

Lankan troops capture rebel base in north

Colombo warns Western sanctions can stoke ethnic conflict

AP, AFP, Colombo

Government troops have captured a Tamil Tiger rebel base in northern Sri Lanka after three days of fighting that killed seven rebels and one soldier, the military said yesterday.

Rebel spokesman Rasiyah Ilanthirayan could not immediately be reached for comment. It was not possible to independently verify the military's claims because journalists are banned from the northern jungles where much of the fighting takes place.

warning that the action could worsen the island's long-running ethnic conflict. The United States and the European Union have withheld various aid programmes and are debating whether to withdraw special trade benefits from Sri Lanka amid concerns the human rights situation has deteriorated since the government pulled out of a Norwegian-brokered truce with the Tamil Tigers in January.

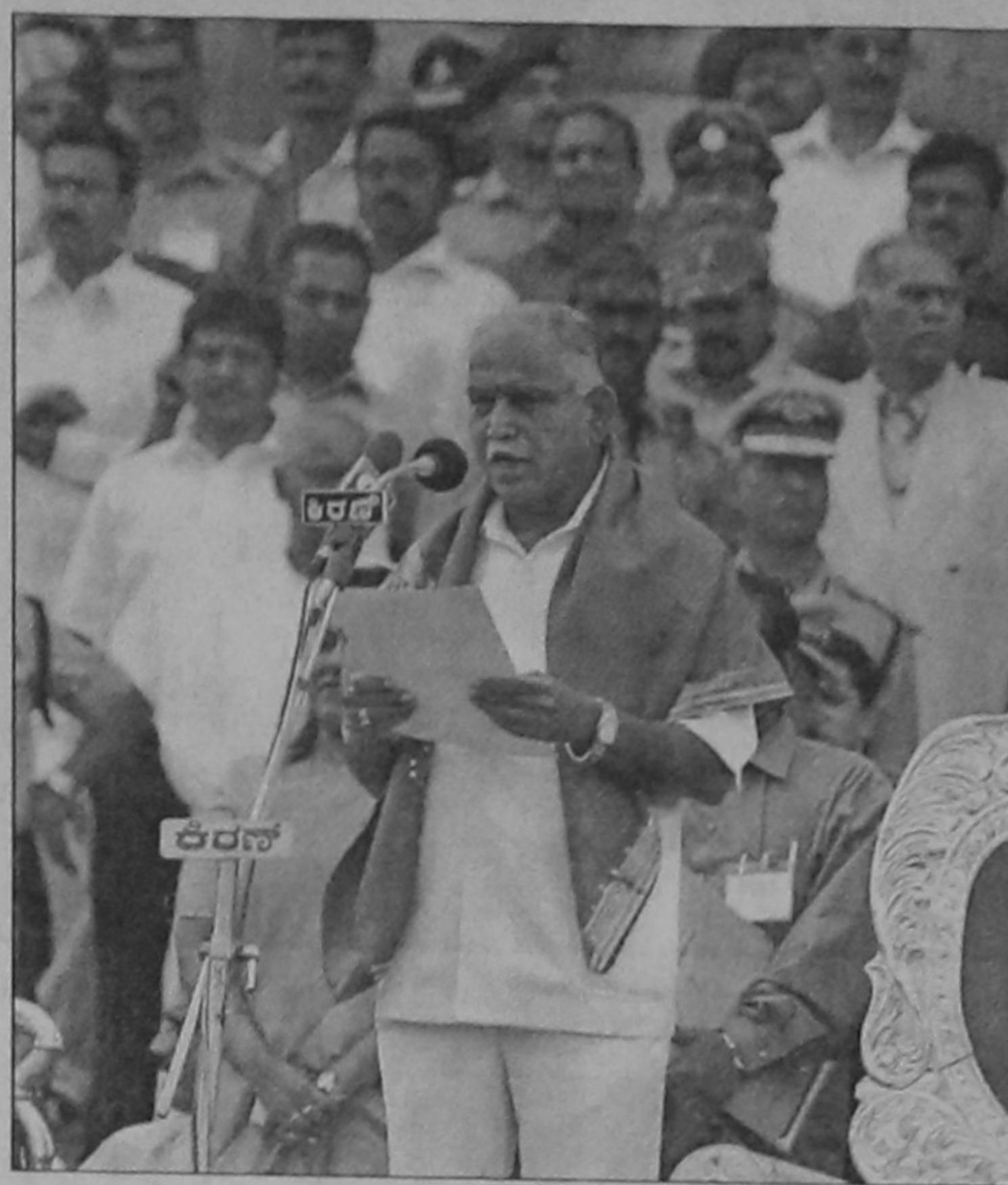
dissemination of poverty, deprivation and adversity," he told AFP. Peiris said under such sanctions and other pressures on "a democratic government pitted against terrorism, you can't possibly prevail."

