

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 working to overthrow the military government, the New Light of Myanmar reported.

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

Underground 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.

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 averting snap elections, reports Reuters.

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), Sangma's spokesman said.

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 in the formation of 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.

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 break away faction of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement, or People's Refugee Movement, had 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 faction 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 Nations of India (UNI) reported today, reports AFP.

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.

BRIEFLY

MQM activist shot dead: Gunmen shot dead yesterday a political activist from a splinter group of a Pakistani ethnic party, the Mohajir Qaumi 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 Junzhang, the Xinmin 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.

See 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, Reuters 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 Manakalath, died of morning, he was 78 and survived by his wife Paravathi and two sons, PTI reports from Thrissur.

Manakalath, 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 at 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.



Ambassador Syed Muazzem Ali addressing members of the Bangladeshi community in Tehran on the occasion of the 26th Anniversary of the Independence & National Day of Bangladesh on 26 March 1997 at the Chancery.

Rebels set to resume attack as Mobutu rejects ultimatum

KINSHASA, Apr 13: Zaire, rebels looked set to resume their whirlwind offensive after President Mobutu Sese Seko defiantly rejected their deadline for him to quit and said he had no plans to go into exile, reports Reuters.

Rebels radio reminded Mobutu, Zaire's ruler since 1965 and now ailing with cancer, on Saturday that time was running out.

"Mobutu has just 24 hours thanks to the extreme generosity of the alliance. He has only two choices — to resign or to go into exile," it said.

But Mobutu, 66, looking in better health than on recent appearances, said: "This kind of joke will backfire... I am head

of state. My country is Zaire and I don't know of anyone who has proposed my exile."

The rebels, who have met little resistance from Mobutu's rapidly retreating army, were consolidating their positions ahead of the expiry of the deadline.

In the second city of Lubumbashi, hundreds of former government soldiers lined up to join rebel ranks. Some 400 men of the 21st Leopard Infantry Brigade switched sides three days ago to help rebels to capture the city.

Rebels leader Laurent Kabila declared from Thursday a three-day "pause" in the advance of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the

liberation of Congo/Zaire (AFDL) after overrunning 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.

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'elia 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 Reuters.

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 very 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 last 10 days.

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



American actress Melanie Griffith, Mickey Mouse, the new CEO of Disneyland Paris, Gilles Pelisson and Italian actress Ornella Muti (L-R) gather Saturday for a group photo during the fifth anniversary of the amusement park, in suburban Marne-la-Vallée. Despite two profit-making years and a record attendance of 11.7 million visitors last year, the park is still on rocky ground.

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 mission.

Pope appeals to Bosnian leaders to foster forgiveness

SARAJEVO, Apr 13: Pope John Paul II appealed to Bosnia's political leaders Sunday to foster forgiveness and transform Sarajevo from a symbol of suffering into a model of coexistence, reports AP.

Tens of thousands of pilgrims, braving a light snow and waving yellow and white flags, converged on a stadium near Sarajevo's wartime front line and greeted the pope when he arrived for the Mass highlighting his long-delayed mission of peace.

NATO helicopters clattered overhead and security was tight to ensure the pope's safety. Tanks of Egyptian peacekeepers followed buses of pilgrims through the city streets, John Paul went ahead with the visit

Saturday despite the discovery hours earlier of mines, plastic explosives and detonators under a bridge along his route into the city.

His meeting with the Muslim, Serb and Croat members of Bosnia's three-man presidency Sunday morning before Mass gave him his only face-to-face contact with a Bosnian Serb political leader. John Paul is to leave Bosnia late Sunday.

The Serb member, Momcilo Krajisnik, was a Bosnian Serb leader throughout the 3 half year war. Nearly 11,000 people were killed in Sarajevo by Serb siege and bombardment in the war.

"Peace is possible, indeed peace is necessary," John Paul told the three politicians.

"For the edifice of peace to be solid, against the background of so much blood and hatred, it will have to be built on the courage of forgiveness," he said. "People must know how to ask forgiveness and to forgive."

John Paul said Sarajevo's history this century — including the start of World War I in 1914, World War II and the recent conflict — symbolizes the century itself.

But if Bosnians can establish peace, it "can become at the end of this century an example of coexistence in diversity for many nations experiencing the same difficulty, in Europe and elsewhere in the world."

He urged respect for human rights, efforts to ensure all Bosnians have work, and the

return of refugees. About 70 per cent of the workforce is employed in the Muslim-Croat federation that makes up 51 per cent of Bosnia, the figure is thought to be even higher on the Serb side.

Krajisnik, handing the pope a medallion with a white angel symbolizing peace, told the pontiff: "I wish that, with your arrival, a lasting peace begins."

The pope's route to the stadium — built for the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo — took him near the so-called Lion Cemetery and a soccer practice field converted to a cemetery where many of Sarajevo's war dead are buried under simple wooden markers.

NATO spokesman Maj. Tony White said that by 8 am (0600 GMT), about 400 buses of pil-

grims had arrived in Sarajevo and 200 more were expected. He said there was increased security on routes throughout Bosnia, and no trouble was reported.

"I don't want to miss this once in a lifetime opportunity to see the pope in my country," said Drago Zivkovic, a 33-year-old bus driver traveling with his wife and three-year-old son.

Thousands walked to the stadium on Sarajevo's north side despite temperatures around zero degrees Centigrade (32 F).

The explosives apparently were planted under a bridge in western Sarajevo late Friday or early Saturday.

The explosives were cleared away and the pope traveled over that bridge on his way into

Sarajevo Saturday. Spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the pope did not want to change his schedule or plans after learning of the explosives.

When he heard there were people waiting for him, he said, "No question about it," Navarro-Valls said.

John Paul wanted to visit the Bosnian capital in September 1994, when it was under Serb siege. That trip was canceled out of fears for safety of the crowds expected to turn out for him. More than 10,000 people died in the 40-month siege.

Thousands of international soldiers now are ensuring a peace that is more than a year old but continues to be fragile.

Lankan troops kill 7 Tigers

COLOMBO, Apr 13: Security forces shot dead at least seven suspected Tamil Tiger guerrillas who tried to infiltrate an army bunker line in northern Sri Lanka, officials here said today, reports AFP.

Troops opened fire when they saw the seven men tried to sneak in to the military-held town of Kilinochchi on Saturday, on the eve of the Sinhala and Tamil new year, officials said.

The army recovered the bodies of the seven men, an official here said.

The attack came two days after the LTTE destroyed a small navy boat north-western Sri Lanka, killing nine security personnel.



'Zairean newly-appointed Prime Minister General Likulia 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 Crous wanted the shoes off Mikhail Baryshnikov's feet, so she wrote to one of the greatest male classical ballet dancers 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.

Inside the size 5 and half D insoles was the nickname Misha 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 cay. The car's problems included weak brakes, loose steering and emittinapear 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 Clifford a note asking her to bone up on Canada, where the show Wednesday by ABC News anchorman Peter Jennings, himself a Canadian.