International =

Myanmar troops attack dissident student base near Thai border

BANGKOK. Apr 20: Myanmar government forces have attacked a dissident student base close to the Thai border triggering a new exodus of refugees into southern Thailand, sources said Saturday, reports

Some 1.000 troops of Myanmar's State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) are conducting an offensive against the student's "8888 camp" and nearby ethnic settlements, oppositive Thailand's Prachuab Khiri Khan province, according to the All Burma Student's Democratic Front (ABSDF).

Colonel Somdej Seumak of Thailand's ninth infantry division confirmed there had been fighting across the border on Friday and that 138 refugees had crossed into Thap Sakae district of Prachuab Khiri Khan that afternoon.

NEW DELHI. Apr 20: India's The Times of India was media reacted with dismayed equally downbeat, arguing that resignation rather than electhe leadership "race got decided tion Sunday after the United not by how many were support-Front selected Inder Kumar

the end of three week's of political turmoil, reports AFP. Most of the country's newspapers, fearing more political trouble ahead, printed pictures of a beaming Gujral, expected to become prime minister soon.

Gujral its new head, signalling

on their front pages. But they also highlighted the fragility of the 13-party United Front coalition by giving wide coverage to a regional party's decision to quit the government after its candidate was rejected.

The Asian Age had prominent pictures of both foreign minister Gujral and GK Moopanar - the rejected Tamil Manila Congress (TMC) leader on its front page.

Quake rocks Japanese Island: An

earthquake measuring 3.6 on the Richter scale rocked the

southern Japanese island of Kyushu yesterday, but there were

no reports of casualties or damage, the meteorological agency

The epicentre was located in the western part of Kagoshima

prefecture on the island, the agency said. It said there were no

Kabila, Mandela hold talks:

Zairean rebel leader Laurent Kabila and President Nelson

Mandela held talks in South Africa on Wednesday, rekindling

hopes for a peaceful settlement to the war in Zaire, AFP reports

dela and senior government members behind closed-doors at

Tuynhuys, the president's parliamentary office in Cape Town

for about an hour. The talks broke up about 6.45pm (1645 GMT)

with Kabila planning to return to Zaire on Thursday, according

Top DPRK defector arrives in ROK:

The highest ranking defector ever to flee North Korea arrived in

South Korea Sunday, bringing with him a trove of eagerly

sought information about the secretive communist nation, AP

Philippines and finally to the capital of South Korea, his

homeland's most hated rival. A former secretary of North Ko-

rea's highest decision-making body, the Central Committee of

the Workers' Party, Hwang is believed capable of spilling many

Former Pak food minister held

Pakistani police on Friday arrested the former food minister of

central Punjab province on corruption charges as a wheat flour

crisis gripped the country, officials said, AFP reports from

in a dramatic raid conducted by the police and anti-corruption

officials in the eastern city of Lahore on the day of Eid-Ul-Azha,

a senior police official Tariq Pervez said. Iqbal served as food

minister in the country's most populous and politically impor-

tant Punjab province during ousted premier Benazir Bhutto's

rule which ended in November when President Farooq Ahmed

Leghari sacked her for alleged corruption and misrule during

Chinese warships arrive in Chile:

Chinese warships, on their first visit to South America, have

arrived in a Chilean port, officials said Saturday. AFP reports

the supply ship "Nancang", are currently visiting this port city

100 kilometres (62 miles) west of Santiago. The ships carry a to-

tal of 810 sailors and officers and are under the command of

vice admiral Huang Yongguo, head of the south seas fleet, offi-

The missile destroyers "Harbing" and "Zhuhai", along with

Tikka Mohammad Iqbal was picked up from his residence

Hwang Jang Yop's arrival at a military airport outside of Seoul ended a 67-day odyssey that took him from Beijing to the

to presidential spokesman Parks Mankahlana.

of the secrets of the world's most closed society.

Shortly after his arrival in South Africa. Kabila met Man-

fears of tsunami seismic tidal waves from the earthquake.

and police said. AFP reports from Tokyo.

from Cape Town

reports from Seoul.

her three year era.

from Valparaiso.

cials said.

