He accused rumour-mongers of abusing the Internet to spread the fear of riots tied to the Aug. 15 deadline to deport Indonesian immigrants without proper work papers.

The rumour, that Indonesians were amassing knives and machetes and would use them against either the Chinese community or immigration officials, had people so frightened that on Friday they left work early, stocked up on milk and instant noodles and locked themselves in their homes.

The rumors were so widespread that police set up a hotline to deal with them, running the phone number on the front pages of Saturday newspapers. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad is livid and has vowed to find and arrest the hearsay instigators. Mohamed said the rumors were spread via the Internet by people envious of Malaysia's perseverance in the face of economic woes.

"I won't point out who the culprits are but what shocked me most is how rumors of disturbances in Chow Kit are widely circulated in Johor Baharu," he said.

Johor Baharu is on the southern border with Singapore.

Mohamed said he was unsure whether the rumors had anything to do with Malaysia's currently strained ties with Singapore.

Meanwhile, Malaysia's Election Commission (EC) said Monday that it was not ready for a snap election, the national news agency Bernama reported.

UN suspends inspection of new sites 'Iraq fulfilled obligations'

BAGHDAD, Aug 10: The Iraqi Parliament said Sunday that Baghdad had fulfilled international obligations for disarmament, but the chief UN weapons inspector accused Iraq of trying to "protect" its biological weapons capability, reports AFP.

"Iraq has fully completed its international obligations for disarmament and entirely cooperate with the UN experts charged with verification," a parliamentary statement carried by Iraq's official INA news agency said.

The statement also denounced the lies and allega-

tions of the US Congress about Iraq.

Earlier Reuter says: The UN Special Commission (Unsc) has suspended arms inspections of new sites in Iraq after Baghdad's decision to halt cooperation with UN arms inspectors, a UN official said Sunday.

But Unsc experts would continue to monitor sites already identified by inspectors looking for evidence of prohibited weapons, Janet Sullivan, special assistant to the director of the UN Baghdad ongoing monitoring and verification centre, told the news agency.

Inspection in respect of the Commission's disarmament responsibility are temporarily suspended," Sullivan said.

In light of the present situation and pending further instructions, inspections are being conducted of the sites in Iraq which are subject to monitoring," she added.

Sullivan identified the sites where Unsc monitoring would continue as "sites which are either declared by Iraq or designated by the special commission."

Iraq on Wednesday announced that it would suspend its cooperation with Unsc.

Kabila accuses Uganda of sending troops into Congo

KINSHASA, Aug 10: With his rule in peril, President Laurent Kabila has accused Uganda of sending soldiers and tanks into Congo in support of a rebel Tutsi uprising in the eastern Kivu region, reports AP.

The government also accused neighbouring Rwanda, which it alleges instigated the week-old rebellion, of executing Congolese Army officers and rounding up civilians in the region.

The charges made Sunday could not be independently confirmed, but if true, they represent a sharp escalation in hostilities that threaten to spawn a broader regional conflict.

Tutsi gunmen with close ties to Rwanda launched an offensive a week ago in Kivu, vowing to topple Kabila's 14-month-old regime. Within the first few days of their uprising, the rebels captured several key cities near the Rwandan border, including Goma and Bukavu.

They also control several small towns in Congo's far west near the Atlantic coastline, about 240 kms southwest of Kinshasa.

"Following a counterattack by Congolese forces at the town of Bukavu, two columns of Ugandan forces violated the integrity of Congolese territory," Information Minister Didier

Mumengi told reporters in Congo's capital, Kinshasa, on Sunday.

Mumengi said Congolese forces reported at least 10 Ugandan tanks and seven trucks filled with soldiers heading toward the Bunia, a Congolese town just inside the Ugandan border.

The information minister also accused Rwandan troops in the Kivu region of executing captured Congolese officers and rounding up civilians, but did not elaborate on the claims.

Kabila has recently accused Rwanda of trying to establish a "Tutsi empire" in his territory, charges that Rwanda has repeatedly denied.



Freah Abu Madain, left, Palestinian Justice Minister, swears in the new Cabinet led by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, right, at Arafat's office in Gaza City Sunday. Palestinian legislators approved Arafat's new Cabinet by a wide margin on Sunday despite criticism that the Palestinian leader had done nothing to address charges of widespread government corruption. — AP/UNB photo

US promises to hit back if any govt involved in bombings

WASHINGTON, Aug 10: Senior US officials promised Sunday to track down those responsible for blowing up two American embassies in East Africa — and to strike back if the attacks were sponsored by a government, reports AP.

The Clinton administration, which ordered embassies worldwide on high alert after Friday's blasts that killed at least 12 Americans, also plans to consider increasing security at older US missions to protect diplomats better in an era of global terrorism.

"We respond and retaliate as swiftly as possible to those states who have sponsored the terrorism," Defence Secretary William Cohen declared. "We saw that with Moammar Gaddafi in Libya."

