Young Nepali volunteers were on

hand along with trained counsellors

to ensure the children -- many of

whom lost relatives or friends in the

quake -- have someone to talk to

Modi to visit China next week

AFP, Beijing

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit China next week, Beijing said yesterday, as New Delhi tries to balance its trade deficit with its neighbour despite a simmering border dispute. Modi's three-day visit will start from Thursday May 14. It is Modi's first visit to China as leader of its Himalayan neighbour -- the world's largest democracy and an Asian geopolitical rival -following his election

7.4 quake sows panic in PNG

AFP, Sydney A 7.4 magnitude earthquake struck off Papua New Guinea yesterday, sending frightened residents fleeing from their homes, but a threatened tsunami passed without incident, seismologists said. The latest quake followed a series of seismic activity in the region in recent weeks but there had been no reports of major damage to buildings or

Taliban kill at least 13 Afghan police

AFP, Kunduz

Taliban militants killed at least 13 policemen after storming security outposts in Afghanistan's remote mountainous northeast, officials said yesterday, despite peace talks between insurgent representatives and an Afghan delegation. The pre-dawn raid in Badakhshan province on Monday came just weeks after a similar Taliban raid on army checkpoints in the province in which killed 18

Cattle raiders kill 46 in northern Kenya

AFP, Nairobi

At least 46 people have been killed and many others injured when cattle raiders attacked a village in northern Kenya, reports said yesterday. Gunmen from the ethnic Turkana people are suspected of launching the attack on Monday against an ethnic Pokot village close to Nadome along the Turkana-East Pokot district

Ailing Thai king makes rare public appearance

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's revered but ailing King Bhumibol Adulyadej made a rare public appearance yesterday, leaving the hospital where he has been convalescing for much of the past few months. The appearance of the world's longest serving monarch after a recent no show will be a source of relief for many Thais who revere him as a semi-

NEWSIN brief Nepal quake leaves children traumatised quake hit on April 25. Nepal quake leaves children traumatised with dolls in a corner of a large tent. and my sister," said Prakash, who

Ten-year-old Ranju Giri wrings her hands as she describes how she cowered terrified under a bed with her younger brother when a massive earthquake rocked their home in Kathmandu. Like many children in the

Nepalese capital, Ranju survived the earthquake physically unharmed. But she bears the mental scars of a disaster that has devastated the country, killing thousands and leaving many more homeless. "We were so scared, we went under

the bed to protect ourselves. And after that we went to an open area. It took a long time to console my brother," said Ranju, whose mother was out working when the quake hit on April 25. Since that day, Ranju's family has

been camping out with hundreds of others on Kathmandu's Tundikhel parade ground, where UNICEF has set up tents to provide a space for children to play safely and begin to overcome their ordeal.

The UN children's agency says the trauma of surviving an earthquake has been compounded by children being left homeless and by the aftershocks that have continued to rock the city since the 7.8-magnitude

Spokesman Kent Page said the spaces were designed to give young people "a sense of normalcy in a situation that's absolutely abnormal". With all government schools

closed until May 15, 22 of these child-friendly spaces have been set up in the Kathmandu Valley and the UN says it wants to expand the service.

On Monday morning, children of all ages ran around in the sun laughing and playing at the space in Tundikhel, while others drew or played quietly

about their experiences.

Thirteen-year-old Prakash Giri, who was playing cricket in the street with his best friend when the quake hit, said the space had given him the chance to meet other children and compare experiences.

isn't related to Ranju.

"I was scared at first but not any more -- I come here and I can have fun with other children."

UNICEF child protection advisor Prakash Acharya said many of the children he spoke to had nightmares about the quake or feared it would happen again.

"One of them could not talk about that period, but after some time he slowly started talking. He said that when the earthquake hit, his feet were sticking and he could not move," said Acharya.

"It helps them to come out here, their resilience is built up."

Acharya said UNICEF also planned to train teachers in how to deal with traumatised children when schools reopened.

Around 16,000 schools were damaged by the quake, and over a dozen teachers have been confirmed dead.

It remains unclear how many children were orphaned by the quake or separated from their parents in the chaos that followed, but the UN said it had received reports of unaccompanied children in Kathmandu and "In my home there is only me other districts. A hotline for reporting

TEXAS SHOOTING

ISIS claims first attack on US soil

AFP, Garland

The Islamic State group yesterday claimed responsibility for its first attack on US soil in which two gunmen were killed after opening fire at an event in Texas showcasing cartoons mocking the Prophet Mohammad.

"Two of the soldiers of the caliphate executed an attack on an art exhibit in Garland, Texas, and this exhibit was portraying negative pictures of the Prophet Mohammad," the jihadist group said.

"We tell America that what is coming will be even bigger and more bitter, and that you will see the soldiers of the Islamic State do terrible things," the group announced.

