

## Moldova threatens war against Russia

MOSCOW, May 26: Moldova's president on Monday urged the republic's parliament to consider declaring war on Russia, saying Moscow was supporting Slavic separatists in Moldova, reports AP.

Moldovan police and Slavic separatists have been fighting for months in the self-declared Trans-Dniester republic, a slice of eastern Moldova populated mainly by ethnic Russians and Ukrainians. Dozens of people have been killed.

The Moldovan parliament has to choose between two decisions — either stop military activities in the Dniester region, which I believe should not be done, or declare a state of war with Russia," President Mircea Snegur told an emergency session of parliament in Kishinev, according to the ITAR-Tass news agency.

Moldovan officials accuse the former 14th Soviet army, now under Russian control, of aiding the separatists in Trans-Dniester. In the rest of Moldova, the population is mainly ethnic Romanians.

The intervention by the foreign army is the main reason hampering a peaceful reso-

lution," Alexandru Moshanu, the Moldovan parliament speaker, was quoted as saying in a Tass dispatch.

Military commanders of the Commonwealth of Independent States claim they are neutral in the fighting in the former Soviet republics.

Fighting also raged Monday between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Two people were killed and six wounded when Azerbaijani troops shelled the Armenian village of Karachinar. Armenian officials said.

Azerbaijani also used naval artillery, taken from former Soviet warships on the Caspian Sea, to shell the village of Talysh in disputed Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian Defense Ministry said.

Turkish Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel arrived in Moscow for two days of talks with Russian President Boris Yeltsin that were expected to include ways to restrain the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

Azerbaijan, which is tied to Turkey by language and culture, has threatened to ask its southern neighbour to intervene.

## Italian parties forced to declare truce, elect Scalfaro president

ROME, May 26: Shock waves from a Mafia bomb forced Italy's squabbling parties to declare a truce and elect Christian democrat veteran Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, a devout Catholic, as the country's ninth president, reports Reuters.

Politicians breathed a sigh of relief. It took them 16 ballots over nearly two weeks to find a president.

Scalfaro, 73, won by a wide margin on Monday after the three largest political parties, buffeted by the weekend murder of Italy's top anti-Mafia fighter, united behind him and enlisted the support of several other parties.

"(The election) has been a tormented process which has ended in the best of ways," said Arnaldo Forlani, who resigned as Christian Democrat party secretary after his own candidacy failed.

Scalfaro, a former interior minister, polled 672 votes of the 1,002 votes cast in a joint session of the Italian parliament — far more than the 508 needed for election.

MPs hailed Scalfaro as a man of moral rigour who would breathe new life into the flagging political system. A devout Catholic, he is best known for his conversations with the virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ. "They are a way of communicating," he once said.

The election ended the power vacuum created by the resignation of President Francesco Cossiga on April 28 and cleared the way for the formation of a new government.

Scalfaro won wide respect with a moving tribute on Sunday to anti-Mafia judge Giovanni Falcone, killed with his wife and three bodyguards by a Mafia bomb that blew up a

huge chunk of a Sicilian motorway over the weekend. Falcone's funeral in the Sicilian capital Palermo on Monday turned into an angry protest against Rome politicians.

Relatives of the victims screamed for justice over their flag-draped coffins in church and a huge crowd outside repeatedly shouted "buffoons", "shame" and "mafiosi" at the country's political leaders.

The tortuous voting process began on May 13, marred by a punch-up between rival parliamentarians on the first day. The voting rules were later changed because of cheating.

Scalfaro, elected for a seven-year mandate, will first have to name a new government to replace the caretaker cabinet of Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, who resigned on April 24 after in consecutive general elections earlier in the

month. He is expected to try to build on the broad political consensus that made his election possible, to form an emergency government charged with combating the Mafia and redressing Italy's desperate public finances.

Despite Scalfaro's election, a new government did not appear to be around the corner. Under Italy's complicated political rules, the president cannot begin formal consultations on naming a new Prime Minister until Scalfaro's successor as speaker has been chosen.

Royalists said Scalfaro was the next best thing to having a king in the presidential Quirinale palace. "Sadly, we needed the new Mafia massacre in Palermo to revive the Italian parliament, said Sergio Bosuicco, spokesman for a royalist movement.

### BJP demands cancellation of talks with Pakistan

NEW DELHI, May 26: India's main opposition party has demanded the cancellation of talks with Pakistan set for next week, amid a diplomatic furore over the alleged abduction and torture of an Indian diplomat in Islamabad, reports AFP.

The right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party) said the tit-for-tat expulsion of two Pakistani diplomats Monday was not enough, and urged a stronger reaction from the government of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao.

"Apart from retaliatory action against the Pakistan High Commission (embassy), the government of India should cancel the next round of the Foreign Secretary-level talks."



