Cuban President Fidel Castro (R) salutes Saturday during the anthems of Cuba and Laos as the Republic of Laos' Prime Minister Khamatay Siphandone (L) arrives at the airport of - AFP/UNB photo Jose Marti in Havana. The Prime Minister is on a three day visit.

Pak press hails govt's extension of anti-graft drive to army

ISLAMABAD, Apr 27: Pakistan's press Saturday hailed the government's extension of its anti-graft drive to the powerful military, as the country's naval chief was removed over corruption charges, reports

Defence Ministry spokesman announced late Friday the government has retired chief of naval staff Admiral Mansurul Haq with immediate effect.

"A good precedent has been set of holding the top members of the services accountable for what they do with their powerful positions," the news commented in an editorial.

"There are big skeletons in cupboards that have been tightly closed so far on one pretext or another. These have to be opened and the rot inside brought to the notice," the paper

The admiral's dismissal needs to be seen in the broader context of accountability as well as of civilian control of the armed forces", observed The

The Defence Ministry announcement cited no reasons, but reports have said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif asked Haq to resign following allegations of corruption and kickbacks in defence deals.

The newspapers called for a thorough probe into the charges against Haq in the interest of

The prime minister has taken a bold decision, he must also see it through", stressed The Muslim, demanding an "exhaustive investigation" into the admiral's personal and family assets.

"If there is any evidence of his having benefited illegally from his official position then the law must take its due course," it said.

Merely removing the guilty government functionaries from their posts "would not do," said another newspaper The Fron-

Observers said the admiral's exit in a corruption scandal added to the embarrassment caused by the arrest in the United States earlier this month of an air force officer on charges of heroin smuggling.

Farooq Ahmed Khan, a squadron leader, was caught while allegedly trying to sell two kilograms of heroin he carried with him on a military plane sent to the US to pick up

Pakistani Army Chief, General Jehangir Karmat, sounded a note of caution against what he called "media trial" of the services chiefs, in remarks made to The Muslim daily.

"Freedom of the press is the best thing that can happen to any democratic society. However, a line must be drawn at some point so that national interest is not jeopardised or compromised," he told the pa-

Fujimori emerges as Peru's man of the moment again

LIMA. Apr 27: President Alberto Fujimori has emerged once again as Peru's man of the moment, riding a surge of popularity following the bold hostage rescue. But the euphoria

may not last, reports AP. Fujimori, already credited with taming economic chaos and quelling the political violence that bloodied the 1980s and early 1990s, is as much a hero as the two commandos killed in Tuesday's raid, which saved 71 of the 72 captives

"It is what Fujimori knows how to do best: Assume his role in difficult moments," wrote commentator Jaime de Althaus, deputy director of the pro-government Expreso news-

Peruvians aren't accustomed to a leader "doing what has to be done," he said.

In a country characterised by vacillation and unreliability, Fujimori is seen by many as a role model — someone to lead

Peruvians to stability and prosperity. But others say the heady success of the Entebbestyle raid will only harden Fujimori's already arbitrary and

authoritarian rule. Friend and foe alike are praising the lighting strike as a masterly move that came out of nowhere and succeeded as nobody thought an armed intervention could - perhaps not even Fujimori, despite his claims to the contrary.

Polls show most Peruvians now believe a military rescue was the only solution, in contrast to surveys before the attack that had most saying the opposite - that negotiation was the only way out.

Poet Anthony Cisneros, an observer of Peruvian society and culture, said most Peruvians really believed a rescue was necessary, but doubted that their armed forces could pull it

Winnie Mandela wins re-election: Winnie Mandela, controversial former wife of South African President Nelson Mandela, easily won re-election Saturday as leader of the African National Congress (ANC) women's league,

AFP reports from Rustenberg. Following several hours of closed-door debate, Mandela was re-elected to a second term by a vote of 656-114 over rival candidate Thandi Modise, who had been the league's vice president, South Africa's SAPA news agency reported. Though implicated in a host of scandals, Mandela - whose 33-year marriage to the president and anti-apartheid champion ended in 1992 - remains popular among many South Africans.

