



US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, right, speaks to Wan Azizah Ismail, wife of ousted Malaysian deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim, during their meeting in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday. Anwar Ibrahim was arrested on September 20 and under trial on 10 counts of corruption and sexual misconduct which Anwar vehemently denies. Albright arrived late Saturday to attend the annual APEC summit but cut short her stay to concentrate on the Iraq situation. — AP/UNB photo

Police questions opposition figures Habibie accuses opponents of trying to oust him

JAKARTA, Nov 16: Police picked up two opposition figures at their homes for questioning today after President BJ Habibie accused opponents of trying to overthrow his 6-month-old government, reports AP.

So far eight prominent activists, two retired military generals, have been interrogated following mob riots and clashes between student protesters and police and soldiers last week.

At least 16 people, including eight students, were killed in the violence.

Normalcy returned to Jakarta today. Many shops opened and rush-hour traffic crawled along the Indonesian capital's main boulevard, the site of battles on Friday night between riot officers and students demanding swifter democratic change.

Last week's unrest was the worst in Jakarta since May, when much heavier rioting swept the city and helped unseat authoritarian President Suharto after three decades in power.

About 300 student protesters gathered on Monday at Trisakti University, where the military fatally shot four activists in May, triggering the violence that led to Suharto's downfall.

Wreathes were laid along the street outside Aina Jaya

Catholic University, where security forces shot and killed students with plastic bullets last week.

In a separate demonstration, about 100 anti-government activists chanted and sang as they marched through a suburb dotted with the homes of the city's elite and foreign diplomats.

"We hold Habibie responsible for the shootings of the students," said Sonia Virgin, a 21-year-old business administration student.

In the eastern city of Palu, thousands of anti-government student protesters occupied the local parliament building, the official Antara news agency reported. The demonstration was peaceful.

Habibie, a former Suharto portage whose efforts to implement political reforms lack credibility among students, said the violence would only jeopardise Indonesia's transition to democracy.

After Habibie ordered the military to get tough on those trying to topple him, police this weekend rounded up activists who have campaigned for a more sweeping overhaul of Suharto's rigid political system.

Among those in custody on Monday were former political prisoner and politician Sri Bintang Pamungkas and Meilondo Suwondo, a close aide to opposition leader Megawati Sukar-

nopturi.

Early in the morning, officers detained Haryono, an intellectual who is active in the University of Indonesia's alumni association, and Permadi Satrio Wiwoho, an outspoken fortune teller.

Another activist, 75-year-old retired Lt. Gen. Kemal Idris, was released late Sunday night after several hours of questioning. Kemal has campaigned to replace Habibie with a transitional government led by a presidium of community leaders.

His family said he would return to police headquarters later Monday. So too would Lt. Gen. Ali Sadikan, a former Cabinet minister, Jakarta governor and longtime government critic.

Habibie has indicated he will stick by military chief Gen. Wiranto despite outrage over the killings of the students by security forces.

The clashes triggered riots by thousands of young men who burned buildings and cars and attacked police on Saturday. Several security personnel and pro-government civilian guards were also killed.

In a meeting with local journalists Sunday, Wiranto expressed regret for the shootings of the students and promised to take action against officers involved.

Indo-Russian defence cooperation to double in a decade

Moscow, Nov 16: India and Russia have finalised an agreement that will nearly double the value of the existing defence deal between the two countries, according to official sources, reports IANS.

The total value of the proposed agreement, which encompasses Indo-Russian defence cooperation till the year 2010, is estimated to be double the price tag of the existing programme which will make it worth between eight to ten billion dollars, according to sources. The new agreement was finalised following a four-day visit here of a high-level Indian delegation led by Defence Secretary Ajit Kumar.

The Indian team held meetings with senior Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Maslyukov, Defence Minister Marshal Sergeyev, First Deputy Defence Minister Sergei Mikhalov, Economic Minister Vladimir Sapozhnikov and top executives of Rosvooruzheniye,

the largest state-owned arms exporter.

Defence analysts here attach special importance to the meeting with Maslyukov, who looks after the military industrial complex and heads the Indo-Russian Joint Commission from the Russian side. Maslyukov is an open lobbyist for Russia's defence industry, which has a large stake in India. He is also a strong advocate of Indo-Russian cooperation, particularly in the defence sector as it could help this country's declining military industrial complex revive.