African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela (L) meets with UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata in Geneva on Monday to discuss the repatriation of exiles to South Africa. —AFP/UNB photo

## Israel to build homes for 1.3 m more Jews in West Bank

CAIRO, May 26: Jewish settlers more than doubled their presence in Israel's occupied territories last year and Israel plans a ten-fold increase in such settlements by the year 2000, the Arab League said, reports AFP.

The League, in a study presented here Monday by its deputy secretary-general, Mohamed Al-Farra, said more than 13,000 Jewish homes were built last year in the West Bank and Gaza Strip compared to 20,000 constructed between 1967 when Israel first occupied the territories, and 1990.

The League report said Israel had drawn up plans for the construction over the next few years of homes for 1.3 mil-

lion Jewish settlers in the West Bank, more than 10 times the current Jewish population in the territory of some 100,000.

In the Gaza Strip, the League said, Israel plans to install an additional 30,000 settlers by the year 2000, up from about 4,000 today. Al-Farra said.

He said the short-term Israeli plan was to counter the growth of Arab towns and villages with strategically placed Jewish settlements, and in the long run to have Jews outnumber Arabs in the territories.

Reuters reports from Gaza: Palestinians killed a man they accused of collaborating with Israeli occupation forces in the Gaza Strip on Monday, the first

such incident since the PLO called for a halt to collaborator killing two days earlier.

Meanwhile Palestinians said at least 27 Gaza Strip residents were wounded by Israeli soldiers on Monday, bringing the number of injured to 79 in two days of widespread confrontation.

The red eagle military arm of the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) claimed responsibility for Monday's killing of Naim Abu-I-Shira, 35, in the town of Rafah, Palestinian sources said.

Last week a respected former PFLP activist was one of the first Palestinians to speak out against collaborator killings that have so far cost at least 470 lives.

### Strike paralyses Gaza Strip

GAZA CITY, Occupied Gaza Strip, May 26: A general strike paralysed the riot-torn Gaza Strip today for the second day running in protest at the killing of three fundamentalist fugitives, correspondents reported, says AFP.

Troops have wounded 68 Palestinians in two days of rioting on the strip since a pre-dawn raid Sunday left dead three wanted men from the Islamic resistance movement Hamas, hospital sources said.

Gaza was declared a closed zone on Monday for three days to keep Palestinians from the strip out of Israel after anti-Arab violence in Tel Aviv after the following the stabbing to death of an Israeli schoolgirl.

The attacks continued Monday evening after her burial and 25 Israelis were due to appear in court today on charges of rioting.

### 60 killed in Colombian fighting

BOGOTA, Colombia, May 26: Colombian war planes pounded guerrilla positions in the Andes mountains on Monday and military sources said about 60 rebels and soldiers had died in the fiercest fighting for months in Colombia guerrilla war, reports Reuters.

General Ramon Gil Bermeudez, the acting army commander, said he estimated that 40 guerrillas had died in three days of fighting around Dabeiba, in the foothills of the Andes some 400 km (250 miles) northwest of the capital Bogota.

The figure included eight guerrillas killed by the army on Monday afternoon, he told reporters.

About 1,500 soldiers forced the 500 guerrillas back into the mountains where they took up defensive positions.

## Off the Record

*'It is time to get tougher'*

WARSAW: British Prime Minister John Major said on Monday it was time for the European Community to "get tougher" with Serbia to end the fighting in Yugoslavia, reports Reuters.

Major Speaker to reporters as he began a five-day visit to three central European states, said he backed calls by US Secretary of State James Baker to take sterner measures quickly against Serbia.

"Do I agree it is time for the EC to get tougher with Serbia? yes, I do," he said.

Baker called on Sunday for mandatory sanctions against Serbia following months of violence between Serbian fighters and pro-independence forces in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Major's words sent a strong message to officials of the 12-member European Community, meeting in Brussels today, to discuss action against Serbia.

The talks were called by EC foreign ministers who were in Lisbon last weekend for an international conference on aid for the former Soviet Union.



### Indonesia lacks mosques?

JAKARTA: Indonesia, the world's most-populated Muslim country, still needs more mosques, the Antara news agency said here today, reports AFP.

Antara quoted Religion Minister Munawir Sjadzali as telling 600 Ulemas, or Muslim scholars, in Lampung province that many Muslims still had to perform their Friday prayers in offices and on open sites.

Sjadzali said the number of mosques had increased from 87,000 in 1969 to 154,000 in 1991. Indonesia has a population of some 180 million people, more than 80 per cent of whom are followers of Islam.

### Presidency I may lose but not assets



MANILA: Former First Lady Imelda Marcos, a failed presidential candidate, formally demanded here today the release of billions of dollars in assets seized from her family by the Philippine government, reports AFP.