AQ Khan blames Musharraf for Pakistan's woes

PTI, Islamabad

Pakistan's disgraced nuclear scientist A Q Khan has turned against embattled President Pervez Musharraf, who pardoned him for proliferation activities four years ago, blaming him for the various problems confronting the country that had "gone to the dogs".

Khan, confined to his home for the past four years by Musharraf after he admitted to proliferating nuclear secrets, claimed he had never done anything illegal. He said he would reveal further details of the proliferation scandal at an "appropriate time".



Hindu nationalists take office in Karnataka

AFP, Bangalore

A 30-member cabinet headed by India's main opposition Hindu nationalists took office Friday in southern Karnataka state, home to the country's computer software industry.

Last weekend's victory in the state by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which forms the main federal opposition, marked the first time the party had been elected to form a government in one of India's four southern states.

The BJP's support was earlier confined to the northern Hindi-speaking belt. Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa and 29 other ministers in Bangalore, India's IT hub, took the oath of office at a ceremony attended by thousands of BJP supporters and senior leaders from New Delhi.

Party workers draped huge saffron-and-green party flags emblazoned with the lotus flower and hung posters of national and state BJP leaders along the city's main thoroughfares.

Leader of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), BS Yeddyurappa takes the oath as chief minister of the state of Karnataka, in Bangalore yesterday. India's opposition Hindu nationalists party BJP created history by forming their first-ever federal government in the southern Indian state of Karnataka, home to global software majors.



Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (L) meets with his childhood friend from Pakistan Raja Ali Mohammad (C) as his wife Gursharan Kaur (R) looks on at his residence in New Delhi yesterday. Raja Ali Mohammad is from Gah village, the ancestral village of the Indian prime minister in Pakistan's Chakwal district. Raja, a farmer, studied with the now Indian prime minister in the mid-1930s in the village primary school in Gah.

3 killed in Gujjar-police clash in Rajasthan

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Jaipur

The Gujjar movement for affirmative action took another violent turn on Friday in Rajasthan with three people killed in clashes with the police, just as some leaders were attempting to hammer out a compromise with the state government to end the eight-day impasse.

One day after the community's movement for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status disrupted life in the national capital and its surrounding areas, violence broke out in Sawai Madhopur district, about 170 km from Jaipur, when some Gujjars tried to block a road and stoned the police trying to disperse the mob.

Three people, including a policeman, were killed in the ensuing violence - taking the number of those killed in the latest round of violence since May 23 to 40.

The incident occurred when a section of Gujjar protesters tried to block the road. When police tried to

disperse the mob, they pelted stones. The police had to fire tear gas and use canes. After this we had to resort to firing," Inspector General of Police Umesh Mishra said.

The deaths, which are likely to make community members more intransigent, came as a section of the leadership was meeting in Jaipur to try to bring the state government and the Gujjars to the negotiating table.

They had taken the initiative to work out a proposal acceptable to their leader, KS Bainsla, and his supporters, who for the last eight days have been squatting on train tracks near Bayana, 160 km from Jaipur, affecting traffic on the New Delhi-Mumbai sector.

"After working out a proposal, we would travel to Bayana where the proposal would be discussed with Col Bainsla," Roop Singh, spokesperson of the Gujjar Sangarsh Akarshak Samiti headed by Bainsla, said.

US changes terror policy to deal with Nepali Maoists

AFP, Washington

Years after being a top supplier of weapons against Nepal's Maoist rebels, the United States acknowledged Thursday it has made a turnaround to talk to the guerrillas set to assume government control after sweeping elections.

US diplomats have spoken twice to Maoist chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal since his Communist Party of Nepal notched a convincing victory in April elections, but Washington for the first time said Thursday it has switched long-standing policy of not negotiating

with the once feared insurgents.

But the United States is not prepared yet to remove the Maoist group from US terrorist blacklists, under which party officials are barred from visiting the United States and their assets are frozen, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Evan Feigenbaum told reporters.

"There has been a policy that we had of not making contact with the Maoists," said Feigenbaum, who just returned from Kathmandu after meeting Dahal, who had also had prior talks with US ambassa-

dor to Nepal Nancy Powell.

