

# World powers lock horns over Syria

US, Russia trade barbs as Israel says it's readying for regional deterioration

AGENCIES

The world powers yesterday sparred over Syria as the crisis took a new dramatic turn with European Union lifting arms embargo on the rebels triggering a strong response from Russia who accused West of derailing the peace effort there.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov denounced a US-backed draft resolution condemning the Syrian government as "odious" before a debate at the UN Human Rights Council yesterday.

The European Union on Monday finally agreed to lift its embargo against arming Syrian rebels. Washington welcomed the EU move to suspend its arms embargo.

Lavrov said US support for the draft resolution, which would condemn "widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights" by Syrian authorities and affiliated militias, ran counter to US-Russian efforts to convene a peace conference.

"The US delegation (at the council in Geneva) is very actively promoting this extremely unwholesome initiative," Lavrov told a news conference after talks with Latin American counterparts in Moscow.

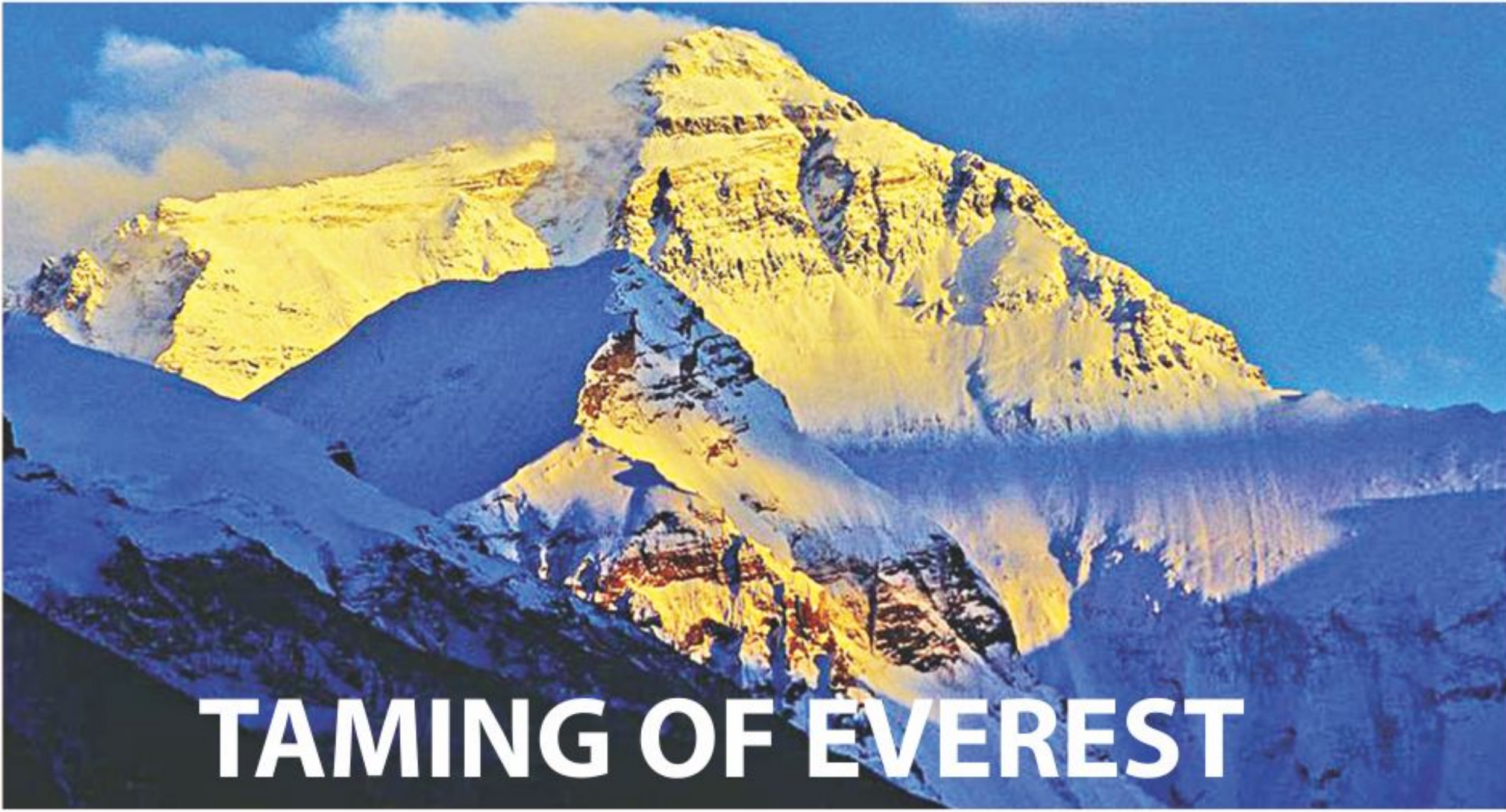
Russia on Tuesday insisted it would deliver anti-aircraft missiles to Syria despite international criticism.

