Taliban regain territory in southwest

KABUL, June 2: Battered by advancing opposition forces the Taliban religious army on Sunday reported its first military gains in several days, reports

Southwest of the beleaguered capital, enemy Shi'ite Muslims had pushed the religious militia to within 40 kilometres (24 miles) of Kabul

But on Sunday the Taliban army used artillery, rockets and mortars to drive back the advancing Shi'ite army to roughly 70 kilometres (42 miles) from Kabul. The Taliban also was in firm control of most of Wardak province.

The front line Taliban commander, Mohammed Zaheeri, said his soldiers were ready for a major offensive into Bamyan province, the Shi'ite stronghold.

"We are waiting for our orders," he said.

North of the capital, soldiers loyal to Kabul's deposed military chief Ahmed Shah Massood were battling Taliban soldiers at Charikar, about 60 kilometres (36 miles) away.

Last week the Taliban religious army controlled roughly 90 per cent of the country after sweeping into the north in an alliance with ethnic Uzbek soldiers, who had ousted northern warlord Rashid Dostum.

But the alliance fell apart when the Taliban tried to dis-

arm its new friends. At Charikar, the Taliban said it had several thousand soldiers on the battlefield and was receiving reinforcements from Jalaluddin Haqqani, a powerful commander from

eastern Afghanistan. The Taliban's army is sepa-

AFP reports from New Delhi.

saying Sunday, AFP reports from Moscow.

official said.

Bangkok.

nearby hospital.

scene carrying the injured.

officials said, reports AP.

BDIFFIN

India to launch sat Wednesday:

India will launch a locally-made satellite on Wednesday to

further improve telecommunication links and beam television

programmes to Southeast and West Asia, officials said Sunday,

satellite will be launched from Kourou in French Guyana, offi-

cials at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said.

"The cost of the launch will be around 62 million dollars," an

Liquor claims 19 lives in Moscow:

Nineteen people have died in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarks

after drinking false Vodka, ITAR-Tass quoted hospital officials

of them from one neighbourhood of the city, the agency said.

Preliminary investigations suggested that the supposed Vodka

was in fact methylated spirits. Three people, all women, have

77 still missing in Jakarta: Se-

venty seven people were reported still missing 10 days after a

shopping mall fire talled at least 123 during a pre-election riot

National Commission on Human Rights, Bhararuddin Lopa,

was quoted as saying in Monday's Jakarta Post. The May 23 riot

in Banjarmasin, about 900 kilometres (560 miles) northeast of

Jakarta, was the biggest in a series of disturbances that rocked

Indonesia during a violent monthlong campaign that culmi-

nated last Thursday in a landslide victory for the ruling Golkar

Five passengers were killed and 37 others injured when a bus

and truck collided in a highway in Thailand's Khon Kaen

province Sunday, according to a TV report, Xinhua reports from

province, northern Thailand from Bangkok, was badly dam-

aged. The bus driver also died. The injured were rushed to a

Blast kills 5 in Algeria: At least five

people, including a baby, were killed and 16 injured after a

bomb exploded in central Algiers in mid-afternoon Sunday,

city centre where witnesses said a bomb had been planted in a

bus stop. "It's panic," said a resident living near the central post office, who added that private vehicles raced away from the

