

# **S.Korea activists launch US beef boycott**

July 3, 2008

Agence France-Presse

SEOUL — South Korean activists on Thursday launched a nationwide campaign to boycott US beef as President Lee Myung-Bak issued a fresh warning against violent protests.

At least four protest groups including two national women's associations denounced the government for allowing the distribution of US beef despite unabated public concerns over health problems.

"We will certainly keep US beef off our dining table," the groups said in a joint statement.

"Aside from mass candle-lit protests, we will stage a nationwide campaign aimed at preventing the distribution and consumption of US beef," the statement said.

Kim Dae-Hoon, a leading activist, said the members would urge distributors, restaurants and canteens to join the boycott and declare themselves as a "Green Zone" free from mad cow perils.

Unions of some 40 large hospitals have already promised they would not allow US beef to be used at their workplaces, he said.

The Korean Teachers' and Education Workers Union (KTEWU) said Thursday it would put up banners at 9,000 schools across the country and write letters to students' parents alerting them to the danger of mad cow disease.

"Mad cow perils remain a source of anxiety in this country. Students' rights to protect their own health should have precedence over any other considerations," a KTEWU spokesman said.

His statement came after the conservative Korean Federation of Teachers' Associations accused the KTEWU of contaminating schools with politics and confusing students with wrong ideas, and urging the union to drop the campaign.

Seoul agreed in April to resume the US beef imports, which were halted in 2003 after a US mad cow case, so it can push ahead with a wider trade deal.

After mass candle-lit protests it negotiated extra beef safeguards and called for the protests to stop. But the rallies, some violent, have continued.

President Lee on Thursday urged an end to "illegal and violent demonstrations" against US beef imports so that the country may focus on dealing with deepening economic woes.

"We are now confronted with double challenges. Law and order are being breached and economic difficulties are worsening" Lee said at a ruling Grand National Party national convention to elect the party's new chairman.

"Its high time that we had to raise a torchlight for economic revival," he said .

He added that the government would do its utmost to guarantee food safety following the resumption of US beef imports.

"The government will listen to people's voices raised in a peaceful manner but the nation will never accept illegal and violent demonstrations," he said.