

# Revamped MQM vows to reshape politics in Pakistan

KARACHI, July 29: The revamped main political force in Karachi has vowed to reshape the country's politics, reports AFP.

The Mohajir Qaumi Movement has changed its name to the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (United National Movement MQM).

Its exiled leader Altaf Hussain said in a broadcast message from London to a Karachi rally late Sunday: "We pledge under the banner of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement that we will not sit idle until we eliminate the feudal system."

The party has dominated Karachi politics but also been accused of involvement in factional strife that has contributed many of the 2,000 political and religious and ethnic killings in the city over the past three years.

It has traditionally represented Urdu-speaking immigrants from India since the

splitting up of the sub-continent 50 years ago.

But Hussain said all communities, sects, religions and nationalities were welcome in the new MQM.

Hussain urged people not to listen to those who in the past have exploited the masses in the name of Islam, democracy or socialism.

Calling for religious tolerance to foster sectarian harmony, he said everybody should have the right to perform his religious duties.

"People should embrace each other instead of fanning sectarianism," he said in a reference to more than 100 deaths reported this year in rivalry between extremist Shiite and Sunni groups in Punjab province.

Stressing that he would struggle for a liberal democracy, Hussain invited ethnic Sindhi, Baluchi, Pashtun and Kashmiri communities as well

as non-Muslim minorities to join the party.

The rights of women and religious minorities including Hindu, Parsi, Christian and Ahmadi should be safeguarded, he added.

Hussain, whose party was at loggerheads with former prime minister Benazir Bhutto during her three years rule up to last November, said "Our war is not against army, police or paramilitary rangers. Our war is against the corrupt elements who looted Pakistan."

He said his party would work for freedom of expression, a free market economy and improving education and the literacy rate among the poor.

Observers said Hussain's changes were aimed at entering mainstream national politics after remaining confined to southern Sindh for 12 years.

Party leaders termed the move an "historic gift" to mark the 50th anniversary of Pak-

istan's independence next month.

The MQM rose to prominence soon after its formation in 1985, promising to fight for the Mohajirs, Urdu-speaking settlers from India.

One MQM leader, Nasreen Jallil, said it was a new beginning for the party. Leaders of other political parties also welcomed the changes.

The MQM coming into mainstream politics will have a "positive effect," said Yusuf Reza Gilani, a former Speaker of the National Assembly and a member of Benazir's Pakistan People's Party.

The decision is good for Pakistan politics," said Gulam Mustafa Jatoi, a former interim premier.

MQM won 12 National Assembly seats in the last election, with 27 deputies in the Sindh Provincial Assembly. It shares power with the party of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

## Plot to assassinate Chandrika

### Five Tamil Tigers held

COLOMBO, July 29: Police in the capital have arrested five suspected Tamil separatist guerrillas who were allegedly plotting to assassinate President Chandrika Kumaratunga, and are hunting for three others, officials said Tuesday, reports AP.

Among those detained are two trained as suicide bombers, said police officials, who asked not to be identified.

Another suspect in custody is a security guard at a state-owned grocery chain who was allegedly helping the rebels gather information on the president's movements, officials said.

The remaining two were low ranking government officials who brought the bombers to Colombo from the rebel hideout in the jungles of eastern Sri Lanka, officials said.

Police arrested the three at a hotel in Colombo.

The arrests were made on July 21, but detectives would not give details for more than a week while they hunted for the

accomplices.

Detectives have discovered four plots to assassinate Kumaratunga since negotiations between the rebels and the government broke down in April 1995.

Since then, Kumaratunga has ordered large military operations to drive the separatists out of the major cities and into the northern jungles.

Guerrilla suicide bombers have assassinated politicians and government officials and blown up key military targets.

Among those allegedly killed by the guerrillas were Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993, and Gamin Dissanayake, Sri Lanka's opposition presidential candidate, who was blown up in 1994.

The rebels are fighting for a separate homeland for the minority Tamils, claiming they are discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese who control the government and the military.



Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat salutes a honour guard upon his arrival in the West Bank city of Habron Monday. The Palestinians announced on Monday that they were "reassured" by the Israeli decision to temporarily prevent the construction of a new Jewish settlement in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Ras el-Amoud in the heart of Arab East Jerusalem.

