

Philippine crisis deepens

SB Arroyo By P. S. Suryanarayana 49-13

SINGAPORE, NOV. 5. The President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, today pledged to hold the national election in May next year, as scheduled, despite the brewing threat of a constitutional crisis in the country at this time.

The political uncertainties pertain to the moves and counter-moves regarding a "complaint", or more precisely a plea, for the impeachment of the Supreme Court Chief Justice, Hilario Davide Jr. Ms. Arroyo's assurance came amid protest rallies, perceived to have been organised by assorted groups including the supporters of the former President, Joseph Estrada. She called upon the people to remain calm. She said the "proactive move" in the form of a "red alert" was designed to enable the Government meet a potential problem.

Ms. Arroyo said, "Even if the impeachment case (against the Supreme Court Chief Justice) were to be transmitted (now) by the House of Representatives to the Senate for [a] hearing and decision", our various institutions (will) continue to function". She told the people, in a radio address, that she herself had presented a draft covenant to those directly dealing with the impeachment case — the Chief Justice, the House Speaker and the Senate President.

Cambodia impasse

The political impasse in Cambodia over the constitution of a new National Assembly and the formation of a viable government appeared nearer a solution, if the latest indications from Phnom Penh are any guide.

The country's three main parties today agreed to form a tripartite government, with the present Prime Minister staying on in the same position, according to one of the protagonists.

Noting that King Norodom Sihanouk "played [a] very essential role", the Prime Minister, Hun Sen's adviser, Om Yentieng, is reported to have said in the Cambodian capital today that the three main parties — Mr. Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party, the royalist Funcipec and the Sam Rainsy Party — would join hands to form a coalition government that could command the majority in the National Assembly.

Although the general election was held in July last, the stalemate over the formation of a new government has persisted.

THE HINDU

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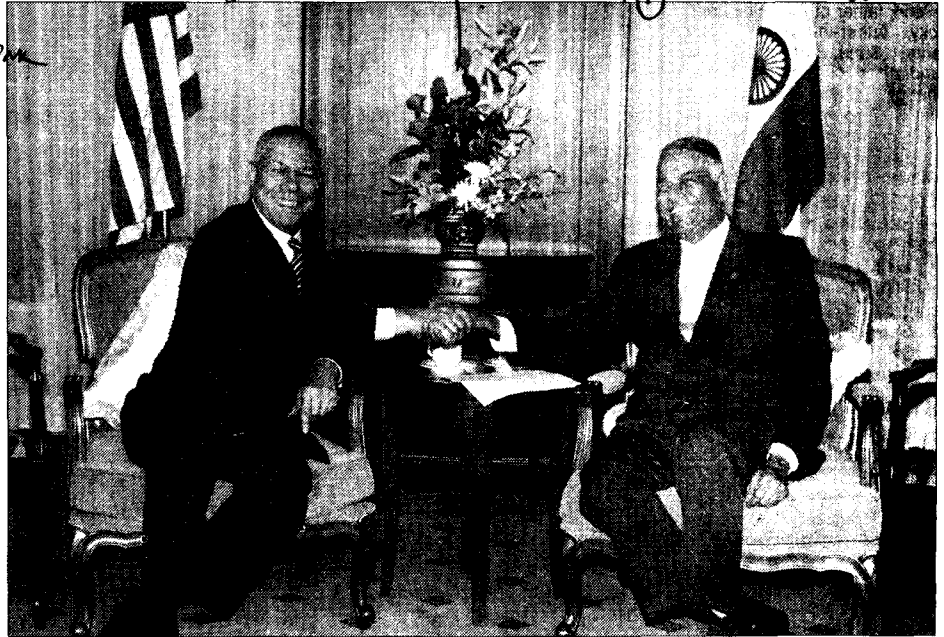
Sinha blocks Pak entry into ARF

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SI-5 19/6 S. B. Sin - KSEAN
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 18. — Mr Yashwant Sinha today effectively blocked Pakistan's entry into the Asean Region Forum citing past decisions at the meeting in the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, which the external affairs minister had gone to attend. India has been an ARF member since 1996, just two years after the forum was launched as a security umbrella to the grouping, which is almost an extension of the Asean.