Hotel fire kills 1 in Thailand: A 30year-old guest died when he failed to land in a swimming pool after jumping from a burning hotel in downtown Bangkok Sun-

day, local media reports said. AP reports from Bangkok. Radio 100 said Monday Masalake of Sri Lanka leapt from the fourth floor of the New Peninsula Hotel after a blaze erupted in a third story guest room. He apparently tried to jump into the hotel's swimming pool but missed. Two of five persons injured in the fire were hospitalised, the radio said. Most of the hotel guests were from South Asian nations.

11 missing as ship capsizes in ROK: Eleven people were missing after a ship carrying liquefied petroleum gas capsized off the coast of South Korea yesterday.

Yonhap Television news reported. Reuter reports from Seoul. It said one person had been rescued from 990 deadweight tonne vessel which capsized after hitting rocks off the southwest coast of the Korean peninsula. No further details were immediately available. Police in Chindo, an island close to where the ship capsized, put the number of missing at ten and said they were all feared dead. They confirmed one member of the crew, an engineer, had been rescued alive. All crew members

were South Korean. Violence claims 2 in China: Two people were killed as Chinese troops opened fire on rioters in the northwestern province of Xinjiang, a report said yesterday,

The deaths in the town of Yining followed the executions of three for earlier rioting there in February, the Chinese-language daily Ming Pao said. More than 1,000 youths, mainly ethnic Uighurs, rioted Thursday in a bid to rescue another 27 who were imprisoned by a court that day.

AFP reports from Hong Kong.

told AFP.

9 die in US house-fire: Nine people, including five children, died in a house fire that firefighters had trouble reaching because of barred windows, burning cars and pit bulls, AP reports from East Palo Alto.

Seven people, including three firefighters, were injured in Saturday's blaze. A neighbour said in elderly woman lived in the house with three daughters, a son and nine grandchildren, though officials said some grandchildren were visiting for the weekend.

Saddam Hussein turns 60: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein celebrated his 60th birthday Monday more confident than ever, six years after his massive defeat in Kuwait and the most severe international sanctions ever imposed on a nation, AFP reports from Dubai.

Saddam thumbed his nose at the world community twice. this month, using the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mak ah, Saudi Arabia, to break a Western-imposed "no-fly zone" over southern Iraq. He sent hundreds of elderly and sick Iraqi pilgrims to Makkah through the "no-fly" zone aboard a civilian airliner and then dispatched helicopters to fetch them back this week from the Saudi border.

N Korean defects to S Korea: A North Korean defector walked into South Korea early this morning across the heavily armed demilitarized zone (DMZ) dividing the

two Koreas, the defence ministry said, AFP reports from Seoul. The ministry identified the defector as Jang Yong-kwan, 38, a civilian who was found seeking asylum in the eastern section of the DMZ by South Korean border guards at 4:00 am Sunday (1900 GMT Saturday). "The defector was guided safe into our region and put under protective custody," a ministry spokesman



Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad al-Sabah at the Bayan Palace in Kuwait City, Saturday. Mubarak arrived in Kuwait for a short visit as part of a tour of the region to discuss the deadlock in the Arab-Israeli peace process. - AFP/UNB photo

Turkish PM to uphold secular traditions

ANKARA, Turkey, Apr 27: Turkey's prime minister has promised to uphold the country's secular traditions, heading off a showdown with the country's top generals over his efforts to promote Islam, reports

Necmettin Erbakan's decision Saturday also appeared aimed at strengthening his ruling coalition, weakened by the defections of two of his ministers who oppose his pro-Islamic stance.

The military-influenced National Security Council had pressed Erbakan during a meeting that lasted more than eight hours to drop his efforts to raise the profile of Islam in Turkey.

The council, made up of military figures and President Suleyman Demirel, said Erbakan had agreed to shut down Islamic-oriented secondary schools, restrict radical Islamic media and ban Islamic-style clothing.

17 Yemeni women contesting polls

SANAA, Apr 27: While most Arab women in Gulf countries remain shut away, Yemeni women have plunged into politics, with 17 of them vying for seats in today's legislative elections, reports BSS.

"We know that the road is long and filled with pitfalls, but women have decided to rise to the challenge, vote for us," candidate Balkis Hadrani told a mostly male audience during a gathering of voters in Sanaa.

"Islam gave women their rights, and women such as the Queen of Sheba and Arwa daughter of Ahmad have governed Yemen," said the fraillooking 42-year-old whose hair was covered with a scarf.