It marked the first time the extremist group claimed to

have carried out an attack in the US. Police said two men drove up to the conference centre Sunday in Garland, where the right-wing American

Freedom Defense Initiative was organising the controversial cartoon contest, and began shooting at a security guard, who was wounded in the ankle. Garland police officers then shot and killed both men. According to US media reports, the two suspected

jihadists were Elton Simpson, 31, and Nadir Soofi, 34, who shared an apartment in Phoenix, Arizona. Simpson was being investigated by the FBI over alleged plans to travel to Somalia to wage holy war, court records show. Many Muslims find drawings of the prophet to be

disrespectful or outright blasphemous, and such cartoons have been cited by Islamists as motivation in previous

UK polls raise

This week's election in Britain

has prompted a heated debate about the potential legitimacy

of the next government given

that the party that wins the

most votes may not end up

tomorrow's vote show the

Conservatives and Labour

neck-and-neck in percent-

age terms, but projections of

the possible make-up of

parliament point mostly to

326-seat majority in the

House of Commons, how-

ever, and the Conservatives

may not be able to gain

enough support from smaller

parties to form a government.

secure enough votes for a

majority, it could take the keys

to Downing Street despite

having technically lost. This

vote begins, Conservative

supporters have begun to

argue that such a move

would be "illegitimate" in

An added complication

this year is the situation in

Scotland, where the Scottish

National Party is expected to

win an overwhelming

The wrangling that has

majority of seats.

the eyes of the electorate.

As the countdown to the

last happened in 1923.

By contrast if Labour could

That might stop short of a

a Conservative victory.

The polls ahead of

legitimacy

question

AFP, London

governing.

How the UK may vote on May 7 General election 2015 Orkney Is. SCOTLAND IORTHERN Liberal Democrats



Opposition Labour Party leader Ed Miliband poses for a selfie with supporters following a campaign event in Kempston near Bedford yesterday.

РНОТО:

Get your paws off me! India to build port in Iran

Female French journalists fed up with lecherous politicians

AFP, Paris

Fed up with bawdy remarks and wandering hands, dozens of female French journalists have signed a petition published Tuesday denouncing sexism from male politicians.

"Get your paws off me!" read the front page of the Liberation newspaper, where 40 female political reporters detailed sexist and lewd behaviour suffered while working in the corridors of power.

One describes waiting in the heart of the National Assembly only to be greeted by a lawmaker saying: "Ah but you're on the game, hustling for a client." Another mentions a deputy running his hands through her hair, while a

minister's advisor asked a journalist upon her return from holiday if she was "tanned all over". From a political spokesman taking photos of sleeping female journalists onboard a plane during the last presidential campaign, to a "friend of the president" declaring that journalists are "much more interesting when they have

big breasts", the female hacks have had enough. The journalists writing in Liberation also described insistent text messages or phone calls seeking late night meetings, suggestions to pop into a nearby hotel "for a bit of fun" and one official who had to be threatened with sexual harassment charges to get him to back off.

"There are also condescending sighs when we ask questions in press conferences: 'That is such a girl question'", wrote the journalists.

The petition was signed by 16 reporters from the main French media houses including Liberation itself, Le Monde and Le Parisien newspapers, Radio France International and Agence France Presse.

REUTERS, New Delhi

India will push ahead this week with plans to build a port in southeast Iran, two sources said, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi keen to develop trade ties with Central Asia and prepared to fend off US pressure not to rush into any deals with Iran.

India and Iran agreed in 2003 to develop a port at Chabahar on the Gulf of Oman, near Iran's border

with Pakistan, but the venture has made little progress because of Western sanctions on Iran.

Now, spurred on by Chinese President Xi Jinping's signing of energy and infrastructure agreements with Pakistan worth \$46 billion, Modi wants to swiftly sign trade deals with Iran and other Gulf countries.

"Shipping Minister Nitin Gadkari will travel on a day-long tour to Iran to sign a memorandum of understanding for development of Chabahar port," a shipping ministry

source with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters. The deal will be signed on Wednesday, he said.

Encouraged by the prospect of a deal between world powers and Tehran by June 30 on Iran's nuclear program, after which sanctions could be eased, India recently sent a delegation to Iran to scout for trade, energy and infrastructure deals.

The United States cautioned India and others last week against strengthening ties with Iran ahead of a final agreement. But Indian officials said New Delhi could not ignore its national interest and noted a report that a US energy delegation was visiting Iran.

"We don't want to miss this opportunity and will move as expeditiously as possible," the shipping ministry source said. India's cabinet approved the plan to develop Chabahar port last year.

agreement with India, a trade ministry source said. Rupee-denominated trade with Iran, started in 2012 because of complications arising from sanctions, has almost doubled Indian exports to Tehran in the past two years to \$4 billion.

India wants to build the port as it would cut transport costs and freight time to Central Asia and the Gulf by about a third.