Aircrash kills 1 in Japan: An F-86

fighter jet crashed in a huge fireball before 50,000 people

watching at an air show in a Denver suburb, killing the pilot,

Sunday and plowed into the ground 300 yards (metres) from the

nearest spectators at Air Show Colorado '97. No one was hurt on

the ground. "It was just a huge fireball, it went a couple of hun-

dred feet in the air," said Paul MacGregor, a radio talk show

host who was watching the show through high-powered binocu-

Crime on rise in Hanoi: Crime is on

the rise in Vietnams capital, Hanoi, a city known for its safe

cluding murder and armed robbery, jumped 10 percent com-

pared to 1996, state-controlled media reported Monday. Police

recorded five murders during a two week stretch in May - an

unprecedented number of peacetime killings in Vietnam under

communist rule. Petty crime, including pick-pocketing, is also

Earthquake rocks Japan: An

intense earthquake estimated at 5.5 on the Richter Scale shook

the area around the Ryukyu islands of Japan, the Hong Kong

Royal Observatory said yesterday, Reuter reports from Hong

Time (1506 GMT on Sunday) was initially determined to be

about 280 km (170 miles) northeast of the Japanese city of Oki-

The epicentre of the quake, detected at 111.06 pm Hong Kong

During the first five months of the year, serious crimes, in-

streets and law abiding residents, AP reports from Hanoi.

increasing with a 7.5 per cent rise over last year.

nawa. The observatory gave no further details.

The Korean War era SabreJet failed to pull out of a steep dive

Dozens of ambulances and police cars were seen racing to the

security forces said, AFP reports from Algiers.

The air-conditioned bus, bound for Nakhon Phanom

killed in Thai road mishap:

"Security personnel are searching for them," the head of the

been charged with selling the lethal liquid, ITAR-Tass said.

on the island of Borneo, AP reports from Jakarta.

A total of 31 people have been hospitalised since Friday, all

The 2,070-kilogramme (4,554-pound) second-generation

rated at the Salang Tunnel, roughly 120 kilometres (78 miles) north of Kabul. Opposition soldiers blew up the northern end of the tunnel trapping Taliban soldiers inside and leaving an estimated 3,000 stuck on the other side, separated from the main body of

There were reports of sporadic fighting in several northern province. It was impossible to independently confirm these

reports. The Taliban now control two-thirds of the country and its enemies, who have formed an alliance, control the northern one-third.

Pak recruiting agencies barred from sending women abroad

ISLAMABAD, June 2: The Pakistan government today barred private recruiting agencies from sending women abroad for employment, following the repatriation of 25 female workers from Malaysia, reports AFP.

The ban was ordered by Interior Minister Chaudhury Shujaat Hussain who also said an inquiry would be conducted to determine how the women workers were sent to the southeast Asian country, state-run television reported.

The women were flown back to Pakistan this week after reports they had been allegedly maltreated and subjected to hardship in Malaysia.

Socialist-led opposition wins French parliamentary polls

PARIS, June 2: France's socialist-led opposition scored a stunning parliamentary election triumph in Sunday's decisive second-round runoff, forcing president Jacques Chirac to share power with a hostile leftwing government, reports

Reuter. Socialist Party Chief Lionel Jospin, who will be asked today to form a government, said the people have voted for a change of direction in European policy. But he did not call into question the planned single European

currency. With 567 constituencies declared, the socialist and their non-communist allies, including the Ecologist Greens, fell short of an absolute majority in the 577-member National Assembly. To rule they will need the support of the Communist

Party, which won 38 seats. Just 40 minutes after polling stations closed, Conservative Prime Minister Alain Juppe went on television to concede defeat.

"The people have spoken. Their decision is sovereign. We all respect it. I wish those who will now govern France good luck and I wish France good luck," the outgoing premier

"We did not manage to convince the French people that we were going in the right direction," he admitted.

The result was a crushing defeat for Chirac's centre-right coalition, which lost almost half the 464 seats it held in the outgoing Lower House.