— AFP/UNB photo

## Myanmar FM dismisses allegations of human rights abuses in his country

KUALA LUMPUR, July 29: Myanmar Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw today dismissed allegations of human rights abuses in his country, saying "wrong reports" in the press were responsible for misconceptions, reports AFP.

Asked to respond to US Secretary of State Madeline Albright's charges of officially sanctioned drug trafficking and money-laundering in Myanmar, Ohn Gyaw said: "We do have law. We do have the process on how to eliminate the suspicion of money-laundering."

He was speaking at a joint news conference concluding the annual meeting between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its main Western and regional trading partners.

Myanmar was admitted to ASEAN last week, along with Laos, despite Western criticism of its record on political and human rights.

"As far as the question of

human rights is concerned, I have to say that the press have been making wrong reports," Ohn Gyaw told reporters.

"But when the press is picking up certain information from a source which is against the government, then of course there are some misunderstandings and misconceptions," he said.

He said Myanmar had been cooperating with the United Nations and with the Human Rights Commission in Geneva "in a manner that is responsible."

Philippines Foreign Minister Domingo Siazon was the first ASEAN minister to publicly take up Myanmar's defense, saying today that Myanmar's membership would provide "the appropriate forum" for ASEAN's partners to convey their opinions.

Siazon dismissed Albright's criticism of Myanmar in meetings here as "expected, coming from where Secretary of State

Albright comes from."

"Despite the rather high level of decibels with which some of the statements have been made, economic sanctions on a country that has very little external trade and that has been used to being closed from the outside world will not really work," Siazon said.

"I can assure you that if economic sanctions are imposed by so many countries on Myanmar, you will have its neighbouring countries to trade with it. So there will be no real impact on it," he added.

Earlier, in an interview with CNN, Ohn Gyaw dismissed allegations of human rights abuses in Myanmar as untrue, saying they came from insurgents and dissidents.

"From the opposition, from the dissidents, from insurgents, when actually you come to visit our country, you'll see that we threat our people much more fairly than they treat them in the West," he said.



Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral (L) and Congress president Sitaram Kesri (C) with Indian vice-president nominee Krishna Kant at Parliament house in New Delhi yesterday after filling the nomination for his candidature for August 16 polls.

— AFP/UNB photo

## Red, white, blue rocks on Mars!

BOSTON, July 29: Mars rocks are red, white and blue in photos taken by America's Pathfinder spacecraft, the blue perhaps showing where fierce storm scoured the rocks, reports AP.

Peter Smith of the University of Arizona said that Pathfinder pictures taken with different filters show a faint bluish tint on one side of exposed rocks, while the other side of the rocks is a typical Martian red.

Some partially buried rocks, he said, are a whitish colour and may actually be layers of a hard material called calcite, a calcium carbonate rock material common in Arizona.

Sinn Fein's vice president, Pat Doherty, said his party had sought assurances that negotiations on future political arrangements for Northern Ireland would go ahead on September 15 with or without pro-British "unionist" parties.

The largest unionist party, the Ulster Unionists, has sought assurances that the IRA would begin disarming during negotiations as recommended by

## Sinn Fein leaders to meet British minister next week

BELFAST, Northern Ireland, July 29: Allies of the Irish Republican Army said Monday that they will meet next week with Mo Mowlam, the British Cabinet minister responsible for Northern Ireland, says AP.

The meeting with Sinn Fein party officials had been expected to follow the IRA's latest ceasefire, which began a week ago.

A Sinn Fein delegation headed by Gerry Kelly, who served a prison term in connection with IRA bombings in London, met Monday with British civil servants to lay the ground for the meeting with Mowlam.

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## Train collision in India: Driver was drunk

NEW DELHI, July 29: An Indian train driver involved in a high-speed collision which killed 12 and injured 82 was drunk, a newspaper reported today.

His assistant told railway officials that the express driver had been drinking before Sunday's accident near the Indian capital, the Times of India said.

## Fighting, looting cause \$49m worth of damage in Phnom Penh

PHNOM PENH, July 29: Pitched street battles between the forces of Cambodia's feuding co-premiers and an orgy of looting in Phnom Penh this month caused at least 49 million dollars worth of damage, reports AFP.

The tally by a committee set up to assess the cost of the factional clashes which saw the ouster of first prime minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh is nearly five times higher than earlier official estimates and is expected to rise further.