The United States bombed two Libyan cities because of evidence that Gaddafi's government, which the State Department lists as a sponsor of terrorism, participated in the bombing of a Berlin dis-

cotheque in 1986. The blast killed two American soldiers and a Turkish woman.

While US officials refused to speculate on who might be responsible for the almost simultaneous explosions in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi and Tanzania's capital, Dar es Salaam, they said the attacks appeared to be perpetrated by a highly trained and organised terrorist group.

Cohen called the twin attacks well-coordinated, "long in the planning."

"It was not the act of some isolated individual, a madman," he said on ABC television.

Sandy Berger, President Bill Clinton's national security adviser, said several hundred US investigators, including more than 100 FBI agents, are seeking out clues at the sites in Africa and elsewhere. He and other US officials refused to reveal specific information.

"It's an act of unadulterated evil," Berger said on CBS televi-

sion. "And we will pursue every lead that we have until we have tracked these people down and held them accountable."

Secretary of state Madeleine Albright pleaded for Americans to have patience with the investigation. Like Cohen, she suggested the US government would retaliate if necessary.

"While there might be an instant gratification to do something about an attack on us, we have to be absolutely sure we have the facts straight," Albright said on NBC television.

"The memory of the United States is very long, and our reach is very far," she said. "There is no statute of limitations on any of these crimes."

The bombings killed more than 200 people and injured thousands.

Among the dead was Jay Bartley, a 20-year-old university student from San Diego, and his father, Consul General Julian Bartley, 55, the last of 12 Americans confirmed dead.



Thousands of supporter of the Pakistan Islamic Party gather outside the huge property of Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Sunday at Raiwind, 25 kilometres from Lahore. Leaders of the Islamic Party called their supporters to assemble in Raiwind to protest against Sharif's assets allegedly got from ill-gotten wealth. — AP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

20 Tamil suspects held: Police detained 20 Tamil rebel suspects during raids in central Sri Lanka after a bomb blew up a section of railroad track and derailed a train over the weekend, police said yesterday. AP says from Colombo. Most of the 40 passengers in seven coaches escaped with minor injuries on Saturday night, but the train driver suffered splinter wounds in his face and eyes and his attendant a fractured limb, police said. Police found 50 metres of wire, batteries and a detonating switch near the track.

Heir to Brunei throne proclaimed: Brunei proclaimed Sultan Hassan Al Bolkiah's eldest son as the new heir to the throne yesterday in a solemn ceremony in the glittering royal palace, Reuters reports from Bandar Seri Begawan. With the passing of a golden sword and the boom of cannon salute, Prince Al-Juhtadee Billah became next in line to be the 30th ruler of one of the world's last absolute monarchies.

Serb commander killed: The commander of an infamous Bosnian Serb war-time paramilitary unit and post-war police chief, Srđjan Knezevic, was killed by two masked gunmen, media and sources said Sunday. AP reports from Sarajevo.

Knezevic was a commander of the "White Wolves unit which during the Bosnian war fought along the front lines around Sarajevo. Sources said he was close to the Serb war-time leader and No. 1 war crimes suspect, Radovan Karadzic. After the war, Knezevic became a deputy chief of the Bosnian Serb police in the Sarajevo region.

Floods in Turkey leave 7 dead: Floods caused by torrential rains along the eastern Black Sea coast killed at least seven people and collapsed scores of houses, the semi-official Anatolia news agency said Sunday. AP reports from Turkey.

As many as 32 other people were missing, feared drowned in rushing rainwater in the village of Beskoy, the worst hit area in Saturday's flooding where some 50 one-story houses, a mosque and a school collapsed, the Anatolia said.

12 killed in Vietnam massacre: A Vietnamese man went on a rampage stabbing 12 people to death and injuring six others at his mother's funeral, an official said yesterday. AFP says from Hanoi.

Duong Vanmon, 35, from the hung minority, attacked his neighbours with two long knives at the funeral on Saturday in the central highland province of Dak Lac, a local official told AFP.

Heat wave claims 35 in Cyprus: Thirty-five people have died in the past three days from the heat wave that has been broiling the eastern Mediterranean island, Cypriot Health Minister Christos Solomis said Sunday. AFP reports from Nicosia.

Twenty people died in the past 24 hours the minister said on state television. All but two of the 35 were elderly said the minister who issued a warning to residents and especially children and older people to avoid going out in the sun.

Suharto's son-in-law questioned: A military tribunal questioned a senior general and son-in-law of former President Suharto yesterday over the kidnappings of political activists. AP says from Jakarta.

Lt. Gen. Prabowo Subianto is a former commander of Indonesia's special forces, which have been implicated in the abductions of Suharto's opponents since last year. Prabowo's testimony to the tribunal, known as an "honor council," was held behind closed doors at the military's headquarters in central Jakarta.

Minister resigns in Jordan: Jordan's Minister of Water and Irrigation, Munzir Haddadin, resigned on Sunday after a public outcry over contamination of the capital's drinking water, state television reported. Reuters says from Amman.