The Indo-Russian joint working group, set up to provide new direction to bilateral defence cooperation, met during the Indian delegation's visit. As the present agreement that guides defence cooperation expires in year 2000, the two sides have now finalised a new draft likely to be signed during President Boris Yeltsin's scheduled visit to India in the first week of December.

In course of the last Moscow session of the joint working group, discussions covered the supply of 12 more multi-purpose Su-30 MK fighters to India, Mig-21 BIS modernisation programme, procuring three Russian frigates and a submarine," a source said.

"We are very pleased with the return of our major arms customer which is now set to spend anything up to Rs 250 billion (nearly six billion dollars) on purchases over the next decade," said a representative of Rosvooruzheniye. India is one of Russia's top arms buyers and the value of the contract for supplying 40 multi-purpose and modernised Su-30 MK fighters to India alone is estimated to be around \$1.8 billion. India has already procured 16 such fighters and the next batch is to be delivered in 1999 and the rest fitted with new radio-electronic equipments and special engines, to be delivered after 2001.

Fresh fighting erupts in Afghanistan

KABUL, Nov 16: Heavy fighting between the Taliban militia and forces loyal to commander Ahmad Shah Masood has erupted across two frontlines, Taliban and opposition sources said today, reports AFP.

Both sides claimed gains in the northern province of Baghlan while Masood opened a second offensive at Nejrab, 85 km northeast of Kabul.

A Taliban spokesman said the militia had regained control of two strategic Baghlan districts, Ishkamish and Burka, which encompass supply routes between Masood's base in the Panjsher Valley and the Tajikistan border.

"Masood did not gain anything but failure in these two districts despite his well prepared operations," one militia spokesman told the official broadcaster of Radio Shariat.

A Masood spokesman, Mohammad Aref, told AFP the Taliban had launched a counter attack in the region but the militia had only gained "a

number of posts in Burka."

"They only hold about 20 per cent of Burka, Ishkamish and Dasaht-i-Archi are both in our hands," he added.

Daasht-i-Archi is a third disputed district in the area.

The Taliban said at least 10 soldiers loyal to Masood had been killed in the fighting while a Masood aide said scores of militia troops had been killed.

At Nejrab, Masood launched a second offensive as a series of heavy rockets slammed into Kabul overnight and early today.

"Our forces have taken Solanak Pass and are advancing towards the district centre," Aref said.

Residents in Kabul said at least four rockets had struck the Afghan capital.

"It is highly unusual, in fact I can't remember the last time there was a rocket strike at night time," one resident said.

It appeared the rockets were aimed at Masood at Kabul Airport.

Cyclone hits Andhra Pradesh: 3 killed

HYDERABAD, Nov 16: A cyclone ripped roofs from homes, badly damaged the power grid and left streets and rail way lines clogged by downed trees and utility poles in a main southern Indian industrial city, but officials said today casualties were very low because several thousand people evacuated in time, reports AP.

Cambodians hope new govt can avoid past mistakes

PHNOM PENH, Nov 16: Cambodian politicians expressed hope today that a new partnership between the parties of strongman Hun Sen and his rival, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, in a coalition government will not end in more violence, reports AP.

Hun Sen and Ranariddh, co-prime ministers in a coalition formed in 1993 after a landmark UN-sponsored election, often clashed over power sharing and the integration of guerrilla fighters from the crumbling Khmer Rouge.

Their arguments turned bloody last year when Hun Sen ousted Ranariddh in a coup. The prince fled Cambodia and did not return until a few months before elections in July.

Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party narrowly won the polls, but a strong second-place finish by Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC gave the royalist party leverage in post-election negotiations.

After a three-month impasse, they agreed last week to a coalition deal that will make Hun Sen sole prime minister and Ranariddh president of the National Assembly.

"This will not be a repetition of 1993 because there will be two prime ministers," said Hun Sen aide Prak Sokhon, who attended last week's summit. "When we had two prime ministers everything moved very slowly and decisions were made more politically than technically."

Ranariddh said on Saturday that the two parties agreed to keep the ministries of interior

and defence under co-ministers.

Senior FUNCINPEC official Ahmad Yahya revealed on Monday that it was also agreed that the CPP would control the foreign affairs and finance portfolios. FUNCINPEC will take justice and information.

Working groups are to be formed by the parties this week to divide remaining government posts and draft a constitutional amendment to form a new Senate.

Hun Sen and Ranariddh are scheduled to meet on November 23 two days before parliament reopens — to review the results of the working groups and give their final approval, Ahmad Yahya said.

Their ability to repair their relationship and work together will be the key to a stable coalition.