The name of the game was sabotage," one of the daily's

Media fear more political turmoil new front government if Deve headlines ran.

Selection of Gujral as head of govt

Gowda was forced out. The Indian Express's banner headline suggested more trouble ahead. It ran: "Dented and ing a particular candidate but bruised, UF picks Gujral.

The TMC's decision to quit the government, depriving it of its finance minister in the process, the daily said, showed just how difficult it would be for Guiral to marshall the minority coalition of leftist, centrist and regional parties while keeping the Congress happy.

The newspaper argued that Gujral was selected after "a week's intense intrigue, fratricidal wranglings and unprincipled jockeying.

It argued that there was some consolation for the country. with the crisis over and the second general election within a year avoided.

"But behind that collective sigh of relief lie vital and un-

Kabila vows to liberate Kinshasa

easy questions, do these politicians have the canability, the intellect or the integrity to manage a fractured polity?"

Another report adds: Gujral will be better equipped to pick his way through the Indian political minefield than the country's previous prime minister. an analyst said today.

Kalim Bahadur. Professor at Jawarharlal Nehru University said that the foreign minister's highly-rated qualities as a manager might even help him survive as India's leader until the next scheduled general elections in 2001.

"He is a person who can manage the United Front's desperate parties." he said. "That was something Deve Gowda wasn't good at." he said.

"He may be able to go through the entire term. From the United Front's perspective it's a change for the better."

Gujral pledges to improve ties with S Asian nations

NEW DELHI. Apr 20: Prime Minister designate Inder Kumar Gujral said on Sunday that he would continue to try to improve relations with India's South Asian neighbours while defending an independent foreign policy, reports Reuter.

Gujral, who was foreign minister in the outgoing government of caretaker Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, told Reuters television in an interview that he would pay keen attention to relations with the major world powers.

"As foreign minister, I have built some sort of a doctrine regarding neighbourly relations that will continue to be my priority area, said Gujral.

"I am equally keen that our relations with the major world powers Europe, America, China, Russia - continue to get my attention," he said, adding that Indian foreign policy must remain independent.

2000 killed in Mina fire, claims Saudi opposition leader

NICOSIA. Apr 20: A Saudi opposition group claimed Saturday that 2.000 Muslims had been killed in last week's huge fire during the Makkah pil grimage, compared to an official toll of 343, reports AFP.

Saad al-Faqih, of the London-based movement for Islamic reform, said he had "picked up information from official Saudi sources saying that 2.000 people had perished in the fire.

Fagih said his information had come from sources at the Saudi Interior. Civil Defence, and Health ministries, and at the municipality of Makkah.

"The Saudi authorities have already been able to identify 1,000 victims," added Faqih. As the annual pilgrimage drew to a close on Saturday, the authorities stuck to the official toll of 343 dead and 1,537 in-

Croat refugees

who fled or were expelled from Vukovar, the main town of appear to have decided elections

They showed non-Serb parties heading for victory in the town after more votes were received from refugees voting in absentia than from Serbs living there. Some 15,650 absentee votes were reported against

The Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS), led by Vojislav Stanimirovic, won 46.99

But Croatian President Franjo Tudjman's ruling Croat ian Democratic Union (HDZ) won 40.32 per cent and an independents list headed by former HDZ member Tomislav Mercep. supported mainly by absentee

Peruvian minister, police chief resign

LIMA. Apr 20 : Peru's interior minister and police chief resigned on Saturday after admitting responsibility for the security lapse that allowed Marxist rebels to storm the Japanese Ambassador's home. where they have held 72 hostages since December, reports Reuter.

Interior Minister Juan Briones, who said his resignation had been accepted by President Alberto Fujimori, made the announcement shortly after swearing in a new police chief after the surprise resignation of Ketin Vidal earlier on Saturday.