MEA sources said, "Consensus could not be reached at the 23-member security grouping on lifting the moratorium on expanding the membership of the ARF" though Asean foreign ministers had yesterday decided that the moratorium could be lifted on a case by case basis.

Sources said Mr Sinha had contended that mandatory procedures had not been followed before the issue of ARF expansion was considered. "He (Mr Sinha) quoted extensively from earlier ARF decisions to emphasise the principles, criteria and procedure of grouping," MEA sources said. Sources said that though Malaysia, a part of the 10-member Asean had strongly favoured Pakistan's entry to the ARF, other members including Australia, New Zealand and the European Union insisted that it was Timor-Leste which should be



General Colin Powell and Mr Yashwant Sinha shake hands during their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the Asean Regional Forum in Phnom Penh on Wednesday. — AFP

granted entry, if the moratorium is lifted.

Mr Sinha told participants that India was committed to lasting peace with Pakistan but also said "the threat of global terrorism needs to be dealt with through concerted efforts, without double standards or equivocation."

Mr Sinha also had a 40-minute meeting with US secretary of state General Gen. Colin Powell in Phnom Penh this afternoon.

MEA sources said the two discussed "the situation in the sub-continent as well as the US request for India's participation in the stabilisation force in Iraq".

Officials, however, remained tight-lipped on what

emerged at the meeting, incidentally the first since Mr Sinha and Mr Powell met in Moscow in May.

In another development, the MEA spokesman said foreign secretary, Mr Kanwal Sibal will attend a meeting of Saarc officials in Kathmandu on 9 and 10 July. The Saarc summit is scheduled to be held in Islamabad but MEA officials did not confirm whether Mr Sibal will hold a meeting with his Pakistani counterpart.

In yet another development, the minister of state for external affairs, Mr Digvijay Singh, during his current visit to Cuba has invited the Cuban President, Mr Fidel Castro, to India.

'Indelible' gift

NEW DELHI, June 18. — During his visit to Cambodia, the external affairs minister, carried with him a somewhat unusual gift for his formal call on that country's Deputy Prime Minister and interior minister, Mr Sar Kheng.

Mr Yashwant Sinha delivered a packet of indelible ink to Mr Kheng today. "Cambodia is to go to the polls soon," said an external affairs ministry official and added "obviously we are not the only country facing problems of bogus voting". — SNS

19 JUN 2003

THE STATESMAN

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BOOST TO FIGHTING SEPARATISM

S B Kiri (L)

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TWO PRO-WESTERN GOVERNMENTS in South-East Asia, both facing long-festered separatist agitations by sections of the population, appear to have decided to take the offensive. The Philippines Government has received a strong boost to its campaign against separatist rebels in the south, with its President, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, getting a promise of total support from the U.S. It might not yet be a return to the balmy days of 12 years ago when strong nationalist sentiment resulted in the closure of American bases in the Philippines. There are, however, clear signs at the end of her highly successful state visit to the U.S. that Ms. Arroyo has had a full measure of Washington's hospitality and its impatience to return militarily to its former colony. Manila, which has been fighting an endless battle against the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Abu Sayyaf group, linked to the Al-Qaeda, has issued a deadline of June 1 for the Front to renounce terrorism or be labelled a terrorist group and ease the path for U.S. intervention.

In Aceh province, across the Straits of Malacca, another U.S.-friendly nation has just launched its own battle against separatists after peace talks failed to end their decades-long rebellion. The military response of the Megawati Government in Jakarta to the failure of the talks with the rebels on the northern tip of Sumatra Island was a surprise as much for its intensity as for its instantaneity. A ceasefire concluded in December last year collapsed when the peace talks held in Tokyo broke off without agreement on Sunday and within hours, President Megawati declared martial law and ordered an army assault on the rebel group. The independence movement in resource-rich Aceh traces the familiar story of rebels taking to arms and being answered with military might by the federal government. Most of Aceh practises a conservative version of Islam and Jakarta had last year allowed the region to enact Sharia law. Under the ceasefire

agreement, supported by the U.S. and Japan, an autonomous government was to come in place after elections next year. The agreement collapsed because the rebels, accusing the Jakarta Government of failing to reduce its military presence in the province as promised, would not give up their demand for independence. With the rebels threatening to wage guerrilla warfare, the renewed military offensive will put the clock back and bring instability to a strategic region on the primary shipping lanes for oil tankers plying the route between the Middle East and East Asia. More than the U.S., it is Tokyo which has the greater interest in getting the two sides back to the table since most of the natural gas from the province is shipped to energy-starved Japan. The pro-U.S. government in Jakarta will come under renewed pressure from Japan to end its military campaign and begin talking to the rebels.