"I consider this a remarriage," Ahmad Yahya said. "They have to be careful with the way they work and what they say. They will have to compromise to achieve results."

Ranariddh's ally, Sam Rainsy, whose party placed a distant third in the election, was left out of last week's deal.

Sam Rainsy, a virulent critic of Hun Sen, and his party's 14 other members of parliament have remained outside Cambodia since September amid fears for their security.

In a letter to King Norodom Sihanouk released on Monday, Sam Rainsy complained that Hun Sen had not responded to his queries on security, making it unsafe for his people to return for the reconvening of parliament.

The Andhra Pradesh state relief control room reported one person was killed in Vishakhapatnam when Sunday's storm hit the port city that is the state's industrial hub. In addition, three fishermen were missing after their boat capsized in stormy seas off Vishakhapatnam, and two people were killed when high winds knocked down their house in nearby East Godavari.

A 1996 storm in the same area killed more than 2,000 people. This time, some 32,000 people heeded cyclone warnings, fleeing before the storm from the Bay of Bengal struck Vishakhapatnam, 800 km northeast of the state capital, Hyderabad, and some 1,400 km southeast of New Delhi.

The storm brought heavy rains that flooded low-lying areas and winds of 150 to 180 km (93 to 112 miles) an hour that toppled thousands of trees and electric and telephone poles in Vishakhapatnam. The downed trees and poles blocked roads and railway tracks, bringing traffic to a halt.

Many areas remained without electricity on Monday.

Party supporters carry a cardboard cutout of the widow of former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, and the present Congress Party president Sonia Gandhi at a rally in New Delhi on Sunday. Sonia addressed the rally in support of the Congress candidates for the forthcoming state assembly elections. — AP/UNB photo

Off the Record

Ted's aspiration for White House

NEW YORK: Media mogul Ted Turner says he is "very serious" about making a bid for the White House, even though his wife, actress Jane Fonda, doesn't approve, according to a magazine report, reports AP.

In its November 23 issue, out on Monday, The New Yorker says Turner let slip the idea after a recent black-tie Southern California dinner where he received the World Citizenship Award from a group dedicated to eliminating nuclear weapons.

"I am very serious about running for president, but Jane doesn't want me to do it," the flamboyant founder of CNN reportedly told several members of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.

According to the magazine, Fonda left the door open to a Turner campaign, saying "Wherever Ted goes, I go."

The article said Turner's prize acceptance speech included the claim that the United States was keeping nuclear weapons as protection from "the starving masses of the Third World when they come to our door."

Turner said they would be coming across the border from Mexico and from Saudi Arabia, "when they run out of oil," according to the article.

Whitney tired of rumours

NEW YORK: Whitney Houston is tired of the rumours that she and husband Bobby Brown might be abusing drugs, reports AP.

"No, I'm not a drug addict, and neither is my husband," Houston says in the issue of Newsweek hitting newsstands on Monday. "If that were so, you'd get a lot less work out of me. It would show in the performances and in the work."

The singer-actress, whose new album is "My Love is Your Love," said her recent cancellation of a schedule appearance on "The Rosie O'Donnell Show," which helped fuelled the drug rumours, was due to illness. She also blamed her frantic work and family schedule for the drug talk.

"A lot of what we go through is stress. When I'm stressed I don't eat, and I guess that makes people think I'm on drugs," Houston said. "Some people eat, I don't. But there is no problem, no reason for me to like, check in."

BRIEFLY



An unidentified boy is busy building two snowmen in a forest at Koenigstein, near Frankfurt, Germany on Sunday, as first snow covered the Taunus mountain area around the 880 metre-high (ft2,887) Feldberg Mountain. — AP/UNB photo

Blast kills 7 Tigers in Lanka:

Seven Tamil Tiger rebels were killed and several others injured when a bomb intended for government forces exploded accidentally in northern Sri Lanka, the rebel radio said yesterday, AP reports from Vavuniya.

The clandestine Voice of Tigers radio monitored in this northern town said the bomb exploded when it was being transported to launch an attack on the government forces on Saturday in the Vanni jungles. It did not give the exact location. The radio did not specify how many in addition to the seven killed were injured. The Vanni jungles are about 25 km north of Vavuniya, which is 210 km north of the capital, Colombo. The rebels are now concentrated in the Vanni jungles and the nearby town of Kilinochchi.