The minister's resignation, a rare step in Jordan, was accepted by the Prime Minister state television said. It said Haddadin was asked to take leave until his resignation was ratified by royal decree from King Hussein, who is being treated for cancer in the United States.

Chinese woman held: Police in Shanghai cracked an international prostitution ring that forced Chinese women into the Southeast Asian sex trade, a newspaper reported yesterday. AP says from Beijing.

The alleged ringleader, a 37-year-old woman identified by her surname Yu, was arrested at Shanghai airport as she attempted to flee the country, the China Women's News reported. It did not say when the arrest was made.

Off the Record

An uninterested male among five females

NEW YORK: He's 28, beefy and lives in a funky New York pad with five interested females. But Dan, a 180-kilogram gorilla at the Bronx Zoo, isn't a swinger. In fact, zoo officials say that as a love machine, this ape is a dud, reports AP.

Shipped in from Salt Lake City as part of a national breeding exchange programme, Dan's sexual indifference hasn't yet worried his new handlers. For now, Dan's libido is awaiting a jumpstart from Patty Cake, Julia, Tunko, Faki and Hollie. The opportunity is there: Each is in heat once a month.

So far, Dan just jumps up and down and claps his hands. He's needed to help reproduce the endangered species of about 10,000 gorillas. About 600 are in captivity — half of which are in North America.

Doherty notes that Dan is still a novice in matters of the heart: "He's never been with five females," much less five who "present themselves" to him in a suggestive fashion.

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A Taliban militiaman, armed with his gun and rocket shells, sit in the front line about 40 kilometres northeast of Kabul, capital of Afghanistan, on Sunday. — AP/UNB photo

Huge arms seized from KLA rebels Serb forces intensifying fight against ethnic Albanians

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia, Aug 10: Moving to crush the last remaining rebel strongholds, Serb forces are intensifying their fight against ethnic Albanian fighters at several locations in western Kosovo, reports AP.

A day after one rebel faction signalled its readiness for talks, other fighters from the Kosovo Liberation Army kept up resistance Sunday. Prospects for peace talks remained uncertain.

The Serbs have overrun one KLA stronghold after the other and sent tens of thousands of

civilians fleeing in the past two weeks in a major offensive in the secessionist province of Serbia, where ethnic Albanians comprise a vast majority of the population.

On Sunday, conflicting accounts from Albanian and Serb sources both reported fighting focused near the town of Decane, about 90 km west of Kosovo's capital Pristina.

While the Serbs said about a dozen police checkpoints and units came under attack and three policemen were wounded in the area, the Albanians said government forces "intensified

attacks" against seven villages held by the KLA.

Reuters adds: Yugoslav Army troops seized weapons and ammunition on Sunday from Kosovo Albanian guerrillas trying to smuggle them across the border from Albania, military source said.

The sources told a Reuters television crew close to the scene at Gorazup, on Mount Pastrick about 1.5 km inside Yugoslav territory, that 50 rebels crossed the frontier with 20 horses loaded with weaponry around 1 am (2300 GMT).

Detained for handing out leaflets Democracy activists urge Yangon to free foreigners

BANGKOK, Aug 10: Democracy activists urged Myanmar's military regime Monday to free 18 foreigners detained for handing out leaflets the government said were aimed at inciting unrest after the 10th anniversary of a nationwide uprising, reports AP.

The Bangkok-based alliance of groups opposed to the government in Myanmar, also known as Burma, that sent the 18 activists into the country been unable to meet with their nationals since they were apprehended Sunday.

Those detained comprised six US citizens from the free Burma coalition and three Malaysians, three Indonesians, three Thais, two Philippines nationals, and an Australian from similar groups opposed to the military regime.

Most were students, but there were also professors, lawyers and a businessman.

They ranged in age from 19 to 51. The names of most were not released.

A US Embassy spokeswoman and officials at other embassies in Yangon, Myanmar's capital, confirmed that diplomats had been unable to meet the detainees and it was unknown where they were being held.

At a news conference in Bangkok, activists said that 12 of their colleagues were arrested in downtown Yangon while handing out leaflets to passersby and another six were detained at the airport.

"They were well aware they might be arrested," said Debbie Stothard, coordinator for the Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma, one of the groups involved, though she denied arrest was a goal.

Stothard said the activists had operated in small groups to

avoid violating illegal assembly laws. She refused to confirm or deny that all activists sent to Myanmar had been arrested.

The groups said they were concerned about health problems suffered by the detainees, ranging from asthma, migraines and allergies to bee stings and penicillin to hearing problems and intolerance to dairy products.

The leafleting operation came a day after Myanmar's own people staged no demonstrations or protests to mark Saturday's anniversary of August 8, 1988, when simmering discontent against military rule erupted in a nationwide uprising.

The military, which has ruled the country since 1962, eventually changed leaders but retained power. Troops crushed the protests with bullets and bayonets. An estimated 3,000 people died.