Ready to defend

rather than

apologise

WASHINGTON, June 2: Pres-

ident Bill Clinton is ready to de-

fend himself in court rather

than apologise in the sexual ha-

rassment case that Paula Jones,

a former Arkansas state em-

ployee, has brought against

him, Clinton's personal lawyer

Throwing down a gauntlet,

the lawyer, Robert Bennett, said

Clinton "is not going to apolo-

gise," one of three conditions

for an out-of-court settlement

"I was listening to Mr Cam-

marata last night, and the pres-

ident of the United States is not

going to apologise," Bennett

said in an interview taped for

the ABC news programme "this

week," one of a series of his

scheduled television appear-

Rebels abduct

PNG MP ahead

of nat'l polls

Papua New Guinea Member of

Parliament has been kidnapped

while campaigning for national

elections on the secessionist

island of Bougainville, the

Papua New Guinea government

for Bougainville in the national

parliament, was abducted on

Sunday by members of the

Bougainville Revolutionary

Army (BRA), the government

taken with him at from Tin-

putz, a regional centre on north

of the Papua New Guinea gov-

ernment on the issue of

Bougainville, where rebels have

been fighting a successionist

it plans to disrupt national

elections, which are due to be-

The BRA has said previously

Bougainville came to inter-

national attention earlier this

year when an army revolt

stymied government plans to

use mercenaries to put an end to

Bougainville, it said.

war for nine years.

gin June 14.

the uprising.

A member of his staff was

Nomis is a strong supporter

John Momis, the member

said today, reports Reuter.

PORT MORESBY, June 2: A

ances on Sunday.

established by Joseph Cam-

marata, a lawyer for Jones.

said today, reports Reuter.

seats, including Justice Minister Jacques Toubon, number

two in the outgoing cabinet. Government sources said Chirac, who dissolved the Assembly on April 21 saying he needed a "new elan" to lead France into a single European currency from a position of strength, would call on Jospin

to form a new government. It will be the third time vears that France has had riod of left-right power-sh

Seats

Extreme-Left

Other left

Ecologists

Other right

Total

National Front

Extreme-Right

Independents

Socialist Party

Communist Party

qualify for the single currency

In a statement in Cintegabelle, near Toulouse, he said the result was "a demand for justice, a demand for a profound renewal of our public put at the service of man, a demand for a reorientation of European construction - which we favour and a demand for a scrupulous

in 11 a pe- haring	attention the problems French people meet in their daily lives."	
	Outgoing	Won
	0	0
	23	37
93	55	237
	5 9 0	12
	9	15
	0	,
	236	129
	236 201	105
	27	13
	ő	ĭ
	ŏ	Õ

known as "cohabitation." The Ecologist Greens enter

parliament for the first time with seven seats. The extremeright national front, despite polling 15 per cent in the first round, won just one seat.

National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen said Chirac had suffered a double defeat and should resign.

Jospin has said the supports European economic and monetary union but would not impose a further bout of austerity

NEW DELHI, June 2: The

controversial chief of India's

Congress (I) Party, Sitaram

Kesri, is "certain" to get elected

as the party's president for a

second term despite mounting

opposition, a party source said

election." a senior leader of the

112-year-old party said on

8,000-odd Congress state mem-

bers are with him. The other

contenders will not win," the

the Congress presidency in two

decades as all the earlier three

presidents were elected by "con-

presidential candidate required

to be nominated by at least 10

top provincial members and for

Kesri "there was no dearth of

support as each top state

(Congress) officials were vying

with each other to nominate

came party president in

September 1996 after the resig-

nation of former prime minis-

ter P V Narasimha Rao follow-

have challenged Kesri for the

the Congress decision-making

body, said he was determined to

Three other senior leaders

Sharad Pawar, a member of

ing corruption charges.

party's president's post.

The 77-year-old Kesri be-

The source said a Congress

condition of anonymity.

"Kesri will certainly win the

"More than 70 per cent of the

It will be the first contest for

today, reports AFP.

source said.

Jospin has said he will seek new EU negotiations on giving greater priority to employment and economic growth, on including Italy, Spain and Portugal in the single currency from the start and on ensuring the Euro was not overvalued

In Brussels, European Commission President Jacques Santer said he expected change in the timetable or terms for the single currency. EU Competition Commissioner Karel Van

Kesri certain to win

Cong (I) presidency

defeat Kesri in elections due on

electoral college to throw out

the incumbent Kesri, saying

"the real need is to project a

younger leadership. There is a

Congress."

yearning for change within the

Nikolai Tikhonov

dead

Tikhonov, the Soviet prime

minister from 1980 to 1985,

died Sunday at the age of 92,

tral Clinical Hospital, agency

starting his career as an assis-

tant train driver, he rose

through the ranks of Soviet in-

dustry, becoming deputy minis-

ter for non-ferrous metallurgy

Leonid Brezhnev, he became

deputy chairman in 1963 of

Gosplan, the Soviet state plan-

ning committee, which man-

deputy chairman of the council

of ministers and in 1980 be-

equivalent to prime minister.

came chairman, the position

aged the USSR's economy.

