

International

Myanmar army urged to crush terrorists

BANGKOK, Apr 13: In his first public appearance since his daughter was killed by a parcel bomb, the chief of staff of Myanmar's army urged his fellow officers to crush terrorists, a state-run newspaper reported Sunday, says AP.

Gen Tin Oo, one of the four most powerful generals in Myanmar's military government, said both legal and underground elements were colluding in terrorist acts to gain power, the New Light of Myanmar reported.

Tin Oo's daughter, Cho Lei Oo, was killed last Sunday by a parcel bomb addressed to the general and delivered to his home. The history teacher was a 34-year-old mother of two.

Underground and above-ground destructionists in their bid to gain power are inciting workers, peasants and students and are trying to create religious strife, Tin Oo said.

Myanmar intelligence officers said the parcel bomb had Japanese postage stamps on it.

leading them to accuse Myanmar exiles in Japan of sending the bomb. The Myanmar government has asked the Japanese government to investigate the exiles.

A wide variety of groups are opposed to military rule in Myanmar, including democracy activists and ethnic insurgents.

Some opponents of the regime have said there is a power struggle taking place within the junta, and say they believe the bomb was planted by one of the factions opposed to Tin Oo.

Tin Oo said subversives "tried to commit terrorist acts and spread rumours to split the army." He urged the officers to "uproot and crush the traitors who are committing subversive acts."

Other exiles say that the bomb may have been sent by an angry businessman upset with Tin Oo over a deal gone sour with some even speculating Japanese gangsters could be involved.

BRIEFLY

MQM activist shot dead: Gunmen shot dead yesterday a political activist from a splinter group of a Pakistani ethnic party, the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM), police said, AFP reports from Karachi.

The assailants broke into the home of Mahmood Ahmed Khan in an eastern area of Karachi, and sprayed him with bullets before escaping in a car, witnesses told police. Khan was a member of the central executive committee of MQM-Haqiqi, rival of the mainstream MQM, which is a member of the ruling coalition in southern Sindh province, led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League.

Turkish troops kill 46 Kurds: Turkish troops have killed 46 Kurdish rebels in several offensives in the mountainous areas of the southeast, regional authorities said Sunday, AP reports from Diyarbakir, Turkey.

Thirty-three of the rebels were killed in Tunceli province, the regional governor's office said. The rest were killed in clashes in the provinces of Batman, Van and Siirt. The offensives were carried out in the last two days.

No Turkish troop casualty figure was given, but the latest casualties increase the rebel death toll since March to 183.

1 gets death sentence in China: A court in Shanghai has sentenced a man to death for his role in a robbery last year that killed one person and injured another, a newspaper reported, AP reports from Beijing.

The Shanghai No. 2 Intermediate People's Court handed down the sentence Friday to Fu Junzhi, the Xinhua Evening News said Saturday. The report was seen in Beijing on Sunday. Two accomplices, Qin Guicun and Li Jiancheng, were given prison sentences for the October crime, the report said. Qin was sentenced to life in prison while Li was given 12 years. Executions in China are usually carried out with a single gunshot to the head.

Clash leaves 5 dead in Russia: Five people died and two others were wounded Saturday when the passengers of two speeding cars opened fire on each other on a motorway near the Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod, ITAR-TASS news agency reported, AFP reports from Moscow.

Three people suspected of having taken part in the shoot-out were arrested. Investigators said the shooting was a settling of scores between rival criminal gangs.

Italian PM to visit Albania: Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi was due to visit Albania yesterday to define the precise role of an Italian-led multinational force designed to safeguard aid supplies to the volatile Balkan state, Reuter reports from Tirana.

Officials said Prodi would meet President Sali Berisha to discuss the deployment of 2,500 Italian troops, the bulk of a UN-approved eight-nation mission.

Noted Indian politician dies: Veteran Freedom Fighter, journalist and writer, R M Manakkalath, died of morning, he was 78 and survived by his wife Paravathi and two sons, PTI reports from Thrissur.

Manakkalath, who had undergone a surgery for a heart disease about 10 years ago, was hospitalised here in the first week of March. An active congressman, he had undergone imprisonment for participating in the 'quit if the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) and the All India Congress Committee (AICC).

Albanian exiled king returns after 58 yrs

TIRANA, Albania, Apr 13: After 58 years in exile, the man who considers himself king of Albania returned to his country of birth and called for a referendum on restoring the monarchy, reports AP.

Thousands of people jostled with police outside Tirana's airport Saturday to catch a glimpse of Leka, who traveled by private jet to talk with the leaders of Europe's poorest country about giving the monarchy another try. Soldiers and armored personnel carriers blocked enthusiastic crowds from entering the airport ground.

In the city, people waved banners and Albanian national flags as the king's column of cars wound through the rainy streets in a tight police escort.

The king's return coincides with the arrival of a multinational force to secure the delivery of desperately needed aid and restore order in a country that has been in turmoil for months.

"It's a wonderful time for me, but also a time of pain because

of what Albania is going through," Leka said in an interview in a hotel room. I hope to add my presence and weight to ... help Albanian people come out of these problems."