Briones acknowledged that the dramatic assault on the diplomatic mansion by Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) guerillas on Dec. 17 had been a serious setback for Peru's security forces.

public outburst by the military. a senior army official compared the governing Islamic party to Muslim guerillas in Algeria. reports said Saturday, reports

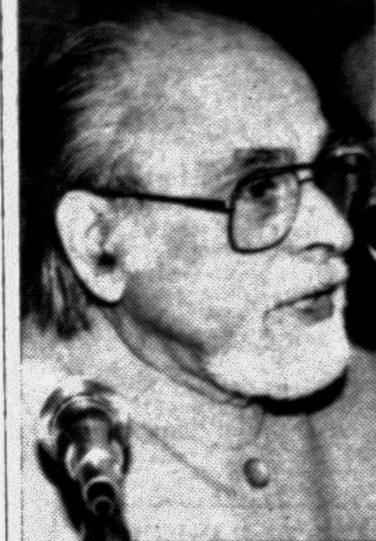
The Milliyet newspaper quoted a gendarmerie commander, Brig. Gen Osman Ozbek, as saying Welfare is seeking to strengthen its power "sometimes by violence, like in

"If I have fought (rebel Kurds) for 13 years. I can fight them too", Ozbek was quoted as say-

The rift has widened between

Profile of IK Gujral

NEW DELHI, Apr 20 Inder Kumar Gujral, the "wise old man of Punjab", will give India a radically new style of leadership when he takes over as 12th



prime minister of the world's argest democracy tomorrow. reports AFP.

The 77-year-old former diplomat is set to replace HD Deve Gowda after being elected today as the leader of the United Front coalition. Gowda flaunted himself as a

simple peasant's son from the

The bespectacled Gujral, in contrast, is a career diplomat an expert in international affairs and a champion of closer ties with Pakistan.

Born on December 4, 1919. he plunged into politics as a student and joined Mahatma Gandhi's 'Quit India' campaign against British rule.

But he seemed set for a business career before joining the Congress (I) party. then dominated by India's Gandhi-Nehru dynasty, in the late 1950s.

By 1959 his administrative qualities had been recognised as he was elected Vice-President of Delhi's city authorities, a post he held until 1964.

longer in deep freeze.

That brought him to the no-

tice of Indira Gandhi.

His entrance into national politics came in 1967, when he was elected to parliament's lower house, he was put in

charge of a series of ministries. While at works and housing. he was credited with drawing up the design for the modern New

But his career seemed to be heading for disaster when he was shifted out from the job of Minister of Information and Broadcasting in 1975, following a scandal over the bugging of Indira Gandhi's telephone.

1988, his tenure covering the region of three Prime Ministers. When he came back, recalled by Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh in 1989, he was the perfect choice to serve as

foreign minister. Gujral, who was born in Jhelum which is now a part of Pakistan, retained that same post in the United Front. lend-

His advocacy of closer relations with India's arch-rival Pakistan led to the end of a three-year freeze on official talks between the neighbours last month.

Accused by the Hindu nationalist hawks of being too soft on Pakistan, Gujral is pasthe bitterness between the two countries, who have fought

In a recent interview Guiral

into action.

At a victory celebration that has become the hallmark of his rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire was the tightest yet at a Kabila victory rally. The 56-year-old rebel leader has

rebellion, rebel leader Laurent Kabila told a cheering crowd Saturday that he would press on to the capital. Kinshasa, reports "We have to prepare our-

who were opposing him."

fewer enemies.

Gujral.

The communists, it argued.

had helped wreck Moopanar's

hopes while Gujral won the

race to become India's next

prime minister because he had

The United Front, whose

former minority coalition col-

lapsed on April 11, is expected

to form a new government soon

after replacing former prime

minister HD Deve Gowda with

by the Congress, which brought

down the previous front gov-

ernment but failed to win back-

renew is outside backing to a

ing for its own coalition.

The change was forced on it

The Congress said it would

LUBUMBASHI. Zaire. Apr 20

selves for the war to push out that devil (Mobutu) This war is not yet finished. Kinshasa is not yet liberated." Kabila told about 12,000 people packed into a soccer stadium in Kenya township, a neighbourhood in

Zaire's second-largest city. In a speech that rambled for nearly three hours. Kabila said President Mobutu Sese Seko's supporters "should know that

they are completely finished." Kabila's rhetoric stood in contrast to comments from Mobutu's entourage that the ailing political veteran would, in principle, meet with Kabila but

would not agree to step down. Security by troops from the

made a practice of holding a

rally in every major town and

city his forces have taken. But Saturday's gathering, held on the home turf of the regional UFERI party that favours autonomy - if not outright secession of mineral-rich Shaba region - was less enthusiastic than earlier rallies held in Mbuji-Mayi, Kisangani or

Rebels took Lubumbashi on April 11. Kabila postponed the rally

twice and changed the venue three times, apparently out of concern for disruptions by UFERI members after rebels ousted their regional governor

Although Kabila spent much

and replaced him with a Kabila

of his speech addressing local political concerns and telling the crowd that he was aware of the special problems in the region, he reiterated his ban on political movements other than his own — at least until all of Zaire was under rebel control

"I want you to put your polit ical parties in a suitcase and close it up. Once the bag is closed, join us and we will chase Mobutu Sese Seko out together, he said in Swahili. "Once that is done, we will

have a transitional government and democracy, and then you can open the suitcase again and take out your political beliefs."

The rebels who claim to be only 300 kilometres (180 miles) from the capital, have denied recent reports that they are being aided by Angolan soldiers.

Arafat orders Palestinian forces to resume cooperation with Israel

JERUSALEM. Apr 20: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has ordered Palestinian security forces to resume cooperating with their Israeli counterparts. radio reports said Saturday, re-

ports AP. The decision followed meetings last week between Israeli and Palestinian security officials that were mediated by US envoy Dennis Ross, who returned to Washington on Saturdeviafter visit aimed at reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace

It was reported Saturday by Israel radio and Israeli Army Radio. The Palestinians broke off regulars meetings with Israeli security officials after Israel began work on a housing project

in east Jerusalem, where the

Palestinians want to establish a future state. The Har Homa housing project touched off weeks of violent demonstrations that left four Palestinians dead. A Palestinian militant planted a bomb in a Tel Aviv cafe last month. killing three Israeli women and

himself. Regular security cooperation meetings, involving the heads of Israeli and Palestinian agencies, are regarded as crucial to the peace process because these services are directly concerned with preventing attacks such as the March 21 Tel Aviv cafe bombing.

The United States expressed opposition to the Har Homa project and asked Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to suspend it. He refused, insisting that Arafat stop the riots and take tougher action against militants.

Arafat said Israel must first halt the housing project and expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. He accused the United States of taking Israel's side by stressing the paramount importance of secu-

A decision to resume the regular security meetings without suspension of Har Homa and the settlement construction would be seen as a major concession by Arafat.

At Ross' request, Arafat agreed to a meeting Thursday with the Israeli army chief of Staff, Amnon Shahak. Palestinian security officials were

A few days earlier the head of the Israeli Shin Bet security service met heads of the Palestiman Preventive Security Service.

Another report add: Hun dreds of ultra-Orthodox Jews clashed with police Saturday on a downtown Jerusalem street angered by a Supreme Court decision to keep the thoroughfare open on the Sabbath.

The demonstrators, who want Bar Illan Street closed on the Jewish day of rest, shouted "Shabbes" (Sabbath) at passing cars. Chanting "Nazi," they threw stones at police, slightly injuring some officers, police

The crowd, which grew to nearly a thousand, briefly blocked the street but was driven back by police. Three demonstrators were arrested. said police spokesman Shmuel Ben-Ruby.

Bar Ilan Street is an arterial thoroughfare that runs through an ultra-Orthodox neighbourhood but also links several secular neighborhoods with the main western exit from Jerusalem.

may go for polls ZAGREB. Apr 20 : Croat

refugees and other minorities Serb-held eastern Slavonia. there, reports AFP.