Balkis, a member of the pro-Iraq Baath Party, is a mother of two who wrote her doctoral thesis on another Balkis, the Queen of Sheba, who lived at least 700 years before Jesus

In one section of the audience, the women wearing black veils applaud. One steps up to the podium.

Iran has power to close off

Hormuz Strait'

CAIRO, Apr 27: A top Iranian commander said Iran's massive war games in the Gulf showed it can close off the Strait of Hormuz, gateway to one-fifth of the world's oil supply, reports AP. The comment by Maj. Gen Mohsen Rezaie, head of the

Revolutionary Guards, to Iranian television Saturday was Iran's most direct statement about its naval strategies. Rezaie, whose remarks were monitored by the British Broadcasting Corp. in London,

was speaking of the Tariq-ol-Quds, or the Road to Jerusalem, war games which were held along Iran's entire Gulf coast last week. The exercises, Iran's largest ever, were designed to test its

missile array and demonstrate its naval prowess, which Rezaie said gave it control over the strategic strait at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

Islamic nations slam Taliban threat to destroy Buddha statues

COLOMBO, Apr 27: Islamic countries on Sunday criticised Afghanistan's Taliban rulers who have threatened to destroy two ancient Buddha statues, which are considered to be the

world's tallest, reports AP. "This type of action which endangers the harmony and friendly coexistence among the various religious followers is against our point of view," said Iranian ambassador Ali Reza Alamoti.

In a telephone interview, Alamoti told the Associated Press that any move to destroy the statues in Afghanistan's Bamyan Valley can bring disunity among different people in the region.

Taliban rulers have said they will destroy the 4th Century AD statues — considered in the Buddhist world to be the

tallest of Buddha in the standing position - if they capture the Valley from their Shi'ite en-

Taliban says statues are against the teachings of Islam In the two-thirds of the country they control, the Taliban rulers have imposed strict Islamic

Pakistan has protected a number of non-Islamic religious sites, said Pakistan's High Commissioner Abdul Haqqani.

Sri Lanka's politically influential Buddhist clergy and Cultural and Religious Affairs Minister Lakshman Jayakody earlier said the demolition of the statues — one of which is over 35 metres high — would be a "treacherous act" where the entire Buddhist world will suf-

Tigers kill 21

government patrol in eastern Sri Lanka Sunday, killing at least 21 soldiers, a military official said, reports AP.

Rebel casualties weren't known in the attack at Polmoddai village in the eastern Trincomalee district, said the official who can't be named under briefing rules. The area is 250 kilometers (156 miles) northeast of the capital,

attacked the army foot patrol, but the assault had been repulsed with the help of reinforcements, said the official.

independent Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka. More than 48,000 people have been killed since the war began in 1983.

are discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese, who control the government and military.

in E Sri Lanka COLOMBO, Apr 27: Separatist Tamil rebels attacked a

Colombo. A large group of rebels had

The rebels are fighting for an

The rebels claim that Tamils



An Afghan taxi driver collects the fare from a passenger travelling between the northern provincial capitals of Talogan and Kunduz April 17, while others wait seated in the trunk - AFP/UNB photo of the vehicle, for which they paid a lower tariff.

US intensifies bid to foster peaceful end to Zairean war WASHINGTON, Apr 27: The refugee repatriation and human porters that he was there "to

United States intensified its efforts at fostering a peaceful end to Zaire's civil conflict, announcing Saturday it would send its UN ambassador there on a special mediating mission, reports AFP.

UN Ambassador Bill Richardson will meet with "senior leaders" of the two sides in Zaire's six-month-old insurgency and urge them to find "a peaceful solution" to the conflict, White House spokesman Michael McCurry said in a statement.

Richardson "will press both sides to agree to half the fighting and launch serious negotiations to form an inclusive transitional government leading to free and fair democratic elections," McCurry's statement

The US UN envoy will also "underscore the deep concern to the United States regarding the humanitarian situation,

rights in Zaire," the statement

In Zaire, Richardson was expected to meet both Zairean president Mobutu Sese Seko and Mobutu's longtime foe Laurent-Desire Kabila, according to Western diplomats at the United Nations.

UN sources familiar with the trip said Richardson would try to convince the two to hold direct talks, while seeking to persuade Mobutu to step down gracefully and suggesting to Kabila he be more flexible.