A close ally of Soviet leader

In 1976 he became first

ITAR-Tass said, reports AFP.

said, quoting the elite clinic.

MOSCOW, June 2: Nikolai

Tikhonov died from lung in-

Born in 1905 in Ukraine and

Pawar has asked the party's

against the dollar.

large majority that will be in favour of the Euro. I don't think this is going to change anything as far as the Euro is concerned.

Communist leader Robert Hue, a declaring "a great hope is born," said his party hoped to join "a government of the whole left" on the basis of a joint policy declaration issued with the socialists in April which did not mention the single cur-

The socialist have pledged to create 700,000 jobs for young people, half of them in the public sector, over the next three vears, and reduce the working week from 39 hours to 35 over five years without loss of pay.

Hundreds of cheering socialist supporters gatecrashed the movement's Victory party at a left bank pairs cultural centre, overwhelming guards who had orders to admit only 2,000 invited guests and journalists.

Another report says : Following is the latest state of the count in the decisive second round of France's election for the 577-seat National Assembly, held on Sunday, according to the interior ministry.

A total of 289 seats is required for an absolute majority. The first table shows which parties held the seats counted so far in the outgoing parliament, followed by the new state of the parties for the same seats.

The second table gives the number of votes won and the percentage share of the national popular vote.

Pawar is the second

A former minister, Rajesh

Congress leader to come out

Pilot, last month also decided

to contest the party's top post.

saying a new leader was a must

in order to rebuild the country's

oldest and once dominant

lay is also in the race for the

the United Front coalition gov-

ernment to change its prime

minister, is under pressure

from critics to resign. But he

Congress, which was voted out

of office last year, props up the

minority coalition government

of Prime Minister Inder Kumar

Gujral with crucial parliamen-

wants Sonia Gandhi, assassi-

nated premier Rajiv Gandhi's

widow who joined the party this

month, to take over the leader-

to be drawn into the party since

her husband, prime minister

from 1984 to 1989, was killed

on May 21, 1991 by a suicide

bomber while campaigning in

Sonia Gandhi has refused to

take up the party presidents

Newspapers said today that

She had repeatedly refused

A section of the Congress

The scandal-tainted

A fourth candidate A K Antu-

Kesri, who last month forced

publicly against Kesri.

party president's post.

has refused.

tary support.

ship from Kesri.

southern India.



Foes oppose Myanmar's ASEAN membership BANGKOK, June 2: Foes of

Myanmar's ruling military government, including students in exile and rebel groups, today denounced ASEAN's weekend decision to admit Myanmar as a member in July, reports Reuter.

There was no statement on the issue from the beleaguered Burmese opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, which has always urged the regional grouping to delay Yangon's admission.

Repeated attempts to reach NLD leaders for comment by telephone in Yangon failed.

The NLD had cited repression by the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) as its reason for calling on ASEAN not to admit Yan-

ASEAN groups Malaysia,

Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei and Vietnam.

The group said Myanmar. along with Cambodia and Laos, would be admitted in late July. Its decision came despite pressure from the United States not to admit Myanmar because of human rights concerns.

The US State Department on Sunday said it regretted ASEAN's decision on Myanmar but was counting on ASEAN members to urged SLORC to enter into dialogue with local democratic forces.

The Karen National Union (KNU), which is among a handful of ethnic rebel groups fighting SLORC for greater autonomy for the eastern Karen state, said the ASEAN decision could derail efforts for a peace settlement in Myanmar.

Turkish PM for snap polls

ANKARA, June 2: Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan called for snap elections to resolve a row between his Islamist-led coalition and Turkey's secularist generals, but the way forward was not immediately clear, reports Reuter.

No date was set for polling and there were no guarantees that a complicated handover of power would not go away and give the opposition a chance to set up its own secularist government.

Erbakan, the first Islamist to head the government of modern Turkey, committed himself to stepping down in favour of coalition ally Tansu Ciller, a secular conservative, within a month as part of a deal to go for early elections.

"The election can be held in a short time by updating the electoral roll. I don't think there will be a need for a long

process," he said. Erbankan must first give his resignation to President Suleyman Demirel, a veteran of the volatile political scene in Turkey, a secular state with an

AP adds: Deputy Prime Minister Tansu Ciller announced Sunday she was taking over the premiership from Islamic leader Necmettin Erbakan later this month, a year ahead of their power-sharing deal, and would lead Turkey to early elec-

overwhelmingly Muslim popu-

The election date was not given. But Mrs Ciller told a news conference she held with Erbakan that the vote would place within an "appropriate

time limit. No exact date was announced either for the switching of the reins. Erbakan said it would take place in the second-half of

Several of the 1997 Tony Award winners pose Sunday with their awards at Radio City Music Hall in New York. Best Leading Actor in a Musical James Naughton is left, Best Actress in a Musical Bebe Neuwirth is second left, Best Leading Actress in a Play Janet McTeer is second right, and Best Leading Actor in a Play Christopher Plummer is right. Naughton and Neuwirth both won for their roles in "Chicago" and McTeer for "A Doll's House" and Plummer for "Barrymore."

Titanic, Chicago lead '97 Tony Awards

NEW YORK, June 2: Can Tony float "Titanic"? That's the question Broad

way is asking after the show with the season's most unlikely subject matter - the famous 1912 sea disaster - won five 1997 Tony Awards Sunday, including best musical, reports The 10 million dollars pro-

duction, plagued by technical problems before its premiere. opened to mixed reviews and tepid but slowly rising ticket The musical reportedly

needed an infusion of another million dollars after its opening to keep running until the Tonys held at Radio City Music

"Titanic" also picked up prices for its composer-lyricist Maury Yeston, author Peter Stone, set designer Stewart Laing and orchestration Jonathan Tunick.

Best play honours went to "The Last Night of Ballyhoo," Alfred Uhry's remembrances of growing up in a Jewish household in 1939 Atlanta.

"Titanic" was a surprise winner during a smooth-running awards ceremony, which featured a genial Rosie O'Donnell as host. The televised ceremony offered few other unexpected winners.

As expected, the critically acclaimed revival of Kander and Ebb's "Chicago" also won big, taking six awards, more than any other show. Besides winning as best musical-revival, it took the top musical performance prizes - for stars Bebe Neuwirth and James Naughton; director, Walter Bobbie: Choreographer, Ann Reinking, and lighting, Ken Billington.

"This one's for you Bobby," she said tearfully, saluting the late Bob Fosse, the show's original director and choreographer. Another big winner was the

revival of Henrik Ibsen's classic "A Doll's House." The play received four major prizes including awards for its star, Janet McTeer, who plays the Petulant Nora, and Owen Teale, who portrays her domineering hus-

Killing of Arab land dealers jeopardizing ME peace move: Israel

JERUSALEM, June 2: The Israeli prime minister's spokesman said Monday that future peacemaking with the Palestinians is being jeopardised by the killing of Arabs who sold land to Israelis, reports AP.

Spokesman David Bar-Illan said Yasser Arafat's self-rule government was behind the killings of three Arab suspected land dealers and the disappearance of a fourth.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu summoned security chiefs to an emergency meeting to discuss what steps to take with the Palestinian Authority and how to protect both Jewish and Palestinian real estate agents whose lives are in danger, Bar-Illan said.

"This kind of conduct puts at

risk the continuation of the peace," Bar-Illan told The Associated Press.

"Obviously, these are acts of hostility, war and murder. