



Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, the wife of jailed Malaysian former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim, shows off a newsmagazine after learning her photo was on the cover on Tuesday in a newsstand in her Hong Kong hotel. Wan Azizah, who was in Hong Kong for a CNN interview, said she believed her newly launched opposition party was making progress and has taken its place in Malaysia's political landscape. Anwar was sentenced to six years for corruption. — AFP photo

## Benazir to delay her return

LONDON, Apr 20: Ex-Pakistani premier Benazir Bhutto has agreed to delay her return to her country since her corruption conviction, she said in an interview here today, although she claimed to personally prefer prison, reports AFP.

In a flattering article in The Express newspaper, the serene, beautiful Benazir Bhutto declared: "I want to go back but my party feels I should wait."

"Personally I think even in prison I will be a strong rallying point for my party. It would motivate the people."

On Thursday Benazir and her husband Asif Ali Zardari were sentenced to five years in jail after being found guilty of receiving millions of dollars in kickbacks over an official contract with Swiss firm Societe Generale de Surveillance.

The couple were also barred from holding public office.

fining 8.6 million dollars and had their property seized.

Benazir immediately declared the trial was politically motivated and her party on Saturday called a general strike in her home province of Sindh.

The former premier also said she would return home this week to appeal her conviction in the Supreme Court. Pakistani officials countered by saying she would be arrested immediately on her return.

Benazir told The Express: "Of course, I have been in prison before. I know I can cope, so in that sense prison does not frighten me."

"I also have such a frenetic life outside that prison could become a part of calm in a sea of storm. Yet I believe this has been a political trial and when the government changes, the sentence will be set aside."

Benazir went on to say that she was worried about the effect

of a jail sentence on her three young children.

"But I have not told them and they do not watch TV or read newspapers because it is hurtful for them. Yet, ultimately they understand that political people go to prison. Their father, after all, has been there for two-and-a-half years."

She continued: "I suppose I have put politics over family. But I was brought up to believe that while one loves one's family, it is to one's people that one owes responsibility."

"I worry about what my children will say when they grow up. I hope they understand, as I understood before them."

Saying she would no longer try to be a "male" leader and pursue "this entire missile programme", she said she also never wanted to enter politics but was forced in by circumstances.

## Taliban should return to peace talks: UN

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 20: UN Security Council members said on Monday the Taliban Islamic leadership in Afghanistan should return to UN-sponsored peace talks with its opponents, reports Reuters.

In a press statement, after council consultations, members also accused the Taliban of "continuous human rights violations."

"Members of the Security Council expressed their deep concern at the decision of the Taliban leadership to withdraw from the inter-Afghan dialogue," said the statement read by Council President Alain Deljannet of France.

"They urged the Taliban to reconsider such a position and return to the negotiating table shortly" and expressed concern at the military preparations carried out by both parties.

## Two policemen shot dead in Pakistan

KARACHI, Apr 20: Two policemen were shot and at least 11 people wounded in the Pakistan cities of Karachi and Hyderabad in southern Sindh province, police said today, reports AFP.

One policeman was shot dead and another wounded when unidentified gunmen fired from a car at a police roadblock in Karachi's eastern Bahadurabad area, they said.

In Hyderabad, a 160-km northeast of here, a policeman was killed by two armed motorcycle riders who wounded 10 people while firing indiscriminately as they fled.

The shootings on Monday night, came on the eve of planned demonstrations by the opposition Pakistan People's Party to protest against last week's conviction of their leader and former premier Benazir Bhutto on corruption charges.

PPP officials said the incidents had no link with its protests.

## Russia's Black Sea Fleet begins war games

SEVASTOPOL, Ukraine, Apr 20: Russia's Black Sea Fleet began military exercises Monday that the fleet's commander said were not linked to the Kosovo crisis, reports AP.

About 30 warships were to head out of port for a series of exercises over the next several days from the fleet's base in Sevastopol on Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, a fleet spokesman said.

Spokesman Andrey Grachev said the manoeuvres would last 10 days, but declined to say when the ships head out.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's Black Sea Fleet, also based in Sevastopol, began its own six-day manoeuvres Monday that involve 15 ships. The ships were to conduct a joint exercise with Russian vessels, Grachev said.

The timing of the Black Sea exercises has raised speculation that they are part of Russia's angry reaction to NATO's bombardment of Yugoslavia.

## China urged to release musician

US-based human rights groups on Monday called for the immediate release of a Chinese musician jailed for leaking names of citizens blacklisted in China for their political activities, AFP reports from Washington.