The largest portion of the damages occurred (in an area) where 18 factories and warehouses are claiming about 38 million dollars in damages, the Cambodia Daily quoted a statement from the committee as saying.

In addition, damage and theft from companies, stolen vehicles and destruction

## State-wide strikes illegal, says Indian court

NEW DELHI, July 29: A court in southern India has said that state-wide shutdowns enforced by political parties and powerful groups are unconstitutional and that they must compensate the government for loss of production, reports AP.

Organised bodies, political parties and associations by calling strikes, trample upon the rights of citizens, the court said in its ruling Monday.

No political party or organisation can claim that it is entitled to paralyse industry and commerce and prevent citizens not sympathetic to its viewpoint from exercising their fundamental rights, it said.

The court said the groups can hold strikes peacefully, without intimidating people to support them.



Some of the 44 girls run for the '97 China Top Ten Models Contest in Shanghai pose for pictures Monday. These girls have an average height of 1.77m and an average age of 19.8 years old. They competed and succeeded out of hundreds of girls all around the country.

— AP/UNB photo

## 50 killed as rebels attack Algerian town

ALGIERS, Algeria, July 29: Suspected Muslim militants killed 50 people and wounded 90 after slitting some victims' throats and blowing up the houses of others in Algeria, police officials said early Tuesday, reports AP.

No one claimed responsibility for the massacre overnight Saturday in a town 35 kilometers (20 miles) south of the capital, Algiers.

Survivors said the attackers were members of an armed Muslim group involved in the five-year fight to overthrow the government in this North African country.

Hospital officials said a district in the town of Larba was besieged by a group of armed

men. They spoke on condition of anonymity.

The attackers placed land mines around the district to prevent people from fleeing, then started firing machine guns in the air.

Most of the 50 people killed had their throats cut, hospital workers said.

The group of about 40 armed men also set off explosives, destroying houses and trapping the occupants inside.

Emergency personnel worked throughout the day Monday to free survivors from the debris.

Many of the wounded suffered head injuries. There was no indication of whether the death toll would rise.

Several Habboush homes were damaged, but there were no casualties, the police added.

Lebanon files complaint against Israeli violation of ceasefire

JERUSALEM, July 29: Lebanon filed a complaint Monday night with the committee overseeing the ceasefire in south Lebanon after Israel filed three complaints of its own about violations, officials said.

"Well, the jury is still out on Kabilia," Richardson told The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer on Monday. "The United States and the international community are prepared to help him but only if he pursues significant political, economic and social reforms."

Richardson said a major test for Kabilia, who seized power last May, will be whether he cooperates with a UN team which plans to investigate allegations that Kabilia's forces massacred

thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees during their seven-month rebellion that deposed Mobutu Sese Seko.

If he is reluctant to give them full access and plays games with the team, as he has in the past, he's going to be isolated and he's not going to get help.

In June, Richardson announced that he had won a pledge from Kabilia to allow a UN team to investigate the allegations starting July 7. But Kabilia refused to allow a team headed by UN investigator Roberto Garretón, claiming he was biased.

Annan then decided to appoint a new team and said its members would be announced shortly.

Kabila will face isolation if fails to cooperate with UN: US

UNITED NATIONS, July 29: Major nations will withhold economic aid to Congo President Laurent Kabila if he "plays games" with a UN investigation into alleged massacres in his country, US Ambassador Bill Richardson said, reports AP.

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Public rallies were held for Cpl. Ahmed Dagamesh and people donated money to his needy family. The king, meanwhile, made a much-publicised visit to the victim's families, and many Jordanians complained that he debased himself by joining a Jewish mourning rite.

Hussain defended himself by saying that anyone visiting the families would have been "pained over the suffering of the people, regardless of who they are."

The issue of peace is spilling over into upcoming elections. Muslim and leftist parties have threatened to boycott the vote, complaining about the peace with Israel and a new law ordered by King Hussein that prohibits newspapers from publishing text or photos that would offend the royal family or the heads of state of friendly countries.

There was an outpouring of sympathy for the soldier.

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Friend said 18-stone (113-kilo) Gordon McMaster, MP for Paisley South in Glasgow, had been suffering from ME, the chronic fatigue syndrome, and had been depressed for some time.

McMaster, a keen gardener, had complained to friends that his illness might have been caused by the organo-phosphates which he used as a pesticide and which have been linked with ME.