The widow of deposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos handcarried a petition to the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) demanding the return of the assets.

"I have come to the PCGG to bring my formal petition for the total accounting, audit and release of the Marcos assets," she said in a statement.

This is not just a matter of human and constitutional right and justice, but for the survival and self-defence of the Marcos family and the millions of Filipino poor and loyalists," he added.

Marcos said that if she won back the assets she would put the proceeds into a foundation that would benefit poor Filipinos.

As she filed the petition, Marcos was running fifth in a slow semi-official tally of the may 11 presidential elections, with former Defence Chief Fidel Ramos, President Corason Aquino's handpicked successor, way ahead of the pack.

Wearing a black and white dress, black pumps, pearls and diamonds, the one-time jetsetter said she did not know how much was seized from her family which has been accused of looting the country's treasury during her late husband's 20-year rule.

### 'Rajiv and the rule of law'

NEW DELHI: Rajiv Gandhi's evolution as a legislator and the laws he enacted during his term as prime minister will form the focus of a documentary film called 'Rajiv Gandhi and the rule of law' reports PTI.

Noted film star, Sunil Dutt, sounded the clasp of the first shot of the film at a simple mahurat here in the presence of Sonia Gandhi, the Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister, Madhav Rao Sciendia, the Minister of State for Textile, Ashok Gehlot and a number of eminent persons.

Earlier, in his introductory remarks, Lall Bhasin, member of the Rajiv Gandhi, foundation, the co-sponsors of the film, said

Rajiv Gandhi had passed some path-breaking laws like the anti-defection law, the consumer protection act, the National Lokpal bill and the lowering of the voting age to 18 years.



## BRIEFLY

### US Launches new rocket:

The US Space Agency launched a rocket from the north coast of Puerto Rico on Monday night as part of a programme to study radio waves in the ionosphere, reports Reuters from San Juan.

The launch, at 7:55 P M EDT (2355 GMT), had been scheduled for May 18, but was delayed seven times because of bad weather and changing atmospheric conditions.

The rocket is one of eight scheduled to be launched from Vega Baja, about 20 miles (32 km) from San Juan, over the next two months.

The rockets, which will go about 200 miles (320 km) into the atmosphere before falling into the ocean, will release chemicals that will help scientists study the effects of high frequency radio waves in the ionosphere.

**28 Vietnamese killed in bus fire:** Twenty-eight people were killed and 10 injured when a bus caught fire in Nghean province, 300 kilometres (180 miles) south of the Vietnamese capital, a newspaper reported here Monday, AFP says from Hanoi.

The Quan Do Nhan Dan said that the bus, carrying 40 passengers, caught fire while crossing a bridge during a heavy storm.

The army newspaper said two passengers escaped unharm.

### Mojaddedi to visit Pakistan:

Interim Afghan President Sibgatullah Mojaddedi said Monday he would leave for Pakistan this week to meet President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Premier Nawaz Sharif, reports AFP from Kabul.

"I will meet the President and the Prime Minister to personally thank them for the assistance they gave us during our 13 years of Jihad (holy war)," he said, adding he would leave Tuesday.

Mojaddedi said he was going personally because the Pakistani Premier visited Kabul after the April 28 transfer of power to his Islamic interim administration following the ouster of the Communist regime of President Najibullah.

### Quake hits Cuba:

An earthquake registering 6.9 on the Richter scale struck on Monday off the southeastern coast of Cuba, the National Earthquake Information Service said, AP reports from Golden.

There were no immediate reports of casualties or damages, the agency said.

The U.S. Geological Survey's earthquake reporting service said the quake was centered about 375 miles (600 kilometers) southeast of Havana.

The Hong Kong Observatory also reported a strong earthquake in the same area. It said in a statement that the quake measure 6.9 on the Richter scale and struck at about 17.41 GMT about 110 miles (180 kilometers) west of Santiago, Cuba on the southeastern end of the island.

### Israelis stab an Arab:

Israeli assailants stabbed and seriously injured an Arab man Monday, apparently in retribution for the killing of a Jewish teen-age, a radio station reported, AP says from Jerusalem.

Israel Radio reported that ten Jewish youths attacked the Arab as he stood alone at a building site in Rishon Lezion, a southern suburb of Tel Aviv.

Police detained five Israelis. The victim, a resident of Nazareth whose name was not immediately available, was in serious condition.

Thousands of Israelis attended a funeral for Helena Rapp, the 15-year-old victim of Sunday's attack.

### Four shot dead in Philippine:

Four plantation workers have been shot to death and two others wounded in a suspected flare-up of sectarian violence near this southern town, police and local officials said, Tuesday, AFP reports from Kauswagan.

Unidentified men opened fire on the workers on Monday as they harvested coconut a plantation owned by former town mayor Maximo Arnada, a wealthy Christian landowner, chief police inspector Geronimo Baritolin told reporters.

He said the attack was most likely perpetrated by followers of a Muslim landlord, but said no arrests have been made.

Kauswagan is situated in the center of the large southern island of Mindanao, the scene of a bloody rebellion by the large Muslim minority in the 1970s.

### Mubarak for national unity

CAIRO, May 26: President Hosni Mubarak again called for stability and national unity in Egypt following a communal clash in upper Egypt, reports Xinhua.

Stability is the responsibility of all citizens and there is the need to eliminate attempts to sow sedition or terrorize the society the Cairo press quoted Mubarak as saying while touring the governorates of Assiut and Suhaj south of Cairo Sunday.

Mubarak's inspection tour of the two governorates followed the killing of 12 Christians in Dierot, Assiut, earlier this month in a communal strife.

Assiut, about 140 kilometers from Cairo, has the largest Coptic Christian community in Egypt and, meanwhile it has been a stronghold of Islamic fundamentalism.

## NATO plans to allow use of nuclear weapons to end war

BRUSSELS, May 26: NATO has drafted a new strategy allowing the use of nuclear weapons first to end a war, according to a confidential alliance document, reports Reuters.

But the doctrine says atomic weapons should be used selectively to hit military targets, preferably on enemy territory.

The document, detailing NATO's military strategy for conventional and nuclear forces in the post-cold war era, was made available to Reuters by sources who said they wanted more public debate on the issues involved.

Reuters was asked not to give full quotes from the 30-page document, which contains military guidance for implementing the new strategy agreed at a NATO summit in Rome last year.

The document, approved by defence ministers last December, says the alliance now faces risks from instability in a variety of areas, including the former Soviet Union and the Middle East.

It says the alliance's much-reduced nuclear arsenal is chiefly a political weapon, that the arms will remain under strict political control and that the likelihood of their use is now very

remote with the end of east-west confrontation.

But it also says this could be considered in a selective way to end a conflict, by convincing an attacker that the cost of continuing the war would be too great.

It adds that the deterrent value of nuclear weapons continues to underpin NATO's entire strategy, geared to the defence of its 16 member nations.

The document, known as MC-400, recommends hitting high-priority military targets, especially on an enemy's home territory, using either nuclear aircraft bombs or missiles launched from submarines or ships.

It says, conventional forces may not be enough to fend off an aggressor in future and that nuclear arms make that risks incalculable for any attacker. The document says they should be used, especially in an initial strike, in a way that is "constrained, discriminate and measured."

NATO has pledged to reshape its nuclear strategy after the Warsaw Pact collapsed and some elements have been changed from the old policy of "flexible response" dating from

the 1960s.

The alliance has agreed to withdraw and destroy all US short-range nuclear missiles and artillery shells in Europe, leaving just 700 nuclear aircraft bombs on the continent. NATO has also dropped rigid targeting plans for nuclear weapons.

The new strategy also strengthens the concept of political control over the arms and forbids their use to win on the frontline battlefield, which the old strategy allowed as a way of dealing with a massed attack from the Warsaw Pact.

That policy caused huge problems in Germany, the cold war frontline, where a strong anti-nuclear movement has flourished — partly because of the knowledge that German towns and cities would be devastated by short-range nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, the new strategy does not rule out that NATO could use nuclear weapons first. Critics of the western alliance say this shows NATO has failed to keep a promise to change nuclear arms into "weapons of last resort."

"Nuclear weapons are still regarded by

NATO as instruments that can be used in a controlled way ... strategy and doctrine have been altered but not changed fundamentally," said Dan Plesch of the British-American Security Information Council. "How can you be the first to use nuclear weapons as a last resort?"

The document says NATO members must continue to share the political burden of basing the weapons and that all countries involved should take part in decisions to use them.

Countries where bombs are based or which have the aircraft needed to deliver them include the United States, Britain, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Greece, Netherlands and Turkey.

Some of the US and British nuclear bombs are almost obsolete, despite a modernisation programme. The NATO document says nuclear weapons should be kept up to date where necessary so they can hit a variety of targets at all ranges.

France, along with the United States and Britain, is the third NATO member with nuclear arms, but it is independent on defence matters and not involved in alliance defence planning.

### Delhi accused of banning LTTE

COLOMBO, May 26: A radical Sri Lankan left-wing party today accused New Delhi of banning the island's main Tamil separatist group after failing to manipulate them, reports AFP.

The Nava Sama Samaja (New Equal Society) party (NSSP), which has one MP, condemned India for outlawing the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and said the action would only serve to make heroes of the separatist guerrillas.

New Delhi banned the LTTE on May 14 after accusing it of assassinating former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in May last year and training secessionist movements in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu.