

Second security leak in US N-labs

NEW YORK, Apr 8: Amid allegations that China stole secrets from US nuclear weapons research laboratories, an intelligence report suggests a second security leak, the New York Times reported today, says Reuters.

The United States learned in 1996 from one of its Chinese spies that China's intelligence service was bragging that they had stolen secrets from the United States and used them to improve their neutron bomb, the newspaper reported.

Citing American officials, the newspaper said the spy offered details of what the Chinese agents were up to and how the information was taken from the United States to China. The report came as US intelligence agencies were examining a separate suspected theft of designs of America's most modern nuclear warhead.

known as the W-88.

Until now, White House officials have maintained that there is no evidence that Chinese nuclear spying continued into the Clinton administration. However, the officials' accounts call in question these assertions, the newspaper said. Officials told the newspaper that current national security adviser Sandy Berger in April 1996, was briefed on evidence of the theft of the warhead design, the need to raise security at the weapon labs and the report about the loss of neutron bomb data.

A National Security Council spokesman told the newspaper that Berger did not believe the neutron bomb issue was mentioned at the briefing.

Officials told the newspaper that the briefing, led by energy department's chief of intelligence Notra Trulock, presented information about the theft.

Bid to blow up police station in Kashmir: 13 killed

SRINAGAR, Apr 8: Thirteen people, including six militants and four securitymen, were killed and nine others, mostly securitymen, wounded while militants made an abortive attempt to blow up a police station in Jammu and Kashmir since Tuesday evening, reports PTI.

Security forces frustrated an attempt of militants to blow up a vital roadlink while two militants were arrested and another laid down his arms in the state during the period, an official spokesman said here yesterday. He said an Army jawan,

Alay Jeddai of Rashidyan Rifles, was shot dead by militants near a match factory in Bramulla district of North Kashmir yesterday.

He said three foreign mercenaries and a security jawan were killed and four securitymen wounded in an encounter at village Dandi-Surankote in Poonch district last night.

A light-machine gun, a rocket projectile gun, two AK 47 assault rifles, three pistols, six kg of explosives, 14 grenades, three remote controls and eight magazines were recovered from the deceased militants, he said.

Communists get best chances yet to impeach Yeltsin

MOSCOW, Apr 8: Boris Yeltsin's Communist enemies have been trying to push him out of power since he dismantled the Soviet Union. They've campaigned, schemed and investigated — and they finally may be getting somewhere, reports AP.

Russia's lower house of parliament, the State Duma, is scheduled to debate impeaching Yeltsin one week from today in the opposition's most carefully conceived effort to oust him to date. The impeachment bid is the first one that appears to have a chance of succeeding.

If approved by the Duma, the motion would require approval of the country's two highest courts and parliament's upper house before Yeltsin could be removed. That's seen as unlikely — though not as unlikely as in Yeltsin's mightier days.

Regardless of the outcome, merely holding an impeachment debate on Russia's first freely elected president in its thousand-year history bodes ill for the country's fragile democracy and its erratic, infirm leader.

While impeachment itself is a democratic process, the Communists trying to oust Yeltsin want to roll back democratic reforms. One of Yeltsin's many crimes, they say, was replacing the totalitarian Soviet system with one that has impoverished and demoralised the Russian populace.

While the United States

could weather the impeachment of President Bill Clinton, "Russia's political system is not so solid," said Sergei Kolmakov, an analyst with the Moscow-based Politika Foundation.

Russia is in a deep recession, with millions of people out of work or going unpaid for months. The military is in shambles, and the country is shamed by its waning global relevance — a condition exposed by Russia's powerlessness to stop NATO airstrikes on its ally Yugoslavia.

The five impeachment counts, approved by a Communist-led parliamentary panel in February after eight months of investigation, charge that Yeltsin instigated the 1991 Soviet collapse, improperly used force against hard-line lawmakers in 1993, launched the botched 1994-96 war in Chechnya, brought Russia's military to ruin, and waged genocide against the Russian people with economic policies that impoverished the country.

Yeltsin's opponents have unsuccessfully tried impeachment before, but those debates involved much less legal preparation.

"The position of the Communists was never as strong as it is now," Kolmakov said.

The Chechnya war charge is the strongest — it's the only one supported by Yabloko, the party of liberal economist Grigory Yavlinsky, as well as the Communists and their allies.

Serbs prepare for facing NATO ground attack

Mission to secure release of 3 US soldiers

KUKES (Albania), Apr 8: Serb forces have laid mines at the border into Albania and are reportedly moving up tanks and guns near the frontier, possibly bracing for a NATO ground attack, the UNHCR said today, reports agencies.

The military movements came a day after Belgrade closed the main border crossing into Albania at Morina, preventing tens of thousands of Kosovans from fleeing their homeland.

The reports of tanks and guns were given by a group of about 25 refugees who crossed the border in this remote region of Albania late Wednesday, after the frontier was suddenly closed earlier in the day.

"They reported many Serb soldiers and tanks and heavy guns along the road," said UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokeswoman Laura Baldini, who interviews the group of refugees.

They confirmed that the road was mostly clear back to the village of Zhur, about five kilometers (three miles) inside Kosovo, but was then littered for several kilometers with empty cars and trailers, some of them burnt and destroyed.

In Athens, a former Cyprus president hopes to win the release of three US servicemen held in Yugoslavia, where NATO aircraft have focused attacks on army and police units blamed for atrocities against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

In Britain, the domestic news agency Press Association said US Defence Secretary William Cohen would confer Thursday at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, with his counterparts

from Britain, France and Germany about the conduct of the air campaign.

The allies have vowed to keep up the pressure on Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic until he pulls back his forces from Kosovo and allows ethnic Albanian refugees to return under the protection of an international security force.

Spyros Kyprianou, current speaker of the Cypriot Parliament who has had a close relationship with Yugoslav leaders, was waiting Thursday in Athens, Greece, hoping to get permission from Milosevic to fly to Belgrade to make arrangements for the soldiers' release.

"I cannot say there is a final arrangement," Kyprianou told reporters Wednesday before leaving Cyprus. The exchanges have been very constructive so far and the indications are that this mission will succeed, I am confident about it."

The release could be a sign that Milosevic was seeking a way out of the confrontation with NATO, which began punishing airstrikes March 24 to force him to accept a Western peace deal to end fighting in Kosovo between government forces and ethnic Albanian rebels.

Ethnic Albanians made up 90 per cent of the 2 million pre-war population of Kosovo, a province in Serbia, the main republic in Yugoslavia. Milosevic's crackdown on ethnic Albanian separatists began 14 months ago.

NATO continued its attacks late Wednesday and early Thursday, striking targets in

Belgrade and others in central and southern Serbia. Based on reports from Yugoslav media, the attacks on population centers were far less than on previous nights since the air campaign began.

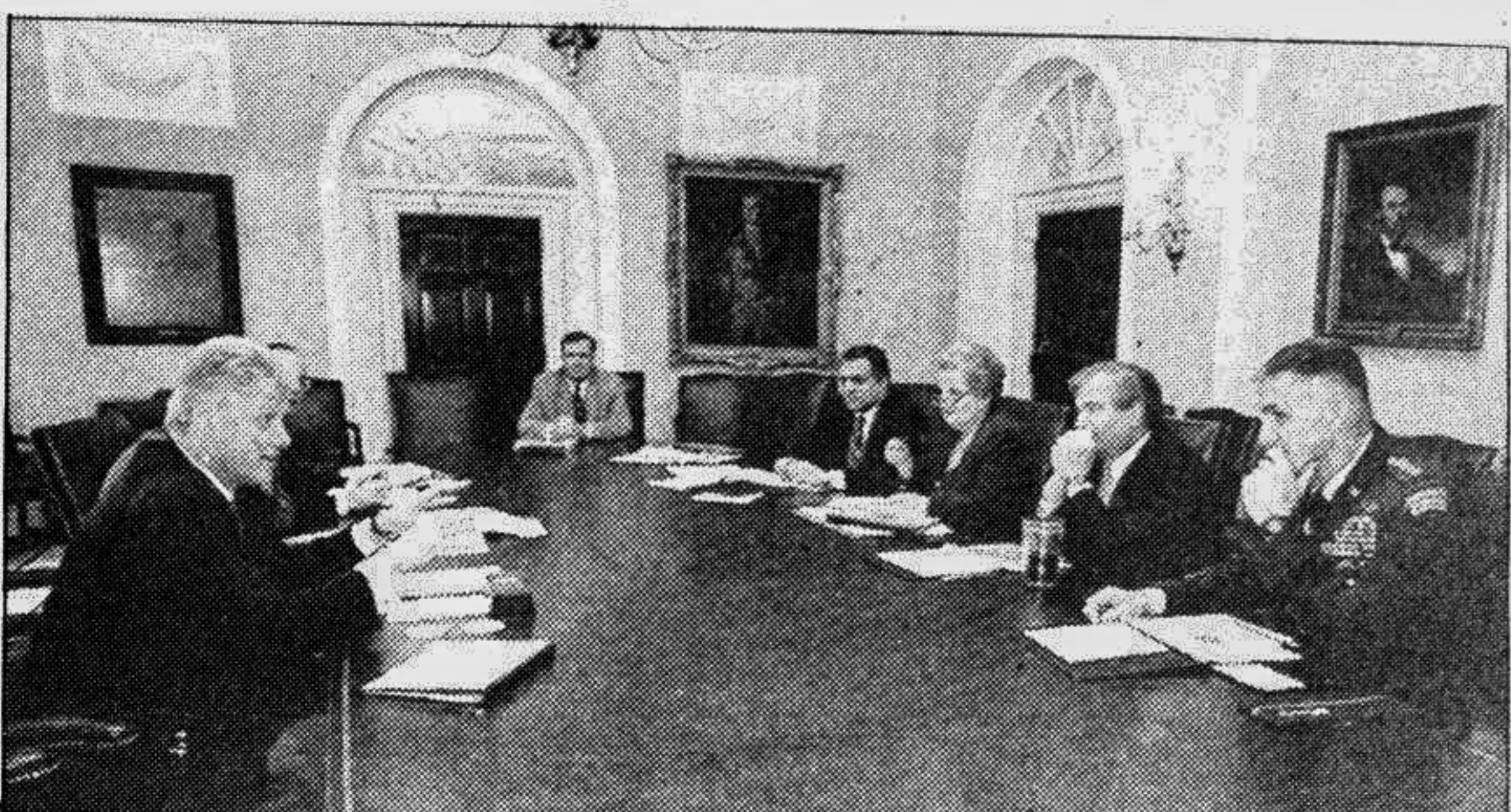
The Pentagon confirmed the loss of a two-engine unmanned reconnaissance plane known as a Hunter. The aircraft was used as a surveillance aid that can transmit video images to battlefield commanders.

The officials who confirmed the Hunter had been lost said he had no details, including whether it was downed over Kosovo or another part of Yugoslavia.

There was no report from NATO or Pentagon officials on the number of missions launched by dawn Thursday. A heavy storm, was reported Wednesday night over Aviano Air Base in northern Italy, where many of the attacks have been launched.

Pentagon officials said attacks were focusing on police and army units scattered in rural areas of Kosovo. Small Yugoslav units have been blamed for most of the atrocities in Kosovo, and targeting them in the hills and forests of the largely rural province has proven difficult.

In Bonn, German Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping warned Wednesday that the Yugoslavs may be planning to use ethnic Albanian civilians in Kosovo as "human shields." That could explain a move by Yugoslav authorities Wednesday to seal off the borders with Macedonia and Albania after forcing more than 400,000 refugees out of the country.



US President Bill Clinton meets with his National Security team Wednesday in the Cabinet Room at the White House in Washington DC.

In Morini, the crossing point for Kosovo refugees into Albania, the flow of cars and trucks suddenly stopped at 3 am Wednesday. Yugoslav border guards could be seen laying what appeared to be mines and digging fortifications just inside their territory.

"The refugees... were told to return to their places of residence — whatever is left of those places," said Doran Vienneau of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which has been monitoring the border.

Scharping said Yugoslav forces had begun forcing ethnic Albanians back from the border areas into the province. He showed aerial photos that he said showed Serb tanks surrounding a Kosovo village, separating the men and women,

and then opening fire on houses.

On Monday, foreign ministers from NATO's 19 members met at NATO's headquarters in Brussels, Belgium to discuss the deteriorating situation in Kosovo, alliance officials said.

In Brussels, NATO spokesman Jamie Shea said NATO was "deeply preoccupied" by reports of atrocities being committed against civilians and 50 villages in Kosovo reportedly have been burned since Saturday.

The KLA claimed Serb forces massacred at least 51 civilians, including 12 children, during a raid on the village of Celina, southwest of Pristina. A statement by the rebel Kosovo Press listed names and ages for all the alleged victims.

—AFP photo
In Washington, Rubin said nine Serb commanders have been linked to atrocities in Kosovo and could face war crime prosecutions.

With the border suddenly closed, Macedonian authorities moved quickly Wednesday to clear out tens of thousands of Kosovo refugees trapped for days in squalid conditions.

The Macedonians hustled thousands of refugees onto buses so quickly that some were separated from their families. About 10,000 refugees were packed off to Albania and another 25,000 were removed to NATO tent camps further inland.

Macedonia has been flooded with more than 130,000 refugees since NATO airstrikes began.

'Beijing military academy recommends redeploying missiles against India'

NEW DELHI, Apr 8: The Beijing Military Academy has recommended China redeploy medium and long-range missiles against India following New Delhi's nuclear tests last year, Indian newspapers said today, reports Reuters.

"One important recommendation, which China has put into action, is to redeploy medium and long-range missiles against India," to ensure nuclear balance in Chinese favour, The Pioneer said in a front-page article.

The Times of India, quoting defence sources in New Delhi, said the military academy pa-

per recommended China seek Western sanctions against India, led by the United States, and seek to isolate India on the international stage.

The documents say that China should penalise India for its alleged anti-China stance and highlight India's hegemonic designs," it said.

India's ministries of defence and foreign affairs said they have no immediate comment on the reports.

China said it had not changed its policies in the wake of the tests.

"There have been no changes on the position of the Chinese

government," Foreign Ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi told reporters.

"We hope and are willing to make efforts to develop friendly relations with India on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence."

The Indian reports came as Chinese state media said Beijing had urged India to adopt a more long-term approach to their relations and stamp out "undesirable disturbances" affecting ties.

During a meeting with visiting members of India's opposition Congress party, Vice President Hu Jintao said relations

between the two neighbours had progressed "along a normal track" but "progress has suffered undesirable disturbances."

India's Pioneer said that despite strong pressure from both China and the United States, India would go ahead with the development of longer range versions of its Agni ballistic missile.

Agni, part of India's indigenous missile development programme, was last tested in February 1994. It is seen as a potential deterrent to nuclear-armed China.

Unreliable partners to be discarded: Advani

NEW DELHI, Apr 8: India's year-old coalition government is holding firm and can demonstrate its majority in parliament next week, Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani said, reports Reuters.

"When the budget session of parliament resumes on the 15th of this month... there have been threats of fireworks but the outcome is going to be the same, namely the government proving its mandate once again," Advani said in an on-line conversation on the Net on Wednesday.

This week a powerful regional group withdrew two of its representatives from Prime

Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's council of ministers and threatened to open negotiations with rival parties plunging the fragile coalition into new uncertainty.

"Vajpayee's government observed its first anniversary only a few days back and it has been growing from strength to strength, perceptibly becoming stabler, causing immense disappointment to our adversaries," the minister told questioners on the internet channel.

Advani said his Bharatiya Janata Party, which leads the government, was committed to coalition politics but would discard unreliable partners.

Ties with China yields benefits: Clinton

WASHINGTON, Apr 8: As he prepares for a meeting with Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, President Bill Clinton says US ties with China have yielded security benefits for Americans on a range of foreign policy hotspots from northeast Asia to the Middle East, reports AP.

Zhu was talking with Clinton and other administration officials Thursday on a number of contentious issues before a dinner Clinton will host in his honour Thursday night.

Thursday's agenda included trade, Taiwan and human rights. Adding spice to the relationship were allegations of Chinese nuclear spying on the

United States and newly published reports that the chief of China's military intelligence directed 300,000 dollar to Clinton's re-election campaign in 1996.

Administration briefers declined to comment on the two latter issues Wednesday on grounds that they were under investigation.

Clinton said in a speech Wednesday that his policies of engaging — as opposed to isolating — China have yielded benefits for the United States.

As a result of these links, the Clinton administration was able to negotiate a nuclear freeze with North Korea five years ago and it also persuaded China to stop selling weapons-

related nuclear materials to Pakistan and Iran.

Zhu, known for his sense of humor, joked about the allegations that China stole nuclear secrets from the Los Alamos research lab in the 1980s.

He said in Los Angeles on Tuesday that China would celebrate the 50th anniversary of communist rule this year by parading weaponry "developed by China itself, not by technology stolen from the United States."

Zhu arrived Wednesday night at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland and had an unscheduled White House meeting with Clinton.

Republican presidential candidate Steve Forbes said

China has been the prime beneficiary of Clinton's efforts to cultivate closer ties with China.

"China's policies toward the United States are based on one perception — that is the administration will continue its one-sided approach in favour of China," he said Wednesday.

The visit, the first by a Chinese premier in 15 years, comes at a time of great wariness between the two countries. China has been under fire from Republicans and others not only for the alleged spy and campaign finance activities but also for repressing dissent, refusing to renounce the use of force against Taiwan and keeping its market closed to many US products.

Vajpayee joins Sikh celebrations

ANANDPUR SAHIB, Apr 8: India's prime minister joined 40,000 Sikh pilgrims, crowded into a sprawling township of tents, to pray today at a shrine where the late great Sikh guru created the Sikh brotherhood 300 years ago, reports AP.

Anandpur Sahib, normally a sleepy town noted for its 40 Sikh temples, glistened with fresh white paint. Streamers and green-and-saffron flags, in place for the two-week anniversary celebration, flapped in a hot breeze.

Vajpayee prayed at the main shrine, the Keshgarh Sahib gurdwara, and addressed the devotees.

With his coalition under strain, Vajpayee's visit was an expression of solidarity with the Akali Dal, which governs Punjab state and which is a partner in the federal coalition. Vajpayee needs to shore up his support to withstand the threat by another coalition partner to withdraw, which could bring down his government.

The Akali Dal itself has been split into moderate and radical factions.

Congress urged to take steps to form govt

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Apr 8: The Indian Union Muslim League (IUM) has urged the Congress to take the initiative to form a secular alternative at the centre in the event of the fall of the Vajpayee government, reports PTI.

According to highly placed League sources here, IUM all India general secretary E. Ahammed, MP, yesterday called on the AICC-I President Sonia Gandhi in Delhi, and apprised her of the League's position and views on the present political scenario in the country.

Ahammed told Sonia Gandhi that the League was of the view that the Congress should take the initiative to bring in an alternative government, League sources told PTI here.

The sources claimed that Muslim League, a long-standing ally of the Congress in Kerala, was the first political ally to pledge its unstinted support to the Congress in the prevailing circumstances.

Troops kill 19 militants in Algeria

ALGIERS, Apr 8: Security forces killed the top lieutenant of the leader of the radical Armed Islamic Group and 18 other Muslim insurgents south of Algiers, authorities announced Wednesday, reports AP.

The brief statement said that authorities seized arms, explosives and documents after killing Abdelkader Rahmouni — among those at the top of a "wanted" list — near the town of Blida, 60 kms south of Algiers.

The killings were clearly part of a cleanup operation by security forces a week before the April 15 presidential election to replace President Liamine Zeroual, a retired general leaving office 18 months before the end of his 5-year term.

Pak HR groups demand new laws to protect women

ISLAMABAD, Apr 8: Human rights activists on Wednesday demanded new laws to protect women in Pakistan, a day after a woman was killed by her relatives for seeking a divorce, reports AP.

Women are unsafe in Pakistan, the killing women in the name of honour, human rights activists shouted in the capital, Islamabad, during a demonstration against the killing of Samia Imran.

Samia, 32, was shot to death inside the office of her lawyer in Lahore, the capital of eastern Punjab province Tuesday.

Police said the killer was hired by Samia's family members. He arrived the office along with Samia's mother.

"Such killings occur regularly in Pakistan," said the Joint Action Committee for Women's and Citizens' Rights, which organised the demonstration.

The group said that state institutions fail to protect women and instead often support family members who victimize

them in the name of honour.

Meanwhile, demonstrators protested the killing of Samia in Lahore, chanting slogans against the legal system and demanding the arrest of those involved in her death.

Samia came from a conservative region where most women are forced to cover themselves from head to toe and marry men selected by their parents.

Divorce is seldom sanctioned by parents.

Rigid tribal and feudal conventions in most rural areas of Pakistan justify a father or brother to kill a daughter or sister if they believe she has dishonoured the family. A divorce is considered a disgrace.

A husband can also kill his wife if he thinks she is an adulteress.

Human rights activists say the strict Islamic laws introduced by the former military dictator General Ziaul Haq against adultery are discriminatory and weaken position of the women.

Police open fire on rioters in Indonesia: 13 killed

JAKARTA, Apr 8: Thirteen people were killed when Indonesian troops and police fired shots to fend off a mass attack by rioters in a town in West Kalimantan, a report said today, reports AFP.

Thousands of ethnic Malays and Dayaks descended on the town of Singkawang Wednesday and clashed with security forces blocking their attempt to free 100 people detained earlier in the week, the Suara Karya daily said.

The death toll could not be immediately confirmed by officials.

"There's no exact figure yet. We're still collecting data," second Sergeant Tarkasim of the district police in Singkawang told the agency.

militiamen, some accused of massacring at least 25 villagers in Indonesia. They waved red and white Indonesian flags.

About 2,000 fighters, brandishing swords, iron bars and other homemade weapons, staged a rally at Maliana, a remote town about 140-km west of the territory's capital, Dili, residents said.

"Many of them chanted long live Indonesia. They waved red and white Indonesian flags," Sumarsono Sriadi, a Roman Catholic priest said by telephone from Maliana.

Organisers of the rally said 13 armed groups took part. There were no reports of trouble today in the wake of bloodshed this week in the former Portuguese colony.

BRIEFLY

IAF jet crashes in Amritsar: An Indian Air Force (IAF) Mig-21 plane Wednesday crashed in Punjab's Amritsar district but the pilot escaped unhurt, police said. PTI reports from Chandigarh.

The pilot bailed out to safety before the plane came crashing in the fields near Harsha Chinnia village in Raja Sansi area. The cause of the crash is not yet known, police said. IAF sources here declined to comment.

Editor of Manila Times resigns: Editor at The Manila Times, one of the Philippines' oldest newspapers, resigned over an apology by its owners Thursday to president Joseph Estrada for a report that prompted him to file a 101 million peso (2.6 million dollars) libel suit, AP reports from Manila.

In response to the apology, Estrada said he would drop his suit. Estrada lodged the suit early this month over a story that said he was an "unwitting godfather" for an allegedly improper government contract.

Jodie Foster hurt in Malaysia:

Oscar-winner Jodie Foster was treated at a northern Malaysian hospital for a minor injury after slipping on location for the 20th Century Fox film, "Anna and the King," a film spokesperson said Thursday. AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

Foster was taken for tests to the outpatient clinic of the Langkawi Hospital on Wednesday after injuring her ankle while on a break from shooting on the popular Malaysian resort island. "It's probably a little bruised but she's fine," said the spokesperson, who declined to be named. "She just slipped and fell. She needs to rest up for a couple days and then we'll be back to shooting."

Farrakhan released from hospital: Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan was discharged from Howard University Hospital on Wednesday after treatment related to his prostate cancer, a hospital spokeswoman said. AP reports from Washington.

Farrakhan, 65, was taken to the hospital last week for surgery to correct an inflammation caused by cancer treatment. University spokeswoman Donna Brock said she could not say where he was going. Farrakhan lives in Chicago.

Actor Bob Peck dies in UK: Actor Bob Peck, a veteran of the British stage and film industry, has died of cancer. He was 53, his associates said yesterday. AFP reports from London.

The father of three was diagnosed with the disease several years ago and died on Sunday. He was well-known to audiences at Britain's Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre and appeared in a score of film and television parts.

Manila sent troops to halt clan feud: Officials said Thursday they have deployed army troops to a small southern island to try and halt sporadic clashes between two clans in which five people have died, AP reports from Zamboanga.

The fighting between the clan members armed with automatic weapons began Wednesday and has killed more than 300 villagers to flee from Linungan, a small village on an island off Basilan province.



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (R) smiles for cameras as he meets with Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi (L) at the start of talks at the premier's official residence in Tokyo Thursday.

Arafat cancels news confce, leaves Japan early

TOKYO, Apr 8: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat today cancelled a news conference and decided to leave Japan two hours earlier than originally scheduled, officials said.

AP adds: Japan's prime minister urged Yasser Arafat on Thursday not to declare Palestinian statehood before restarting talks with Israel, a government official said.

Japan has been pushing Arafat not to jeopardise the Middle East peace process with such a declaration when the five-year interim period of self-rule for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip ends on May 4.

"I understand the Palestinians do have rights to their autonomy, and I strongly hope

meeting with Japan's premier and decided to leave the country two hours earlier than originally scheduled, officials said.

But I strongly request that such a declaration of statehood not be made at this point," Obuchi was quoted as saying. "I hope the negotiations will be open soon and come to a conclusion within a year."

Arafat, who left Japan for Vietnam shortly after the 35-minute session with Obuchi, agreed that the decision was a delicate one, though he said that the end of the interim period would leave the Palestinian autonomous region "in a legal vacuum."

that an independent state will be established in the near future," Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi was quoted as telling Arafat by a Foreign Ministry official.

The brief statement said that authorities seized arms, explosives and documents after killing Abdelkader Rahmouni — among those at the top of a "wanted" list — near the town of Blida, 60 kms south of Algiers.

The killings were clearly part of a cleanup operation by security forces a week before the April 15 presidential election to replace President Liamine Zeroual, a retired general leaving office 18 months before the end of his 5-year term.