The groups said in a statement that Chen Meng, 37, was reportedly seriously ill with a liver disease after serving four years of a 12-year sentence. Chen was arrested in 1995 for faxing to Hong Kong a list of Chinese citizens with valid passports who were barred from leaving or returning to China because of their political activities.

## Support for Obuchi's Cabinet rising

Support for Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi's Cabinet was rising, and closing in on the numbers who gave the administration the thumbs down, according to polls released yesterday, AFP reports from Tokyo.

An Asahi Shimbun poll put support for the government at 36 per cent, up from 33 per cent last month, while Cabinet disapproval shrank from 46 per cent to 38 per cent. Obuchi's Cabinet has carried an unpopularity rating since it was launched last July, although voter support has been picking up in recent months. But of those offering support in the latest poll, the largest group, 15 per cent, said there was no accountable reason.

## Hungarian president to visit US

Hungarian President Arpad Goncz will make a state visit to the United States in June when he and President Bill Clinton will discuss Hungary's engagement in NATO, the Kosovo situation and long-term efforts to stabilise southeastern Europe, the White House said on Monday, Reuters reports from Washington.

Goncz's state visit will be June 7-9 and "will celebrate Hungary's long struggle for freedom, democracy and human rights," a written statement said.

## New initiatives to save forests

Forests have virtually disappeared in 25 countries and will continue to vanish unless governments change their policies and practices, says an international commission warned in proposing new initiatives to save the world's trees, AP reports from United Nations.

Today virtually the only economic value officially assigned to forests is timber. But the report Monday from the World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development suggests that the world can satisfy its material needs from forests without jeopardizing their ecological benefits.

## 5 Ukrainian N-plants reduce output

A nuclear reactor was shut down briefly in Ukraine over the weekend due to a malfunction, while five more reactors reduced their output, officials said Monday, AP reports from Kiev.

Reactor No. 2 at the Rivne nuclear power plant was stopped for three hours before dawn Sunday after its automatic safety system suddenly shut down one of the reactor's turbine generators. The shut down came just as plant operators were preparing to stop another generator for repairs. Of the five reactors that had their output reduced, three were scaled back to prevent an energy production surplus, while two underwent planned safety checks.

## Australian jet crashes

An Australian air force F-111 fighter-bomber crashed into the jungle on a Malaysian island overnight during a multinational exercise, authorities said Monday. The pilot and navigator were killed, AP reports from Brisbane.

The aircraft crashed into the peak of a hill on Pulau Aur, a small island off Malaysia's east coast in the South China Sea, about 10:30 pm Australian time (1230 GMT) Sunday night during an attack simulation on a navy flotilla.

## Chopper crash kills 3 in Japan

Three US Marines were killed and one was missing after their helicopter crashed into the sea off Japan, Tokyo's top government spokesman said yesterday, AFP reports from Tokyo.

The US Marine helicopter plunged into the sea late Monday about one kilometer off the western coast of the southern Japanese island of Okinawa, where it was based, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiromu Nonaka said.

## Jet carrying cocaine seized in Brazil

A Brazilian air force plane carrying cocaine was detained at the international airport in Recife, capital of the northeastern state of Pernambuco, the second regional air command said Monday, AFP reports from Rio de Janeiro.

The Hercules C-130 aircraft took off from Rio de Janeiro on Sunday en route to Palma de Mallorca in Spain, stopping over in Recife where 35 kilograms of cocaine were seized. The pilot and the eight crew members were arrested but their identities have not been revealed by air base authorities.

## Taiwan president to visit Manila

Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui is planning to visit the Philippines this month to meet with a private group but China has warned Manila not to allow the visit, a senior foreign affairs official said Monday, AFP reports from Manila.

Lee has been invited by Filipino alumni of Cornell University to a private event in the country but China learned about the visit and is trying to block it, the official said.

# International

## Bid to bolster NATO capability to destroy Y'slav ground forces

# US sends more troops to Albania

BELGRADE, Apr 20: NATO blasted communications sites and a military garrison city Tuesday as the United States dispatched more troops to Albania to bolster the alliance's capability to destroy Yugoslav ground forces accused of atrocities against Kosovo Albanians, reports AP.

In the 27th straight night of attacks, Serbian media reported one person was killed and 11 injured as NATO missiles slammed into the southern industrial city of Nis, which also serves as the headquarters of the Yugoslav Army corps responsible for Kosovo.

Serbian television said 10 civilian homes were completely destroyed and 15 seriously damaged. Another Belgrade station, Studio B, said missiles heavily damaged the country's main cigarette factory, as well as the Nis water system. Power failed in the Nis district where the attack occurred.

NATO also targeted Batajnica, northwest of Belgrade, where a military airfield is located, Serbian media said. A 3-year-old girl was killed there two nights ago.

Elsewhere, Serbian media said the alliance struck a major international telecommunication relay facility at Prilike, 130-KM south of Belgrade, and undisclosed targets on Mount Zlatibor near the town of Uzice to the west.

The state-run Tanjug news agency said the Prilike relay station was for international telephone and satellite television relays.

The agency also reported a series of strong explosions early Tuesday near Pristina and in a village near the town of Podujevo about 20-KM north of the Kosovo capital.

Heavy explosions were also reported about 150-KM south of Belgrade near a major rail line linking the capital to the Yugoslav republic Montenegro, Tanjug said. A bridge on the same rail line was reportedly damaged in an attack four days ago.

Tanjug also reported a series of strong detonations early Tuesday in the central Serbian industrial city of Kragujevac but gave no details. The industrial cities of Kraljevo and Valjevo, also took several hits, the

agency said. Novi Pazar, west of Kosovo's northern tip, was also targeted.

Serbian television continued broadcasting, but some of the staff were sent home along with foreign television crews which had been using the facilities to transmit reports abroad.

NATO has repeatedly accused state television of "spreading lies" about the air campaign. A senior Serbian official, Goran Matic, complained that threats against the television facility were "unprecedented... not only in the history of journalism but also in the history of warfare."

In Washington, US Air Force Maj. Gen. Charles Wald said 24 Army Apache attack helicopters probably would arrive in Albania on Tuesday unless bad weather forces a delay. The helicopters are to attack Yugoslav army tanks and other armour in Kosovo in conjunction with ground-based multiple rocket launchers.

About 700 Army paratroopers were heading to Albania Monday night from the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to provide protection for the Apache

mission, codenamed Task Force Hawk. The task force will involve 3,000 US troops.

The use of the Apaches in combat would mark a major escalation of the conflict because US Army units would be involved in a campaign which has been waged by Air Force and naval forces.

NATO launched the air campaign March 24 to force Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to accept a Western-dictated peace plan for Kosovo, a province of Yugoslavia's main republic Serbia but with a population that is overwhelmingly Albanian.

In response to the attacks, Yugoslav forces launched a massive operation to expel hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians from the province.

Refugee traffic from Kosovo into Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro slowed to a trickle Monday. The UN refugee agency said the Serbs apparently were turning back the refugees. In Montenegro, which together with Serbia forms Yugoslavia, Muslim villagers near the border with Kosovo said soldiers

ordered them to leave their homes so the army could tighten security in the area.

It was not immediately clear why the refugee flow out of Kosovo was halted, as it had been periodically in past days.

The majority of Kosovo Albanians who have fled or been forced out of the Serbian province have come to Albania — 365,000 of more than 600,000. Over the weekend, an estimated 40,000 either left Kosovo for neighbouring territories or were at its borders, aid officials said.

As the conflict escalates, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan scheduled a trip to Moscow next week to discuss the Kosovo crisis.

In a report Tuesday, the Times of London said NATO is using intelligence supplied by the ethnic Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army to help its planes find and destroy Serb targets in the province.

The newspaper said one of its reporters has witnessed KLA fighters supplying detailed reconnaissance to Western diplomats in Macedonia via satellite telephone.

## Reconciliation with Pakistan

# US urges Indian leaders to continue process

WASHINGTON, Apr 20: The United States on Monday urged Indian leaders to continue a process of reconciliation with Pakistan regardless of which party forms the next government, reports Reuters.

Because the political situation in New Delhi remains unsettled, US officials said they were unable to predict how a change in leadership might affect India's nuclear weapons programme.

But it was hoped India would respond to international demands that New Delhi curb its programme, State Department spokesman James Rubin told reporters.

He spoke after the ruling coalition of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

"was defeated by one vote in the fragmented lower house on Saturday. There was a chance the rival Congress Party may be asked to try to form a new government."

"We look forward to working closely with whatever new government is formed in India," Rubin said.

"We were encouraged by the summit in Lahore in February between the prime ministers of India and Pakistan. We believe these talks reflect not only the commitment of the prime ministers to reconcile long-standing differences, but are also an expression of the popular will of millions of ordinary Indians and Pakistanis who want to move beyond these problems to a new relationship," he said.

## Chandra Shekhar opposes Sonia heading govt

NEW DELHI, Apr 20: Former Indian prime minister Chandra Shekhar said today he opposed Sonia Gandhi heading an alternative government after ousting the Hindu nationalist coalition, reports AFP.

