

Activists remain on Puerto Rican island protesting bombings

INTERNATIONAL
MANILA, Philippines — Plans for a coup during protests by supporters of ousted leader Joseph Estrada "fizzled out," President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said today.

Declaring her government was in "absolute control of the situation," Arroyo said she wished the threat had materialized.

"Last night, there was going to be a power grab, but it fizzled out," Arroyo told a news conference marking 100 days in power — and her first crisis. "I was hoping they would act so I could crush them."

Arroyo, who was sworn in as Estrada was packing to leave the presidential palace because of growing protests over his alleged corruption, did not

identify who she believed was behind the coup plans. But, she added, "This is not their first time around."

Estrada supporters swelled to about 200,000 before dawn today, demanding that he be freed and returned to power. But they called off a planned march to the presidential palace, preventing a possible clash with leftist groups.

Military chief of staff Diomedio Villanueva held a 2 a.m. news conference to squelch reports of high-level defections to Estrada's camp and reiterate support of Arroyo.

NATIONAL
SPACE CENTER, Houston — The theme of "Gladiator" greeted the seven-man crew of space shuttle Endeavour today as they headed for home after delivering and installing a billion-dollar robot

ap news capsules

arm for the international space station. "To the crew of Endeavour where strength and honor mean mission success," Mission Control said.

"Thank you for that wonderful music," Endeavour commander Kent Rominger said. "It's very appropriate given where we are today and it's a very popular movie among this crew."

Endeavour undocked from the space station, called Alpha, on Sunday and headed for the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., to land on Tuesday.

Crippling computer troubles aboard Alpha kept Endeavour there an extra day. Last week the two backups to a

command-and-control computer critical to operating the new Canadian-built arm repeatedly failed.

Mission Control engineers scrambled for four days to fix them while the station and Endeavour crews unloaded Italian-built cargo carrier Raffaello of 6,000 pounds of supplies delivered to Alpha. The crews tested the 58-foot arm on Saturday.

With only two days left in the Hollywood writers contract, negotiators still have not reached an agreement to avert a walkout that would halt TV and movie production.

Representatives of the Writers Guild

of America and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers met throughout the weekend, but ended talks Sunday without bridging a \$100 million gap between their respective demands.

With both sides participating in a news blackout, it was unclear whether they had made any progress.

The real cliffhanger for audiences is whether a strike will keep their favorite comedies and dramas off the air in the fall.

If the writers walk out at midnight Tuesday, the first victims would be daily soap operas and late-night variety shows, followed by sitcoms and hour-long dramas if a strike drags on.

"It might be the winter season before the public starts seeing a lot of new shows," said Doug Lieblein, a writer-

producer on the CBS comedy "Yes, Dear."

Studio officials and WGA leaders have said they are willing to compromise — but only a little.

WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON — World finance leaders recognized for the first time there was a "need for global action" in the fight against AIDS and other infectious diseases. But the United States has reservations about whether such an effort can succeed.

The finance ministers and central bank governors also agreed at their weekend meetings to look for an improved early warning system to prevent future financial crises and voiced optimism that the current global economic slowdown will not be an extended one.

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