Both the Governments, in Indonesia and the Philippines, have faced strong domestic opposition to the forging of close military ties with the U.S. The fairly strong anti-American sentiment in Indonesia has been revived with the fall of the Suharto dictatorship, with Islamic groups leading strident protests. In the Philippines, driven by strong nationalist sentiment in the wake of the fall of the Marcos dictatorship, the Senate a decade ago had refused to renew the leases of American military bases, which had to be shut. After the transition to democracy and the turmoil of the political process during the 1990s, it was Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo who approved counter-terrorism and other joint training missions involving American soldiers. Her host in Washington, George W. Bush, showered praise on her and declared that the Philippines was a "major non-NATO ally" of Washington. The Pentagon will wait to see if Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo can get past a constitutional hurdle that prevents foreign soldiers being deployed on Filipino soil: this had foiled an ambitious plan for joint military exercises in February.

22 MAY 2003

THE HINDU

Army launches Aceh offensive

Banda Aceh, May 19 (Reuters): Indonesia's military launched rocket attacks on rebels in Aceh today and troops began parachuting in as a big offensive got under way just hours after the president put the province under martial law.

Footage broadcast on local Metro TV showed smoke rising from a set of hills after two war planes swooped low over a rise, not far from the airport at the provincial capital, Banda Aceh.

Hercules transport planes dropped scores of troops near the airport. Laden with heavy packs, many took defensive positions in fields. Officials also said around 700 fresh Marines had come ashore near the industrial town of Lhokseumawe.

Just after midnight yesterday, President Megawati Sukarnoputri gave the go-ahead for war against the rebels after last-ditch peace talks in Tokyo collapsed, leaving a landmark peace pact welcomed by Aceh's four million people in tatters.

"The offensive has begun. Two planes launched the rockets, many of them," Major General Erwin Sujono, an operational commander, said at the airport without elaborating on the precise targets and their location.

Another military official said offensive patrols had begun and operations would focus on six parts of Aceh. In Banda Aceh, there was little sign of martial law as children went to school, shops opened and traffic clogged the city's busy central market.

Tengku Muhammad, 47, said Acehnese felt helpless and prayed that the war would not be long and costly in human life.



An Indonesian trooper patrolling in Aceh. (AFP)

"Everyone in Aceh is in fear, I have resigned myself to God," said the trader, wearing an olive green Muslim shirt and sarong as he leaned against a pillar inside the city's grand mosque.

In a decree, Megawati said the refusal of Free Aceh Movement (GAM) rebels to give up their 27-year fight for independence gave her no option but to get tough.

20 MAY 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

China, ASEAN plan to fight epidemic

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 29. China and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) today pledged to act in concert in battling the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) by pooling resources and sharing their skills.

At an unprecedented summit in Bangkok, the Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, and the leaders of all the 10 ASEAN member-states agreed to set up a China-ASEAN fund to fight the new disease on various fronts, ranging from the scientific-medical zone of action to the political-legal spheres. It was announced tonight, at the conclusion of the China-ASEAN summit, that Mr. Wen had pledged a contribution of 10 million yuan (over \$1 million) towards the Anti-SARS Fund. This would be China's contribution for the present at least, and some individual ASEAN member-states also announced their immediate financial commitments.

As the host to the conference, Thailand announced a contribution of \$250,000. Cambodia, the current ASEAN Chairman, also specified its contribution, while other members, too, would follow suit.

The other major decision taken was that relating to what the Singapore Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, described as a policy of keeping borders "open" so that people could freely travel across the frontiers of SARS-hit countries. The idea was to safeguard the economies of the SARS-afflicted countries by allowing free movement of people and goods under some guidelines of health checks at the exit and entry points.

The idea of safeguarded "open borders" was recommended to the summit leaders by the Health Ministers of the ASEAN countries as also China and Japan, besides South Korea. These Health Ministers had met in Kuala Lumpur a couple of days ago. However, the latest Bangkok summit was attended only by China and Hong Kong (as part of the Chinese delegation) in addition to the ASEAN member-states, the reason being the acute seriousness of the SARS crisis in China.