Shekhar told reporters that Italian-born Sonia, who heads the main opposition Congress Party, had concentrated too much power in her own hands.

"The way the Congress is behaving, it would endanger democracy," he said.

Shekhar did not rule out early elections following the government's collapse on Saturday.

Shekhar is a longstanding critic of the Congress Party, although he became prime minister as the head of a minority government in 1990 with Congress backing.

## Yeltsin denies rift with Primakov

MOSCOW, Apr 20: President Boris Yeltsin said Monday that he had no quarrel with his prime minister and warned that a rift between the two men would cause serious problems for Russia, reports AP.

"Don't set me against Primakov, it's very grave for the nation," Yeltsin told reporters in the Kremlin.

The Russian media has been speculating about possible friction between the two, saying that Yeltsin resents Primakov's popularity and does not like the prime minister's friendly relations with the Communists in parliament.

Primakov was also slow to speak out publicly against the Communist-led impeachment debate against Yeltsin, which has been postponed until mid-May.

The motion is expected to

fail, but the debate could further weaken Yeltsin's authority, already eroded by his frequent illnesses and Russia's economic crisis.

"I believe that Primakov is useful at this stage, and later we shall see," the president said recently.

Yeltsin said Monday that he and prime minister had respect for each other, but then the president said he was instructing Primakov on how to take criticism.

"I'm teaching him so that he gets accustomed to that," Yeltsin said. "Is the Cabinet working faultlessly? No, it isn't. So, why get hurt?"

Yeltsin has a long history of jealously guarding his power and quickly dismissing officials who appear to be encroaching on his authority.

## Mahathir may call snap polls in June

KUALA LUMPUR, Apr 20: Buoyed by the signs of economic recovery and wary of the growing opposition movement, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad may call a snap election in June, a Malaysian newspaper said Tuesday.

With the economy and share market getting better, the governing coalition will hold the next general election in June, almost one year ahead of schedule, a front-page article in the independent China Press daily said.

The members of the coalition, dominated by Mahathir's United Malays National Organisation, discussed the issue and decided on June, the daily said quoting an unnamed senior UMNO official.

Government spokesmen could not be immediately reached. Officials rarely comment immediately on newspaper reports, but ministers are likely to react later.

Speculation about an early general election was accelerated after Mahathir's coalition won a landslide victory in the February legislative vote in the eastern state of Sabah.

The Sabah elections were the first test of popularity for Mahathir since last September's sacking and arrest of his onetime protege, Anwar Ibrahim.

Anwar, 51, was sentenced to a six-year prison term last week for using his office as deputy prime minister to cover up allegations of sodomy and adultery. Anwar said he was being punished for challenging Mahathir's 18-year rule of the Southeast Asian nation.

Protests exploded after the verdict. Mobs attacked the police, smashed window panes, burned flags of the ruling Barisan National coalition and damaged cars. Police arrested more than 150 people, many of them young university students.

The growing popularity of the opposition party headed by Anwar's wife, Azizah Ismail, was an important factor in calling early election, China Press said. It also said that a new voter-registration list that takes effect after June would include many younger Malaysians who may vote against Mahathir.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II listens as Colin Millerchip, manager of British software company Cambridge Animation Systems, explains how his company's product is used to create cartoons at the South Korean Ani Dream Animation Studio in Seoul Tuesday. The Queen arrived in Seoul on Monday for a four-day official visit. — AFP photo

## Turkey's next govt may rule out compromises with Kurdish activists

ANKARA, Apr 20: The leader of a far-right nationalist party which made stunning gains in parliamentary elections was quoted Tuesday as saying no one should fear the rise of his party, reports AP.

The strong showing by nationalist parties in Turkish elections means the country's next government will likely rule out compromises with Kurdish activists and adopt a tougher policy toward Cyprus.

The 18 per cent of votes, according to initial results, gained by the Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP, has raised fears in many Turks, who identify the movement with the militant Gray Wolves, the party's youth branch.

The Gray Wolves battled leftists in the late 1970s in clashes that killed 5,000 people and prompted the military to seize power in the MHP, leader Devlet Bahceli told daily Hurriyet. "Some intellectual circles think the MHP is a marginal party, but we are right at the central of the political spectrum."

The party has over the years softened its image and now calls for an end to government corruption and respect for tradition. "History has condemned racist and fascist ideologies," Bahceli said. "It would not be intelligent to defend a condemned attitude."

Outgoing Premier Bulent Ecevit, whose centre-left party came out first in the polls with 22 per cent, is likely to form a coalition with the MHP and the centre-right Motherland Party, which took 13 per cent of the vote.