Leka, 58, has lived abroad since he was 3 days old. His father fled Albania with his family in 1939 when Italian troops invaded.

Leka's father had declared himself king Zog I of Albania in 1928, ruling for 11 years until the invasion. When Zog died in France in 1961, a government in exile swore in Leka as king.

In a statement, Leka said his return signaled the return of Albania's independence and freedom. He urged a referendum to let Albanians decide whether they want a parliamentary monarchy or a republic, adding "the people's choice will be binding on us."

Leka, who plans to meet with the president and other members of government, has said he would be willing to serve his country should Albanians give the monarchy another try.

French troops arrive in Albania

DURRES, Apr 13: The first 120 French soldiers landed in the western port of Durres Sunday, ahead of a multinational force which will secure ports and the airport to allow safe passage for humanitarian aid to impoverished Albanians, reports AP.

About 40 soldiers alighted from a French cargo ship that arrived from Italy, while another 80 remained on board as reserves. On Friday, an advance team of 120 Italian paratroopers arrived by air and sea as part of a 6,000-member international force, due to be fully operational in 11 days.

France has pledged 1,000 troops for the Italian-led mis-

sion.

UF, Congress wrangle over setting up new govt to avert snap polls

NEW DELHI, Apr 13: Leaders of India's defeated coalition and its lost ally, the Congress party, wrangled over the possibility of setting up a new government and avert snap elections, reports Reuter.

There were signs that the United Front alliance would agree to replace its leader, Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, in a last-ditch effort to prevent elections. But officially, neither group conceded ground to the other.

Deve Gowda, whose centre-left alliance was defeated in a vote of confidence on Friday, indicated that he was ready for fresh elections but few lawmakers wanted to face voters only a year after the last polls.

Partners in the 15-party alliance criticised Deve Gowda's stance, saying they were in no mood for a mid-term polls, a close aide of a key negotiator told Reuters.

As a final resort, the United

Front, whose decision-making Steering Committee was due to meet at 7 pm (1330 GMT) might have to accept the Congress demand and replace its leader, he said. There is no other way," he said.

The United Front government was set up last June under an agreement with Congress to oust a 12-day-old administration formed by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), accused by both of bias against India's minority Muslims.

Another report says, Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma told parliament Speaker PA Sangma on Saturday he would help parliament consider the budget for 1997/98 (April-March).

The president fully appreciated the situation (arising out of political uncertainties) and indicated that he would facilitate consideration of the budget

by the House as the circumstances may warrant," the spokesman told Reuters.

The speaker today called on the president and informed him about the decision of all parties for a budget session from April 21 to 23 for passing of the budget," the spokesman said.

PTI adds: The Steering Committee of the United Front meets here this evening to have a fresh look at the prevailing political situation vis-a-vis the reported disenchantment among Congress MPs against the decision to topple the Deve Gowda government.

The meeting to be held at the residence of the Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda follows two rounds of discussion the Steering Committee held yesterday to discuss various issues.

The Front, while ruling out change in its leadership, has decided to adopt a wait and watch policy for some more

time but has declared that its constituents will not support either the Congress or the BJP in the formation of a new government.

While maintaining that informal parleys among the Front and Congress leaders were on, Front sources said various options were being considered to avert dissolution of the Lok Sabha and a snap polls.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda on Saturday thanked Congress president Sitaram Kesri for the cooperation his party had extended to the United Front government in the last ten months.

Gowda, who spoke with Kesri over telephone, is understood to have said he bore him no ill-will for withdrawal of support by the Congress and the defeat of the confidence motion in parliament on Friday.

The prime minister said he would make a courtesy call on Kesri in the near future.

Anti-Taliban forces talk strategy for jt offensive

TALUQAN, Afghanistan, Apr 13: Anti-Taliban coalition leaders have begun discussing strategy for a coordinated offensive against the religious militia, officials told AFP today.

The meeting was between the big three — Ahmed Shah Masood, General Abdul Rashid Dostam and Karim Khalili, said an official in Baghlan provincial centre of Taluqan, 250 kilometres (156 miles) north of Kabul.

Masood, the commander of the former government forces ousted with President Burhanuddin Rabbani by the Taliban last September, has joined forces with Dostam's ethnic Uzbek army and Khalili's Shi'ite religious faction.

General Said, Jaffer Naderi, who commands Dostam's Isma'ili minority religious militia, hosted the Saturday night strategy meeting at his northern base in Pule Khomri, officials said.

Labour Party dips sharply in 2 opinion polls

LONDON, Apr 13: The British opposition Labour Party's opinion poll lead ahead of May 1 elections dipped sharply in two opinion polls published in Sunday newspapers and was stuck at a comparatively narrow 16 points in a third, reports Lubumbashi.

Xinhua adds: France on Saturday called on all the Zairean leaders to hold dialogue with each other in order to 'save your country' and organise free elections.

"We say to all the Zairean leaders, hold dialogue, renounce hostilities, resume negotiations with the assistance of the special representatives of the United Nations secretary general and the OAU (Organisation of African Unity). Save your country, lead it to free and democratic elections, there is no other political way," said a spokesman of the French Foreign Ministry.

