



A paramilitary soldier armed with an automatic rifle stands alert in his newly erected post, in Karachi, Saturday. Heavy force of paramilitary troops and police would be deployed at the sensitive establishments like worship places of Shiite and Sunni sects and patrolling will be intensified in several parts of Karachi during the Islamic month of Moharram to avoid any "sectarian clashes". Moharram will start from Thursday. — AFP/UNB photo

Demonstration against US sanctions held Myanmar govt firm on political stand

YANGON, May 4: Myanmar's military vowed on Saturday that it would not change its current political and economic course despite recent US economic sanctions which bar new American investment in the country, reports Reuters.

Secretary one of the Ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) lieutenant General Khin Nyunt was quoted in the official media as saying Myanmar was confident it could overcome the latest hurdle imposed on it by Washington.

San Suu Kyi. "Destructionist groups within the country are employing various way to destabilise the nation, to jeopardise the nation's political and economic development and to cause difficulties in international relations," Khin Nyunt was quoted as saying at a meeting with local authorities in Hakha township, 375 km (600 miles) northwest of Yangon on Friday.

"As the government can overcome all these obstacles, it has no big problem" he said. "The [US] economic sanctions will have no result for the US as they expect nor will they affect Myanmar."

government sponsored mass movement today held a demonstration against a US decision two weeks ago to clamp economic sanctions on Myanmar.

The rally, held amid tight security in a sports stadium in east Yangon, was organised by the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), which is generally regarded as the political arm of Myanmar's internal affairs using bullying tactics, a USDA spokesman said, calling the US investment ban on April 22 an entirely "wrong decision."

The USDA also accused the United States of failing to curb its own law and order problems, particularly widespread murder and rape.

"We invite the American government, which cannot even provide security or guarantee human rights for its own people, to come and take some much needed lessons from our government on how to provide security," one spokesman said.

The rally ended with cries of "shame, shame on the United States" with spokesmen accusing Washington of having been swayed by the "falsehoods" spread by pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Aung San Suu Kyi, whose National League for Democracy (NLD) won 1990 elections later overturned by the military, has called for investment bans and tourist boycotts of Myanmar as a means of pressuring the military into reform.

11 Pak officials charged with graft: 6 arrested

ISLAMABAD, May 4: In its bid to curb corruption, the government has charged 11 civil aviation officials with misappropriating millions of dollars of state funds, the government said in a statement Sunday, reports AP.

Police arrested six officials, including Ahmed Iqbal Khan, general manager for civil aviation, on Saturday. Attempts are being made to arrest the other five men, the statement said.

The officials are being charged with siphoning off millions of rupees (dollars) from a project to expand and renovate the Islamabad International Airport, the statement said.

The officials allegedly awarded costly contracts to two construction companies, who paid out huge kickbacks.

day, the government said more than 2,000 unqualified candidates were hired by the national carrier, Pakistan International Airlines, while Benazir Bhutto was in power.

Benazir was dismissed last November on charges of runaway corruption and economic mismanagement.

The anti-corruption commission also ordered the arrest of three top airline officials and began a law suit to dismiss the others, the statement said.

The arrests came a week after the resignation of naval chief Mansur-ul-Haq amid allegations of kickbacks in the purchase of French-made submarines.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif reportedly ordered Haq's resignation, unusual in a country where the military has ruled for 25 of its 50-year history.

Despite high hopes, weary indifference greets change of govt in poorest corner of Britain

GRIMETHORPE, England, May 4: Despite high hopes in middle England for a fresh start under Prime Minister Tony Blair, weary indifference greeted the change of government in the poorest corner of Britain, reports Reuters.

The scene is one of desolation: Rows of blackened terraced houses, boarded-up shops, mounds of wasteland from old coalmines, and people who have never known what it is to work.

The voices are those of utter despair. Once at the heart of the industrial revolution, and world famous for its colliery brass band, Grimethorpe carries little optimism about the overwhelming victory chalked up by Labour in Britain's general election on Thursday.

Blair's landslide ended 18 years of Conservative rule and delivered him a strong 179-seat majority that should ensure he can push through new initiatives without impediment.

Labour has traditionally acted as the champion of the poor. Whereas the Conservatives were seen as the friends of the rich, yet the new Labour that Blair has forged is far more centrist than the party of old and few expect overnight miracles.

For while Grimethorpe was always grimy, it was once booming, surrounded by working coalmines, and that has all gone now.

Economic change in recent decades ended nearly two centuries of coalmining and blasted away a proud industrial tradition.

In the region, stretching for about 50 miles (80 km) north-east of the steel-making city of Sheffield, many locals blame it all on the Conservatives who ruled Britain after Margaret Thatcher swept to power in 1979.

Thatcher held out pugnaciously in the 1980s against a coalminers' strike that left many mines closed, pitted family against family and all but destroyed a once lucrative industry.