Russia says the weapons it supplies Assad's government are meant for defence against external attacks. Moscow has declared it will not yield to pressure to scrap a contract to deliver S-300 ground-to-air missile systems to Syria.

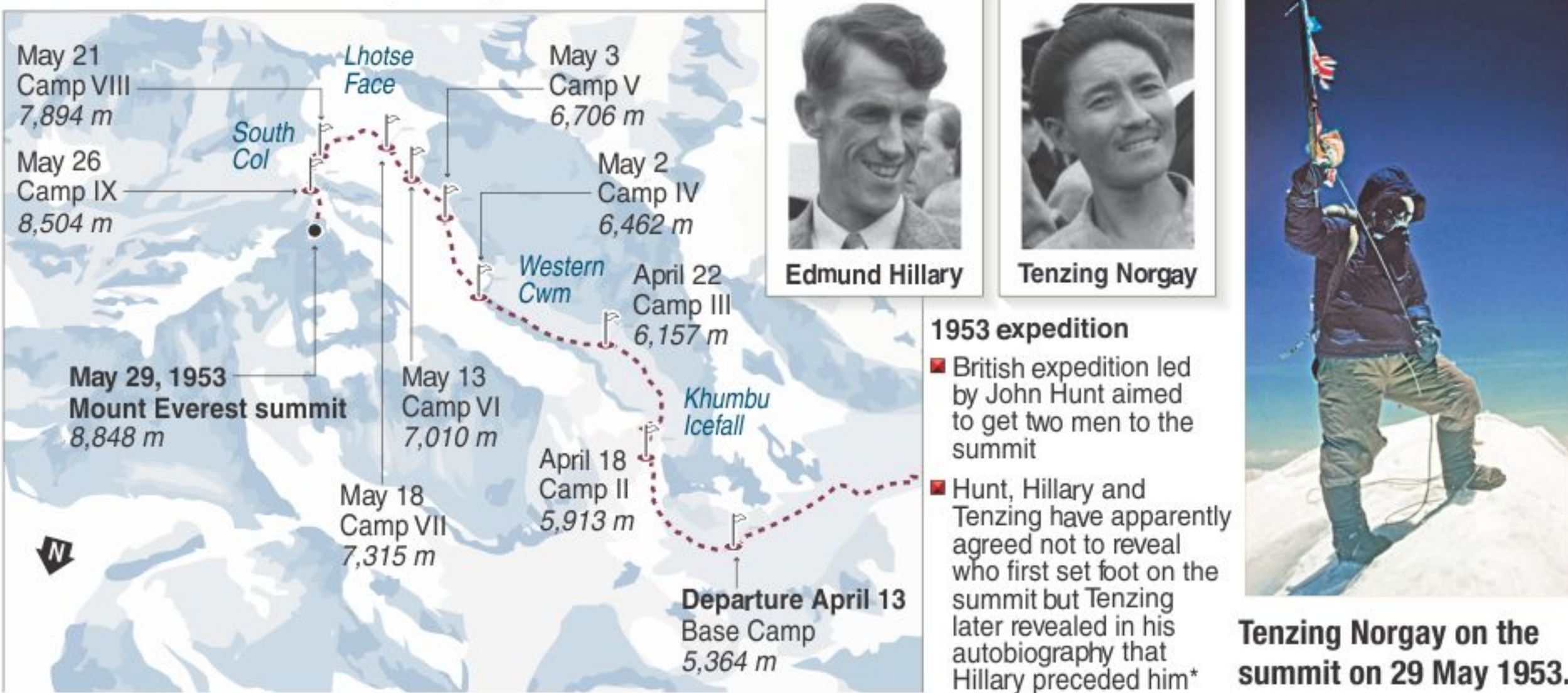
Israel quickly issued a thinly veiled warning that it would bomb the Russian S-300s if they were deployed in Syria as such a move would bring the advanced guided missiles within range of civilian and military planes in Israeli air space.

The move by Moscow was also criticised by the White House, which said arming the Syrian government did "not bring the country closer to the desired political transition" that it deserved.

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday said that his country is ready for any situation and gearing up for the regional situation to get worse. "We are anticipating a deterioration," Netanyahu said, without elaborating.



New Zealander Edmund Hillary and Nepalese Sherpa Tenzing Norgay were the first to reach the summit of the world's tallest mountain 60 years ago



Tenzing Norgay on the summit on 29 May 1953.

## NEWSIN brief

### Bosnia war crimes: 6 more convicted

REUTERS, The Hague

Former Bosnian Croat leader Jadranko Prlic was sentenced to 25 years in jail yesterday for "ethnic cleansing" that included the murder, rape and expulsion of Muslims from Bosnia during the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the Hague also sentenced five others, including Slobodan Praljak, Croatia's former assistant minister of defence, to jail terms of between 10 and 20 years.