First case in South Korea

While Japan has so far reported no SARS cases, South Korea today indicated that the first SARS case might have occurred within its territory. The Prime Minister of Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra, took the initiative for this summit and sought to make it more meaningful by inviting the leader of China, which is reckoned to be the epicentre of the SARS disease.

Mr. Thaksin underlined that the summit was aimed at winning back the international community's confidence in the ability of the SARS-affected countries of East Asia to combat the disease. In this sense, the latest confidence-building exercise was likened to similar efforts that were launched in this region in the wake of a "financial melt-down" in the 1990s and the more recent terrorist inroads into East Asia. To induce confidence in the global community in the present context, Mr. Wen said in Bangkok today that he would be willing to let the World Health Organisation inspect any hospital or any place in China to determine the causes of the outbreak of the disease and to work out remedies.

Mr. Wen's assurance followed certain China-specific comments that the WHO's executive director for communicable diseases, David Heymann, made on the sidelines of the summit. Mr. Heymann, who briefed the summit leaders on the WHO's perspectives, noted that the global SARS control efforts would depend on the efforts of China, which was at present fully engaged in the battle against the disease. According to the latest WHO assessment, SARS was still raging in China, while the worst of the disease might either be over or nearing the end in places like Vietnam and Singapore and perhaps even Hong Kong. China's latest SARS death toll was 148 against the total confirmed cases of 3,306.

Asean, China mull SARS research fund

The Nation/ANN

BANGKOK, April 29. — The Association of South-East Asian Nations and China are considering the establishment of a fund for research into SARS. This was announced today, ahead of an emergency summit of leaders from 10 South-East Asian nations and China, by Thailand's foreign minister.

At the summit, the first international meet set to discuss SARS, the Asean members decided to set up a regional information network to combat the spread of SARS, according to a joint draft declaration issued by their leaders. They also decided to keep their borders and economies open despite the crisis, said the draft, issued at the end of the summit.

Earlier today, Chinese premier Mr Wen Jiabao met Thai prime minister Mr Thaksin Shinawatra and discussed the situation arising out of the spread of SARS. China has reportedly pledged an initial seed

money of \$1.2 million for the fund, while Thailand has promised to contribute \$250,000 for the same purpose.

The information network is chief among the 20 measures that were discussed at the summit. The draft declaration said the leaders recognise "the need for members to take individual and collective responsibility to implement stringent measures to control and contain the spread of SARS". The ASEAN SARS Containment Information Network was recommended by Singapore, the country in southeast Asia worst hit by SARS. The city-state has suffered 23 SARS deaths already.

In a discussion paper distributed at the summit, Singapore said: "Through this network, ASEAN member countries could share essential information as well as best practices distilled from their experience in dealing with SARS". The network envisages sharing information, best practices and new findings among the member nations of ASEAN — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia,

Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Other measures that were to be adopted by the summit include: ensuring proper pre-departure health screening for travellers at the point of origin; establishing standardised measures for proper health screening; cooperation in providing public information and education to promote awareness; strengthening cooperation among front-line enforcement agencies; establishing and strengthening early warning systems on emerging infectious diseases. The leaders also reaffirmed their "commitment to keep our economies and borders open" as part of the region's fundamental policy that has brought it "many years of growth and prosperity," the draft declaration said.

Singapore, a strong proponent of free trade in the region, said in its paper: "We must, in particular, be totally transparent about (the) SARS situation in our countries. If we are seen to be hiding our problems, this will inspire less, not more, confidence in us".

Asean meet on SARS begins

Press Trust of India

KUALA LUMPUR, April 25. — Senior health officials from Asean nations and China began discussing an action plan to control SARS here today, ahead of a ministers' meet tomorrow in which a joint declaration on prevention of SARS is likely to be adopted.

The two-day meeting has been called by Malaysia.