But expectations were low when locals were asked about the future under Blair for south Yorkshire, designated by the European Union as this nation's poorest area.

"The Tories (Conservatives) devastated this mining community," said 63-year-old ex-miner Eric Woollands. "He (Blair) has got to unring 18 years of Tory rule and he's not going to do that in five years (his term of office)."

Jobs for the young (young ones) — that's what the area wants, because they've got not (nothing) to do in this town," said Eric's brother Albert, a 53-year-old suffering from arthritis from once working in the pits.

"Jobs have grown so rare that people help up little hope for any quick improvement. We are talking 75 per cent unemployment in this area," said another ex-miner, Neil Darbyshire.

Maggie Loy, a local employment officer involved in training schemes, said the official figure stood at 34 per cent but the real total was nearer 80 per cent. Once people went on a training scheme they were taken off the unemployment records.

Tony Blair arrives at No. 10 Downing Street on Saturday on his first full day as British Prime Minister.



— AFP/UNB photo

Pakistan deports 12 Chinese Muslim youths to Xinjiang

ISLAMABAD, May 4: Pakistani authorities have deported 12 Chinese Muslims youths to the troubled Chinese region of Xinjiang amid fears over their safety as being cracks down on a separatist movement there, news and diplomatic sources said here today, reports AFP.

The youths had illegally crossed into Pakistan by road in December. Without visa and without passport, Chinese source said.

They were taken into custody by the police in the northern town of Gilgit and were sent back on Friday after the Chinese government sought their repatriation, a Chinese embassy official said.

"They violated both Pakistani and Chinese immigration laws," by entering illegally into a neighbouring country, he told the news agency.

Local news agency PPI said the 12, aged between 17 and 20, had fled the Muslim majority Xinjiang region which was troubled by recent separatist violence, fearing "threats."

Some Pakistani human rights activists feared for the safety of the Chinese Muslims on return to Xinjiang, the news agency said.

Chinese diplomatic sources rejected the report as "totally baseless" and termed it "mere speculations."

However, the London-based human rights organisation Amnesty International and leading officials in Turkey and Kazakhstan have voiced concern in recent weeks over China's actions in the region.

In a statement in March, Amnesty called on China to refrain from using the death penalty against anyone tried in connection with ethnic unrest that exploded in Xinjiang in early February.

Ethnic clashes between the Uighur Muslims of Xinjiang and Han Chinese settlers are frequent in the vast semi-desert region, which is home to 16 million people.

feudal landlords. Yadvav, son of a shepherd, grew up in abject poverty carrying loads on his head to help provide for the family. He says he dreamt of the day when he could fight social injustice.

As a student he was involved in the socialist movement, slowing graduating to full-time politics.

Today, the maverick Chief Minister of the eastern state of Bihar is in a position to precipitate a crisis which could topple the country's fledgling coalition government.

"I have always been a rebel and never played the game by the rules," he declared in an interview here, justifying his adamant refusal to quit his post within the government.

The refusal comes despite mounting pressure from within his own Janata Dal (people's party) and the United Front coalition in New Delhi following a police decision to charge him in a 271-million-dollar cattle feed scandal.

Yadvav's bravado, which is causing rifts in the administration, comes from an infallible belief in his popularity with the largely rural public of Bihar, one of India's most backward states.

Despite his years in power, the shepherd-turned politician has carefully cultivated his rustic image with his country bumpkin hairstyle and traditional Indian attire of flowing shirt and pyjamas.

His brother works in a lowly-paid government job — a rarity for a successful Indian politician's relative — while his wife continues to cook on a wood stove.

When the cameras are there, Yadvav helps her chop the vegetables.

This showmanship has made him popular with his voters, a mix of poor farmers, low-caste Hindus and the minority Muslims, who see him as one of them in a state which for centuries has been dominated by

Yadvav justifies refusal to quit

Washington Post welcomes ensuing Indo-Pak talks

WASHINGTON, May 4: The Washington Post has welcomed the forthcoming meeting between the Indian and Pakistan Prime Ministers and said that there is a basis for progress in mutual understanding in the current signs, but far from any certainty of it, reports PTL.

Commenting on the resumption of Indo-Pak talks the paper said it is a frail foundation on which to repair relations between the two countries that provide the greatest possible threat of nuclear war in the world.

Pakistan's two major allies, the United States and China, are encouraging the talks, the Post said.

In the present political environment, it said, a little ripple of promise of better relations between India and Pakistan has spread across South Asia. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan was returned to office with an improved margin, and India's foreign minister I K Gujral, became Prime Minister.

These developments were steered mostly by internal events. But they confirm in power the two figures considered most responsible for last month's meeting between the two foreign secretaries.

BRIEFLY

Sudan frees UNICEF pilot: Sudan has freed the pilot of a UNICEF-leased aircraft detained since mid-March on suspicion of aiding southern rebels, the official Sudan News Agency said Saturday. AFP reports from Khartoum.

Sudan said it detained Richard Stewart, a Kenyan pilot, on March 15 after he landed the airplane without permission in the southern town of Bor, 1,050 kilometres (650 miles) south of Khartoum. Sudanese authorities accused Stewart of carrying documents they said he intended to pass on to rebels. The government is fighting the Sudan People's Liberation Army in the south.

Road mishap claims 19 in Mali: Nineteen people died and 38 others were injured when a truck plunged into a ravine in southern Mali, police said yesterday. AFP reports from Bamako.

Ten of the injured were in serious condition after the accident which happened Thursday near Banamba, northeast of the capital Bamako. The truck also transported diesel canisters, scrap, building material and potash.

Noted British journalist Junor dies: Sir John Junor, one of the great editors and columnists in British journalism over the past-half century, died Saturday. He was 78. AP reports from London.

The cause and place of death was not announced. Junor was editor of the Sunday Express newspaper for 32 years and was knighted by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher shortly after she came to power in 1979. After leaving the editor's chair in 1986 he continued to write columns in the Sunday Express and later in The Mail on Sunday. "He was the best Sunday paper editor of his generation, taking the Sunday Express to an all-time high in both circulation and prestige," said Sir David English, editor-in-chief of Associated Newspapers, publishers of the Mail on Sunday.

Gunman kills 1 in Spain: A Spanish civil guard officer was killed on Saturday in an attack in the Basque county town of Zierbena the prefecture in Vizcaya province said, AFP reports from Bilbao.

Jose Manuel Garcia Fernandez, 43, was shot in the back of the neck as he stood at the bar of a restaurant of the port by a young man who then fled in a car that waited outside. The assassination as typical of the Basque separatist group ETA, which has killed eight other people, including two policemen, since the beginning of this year, four more than for the whole of 1996.

Ivory Coast President visit China: Ivory Coast President Henri Konan Bedie arrived in Beijing yesterday for the first state visit to China by an Ivorian President since the country switched allegiance from Taiwan in 1983, Xinhua reported. AFP reports from Beijing.

Bedie's one-week visit to China at the invitation of Chinese President Jiang Zemin came as state councillor Song Jian left for the Ivory Coast to promote scientific and technological contracts there. Last year, China granted the Ivory Coast a 6.2 million dollar loan, spread over a 15-year period, to build a light vehicle plant.

Oldest Japanese woman dies: Japan's oldest person, Sue Utagawa, aged 113, died yesterday, her family said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

Utagawa died of natural causes at a hospital in Ube, western Japan, where she lived since turning 100 in 1984. She passed away as if falling asleep, a family member reportedly said.

Arafat, Weizman agree to meet

JERUSALEM, May 4: Israeli President Ezer Weizman and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat have agreed to meet but a date has yet to be set, a PLO official and Israel Radio said on Saturday, reports Reuters.

"Weizman asked for the meeting," the PLO official, who confirmed the Israel Radio report and spoke on condition he not be identified, said. "No date has been set for the meeting. We don't expect it to take place before the end of the week."

He could not elaborate on the purpose of the meeting. Weizman's Director-General, Aryeh Shumer, later told Israel Radio that it was the Palestinian Authority that had requested the meeting.

Texas separatists lay down arms, leave mountain hideaway

FORT DAVIS, May 4: Texas separatists laid down their arms and left their mountain hideaway, ending their week-long standoff with authorities. But two heavily armed followers eluded authorities, fleeing into the woods, reports AP.

Richard McLaren, the self-styled ambassador of the Republic of Texas secessionist movement, signed a "cease-fire document" with the Texas Rangers at about 2:15 pm Saturday.

By 4 pm, McLaren and three followers abandoned their "embassy," a trailer in the remote Davis mountains. They left behind 24 pipe bombs, eight to 10 gasoline cans with coils around them, a propane tank with a

Govt-rebels clash leaves 49 dead in Turkey

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey, May 4: Turkish security forces have killed 42 Kurdish separatists and lost seven members in the last three days of violent clashes in the troubled south-east, government officials said, reports AP.

In a related development, Defence Minister Turhan Tayan said Turkish troops could enter northern Iraq to hunt down rebels as part of a hot pursuit agreement with Baghdad.

Government troops have killed 23 members of the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in fighting in the mountainous province of Sirkak in the Iraqi border since Thursday, the southeast's regional governor said here in a statement.

Three pro-government Kurdish village guards were also killed in the ongoing clash in which the troops were supported by military helicopters and aircraft, it said.

Nineteen other PKK members and four troops were killed in fighting in the provinces of Siirt, Batman and Hakkari.

