

International

New Pak govt seeks cooperation, good ties with India

Sharif vows to form special teams to end red-tapism

ISLAMABAD, Feb 24: Pakistan's new Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif Sunday vowed to form special teams to end red-tapism, reports Xinhua.

These teams would take stock of the situation in two to three departments daily, Nawaz said Sunday evening in his first televised speech after becoming prime minister.

Provincial and federal cabinets would be small in size, he said.

His government will do accountability on certain given standards and foes and friends will be equally treated, Nawaz said.

Every official who has served on high posts will have to give account of his assets within the next 15 days, he said.

No person including the president, the prime minister,

governors, chief ministers and chiefs of armed forces would be allowed to import cars without duty, he said.

No politician or government official would be allowed to go abroad for medical treatment on government expense, he said.

Security guards would be removed from the residences of the influential, ministers, advisors and high officials, Nawaz said.

The rich and the poor will be treated equally.

Earlier AFP says: New Pak Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said Sunday his government would seek cooperation and good neighbourly relations with India.

In a nationwide television address, Sharif said Pakistan

would strive for peaceful settlement of problems with India through negotiations.

He expressed the hope that the dispute with India over Kashmir, which has caused two of the three wars between the two countries since their independence in 1947, would be resolved through dialogue.

But he pledged continued moral and diplomatic support for the "just" cause of the Kashmiri people, a reference to a Muslim separatist campaign in the India-controlled southern two-thirds of Kashmir.

Pakistan, which controls the northern third of Kashmir, calls the campaign a legitimate struggle for self-determination. India accuses it of fuelling the separatist drive which has claimed more than 17,000 lives since 1989.

Sharif vowed that Pakistan would continue its "peaceful" nuclear programme and maintain an effective defence capability at all costs.

"Defence is our foremost priority," he said, adding that Pakistan could not lower its defence until the Kashmir dispute was resolved and peace guaranteed in South Asia on the basis of equality and sovereignty of its nations.

He said Pakistan would resist any pressure to accept unilateral or discriminatory curbs on its nuclear programme.

Sharif said his government would support international efforts to combat all forms of terrorism.

The prime minister termed traditional close relations with China the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy.



Children watch through a barrier at the Saint Jean-Baptiste Church of Belleville in eastern Paris early on Sunday, hours before police evacuated some 400 illegal immigrants, most Chinese, who occupied the church to protest the year's delay in the state's regularisation of their status. The mayor of the 19th arrondissement, Roger Madec, blasted the evacuation ordered by the mayor of Paris, declaring that the action "reveals the incapacity of the government to resolve the problems of immigration other than with force."

—AFP/UNB photo

'Zaire won't talk with rebels despite their victories'

KISANGANI, Zaire, Feb 24: Zaire will never negotiate with anti-government rebels, despite their continued victories in eastern Zaire, the president's son said, reports AFP.

"Our position remains the same from the start. We will not discuss or negotiate whatsoever," Nzanga Mobutu, who serves as his father's spokesman, told The Associated Press in a telephone interview Sunday from southern France.

Even as he spoke, government officials in the Zairian capital, Kinshasa, were conceding the rebels had advanced toward the government's northeast military headquarters in Kisangani, the country's third-largest city.

The Defence Ministry said Kisangani, a small mining town about 180 miles (290 kms) south of Kinshasa, had been taken by rebels.

"We can be in Kisangani in a few days," Nzanga Mobutu said.

South of Kisangani, came under rebel control Saturday. The rebel advance prompted more than 25,000 refugees who had taken refuge in Kalima to flee into the forest.

Most of the refugees are Rwandan Hutus who have been on the road since the 1994 Hutu-orchestrated slaughter of a half-million Rwandan Tutsis. They are reluctant to return home for fear of reprisals by the Tutsi-led government in Rwanda.

Rebel spokesman Moise Nyarugabo Muhizi said the rebels were moving from Kalima south to Kinshasa, a distance of 75 miles (120 kms) to try to capture one of two government airports in eastern Zaire.

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Refugee workers fear the rebels will next attack the 160,000 people in the Tingi-Tingi refugee camp, 150 miles (240 kms) southeast of Kisangani. Laurent Kabila, leader of the rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, alleges Zaire's government has armed former Rwandan Hutu soldiers and militiamen among the refugees at the camp.

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