6 clergymen killed in Congo:

Six clergymen were killed while on a peace mediation mission to a rebel group in the Republic of Congo, Radio France International reported on Sunday, Reuter says from London.

The six members of a church committee set up to end armed conflict in the region, were killed on Saturday in cold blood at Mindouli in the Pool region west of the capital Brazzaville, the radio quoted witnesses as saying in a report monitored by the BBC. The clergymen, all from Pool region, had gone to speak to the rebels without guards as they wanted to avoid any suspicion, the radio said.

New governor elected in Okinawa:

Residents in Okinawa elected a ruling party candidate as new governor in Sunday's elections, signalling support for a deadlocked US base reorganisation project in the southern Japanese island, AFP reports from Tokyo.

Keiichi Inamine, 65, backed by the ruling liberal Democratic Party (LDP), narrowly beat incumbent Governor Masahide Ota, 73, a champion of the island's anti-US military campaign, officials said on Monday. Inamine's victory is largely seen as an endorsement by residents of the central government's plan to reorganise the US military bases in Okinawa, which had been stalled in the face of strong opposition from Ota.

Floods kill 12 in Ukraine:

Flooding in the Carpathian Mountains of western Ukraine has claimed at least 12 lives and left thousands homeless, a Russian news agency reported on Sunday, AP says from Moscow.

The dead include a family of four, swept away along with their home when it was struck by a mud slide, Interfax said, citing Ukraine's Ministry of Emergency situations. The flooding has destroyed an estimated 1,630 houses in 30 villages. About 8,500 people have been evacuated.

Suharto's wealth \$2.6m unearthed in 72 banks in Indonesia so far

JAKARTA, Nov 16: A government probe into the wealth of former president Suharto has so far unearthed 21 billion rupiah (some 2.6 million dollars) in 72 banks in the country, news reports said today, according to AFP.

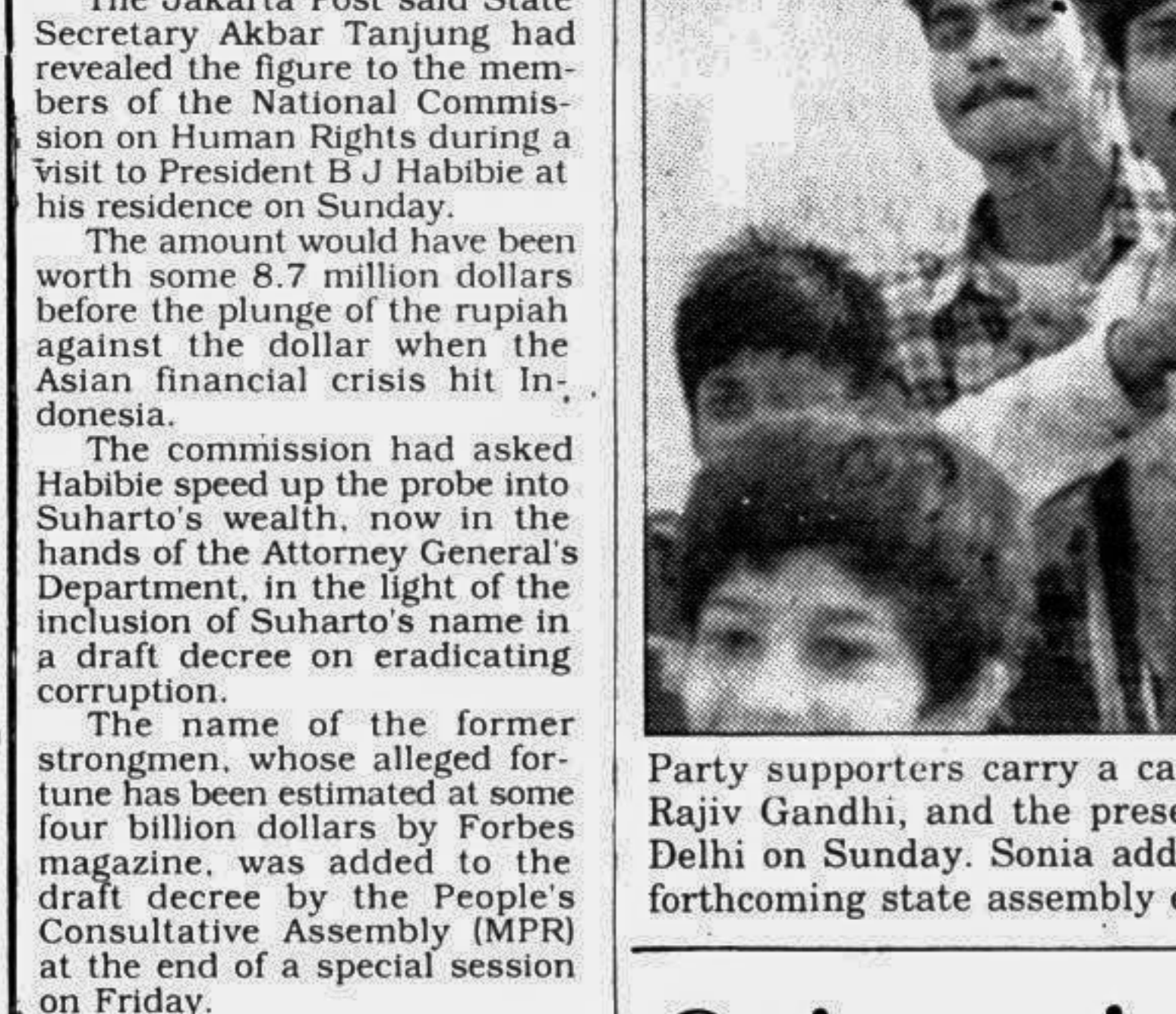
The Jakarta Post said State Secretary Akbar Tanjung had revealed the figure to the members of the National Commission on Human Rights during a visit to President BJ Habibie at his residence on Sunday.

The amount would have been worth some 8.7 million dollars before the plunge of the rupiah against the dollar when the Asian financial crisis hit Indonesia.

The commission had asked Habibie speed up the probe into Suharto's wealth, now in the hands of the Attorney General's Department, in the light of the inclusion of Suharto's name in a draft decree on eradicating corruption.

The name of the former strongman, whose alleged fortune has been estimated at some four billion dollars by Forbes magazine, was added to the draft decree by the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) at the end of a special session on Friday.

Habibie's government came under fire earlier this year when it said it planned to appropriate some 1.7 billion dollars from the state budget for a retirement home for Suharto.



26 journalists slain in 12 months across Americas

PUNTA DEL ESTE, Uruguay, Nov 16: Twenty-six journalists have been killed in the past 12 months across the Americas, an official with the Inter American Press Association announced on Sunday at its 54th annual assembly, reports AP.

Daniilo Arbilla, chairman of the IAPA's Committee on Press Freedom and Information, said that brings to 205 the number of journalists slain in 10 years throughout the western hemisphere. Few cases have been solved.

Arbilla, of the Uruguayan newsweekly Busqueda, noted that while technology has revolutionised the way journalists work, the dangers to the media for exposing crimes and corruption remain high.

He told the IAPA, a prominent grouping of hundreds of publishers from Canada to southernmost South America, that many governments continued in 1998 to pursue legislation and other means of pressuring the media.

Onion price has put BJP in trouble

POKHRAN, Indian, Nov 16: In this sprawling desert region, the spiralling cost of onions has virtually erased the euphoria that followed the Indian nuclear explosions six months ago, reports AFP.

Villagers who in May had eulogised the ruling Hindu nationalists for the string of five underground nuclear tests here are a bitter lot today, thanks to run away inflation.

"What benefit have we got from the nuclear tests?" asked Ranjita Ram Bishnoi, a 50-year-old farmer as he sat cross-legged on the ground near a Hindu temple at nearby Khetolai village.

"Yes, we had held cloth banners hailing the nuclear tests when the prime minister visited the area," he said. But he refused to meet us. In any case, the past is past.

"Today onions sell for around 50 rupees (1.25 dollars) a kilo (2.2 pounds), what is there to be proud of?"

India has witnessed a sharp increase in prices of most vegetables in the past few months. The price of onions, a staple in northern India, has shot up 10 times in some places, making it a luxury for many.

Two weeks ago even salt disappeared from shops following rumours of an impending shortage although it is produced near here.

With elections for local governments in New Delhi city and three Indian states just 10 days away, the opposition has happily picked on the onion muddle to lampoon India's Hindu nationalists.

And Prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) seems to have fallen into the trap.

In the desert state of Rajasthan, where Pokhran is located, BJP leaders have been asking at campaign rallies, which is more important for India? onions or nuclear bombs?

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat even urged his voters to go for apples if onions were beyond the reach.

Naturally, not everyone is amused.

"It is like the French royalty asking people to eat cake if they could not get bread," said PC Vyas, an opposition leader.