Boat carrying 600 tourists sinks off Bangkok

BANGKOK, May 4: A ferry carrying 600 tourists hit a reef and sank Sunday near an island 17 miles (27 kilometres) off the beach resort of Phuket, but all passengers were believed to have been rescued, police said, reports AP.

Lt Peerapat Thingnga of the Phuket Police station said there were no reports yet of anyone missing or seriously injured.

The tourists, mostly Thais taking advantage of a long holiday weekend, were picked up by local fishermen plying the waters near Flower Island in the Andaman Sea.

A number of foreigners were among the passengers, however, as Phuket, 690 kilometres (428 miles) southwest of Bangkok, is Thailand's most popular island resort with foreign tourists.

The boat, named the King Ferry and owned by Serm Suk Travel agency, hit Moo Sang reef near Flower Island at about 10 am (0300 GMT) while travelling from Phuket to Phi Phi, a smaller resort island southeast of Phuket.

Peerapat said disaster was averted because there were enough life jackets for everyone and it took almost an hour for the boat to sink, allowing fishermen from nearby Flower Island to come to the rescue.

"I felt a big bump when it hit," said Tiffany Gibbs, a 24-year-old vacationer from Hong Kong.

"People were very quiet. Some people were running and there was a scramble for the life jackets because the boat began to tilt very quickly, but people didn't panic," she said.

Gibbs said she heard no instructions from the crew about what to do after the ferry hit the reef very close to Flower Island.

List of new UK cabinet

LONDON, May 4: Following more appointments yesterday, here is a complete list of new British Cabinet following the Labour Party victory in Thursday's general elections:

Prime Minister: Tony Blair; Deputy Prime Minister, Secretary of State for Transport, Environment and Regional Policy: John Prescott; Chancellor of the Exchequer (finance minister): Gordon Brown; Foreign Secretary: Robin Cook; Home Secretary (interior minister): Jack Straw; Defence Secretary: George Robertson; Lord Chancellor (justice minister): Lord Irvine; Education and Employment Secretary: David Blunkett; President of the Board of Trade: Margaret Beckett; Social Security Secretary: Harriet Harman; Northern Ireland Secretary: Marjorie Mowlem; Chief Secretary to the Treasury: Alistair Darling; Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: Jack Cunningham; Scottish Secretary: Donald Dewar; Welsh Secretary: Rob Davies; Health Secretary: Frank Dobson; Transport Minister: Gavin Strang; Leader of the House of Commons: Ann Taylor; National Heritage Secretary: Chris Smith; Secretary of State for International Development: Clare Short; Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords: Lord Richard; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster: David Clark.

Minister announced yesterday who are not in the Cabinet: Chief Whip: Nick Brown; Employment Minister of State: Andrew Smith; Social Security Minister of State: Frank Field.

Chinese president, PM to attend HK handover ceremony

HONG KONG, May 4: Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Premier Li Peng will attend the ceremony marking the handover of Hong Kong to China in July, a Hong Kong newspaper said today, reports Reuters.

Hong Kong, a British colony for 156 years, reverts to Chinese rule at midnight on June 30.

Britain and China have agreed to stage a 35 minute ceremony to mark the transfer of sovereignty.

When Mrs McLaren left the trailer mid-morning, she told officials that those she left behind were ready to come out. At that time, details for the ceasefire were finalized. The document was signed by Texas Rangers Capt. Barry Caver, Mrs McLaren and McLaren, Cox said.

"It was only a page and a paragraph long," Cox said. "Essentially all it was an agreement for a cease fire."

Gov. George W. Bush, who had promised not to intervene in the standoff, said he was proud to see the matter resolved without force.

Mother Teresa hopes to set up base in China

CALCUTTA, May 4: Mother Teresa, who handed over the reins of her Missionaries of Charity in March, said today her next project would be to set up a base in China, reports AFP.

The 86-year-old nun told the Telegraph newspaper here in an interview she had already spoken to top leaders in China and was hoping for a breakthrough.

"I am hopeful of setting a base in China soon and am awaiting a positive response from the leader, let me see if he can help me out", Teresa said.

China has not allowed Mother Teresa to set up her Missionaries of Charity there.

out force. "It re-emphasizes what I say, 'Texans can run Texas,'" he said. "The message ought to be very clearly to people that, you're free to think any way you want to think, but you better not arm up and hurt innocent citizens because we'll enforce the law in our state."

The stalemate began last Sunday, when several McLaren followers stormed the home of two neighbours in their remote suburb of the Davis Mountains and held the couple hostage in protest of the arrest of group member Robert Scheidt.

Scheidt was exchanged for the hostages early Monday, but the standoff continued.

Miss Puerto Rico, Ana Rosa Brito, videotapes her part of the evening gown competition Saturday for the 1997 Miss Universe Pageant. The contestants are in Miami Beach, Florida, preparing for the competition which will air May 16.



— AFP/UNB photo