Meanwhile, Zairean rebel leader Laurent Kabila said Saturday he had flown to Kisangani to resolve what he called the "little problem" of more than 85,000 missing Rwandan refugees, and dismissed UN fears as "propaganda."

Arriving from Lubumbashi for talks with international aid officials, Kabila told local re-

solve the problem of the refugees, we are going to solve it, it's a little problem.

Kabila had a first meeting later Saturday with Aldo Ajello, the European Union's special envoy on the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, and more talks are set for today, said Kilian Kleinschmidt of the UN High Commissioner for refugees.

Kabila was also to see UN-HCR regional coordinator Filippo Grandi and UN regional humanitarian coordinator Pierce Gerety, Kleinschmidt

Questioned about accusations by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that the rebels had adopted a "slow extermination" policy against wandering Rwandan refugees, opting to let them starve to death, Kabila said the charges were "gratuitious."

Clinton in good standing

with public WASHINGTON, Apr 27: The

First 100 days of 2nd term

first 100 days of President Bill Clinton's second term show him in good standing with the public despite a slew of scandals, but his wings have been considerably clipped since he surged into office four years ago, reports AFP. Clinton faces a Republican

majority in Congress which has hobbled him on everything from the budget to foreign pol-

In 1993, Clinton passed his spending plan in record time. Since then his budget battles twice shut down the government and three months into this year he has yet to get an agreement on his financial

Thursday, the president won a tough fight over the ratification of the chemical weapons convention, which he crusaded

for almost daily since his January 20 inauguration, and he faces similar battles on China's 'most favoured nation' (MFN) status and NATO expansion.

In 1993, Clinton came into the office with guns blazing and big plans to overhaul the mammoth healthcare system and eliminate the even bigger US deficit.

The first proved an abysmal failure - and may have led to the Republican takeover of Congress in 1994 — but he has made real headway on the second goal

"It was not clear that we had an economic plan that would move us toward a balanced budget," White House spokesman Michael McCurry said of 1993, when the federal government was some 280 billion dollars in

68 per cent in the last elections

Development Party (PPP),

which won 17 per cent of the

vote in 1992, was campaigning

in Sumatra, the resort island of

Bali and its adjacent Nusa

Tenggara islands.

Indonesian democratic party,

The Christian-nationalist

The Muslim-oriented United

Month-long polls campaign begins in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Apr 27: Indonesian political leaders spread out through the sprawling archipelago today at the start of a month-long general election campaign to woo nearly 125 million voters in the world's fourth-largest nation, reports

Leaders including President Suharto and armed forces chief general Feisal Tanjung have called for a peaceful campaign and there were no reports of trouble in the initial stages. The only three parties

legally permitted to contest the May 29 local and national elections have agreed to campaign each day in separate areas of the country. On Sunday, the ruling Golkar was campaigning across

the country's most populous is-

land of Java and in the remote

Mulukus and Irian Jaya in the

east. Golkar is seeking over 70

per cent of the vote after taking

badly split since its leader Megawati Sukarnoputri was ousted by government-backed rebels last year, was seeking voter backing in Kalimantan on Borneo island and Sulawesi It took 15 per cent in 1992.

President Suharto's eldest daughter, businesswoman Siti Hardyanti Rukmana (also known as Tutut), kicked off the Golkar campaign in populous central Java with a mass rally at a fairground in the industrial port city of Semarang with a population of 750,000.

Off the Record

Truth therapy

WASHINGTON: Telling lies is bad for your health, according to a psychotherapist and author of a new book that outlines a "truth therapy" plan that works on both physical and mental health, reports AFP.

"We are all terrible liars," says Brad Blanton, author "Radical honesty. "People with notable stress disorders like ulcers, insomnia

and spastic colitis are worse liars than normal people, although normal people are generally unhappy from lying, withholding. hiding, avoiding and evading." "Many people don't connect lying and their body's experi-ence," said Blanton. "But it's often the compilation of little

white lies that add up into a health problem. It costs more than you think." Under Blanton's therapy programme, it is not acceptable to

withhold the truth to avoid hurting people's feelings.
"Hurt people's feelings and staywith them through it," he "Let them hurt your feelings and stay with you through it."
Other mental health professionals, however, say the scien-

tific evidence on the matter is unclear and are more cautious in their approach to the subject. "I say honesty is always your goal," said William Pinsof, a

psychologist and President of the Family Institute at Northwestern University. "But truthfulness can be more selfish than healing. Ask yourself if the other person needs to know this truth and especially whether it will make a difference in their lives," Pinsof