Columnist Enis Berberoglu of daily Hurriyet said Tuesday an Ecevit-MHP coalition would be a logical one as the two parties share the same views on the

Kurdish issue, and on the need for a strong state.

Turkey has had six governments since 1995, and an unstable coalition would jeopardize the chances for needed economic reforms.

It is almost certain that Ecevit, a staunch secularist who is popular with the military, will not invite the Islamic Virtue Party into any coalition.

Virtue — the largest party in parliament — took only 15 per cent of the vote. The military, which has seized power three times since 1960, has ruled out any changes to the country's secular system and was at constant odds with Islamic activists.

## Suharto's lawyers challenged to prove corruption charges against Habibie

JAKARTA, Apr 20: Indonesian Attorney General Andi Ghalib has challenged former president Suharto's lawyers to prove their accusations of corruption against his successor, President BJ Habibie, the Jakarta Post said today, reports AFP.

Ghalib dismissed the threat as a lawyer's attempt to help his client evade an ongoing probe into allegations that the ageing former head of state had amassed a multi-billion dollar fortune during his 32 years in power.

"We will enforce the law, although it may be very bitter. You have seen what I have done so far," Ghalib, who is widely accused of foot-dragging on the Suharto probe, was quoted by the Post as saying.

## Retaliation for blast in mosque in Jakarta

# Muslims attack Christian community centre

JAKARTA, Apr 20: Hundreds of Muslims attacked a Christian community centre in eastern Indonesia in retaliation for the bombing of the national mosque in the capital of Jakarta, witnesses said Tuesday, reports AP.

One man was injured and four people were arrested in the violence Monday night in the city of Ujung Pandang on Sulawesi Island, 1,400 kilometers northeast of Jakarta.

"God is great," rioters shouted as they burned part of Wisma Kare, which is used for Christian social gatherings. The building is near the ruins of a church that was set afire in a bout of religious unrest in December.

Residents said by telephone that the riot broke out during a protest march against the bombing several hours earlier of Istiqal Mosque in Jakarta. Three people were injured.

Religious tensions have spilled into violence in several parts of Indonesia since the downfall in May of President Suharto after 32 years of authoritarian rule. There are fears that the antagonisms could disrupt parliamentary elections scheduled on June 7.

The blast in the basement of Istiqal Mosque shattered office windows as more than 600 worshippers prayed in the main chamber several floors above. There was no claim of responsibility for the attack.

## 1.2 lakh African children used as soldiers: NGOs

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 20: More than 120,000 children are used as soldiers in African wars, a coalition of non-governmental groups said Monday, reports AP.

According to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, the practice is widespread in Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Uganda.

Some of the children, such as in Sierra Leone, are barely seven years old, the groups said.

"African children are being targeted across the continent as tools of war," said Reed Brody, head of the coalition.

Brody, who is a spokesman for Human Rights Watch, called on African governments to stop recruiting children as soldiers.

## OAU hosts all-party meeting to resolve Comoros dispute

ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar, Apr 20: Bedeviled by several civil conflicts and one war in Africa, a group of African nations was trying Monday to keep intact the three-island nation of Comoros, reports AP.

Secessionists on the Anjouan islands broke away from the tiny republic off the coast of Mozambique in August 1997, declaring independence and asking to be reunited with France, the former colonial power. The government sent troops to put down the rebellion. But the secessionists held them off.

More than 70 delegates of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros, as well as Grand Comore, Moheli and the Anjouan islands gathered in the Malagasy capital Monday for the

## OAU hosts all-party meeting to resolve Comoros dispute

talks.

You have already achieved a good victory by showing up here. It is a victory of courage and the will to complete the process," Madagascar's President Didier Ratsiraka said during the opening session.

But the prospects for cooperation during the week-long talks seemed to him when the interim president of the Comoros, Tadjidine Ben Said Massounde, rose to address the session and the Anjouan delegates walked out in protest. The Anjouan delegates said they would return to the talks after the speech.

France and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) insist that the Comoros remain united, and the African group has threatened force against the

secessionists to keep together the archipelago — with an estimated 700,000 inhabitants.

Separatists in Comoros claim the government — based on Grand Comore — has denied them the possibility of economic development for a nation that derives most income from the export of vanilla, cloves and ylang-ylang flowers from perfume.

"The principles involved are important for Africa: cohesion, unity and legality," OAU Secretary-General Salim A. Salim said Sunday. He said that the problems were "socioeconomic, and all of us believed it was a solvable crisis."

Salim acknowledged that the 52-nation OAU has few resources — other than moral

force.