"The fact that Nancy Powell met them and that I met them should suggest to you that we have just revised that policy with respect to this group," he said.

The United States adheres to a strict policy of not negotiating with groups designated as terrorists.

Although the Maoists have not been declared by Washington as a "foreign terrorist organisation," which can trigger broad sanctions, they have been on the "terrorist exclusion list" and "specially designated national list" for about five years.

Myanmar forcing storm victims from camps: UN

AP, Yangon

Myanmar's military government is removing cyclone victims from refugee camps and dumping them near their devastated villages with virtually no aid supplies, the United Nations said yesterday.

In an aid agency meeting, the UN Children's Fund said eight camps earlier set up by the government to receive homeless victims in the Irrawaddy delta town of Bogalay had emptied as the mass clear-out of

victims was stepped up.

"The government is moving people unannounced," said Teh Tai Ring, a Unicef official, adding that authorities were "dumping people in the approximate location of the villages, basically with nothing."

Camps were also being closed in Labutta, another town in the delta, a low-lying area which took the brunt of Cyclone Nargis nearly a month ago.

About 2.4 million are homeless and hungry after the May 2-3 cyclone

hit Myanmar, also known as Burma.

Centralising the stricken people in the centres made it easier for aid agencies to deliver emergency relief since many villages in the delta can only be reached by boat or very rough roads.

Aid workers who have reached some of the remote villages say little remains that could sustain their former residents: houses are destroyed, livestock has perished and food stocks have virtually run out. Medicines are nonexistent.

Pakistan needs more time on militants

Says US defence chief

AFP, On Board A U Military Plane

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates said Friday that Pakistan's new civilian government needed more time to effectively tackle extremists on its border with Afghanistan.

Speaking en route to Singapore to attend a regional security conference, Gates said the coalition government in Islamabad was still trying to feel its way.

It launched talks with local Taliban militants soon after winning elections in February, amid concern that US-backed Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's military approach was spawning more violence.

"Clearly Pakistan is in a transition, the civilian government is still relatively new, and I think until they get their feet on the ground and get a full appreciation of the nature of the threats that they face and their approach to it, I

think we just have to give them a little time," Gates told reporters.

Asked if it was just a question of transition, he responded: "I certainly hope so."

On Thursday, the head of Nato-led forces in Afghanistan, US General Dan McNeill, said that a recent increase in attacks in the east of the country was because there was no pressure on the extremists from Pakistan's side of the border.

US general calls on Pakistan to help with insurgents

AP, Kabul

The American commander of Nato forces in Afghanistan says insurgents will pose a challenge for years if safe havens continue to exist across the border in Pakistan.

Gen. Dan McNeill, who leaves his post next week after 15 months, says peace deals on the other side of the border are causing a spike in violence in Afghanistan. Pakistan has recently made agreements with

militants.

McNeill was asked if he agrees with a recent vision laid out by Sen. John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee for president. In a speech this month laying out his vision for 2013, McCain said the Taliban threat in Afghanistan would be "greatly reduced."

In response, McNeill said "there would still be a challenge there" if sanctuaries still exist where militants can recruit and train.

Fears of political unrest grip Bangkok

THE STRAITS TIMES/ ANN, Bangkok

Scuffles last weekend between pro- and anti-government demonstrators in Bangkok as well as ongoing anti-government protests have sharpened fears of another upheaval in Thailand in the weeks or months ahead.

On Wednesday (May 28), the Stock Exchange Thailand's Research Institute said the results of a poll of CEOs of 118 listed com-

panies by the Thai Capital Research Centre show that 55 per cent thought the government will not last longer than one year, while 20 per cent thought it will not last longer than six months.

There are currently two issues fuelling a confrontation between pro- and anti-government elements, which closely mirror events of early 2006 when similar trends laid the ground for the Sept 19 military coup that year.



Pakistani lawyers and activists of opposition parties hold portraits of deposed Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry as they marched during a protest in Lahore yesterday. President Pervez Musharraf sacked dozens of judges, including Chaudhry, on November 3 in a bid to thwart legal challenges to his controversial re-election, sparking a nationwide protest by lawyers who demanded their unconditional restoration.

Advertisement for 'Dhaka Sati Corporation, Dhaka'. It includes a logo, contact information, and a list of services offered, such as construction and renovation work. The text is in Bengali.

Advertisement for 'Jagannath University, Dhaka'. It features a table with details about the university's programs, including admission dates, fees, and contact information. The text is in Bengali.