The ministerial-level meeting will have health ministers from nine of the ten-member Asean as Vietnam has not been able to send its representation. China has sent a six-member team led by deputy minister of health Mr Huang Jie Fu. Participants are likely to adopt a joint declaration on prevention of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, which will be forwarded to their respective heads of government for the special summit in Bangkok on 29 April. Malaysian health minister Mr Chua Jui Meng said the weekend meet will discuss eight areas of cooperation, including discussing the country reports in the areas of epidemiology, public health measures, information on cases and contacts as well as how to handle the question of foreign workers.

11 SARS deaths

Five more deaths were reported overnight in China and six in Hong Kong, taking the toll to 115 both in the mainland and Hong Kong.

Malaysia reported four new suspected cases today. It was probing a Chinese woman with SARS symptoms who was held for trying to sneak in from Singapore.

THE STATESMAN

25 APR 2003

SARS SPREAD / BEIJING ADOPTS DRASTIC MEASURES

Situation turns grim as toll goes up

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 24. The public health crisis gripping China over the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) menace came into sharper international focus today, as the Chinese authorities announced drastic steps, including systematic quarantine orders, in a bid to arrest the further spread of the disease. Of prime concern to the Chinese Government was the upkeep of Beijing, where people required to be counselled against fleeing homes and causing a further chain reaction of more infections and a greater sense of insecurity.

The Chinese Government, which has come under strictures from the World Health Organisation (WHO) for the failure to take appropriate measures from last November when the problem first set in, did not formally protest against the WHO's latest advisory against travel to Beijing (as also Toronto in Canada). Instead, Chinese officials reaffirmed their resolve to contain the emergency through a multi-pronged approach that would include a systematic quarantine for certain categories of suspected cases and a clean-up campaign that would cover the isolation of not only the afflicted people but also the affected places and buildings.

On the political front, China exuded confidence about being able to ride out the crisis through healthcare measures and through research aimed at understanding the new disease and curing or eliminating it.

It was announced in Beijing today that the Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, will meet the leaders of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Bangkok on Tuesday next week. Thailand's Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, who will play host to this special ASEAN summit on SARS, invited Mr. Wen to enter into a China-ASEAN dialogue on the SARS menace.

As for the profile of sorrow, the Chinese



HOLDING THEIR BREATH: Passengers wearing masks wait to check in at Beijing Airport on Thursday. Thousands have been crowding the airport and railway stations trying to get out of the city.

authorities painted a grim picture for yet another day. The total number of confirmed cases was put at 2,322, while the death toll stood at 110. In Beijing alone, the total cases rose to 774 even as the toll in the city rose to 39. The number of suspected cases all over China rose to 1,278. Of these Beijing accounted for 862.

The virulence of SARS continued to be felt in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. In Singapore, the Government on Thursday announced its intention to raise penalties to alarming levels so that those served with quarantine orders would observe the rules and precautions. Legislation on this subject was expected to be passed soon. The City-State's strategy was

defined more sharply than before as isolating the affected persons (and their close contacts) and containing the disease spreading.

Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister, Hsien Loong, told Parliament that the outbreak had already come to pose a "great threat" to society and the economy.