A Gallup poll in the Sunday Telegraph gave Labour a 16 point lead over Prime Minister John Major's Conservative Party, down seven points from a week ago, it was the narrowest lead for Labour since Tony Blair became its leader three years ago.

An ICM poll in the Observer also put Labour 16 points ahead of the Conservatives, but this was unchanged from the previous week.

Gallup showed support for Labour at 49 per cent, the Conservatives at 33 per cent and the Liberal Democrats at 12 per cent.

Gunman kills 7 civilians in Algeria

ALGIERS, Apr 13: Seven civilians were killed in an overnight attack south of Algiers by an armed Islamic extremist group, the press here reported today, says AFP.

The victims were transporting cattle late Thursday when they were stopped at a roadblock set up on one of the country's most feared routes between Blida and Medea, a zone where Islamic fundamentalist groups are active.

They were killed and then robbed of their money, the El-Khabar newspaper said.

The killings are part of a wave of massacres attributed to Islamic extremists which have cost the lives of some 140 people in the past 10 days.

The most recent of these was overnight Friday when 22 people in the village of Dogar Menia were shot or hacked to death, many of them women and children, a 14-year-old girl was decapitated in the slaughter.

Inside the size 5 and half D insoles was the nickname Mishka.

Printed in faded letters — testimony that the great Russian's toes once tip-toed there.

Baryshnikov also sent a signed photo and Renck, automotive inspectors say.

The king made a splash last year when he drove a car.

The car's problems included weak brakes, loose steering and emitinapins quoted car inspector PG Huhta as saying.

The king now has a month in which Washington this week, US Senate majority leader Trent Lott referred to the prime minister as Jones well, said the Sun. He sent Gifford a note asking her to bone up on Canada, where the show Wednesday by ABC News anchor Peter Jennings, himself a Canadian.

Blast during funeral in Pakistan : One dies

KARACHI, Apr 13: A powerful bomb ripped through a funeral Sunday for an activist of militant ethnic group killing one mourner and injuring two others, reports AP.

The bomb exploded as members of a breakaway faction of the Mohajir Quami Movement, or People's Refugee Movement, gathered to mourn a top faction leader killed a day earlier in the southern port city of Karachi.

The bomb ripped through the front yard of Mohammed Ahmed, killing Iqbal Saeed and injuring two others, party officials and police said.

Ahmed was gunned down Saturday in a drive-by shooting that also injured an eight-year-old boy.

Afaq Ahmed Khan, who was present when the bomb went off, accused leaders of a rival faction.

Khan escaped unhurt, but said he believed he was the target of the bombing. He also accused leaders of the rival fac-

tion of ordering Ahmed's death.

The MQM, which represents Urdu-speaking Muslim immigrants from neighbouring India, split in 1992 after an internal power struggle.

Violence between the two factions has led to thousands of deaths since then.

24 of a bridal party killed in India

NEW DELHI, Apr 13: At least 24 members of a marriage party were killed when their bus fell into a gorge in the hills of northern India, the United News of India (UNI) reported today.

Thirty-five others were injured in the accident, which happened in Garhwal region on Saturday, the news agency said.

The dead included the groom and his father.



Zairean newly-appointed Prime Minister General Likulisa Bolongo Lingbangi answers journalists' questions Saturday at the presidential camp Tshachi residence in Kinshasa, after his meeting with Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko. Mobutu Sunday rejected an ultimatum from rebel leader Laurent Desire Kabila, who had on Wednesday given him three days "to relinquish power."

Off the Record

Bid to revive memories of Beatles

LONDON: Paul McCartney gave a free rooftop concert to startled passers-by, reviving memories of The Beatles' final concert in 1969, reports AP.

McCartney — who was recently knighted — performed for 20 minutes Friday during the filming of a documentary about his new album on the rooftop of a building he owns in Soho Square in central London.

"There were quite a few people gathered below listening to him playing live on his guitar," his agent Geoff Baker said. "There was amplification so people down below could hear him."

"Several of them were rather mystified but Paul really enjoyed himself. It certainly brought back memories for him," he said.

The Beatles brought traffic to a standstill during their final appearance in 1969 when they played their hit "Get Back" from the roof of the Apple Record building in Savile Row.

Baker said McCartney played two songs on Friday, "Young Boy" and "The World Tonight," which are due to be released in the next few weeks in Britain and the United States. The documentary is scheduled to be shown on Britain's Independent Television on May 18.

Little ballerina got the answer

CALGARY, Canada: Eight-year-old Renee Crouse wanted the shoes off Mikhail Baryshnikov's feet, so she wrote to one of the greatest male classical ballerinas of this century, hoping her words would leap off the page, reports AP.

She explained she wanted the slippers for a silent auction that will help her ballet troupe stage a benefit for the Alberta Children's Hospital.

The little ballerina got an answer Wednesday when she opened a special delivery parcel from New York.

He actually answered me, gasped Renee, fingering a pair of rather tattered, flesh-coloured ballet slippers autographed by the acclaimed dancer.

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