

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 fees 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.

Gunman opens fire on tourists at Empire State Bldg: 1 killed

NEW YORK, Feb 24: A 69-year-old Palestinian on Sunday opened fire into a crowd of tourists on the 86th-floor observation deck of the Empire State Building, killing one person and wounding six others before shooting himself, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said, reports Reuters.

The dead included a young musician from Denmark, among the injured was his musician friend from Connecticut, a 52-year-old Argentine, a 32-year-old Swiss national, a French couple and a 35-year-old New York man.

Giuliani said the gunman was in "life threatening" condition, his documents if valid identified him as Ali Abu Kamal from Ramallah in the West Bank. He was born in Jaffa.

The shooting occurred about 5 pm est (2200 GMT) and sent hundreds of tourists on the 86th floor of the skyscraper scattering for safety. Witnesses said they dived to the floor as bursts of fire rang out and some received injuries in the melees that ensued.

UN envoy meets Suu Kyi

YANGON, Feb 24: A United Nations envoy visiting Myanmar last week met pro-democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi and Shan opposition leader Khun Htun Oo as well as Myanmar junta officials, reports AFP.

Khun Htun Oo said today that Frances Vendrell, director of the East Asia Desk in the UN's political affairs department, had called on him at his office Friday for first-hand information on the Shan position.

A source close to Aung San Suu Kyi confirmed today that she had met the UN representative but gave no details.

Vendrell met several government figures, including junta member lieutenant general Maung Thint, the Minister for Development of Border Areas and National Races, and Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw.

He was reportedly unsuccessful, however, in attempts to see senior junta figure lieutenant-general Khin Nyunt, the head of military intelligence.

Karen civilians flee rebels' HQs amid fear of attack

BANGKOK, Feb 24: Hundreds of ethnic Karen civilians began today to evacuate the rebels' headquarters in southern Myanmar as government troops were poised to attack an official of the Karen National Union (KNU) said, reports AFP.

Speaking by a radio-telephone link from the KNU's fourth brigade base at Minshamee some four kilometres from Thailand Kwe Htoo Win said about 3,000 people, mainly women and children would be leaving heading for the Thai border.

Myanmar government forces were poised to attack from the west and the north, about 15 miles (10 kilometres) away, he said.

"Most people are leaving on foot and a few have cars, he said.

They are worried because the SLORC troops are close but there is no panic.

ROK president comes under fire in parliament

SEOUL, Feb 24: South Korean President Kim Young-sam came under fire in Parliament today as he was set to apologise for his son and close confidants ensnared in a stormy loan scandal, reports AFP.

In Parliament, the opposition fired a barrage of charges against the father and son, forcing Prime Minister Lee Soo-Sung to apologise for the involvement of ruling party members and an ex-home minister in the loans for kick-backs scandal.

"I acutely feel sorry," the prime minister said, as opposition MPs accused the government of whitewashing and covering up an alleged role by the president's second son, Kim Hyun-chul, in the scandal.



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 AP.

"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 rebels had advanced toward the government's north-east military headquarters in Kisangani, the country's third-largest city.

The Defence Ministry said Kalima, a small mining town about 180 miles (290 kms)

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 Kindu, a distance of 75 miles (120 kms) to try to capture one of two government airports in eastern Zaire.

"We can be in Kindu in a few days," Nyarugabo said.

He said of Nzanga Mobutu ruling out negotiations: "If they accept, we will talk. If they refuse, we will go on fighting."

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.

Capt. Ndolli Esenge Ekeli, a legal adviser to the ministry of defense, said the "determination of the rebels to attack the refugees demonstrates Laurent Kabila does nothing but obey the Tutsis in their objective to exterminate the Hutus."

NATO, Russia hold 2nd round of talks

BRUSSELS, Feb 24: With NATO pressing ahead with expansion plans despite Moscow's objections, Russia's foreign minister visited Brussels on Sunday to try to win concessions from the alliance, reports AP.

Yevgeny Primakov met with NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana in the second round of talks aimed at forging a charter outlining the future relationship between Russia and the alliance.

Both sides clamped a news blackout on the meeting, held at Solana's residence rather than at the headquarters of the 16-nation alliance.

Moscow opposes NATO's plans to take in new members, including at least some of Russia's former allies in the now defunct Warsaw Pact.

Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are thought to head the list.

Ghinva 'protecting real killer', says Benazir

KARACHI, Feb 24: Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto Sunday accused her slain brother's widow of being part of a plot to frame Benazir Bhutto's husband for the murder, reports AP.

In her second day of testimony to a three-judge panel investigating the shooting death of Murtaza Bhutto, Ms. Benazir said the dead man's widow, Ghinva Bhutto, was "protecting the real killer."

Murtaza Bhutto, 42, was killed in a hail of police gunfire outside his residence in southern port city of Karachi on September 20, less than six weeks before his sister's government was dismissed on charges of corruption and economic ineptitude.

In a testimony Saturday, Benazir accused President Farooq Leghari, the man who sacked her, of conspiracy in her

brother's assassination in order to justify the dismissal of her government.

Ms Benazir's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, was jailed immediately after her November 5 ouster and has been charged with planning Murtaza's murder.

Clad in white, Benazir Bhutto maintained her composure Sunday, after breaking down into tears on several occasions during her first day of testimony.

She denied that her relationship with her late brother was estranged, saying reports that she threw a plate at him during their last meeting were false.

"I have never thrown a plate in my life," she said.

Murtaza had condemned his sister's government as corrupt and led a break-away faction of her Pakistan People's Party.

Netanyahu wants Jerusalem to be city of peace for Jews, Arabs

AMMAN, Feb 24: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday he wants Jerusalem to be a city of peace for both Jews and Arabs, stressing that his government had development plans for both communities, reports AFP.

"We want to see Jerusalem a city of peace for both Jews and Arabs and all our plans regarding Jerusalem, all of them without exception, include development plans for Arab neighbourhoods as well as Jewish neighbourhoods," Netanyahu said at a press conference with Jordan's King Hussein.

"We do not view the devel-

opment of Jerusalem as developing the Jewish part, leaving undeveloped the Arab parts," he said, that the government has committed financially to developing infrastructure in the Arab communities.

Jordanian Information Minister Marwan Moasi, earlier that King Hussein press Netanyahu, who here Sunday, on ways to overcome the obstacles which threaten the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, and the question of Jerusalem.

The two leaders met behind closed doors at the Royal Palace before expanding the talks to

include senior officials from the two countries.

The Israeli government announced this week that it would soon begin construction of a new Jewish neighbourhood in annexed Arab east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians claim as the capital of a future state.

The Jordanian monarch reiterated on Thursday his opposition to the settlement policy of Israel's rightwing government, which "would modify the situation" in Jerusalem before the start of talks on the final status of Palestinian self-rule areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.



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