The port is also central to India's efforts to circumvent Pakistan and open up a route to landlocked Afghanistan where it has developed close security ties and economic interests.

India has already spent about \$100 million to construct a 220-km road in western Afghanistan to link up with Chabahar port.

Last week Modi assured Afghan President Ashraf Ghani of India's commitment to building the port.

already begun about deals that could be made after Iran has also proposed a free-trade the election indicates that

the situation could get "messy", said Professor Robert Hazell, head of the Constitutional Unit at University College London. "If the numbers are very close it's possible that there

will be two rival camps both claiming to be able to form a credible government," he said. The default in that case is that Prime Minister David Cameron would stay in power and could call a confidence vote in parliament, effectively challenging his rivals to bring down the government.

Sale of US arms fuelling wars in ME

THE NEW YORK TIMES ONLINE

To wage war in Yemen, Saudi Arabia is using F-15 fighter jets bought from Boeing. Pilots from the United Arab Emirates are flying Lockheed Martin's F-16 to bomb both Yemen and Syria. Soon, the Emirates are expected to complete a deal with General Atomics for a fleet of Predator drones to run spying missions in their neighbor-

As the Middle East descends into proxy wars, sectarian conflicts and battles against terrorist networks, countries in the region that have stockpiled American military hardware are now actually using it and wanting more. The result is a boom for American defense contractors looking for foreign business in an era of shrinking Pentagon budgets — but also the prospect of a dangerous new arms race in a region where the map of alliances has been sharply redrawn.

Last week, defense industry officials told Congress that they were expecting within days a request from Arab allies fighting the Islamic State Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan and Egypt — to buy thousands of American-made missiles, bombs and other weapons, replenishing an arsenal that has been high-tech hardware.

depleted over the past year. The United States has long put restrictions on the types of weapons that American defense firms

can sell to Arab nations, meant to ensure that Israel keeps a military advantage against its traditional adversaries in the region. But because Israel and the Arab states are now in a de facto alliance against Iran, the Obama administration has been far more willing to allow the sale of advanced weapons in the Persian Gulf, with few public objections from Israel.



Industry analysts and Middle East experts say that the region's turmoil, and the determination of the wealthy Sunni nations to battle Shia Iran for regional supremacy, will lead to a surge in new orders for the defense industry's latest, most

Saudi Arabia spent more than \$80 billion on weaponry last year — the most ever, and more than either France or Britain - and has become

the world's fourth-largest defense market, according to figures released last week by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which tracks global military spending. The Emirates spent nearly \$23 billion last year, more than three times what they spent in 2006.

Qatar, another gulf country with bulging coffers and a desire to assert its influence around the Middle East, is on a shopping spree. Last year, Qatar signed an \$11 billion deal with the Pentagon to purchase Apache attack helicopters and Patriot and Javelin air-defense systems. Now the tiny nation is hoping to make a large purchase of Boeing F-15 fighters to replace its aging fleet of French Mirage jets. American defense firms are following the

money. Boeing opened an office in Doha, Qatar, in 2011, and Lockheed Martin set up an office there this year. Lockheed created a division in 2013 devoted solely to foreign military sales. American intelligence agencies believe that the

proxy wars in the Middle East could last for years. And with the balance of power in the Middle East in flux, several defense analysts said that could change. Russia is a major arms supplier to Iran, and a decision by President Vladimir V Putin to sell an advanced air defense system to Iran could increase demand for the F-35, which is likely to have the ability to penetrate Russian-made defenses.

Obama urges deeper look at US race-fuelled violence

zation.

Hints at his post-presidency future

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama on Monday urged Americans to address the root causes of recent racially-tinged unrest, focusing not just on police actions but improving opportunities for young black men. As police again mobilized on the

streets of Baltimore to calm tempers after a false report of a man shot by officers, Obama weighed in on anger over police treatment of blacks that has prompted protests from New York to Ferguson. Obama said protests were

fuelled not just by police mistreatment, but a festering sense of "unfairness and of powerlessness."

"If we're just looking at policing, we're looking at it too narrowly," he said, sketching a grim picture of city neigh-

borhoods plagued by absent fathers and drug-addicted mothers, where jail is a more likely career path than university.

are worse than his peers," Obama said, making a highly personal pitch for change. "Those opportunity gaps begin early, often at birth, and they compound over time,

becoming harder and harder to bridge." "There are consequences to inaction. There are consequences to indifference...

over time, it wears us out. Over time, it weakens our nation as a whole."

Obama's comments came during a visit to New York to spin off his "My Brother's Keeper" initiative.

Started as a White House policy to talk about improving opportunities for young black men, it will now become an independent non-profit organi-

Making the initiative independent of the

Obama when he leaves the Oval Office. "This will remain a mission for me and "By almost every measure, the life for Michelle, not just for the rest of my chances of the average young man of color presidency, but for the rest of my life,"

White House could portend a future role for