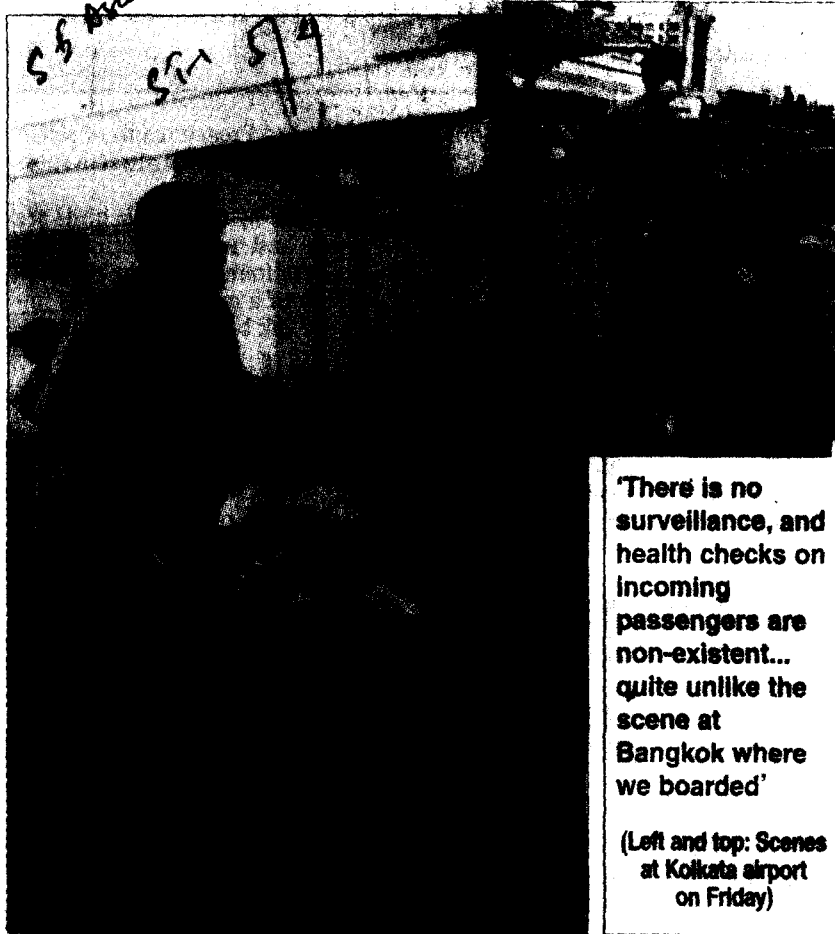
To prevent the situation from spiralling into a catastrophe, the Infectious Disease Act would be urgently amended to provide for remedies.

While an economic relief package of millions was being put together, the authorities have begun "thermal scanning" of passengers to look for signs of fever among passengers.

25 APR 2003

THE FINDB

Bangkok flight bares SARS loopholes



'There is no surveillance, and health checks on incoming passengers are non-existent... quite unlike the scene at Bangkok where we boarded'

(Left and top: Scenes at Kolkata airport on Friday)

Inran Ahmed Siddiqui in Kolkata

April 4. — At a time when airports across the globe have gone into overdrive to guard against the influx of the dreaded SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), the authorities at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport seem to be content with cursory checks and carelessness bordering on the criminal. And this, despite the panic caused when the city's first "suspect", a passenger from Vancouver, landed at the airport last week.

Passengers, who arrived from Bangkok by IC 732 flight this afternoon and spoke to The Statesman, were rather taken aback at the lack of surveillance.

"This is astonishing... there are no surveillance, and health checks on

tent... quite unlike the scene at Bangkok where we boarded", said Mr UK Chatterjee, an official of Unilever, Asia. "They are not even checking to see where we boarded or what our travel details are. It's possible that some passengers have been exposed to SARS in areas where the disease is spreading rapidly, but they seem unconcerned".

The disease has impacted South-east Asia, particularly Hong Kong, China and Singapore. "There is panic in Bangkok and people were seen wearing masks especially at the airport," Mr Chatterjee added.

Mr Amit Bothra, a software engineer who flew in from California (via Bangkok) and without taking off his mask, was very perturbed. "I was shocked to see that not a single official

Cambodia seals border with Thailand

MS *ST* *PH AS*
CAMBODIA (PHNOM PENH), MARCH 6. The Cambodian Prime Minister, Hun Sen, said on Thursday that he ordered the border with Thailand closed because he feared Thai authorities would accuse visiting Cambodians of being drug traffickers and shoot them.

More than 1,000 suspected drug traffickers have been killed in a tough anti-drug campaign launched by the Thai Government on February 1. Police say they have shot a small number of the suspects in self defense, but that most were gunned down by drug gangs trying to silence possible informants.

"I am concerned about the security of Khmer citizens who enter Thailand to work or trade," Mr. Hun Sen said. "Maybe hundreds of them could be killed,

because the operation to suppress drug traffickers is leading to many shootings." Cambodia sealed its border with Thailand on Wednesday, asserting that progress "to normalise relations in border areas" has been sluggish since anti-Thai riots in the Cambodian capital in January.

On January 29, Cambodian rioters torched the Thai Embassy and dozens of Thai-owned businesses. The violence allegedly followed Cambodian media reports that wrongly quoted a Thai actress as saying the famous Angkor temples, Cambodia's national symbol, should belong to Thailand.

In response, Thailand closed its border, downgraded diplomatic relations, evacuated its citizens and asked for \$50 million in compensation. — AP

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7 MAR 2003

Thailand severs ties with Cambodia

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The Nation/ANN

BANGKOK, Jan. 30. — Thailand today severed all bilateral ties with Cambodia and recalled its envoy after fierce anti-Thai protests in Cambodian capital Phnom Penh. One Thai national was believed to have been killed and Thai shops ravaged. The situation prompted Thailand's HM the King to intervene.

Thai-Cambodian ties broke down at just about every levels following the decision to downgrade diplomatic relations with Cambodia as a mark of protest against Cambodia's failure to provide adequate protection to Thailand's diplomatic corps and the Thai-owned businesses in Phnom Penh.

Police chief Pol General Sant Sarutanond, reciting a statement from Privy Council Arsa Sarasin had called him on behalf of HM the King, telling the 1,000-plus demonstrators in front of the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok that it was the wish of HM that everybody refrained from the use of violence and that the crowd

Newspaper

spread rumour

PHNOM-PENH, Jan. 30. — Three unidentified men were the source of an inflammatory story about a Thai actress that led to an outpouring of anti-Thailand rioting in Cambodia, a newspaper editor said today. In Chan Watha, the editor of *Rasmel Angkor* published on 18 January the account of actress Suwanan Kongying's alleged remarks that Cambodia had stolen Angkor Vat.

He said Suwanan's alleged comments were conveyed to him by three Cambodians who visited his office. He said he published the story "to protect Cambodia's sovereignty." — AP

be disperse return home.

More than 1,000 protesters flocked to the Cambodian embassy in Bangkok yesterday after watching footages of Cambodian demonstrators burning and looting the Thai Embassy and Thai-owned business in Phnom Penh.



Thai protesters burn a mock coffin before the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok while Thai military and city police stand guard in Bangkok on Thursday. Thai protesters staged a pre-dawn rally amid tight security in front of the Cambodian embassy. — AFP

They tore down the sign on the gate of the Cambodian mission, throwing it to the ground and stamping on it. An infuriated Prime Minister Mr Thaksin Shinawatra told reporters that all activities with Cambodia have been severed.

"We have stopped all activities with Cambodia. No beggars" to be sent back.

The foreign ministry yesterday summoned the Cambodian ambassador Ung Sean to receive a strongly worded "Aide-Memoire" that called on the envoy, for his own personal safety, be recalled by 24 hours, the ministry's chief spokesman Sihesak said. With his departure, the Cambodia's

diplomatic representation to Thailand was effectively down graded to the level of Charge d' Affaires, he said. Thailand also recalled its ambassador to Phnom Penh Chatchawed Chartsuwan, who on Wednesday escaped an angry mob of about 1000 by climbing the embassy wall.

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Suu Kyi not allowed to phone in message

By W. Chandrakanth

HYDERABAD, JAN. 6. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace laureate, fighting for restoration of democratic rights of the Myanmarese was allegedly not allowed by the military regime on January 2 to deliver a message over telephone to the first Asian Social Forum summit being held here.

The telephone lines were reportedly cut as the regime feared she would speak against it in the phone-in programme. As a result, her recorded message would be delivered here on the concluding day on Tuesday.

A human rights delegation from Myanmar attending the summit reiterated its call to the international community to cut aid to the military Government

"in every form" till it complies with "civilised norms" and halts crime against women.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Thin Than Aung, joint general secretary of the Women's League of Burma and Nang Hseng Moon of the Shan Women's Action Network said the 'military regime's atrocities against women continue'.

It had only released Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest but human rights continue to be "under arrest" and there is no sight of their being "released." "The Burmese military has been systematically using rape as a weapon of war against women and girls belonging to the ethnic minorities. Our carefully documented work covering 173 cases proves that 83 per cent of rapes had been committed by the mil-

itary officers and in most cases, in front of their troops. These rapes often involve extreme brutality and torture. At least 25 per cent of such rapes have resulted in the death of victims", they say.

The military regime uses foreign funding to train officials in human rights but has it any positive effect? "No, not at all. Any support to the regime only means a continued license to rape and kill. We have appealed to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to send a fact finding mission to the Thai-Burma border to investigate sexual violence committed by the military. We had submitted a report to the officials, Radhika Comaraswamy, in Colombo. We are yet to see a positive response from the international community".

THE HINDU