Election campaign less visible on streets in Britain

LONDON, Apr 27: Britain goes to polls on May 1. The election fever has caught on, but the heat of the campaign is felt more in the media than on the streets. For a Bangladeshi, walking down any street here it would be quite hard to grasp that the country is heading towards an election, writes Irtiza Nasim Ali of the Probe News

noisy and less visible on the ets. The reasons are obvilatest developments in ogy have replaced peotelephones, television Things are more

Election campaigns are less

g for the polls is elling a product. graffiti on the walls posters are put on ghated places and billboards. Faces of John Major of the Conservative Party and that of Tony Blair of Labour, don't appear on the walls, not even in

Indophobia in

and systematic.

Bangladesh, the political parties and people here suffer from Europhobia. The Referendum Party leaflet reads "This general election is by far the most important in Britain's history. It will decide whether our country finally surrenders her independence to Brussels and we become a mere province of Europe." And the Conservatives promises to 'fight any proposal to replace the British pound with a single currency.' Tony Blair is somewhat a Eurosceptic because it is fashionable to be marginally Eurosceptic. However, the plain truth is the Labour Party will fight the election as a pro-European party, and the Conservatives will attack Labour for selling out British interests. Only one major British party has consistently said the same thing about Europe for decades: the Liberal Democrats who say they believe in a federal Europe. It is Europhobia that seems

to be dominating the campaign. Some feel that Britain should

come out of its 'Little England' mentality. And others feel that if the Eurocrats are allowed to have their way, Britain will soon be forced to abandon it's three remaining rights — to decide foreign policy, to organise its own national security and its control over borders. Britain will be little more than a province in a new country called Europe. The general understanding is that the issue of joining Europe has not been discussed well. People are still confused

dum that was held in the mid 70s to join the common market was a trading agreement, not a political one. The Labour Party is hammering on a 'New Labour, New Britain' strategy. That's the marketing ploy they have come up with. 'New' after all is the most powerful word in the marketing armoury. However,

while in some ways it is a new

Labour, in some ways it is not.

and some feel that the referen-

It is still a radical alternative to the Conservatives. It is not as socialistic as it used to be and that is certainly new. The party has ditched its nationalise-everything policy. Not only that, it is highly probable that they will change the party colour which has been historically red to signify socialism, to purple to disassociate itself from anything that goes with socialism. Bangladeshis living in Lon-

don have also joined in the campaign. The local Awami League is working in favour of the Labour Party though Labour has failed to put up a Bengali candidate from East London. Dr Kabir Chowdhury Bangladesh is running the race with a Conservative ticket from the same area. Local AL leaders feel closer to the Labour as they are from the same background, socialism and such. Bengalis are carrying out a vigorous

campaign and are more vocal than the Britons. The people here they rarely discuss elections or politics. It

seems a social convention in Britain that political belief is something they would rather keep within themselves. It would be rather like 'children arguing,' as David Burton, Export Promoter, Bangladesh & Sri Lanka of the Department of Trade and Industry in London puts it, 'as to who is strong and who is weak, who will win and who to lose'. It is not that they are not politically conscious over 70 per cent cast their votes.

Media has always been more on the side of the Conservatives. Labour Party has had to rely on two or three against a dozen for the Tories. A newspaper analysis on the coverage of the election stories said quite clearly that as usual the Conservatives are getting a better than fair deal. However, the scenario has somewhat changed last week. Many newspaper are now subtly leaning towards Labour.

E-mail is playing a great role in campaigning this election. However, for many in London,

the human touch is missing. There's very little door to door campaigning. "I feel that the political par-

ties have this illusion that with means of mass communications like e-mail and such, they can afford to neglect communication to individuals," says Tim Steel, a former Labour advisor. "That is a very bad mistake. That is why as many as 10 per cent of the individuals go into the polling stations with an undecided mind. And this 10 per cent turns out to be the determining factor in the poll re-

might be 15 per cent behind in the polls. However, they claim in their private polls the figure to be down by 8 per cent. The gap is probably closing. Despite the people being

So the Conservatives today

clearly in favour of a change, markedly in favour of the new Labour, this 10 per cent 'impulse vote' will determine who will lead Britain.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (L) walk next to