### First gay couple wed in France

BBC ONLINE

Two men have become the first gay couple to wed in France, just days after President Francois Hollande signed the same-sex marriage bill into law.

Vincent Autin and Bruno Boileau said "oui" in the southern city of Montpellier amid tight security. The ceremony was broadcast live on French TV.

The new legislation has proved controversial and sparked violent protests. The anti-gay-marriage lobby, backed by the Catholic Church and conservative opposition, argues the bill undermines an essential building block of society.

### French jail-break gangster captured

CNN ONLINE

French gangster Redoine Faïd, the subject of an international manhunt after his brazen escape from a prison last month, is back in custody, the country's interior ministry said yesterday.

Faïd held five people, including four guards, at gunpoint at a detention center in the northern city of Lille on April 13, officials said. He then burst his way to freedom, detonating explosives to destroy five doors.

French police arrested Faïd at a hotel in the Seine-et-Marne region of France, the ministry said.

### Afghan Red Cross attacked; 1 killed

REUTERS, Jalalabad

Insurgents attacked the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad yesterday, killing an Afghan guard in the second major assault on a humanitarian organisation in less than a week.

Seven staff members, believed to be the total number of foreign workers at the ICRC there, were rescued by police during the attack, which involved a suicide bomber and three gunmen. No one has claimed responsibility of the attack.

## 'Still money to be made in newspapers'

REUTERS, New York

Rupert Murdoch tried to convince Wall Street on Tuesday that there is still money to be made in newspapers, reminding investors that he had defied skeptics over the past 60 years to build one of the world's biggest media empires.

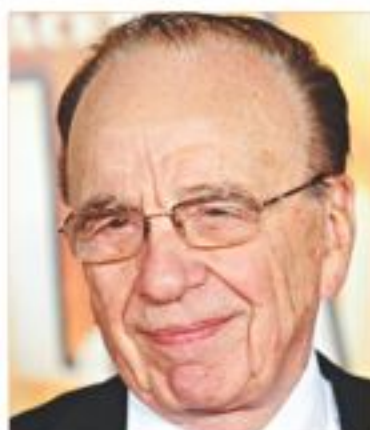
As News Corp prepares to separate its publishing business from its entertainment assets, Murdoch said that while some brands face individual challenges, as a whole the publishing portfolio is "undervalued and underdeveloped."

"I am not saying I didn't make many mistakes along the way—even some spectacular ones," Murdoch said at a meeting in Manhattan to sell investors on the new publishing company.

"You may be wondering why I want to do it all over again," the 82-year-old media mogul said. "The simple answer is: there is opportunity everywhere."

The new publishing company, which will retain the News Corp name, officially kicks off on June 28 with properties such as: The Wall Street Journal, Dow Jones Newswires, The Times of London, Australian pay-TV services, book publisher HarperCollins and fledgling education unit, Amplify.

The spin-off comes as newspapers face plunging advertising revenue and readers who increasingly prefer to get news for free on their smartphones and tablets.



## Pak PM-elect Sharif builds power base

Set to take on foreign, defence portfolios himself

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan Prime Minister-elect Nawaz Sharif will oversee the sensitive foreign and defence portfolios as he seeks to forge a working partnership with the all-powerful military in the early days of his tenure, sources close to him said on late Tuesday.

Sharif, ousted in a bloodless military coup in 1999, has decided not to appoint defence and foreign ministers in the cabinet he is putting together. He led his party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), back to power in May 11 elections.

Instead, he will select a retired civil servant as an adviser on foreign affairs - Tariq Fatemi, a former ambassador to the United States and the European Union, the sources said.

The army has ruled Pakistan for more than

half its history since partition with India in 1947 and critics say generals have jealously guarded the right to dictate foreign policy.

The move to defer appointing a foreign minister suggests that Sharif wants to get to grips with the government's relationship with the army.

"The incoming government and the army need to be on the same page on key foreign policy issues, not least Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan, India and the United States," a PML-N insider told Reuters, requesting anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media about the issue.

Sharif was a protégé of military dictator General Zia ul-Haq in the 1980s. But he was overthrown by General Pervez Musharraf because he refused to allow an airliner carrying the army chief to land in Pakistan.



## Sectarian unrest rages on in Myanmar

AFP, Lashio

Religious violence shook eastern Myanmar for a second day yesterday as terrified residents called for security reinforcements after an orphanage, mosque and shops were burned down.

The government appealed for calm after the unrest -- the latest in a series of outbreaks of sectarian strife that pose a major challenge to the country's reformist leaders following the end of decades of military rule.

Residents said mobs armed with sticks were roaming the streets of Lashio town in Shan State looking for Muslims, while an AFP reporter saw two houses ablaze.

A local hospital said it had received four people with slash wounds but their injuries were not believed to be life-threatening.

Police had earlier claimed the situation was "under control" after an overnight curfew was imposed Tuesday after the initial unrest, which the authorities said was triggered by an attack on a local Buddhist woman.

A 48-year-old Muslim man was arrested over that incident, in which the 24-year-old woman suffered burns but was not in a serious condition, according to state-run broadcaster MRTV.

A Muslim orphanage, a mosque and several shops were destroyed by rioters, a government official told AFP, requesting anonymity.



A woman holds her son as she reacts while Israeli bulldozers destroys a Palestinian home in the Arab east Jerusalem's neighborhood of Beit Hanina yesterday. Palestinian homes built without a construction permit are often demolished by order of the Jerusalem municipality.

PHOTO: AFP

## US drone kills Pakistan Taliban No 2 leader

REUTERS, Peshawar

A US drone strike killed the number two of the Pakistan Taliban in the North Waziristan region yesterday, three security officials said, in what would be a major blow in the fight against militancy.

The drone strike killed seven people, the Pakistani security officials said, including Taliban deputy commander Wali-ur-Rehman, in the first such attack since a May 11 general election in which the use of the unmanned aircraft was a major issue.

Wali-ur-Rehman had been poised to succeed Hakimullah Mehsud as leader of the Pakistan Taliban, a senior army official based in South Waziristan, said in December.

"This is a huge blow to militants and a



win in the fight against insurgents," one security official told Reuters, declining further comment.

The Pakistani Taliban are a separate entity allied to the Afghan Taliban. Known as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), they have launched devastating attacks against the Pakistani military and civilians.

The security officials and Pashtun tribesmen in the north-western region said the drone fired two missiles that struck a mud-built house at Chashma village, 3 km (2 miles) east of Miranshah, the region's administrative town.

The Pakistan government had yet to confirm Wali-ur-Rehman's death. A US drone killed Pakistani Taliban commander Baitullah Mehsud in 2009.

## CHHATTISGARH ATTACK

## India to rework anti-Maoist strategy

NDTV ONLINE

After the grieving, a re-look at strategy. The Centre is holding a series of internal meetings to rework its plan on battling Maoist activity in the heart of the country, termed for the first time by a senior minister as "terrorism".

This review of strategy comes amid an intense political blame-game over the massacre in Chhattisgarh of 24 people, including top Congress leaders of the state, by Maoists on Saturday last.

The Congress-led UPA government, which had earlier suggested talks with Naxal leaders to find a solution, now say that time is past. Two union ministers have indicated this policy shift.

Union minister of state for home RPN Singh told NDTV, "We are going to re-think our policy as far as Naxalism is concerned. Chidambaram when he was the home minister had asked for talks with the Naxals after they laid down their arms. That period of talk is over; it is very evident that they are not interested in talking. The government of India is going to ensure that the rule of law is enforced and Naxalism is wiped out from its roots."

The BJP, whose Raman Singh is the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, has said that parties must go beyond a political blame game and combat Naxalism with a "unified strategy."

## ODDLY enough

### Ghosts at Japan PM residence!

REUTERS, Tokyo

A delay in Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his wife moving into their official residence, the site of past assassinations, has revived talk of ghosts in the corridors, prompting the government to deny any knowledge of hauntings.

The residence was built in 1929 and was the site of military rebellions, including in 1932 when then-prime minister Tsuyoshi Inukai was assassinated.

### Turn down the volume

Jakarta asks mosques

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesia, which has the world's biggest Muslim population, has asked mosques to cut down on their use of loudspeakers, an Islamic group said yesterday, a move that may provide some relief to millions who live near the places of worship.

The Indonesian Mosques Council has asked the places of worship to restrict the use of loudspeakers following years of complaints by weary residents. If there are several mosques in the same area, only one should broadcast the call, the council said.

## Japan, India to carry out bullet rail study

AFP, Tokyo

India is seen set to use Japanese bullet train technology for a high-speed connection between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, a report said yesterday, the centrepiece of a huge package of infrastructure sales.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh will issue a joint statement at a summit later in the day giving details on a feasibility study for the railway, the Nikkei newspaper said.

Abe is to offer a sweetener in the form of 101.7 billion yen (\$1.0 billion) in yen-based loans to India, the Nikkei said, as Tokyo fights off competition from nations such as France, which has the TGV high-speed rail network.

Japan under Abe is embarking on a renewed drive to sell roads, rail and power stations to emerging nations, including India, in a bid to offset lassitude in the domestic economy that has left it treading water.

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad rail line would stretch 500 kilometres (312 miles) at a cost of up to one trillion yen, the Nikkei said, adding the two governments plan to finish technological reviews and costings by March 2014.