About 10 days ago, Indian opposition leader Sonia Gandhi attacked the Hindu nationalists, saying they had failed to ensure clean drinking water to villages around Pokhran.

People at Khetolai village, the closest habitation to the nuclear test site, readily agreed.

"We get water in tanks from 20 kilometers (12.5 miles) away," said Jagmal Ram, 65.

"For each tank, we cough out 300 rupees (7.5 dollars). Is this life?"

"If this wasn't enough the village water tanks which were damaged by the nuclear blasts have not yet been repaired," Ram said. "The government has not given us any compensation either."

It is a common sight to see women, their face covered with clothes, trek long distances in this desert region carrying plastic and steel pots of potable water on their head.

At Khetolai, villagers and their hundreds of cows and camels drink the same water.

Bir Balram, a villager around 180 kilometers (112 miles) away, said he agreed with Ram.

"We are eagerly waiting for November 25," he told AFP, referring to the election day. "Nuclear bomb can go to hell. Nothing can save BJP from a miserable rout this time."

BJP activists are, however, putting on a brave face.

"All that you hear about our so-called misrule is propaganda," a party official said in Jodhpur town.

But Manohar Joshi, a resident of Pokhran town, disagreed: "The election has pitted the onions against the nuclear bomb. And it seems the onion will win."

UNDP to start mine clearing project in Jaffna soon

COLOMBO, Nov 16: A long-delayed land mine clearing project in the former Tamil tiger rebel capital of Jaffna will start soon, the United Nations Development Programme said on Monday after resolving a communications problem, reports AP.

Jaffna was captured by Sri Lankan forces in 1995. Thousands of lands mines were planted, mainly in rice fields, by rebels and government troops during more than a decade of fighting.

Land mines still remain under farms, dirt roads and wild areas of Jaffna Peninsula, situated 300 km north of the capital Colombo and home to some half a million people. Since 1995, the military has reported more than 100 land mine injuries. Most of those hurt were civilians walking on deserted roads or farmers plowing their fields.

The UNDP will set up its communication equipment in Jaffna next week.

"We will first have to test the communication equipment and only after that we will be in a position to say when the actual ground work will start," said

Douglas Higgins of the UNDP in Colombo. If everything goes on well, mine detecting and destroying work will start early next year.

The project was to have started earlier this year, but the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry objected to UNDP plans to use communications equipment that could have interfered with military communications. After a series of discussions, the UNDP agreed to use different equipment to allow workers in the field to contact headquarters in Jaffna and Colombo.

The rebels want a homeland in the north and east of the country for minority Tamils, who they say are discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese, who control the army and the government. The government denies the charges.

Tamils account for 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 18.5 million people. They have a distinct language, religion and culture from that of the Sinhalese, who are 76 per cent of the population.

More than 55,000 people have been killed in the 15-year-old war.

15 militants of Islamic Jihad arrested in Hebron

HEBRON, West Bank, Nov 16: Palestinian security forces in Hebron have arrested 15 militants of the radical Islamic Jihad movement suspected of planning attacks against Israel, the group said today, reports AFP.

On Sunday Palestinian police announced the arrest of one Islamic Jihad activist, Ayad al-Haimuni, who confessed to throwing a hand grenade at Israeli soldiers in the city on Friday. The grenade did not explode.

Sources in Islamic Jihad said Haimuni was only one of 15 of its members detained by police in the city over the weekend.

There was no immediate confirmation of the other arrests from the Palestinian police.

Israel had demanded that Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority dismantle Islamic Jihad and the military wing of the larger Islamic resistance movement (Hamas) as a condition for implementing the Wye River peace accord signed last month in Washington.

The accord calls for Israel to begin withdrawing this week from more of the West Bank and to free Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the Palestinian

crackdown on Islamic militants.

Both Hamas and the Islamic Jihad have claimed responsibility for a series of attacks on Israelis aimed at torpedoing the Wye accord, although senior Hamas officials have been in negotiations with the Palestinian Authority about a possible ceasefire.

Two Islamic Jihad militants were killed in an attempted bombing of a Jerusalem street market 10 days ago.

Moscow mayor forming own party

MOSCOW, Nov 16: Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, a potential presidential candidate in 2000, said he has begun forming his own political movement, a news report said Monday, reports AP.

Luzhkov has repeatedly called for a social-democratic party, similar to those led by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder.

In an interview on the influential Itogi television on Sunday, Luzhkov said he has started forming a movement that will be called Fatherland.