Provisional results from last Sunday's and Monday's local regional and upper house polls were announced simultafleously by the United Nations administration in Vukovar and by the Croatian electoral commission in Zagreb on Sat-

14,136 from resident Serbs.

per cent of votes in Vukovar. ballots, won 12.69 per cent.

Turkish army officer

ANKARA, Apr 20: In a rare

coalition government.

Algeria.

the military, which proclaims Welfare Party.

His punishment, however a transfer to Russia as ambassador in 1976 - was ironically to lay the foundation for his luture success. His Moscow exile lasted until

ing an air of sophistication to the coalition government.

sionately dedicated to ending three wars since their independence in 1947.

admitted the Front, made up of 13 centrist, leftist and regional parties, had made mistakes.

"We were different fish from different streams and tanks. Deve Gowda was an excellent leader ... but let us learn from the past and not repeat mis-*takes.

He will now get the perfect opportunity to put those words

Off the Record

It is good for drought stricken Africa

TEL AVIV. Israel: Ice cream made from camel milk may not sound like a treat, but it could be a stopgap solution to mass hunger in drought-stricken Africa, an Israeli scientist says, re-

ports AP. "In Kenya, all the cattle have died because of the prolonged drought, but they have a surplus of 2 and a half million liters of camel milk per day," said Reuven Yagil, who has developed the

JHULHOGES Visitors who sampled the dessert at an exhibition Friday found it tasty and smooth, with a faint and pleasant bitterness that comes from the plants that camels eat.

Yagil, a physiology professor at Ben Gurion University in southern Israel, said he and his associates could help set up small-scale refrigeration plants to produce the ice cream for local consumption.

Like cows' milk. camel milk does not keep long, even in refrigerators. The traditional method of preserving cows' milk is to make cheese, but that does not work for camel milk, Yagil

It can, however, be made into ice cream, which lasts much



Children from the schools of Fier are all smiles as they gather with a message of peace at the city's central square to greet the international aid to Albania, Saturday. Some 200 kids gathered and took place in - AFP/UNB photo music happening.

Chirac to go for early polls

right.

PARIS, Apr 20: President Jacques Chirac, feeling the pinch on his popularity ratings and fearing tough times ahead. has decided to go for broke and call early legislative elections. the French press reported this weekend, reports AP.

According to the respected independent newspaper Le Monde, Chirac will address the nation Monday night, announcing the dissolution of the National Assembly.

The report, echoed in the left-leaning paper Liberation. gave an authoritative twist to a week of rumors that Chirac would dissolve the legislature to pump up his authority at a critical moment for France.

The two-round vote could be held May 25 and June 1, according to Le Monde Earlier reports

A spokesman for the presidential Elysee Palace, Laurent Glepin, refused comment on the report that Chirac would make an announcement Monday or anytime He denied Le Monde's claim

said it could be June 1 and June

every five years, are normally

scheduled for March 1998. They

were last held in 1993 when the

Socialists, dogged by corruption

scandals after a dozen years in

power, were crushed by the

Legislative elections, held

that a team of specialists was at work to define the parameters of economic change, including what sacrifices could be sought and how far the state should go in its privatization programme.

IRA claims responsibility for blasts in England

LONDON. Apr 20: The Irish Republican Army claimed responsibility Saturday for an explosion and bomb threats a day earlier that disrupted roads and rail lines in northern England, but caused minimal damage, reports AP.

the Dublin newsroom of the Irish broadcasting network RTE. The incidents coincided with a high-security visit to northwest England Friday by Prime Minister John Major to canvas

for May 1 national elections.

The claim came in a tele-

phone call Saturday night to

The IRA started its current campaign a few days after Major called the election, planting two bombs beneath an elevated section of the M-6 motorway in central England on April 3. The outlawed group has also claimed responsibility for a

bomb hoax that forced post-

ponement of the April 5 run-

ning of the Grand National, the world's most famous steeplechase. There were no injuries in Friday's explosion near the rail station at Leeds. 170 miles (270 kms) northwest of London. Police have said another loud bang heard at the rail station at

Doncaster, about 30 miles (50

HONG KONG, Apr 20: The

first Chinese troops to enter

Hong Kong under British rule

arrive Monday, the Queen's

birthday, to share the Prince of

Wales barracks with the black

watch garrison complete with

their bagpipes and kilts, reports

formed but unarmed People's

Liberation Army (PLA) troops

cross the land border from

Shenzhen in southern China, a

British royal navy ship will fire

a 21-gun salute in Victoria har-

bour to celebrate the queen's

The incoming troops, the

vanguard of up to 10,000 Chi-

nese soldiers who will be based

here after the handover of

sovereignty, will march into a

territory very different from

birthday.

An hour before the 40 uni-

and the south.

carried out two controlled explosions on a package found at

turned out to contain magazines. received at the Leeds General Infirmary was not accompanied

by a code word.

railway stations were also closed after coded warnings. Army bomb disposal experts

kins) from Leeds, was caused by a bird flying into power lines. But the security alerts, which began just after 7 am

hour was getting under way. created turmoil for motorists and commuters trying to get to Two stretches of the busy M-6 motorway, one of Britain's major north-south arteries, were closed for six hours. Three

key railway stations were shut

northern England to London Callers using recognized IRA code words warned that bombs had been planted on the M-6 near Staffordshire and also near Manchester, Britain's third-largest city. Doncaster. Crewe and Stoke-on-Trent

the Stoke-on-Trent station. It

Police said a warning call

First batch of Chinese troops enters HK today

Hong Kong residents are

hoping they can deal with the

culture shock quickly and qui-The PLA are best remembered by most people here for their brutal suppression of a pro-democracy movement in China in 1989. In June that year a million people here. about a sixth of the total population, took to the streets in protest against the Tiananmen

Square massacre. Kimmy Tang, a 40-year-old clerk said the bloody Tiananmen crackdown had left some very bad memories of the PLA and she feared a similar incident could happen after the handover.

barracks" in central Hong Kong, "Command comes first for

(0600 GMT) as the morning rush

for the day, disrupting service from much of Scotland and

any military base across the the PLA," she said. "If there is trouble in Hong Kong in the future, they may follow orders from China's central government to suppress Hong Kong people."

recently at the official residence of President.

But the advance party's first problems will be adjusting. They will be helped in this endeavour by "the ladies from hell" as Scottish troops with their kilts were dubbed by their German foes in World War I. However, they won't have to acquire a taste for porridge,

haggis or any other Scottish

delicacies as they will be housed

in quarters formerly used by local Chinese members of the British garrison. Most are being provided "with standard British accommodation at the Prince of Wales

The High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Sri Lanka and Mrs. Masum Ahmed Chowdhury are seen talking to President of Sri Lanka H E Mrs Chandrika Bandaranaike Ku-

maratunga and the Hon. Foreign Minister Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar at a reception held

says British forces spokesman Roger Goodwin. A dozen of the group will be housed on stone cutters island on Kowloon side. "Their kitchen is fully equipped for Chinese cooking

with four giant works. They will live separately but be invited to share our facilities including the gyms and swimming pool," said Goodwin. The Chinese troops will be encouraged to study how the British troops interact with the local populace in terms of

the annual Hong Kong rugby sevens tournament. The members of the Chinese garrison will be spending most of their time in their barracks.

community work, liaison with

the police and even stewarding

very little money with which to which Hong Kong has to offer. told AFP.

lower high school education.

not least because they will have

confined to barracks and any significant time they have will be spent with their families in China. You're not going to see them staggering around the fleshpots of Wanchai or Mong The British garrison, which

has been slowly winding down for years - the naval base was the last to shut down - will keep a force here until midnight on June 30,

blasts govt

The comments raise the tension between the army and the Welfare Party, which leads the

itself the guarantor of Turkey's secular traditions, and Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's

enjoy the capitalist delights "The conscripts are very poorly paid," a PLA expert here "The average soldier tends to come from the countryside with

"They will be pretty much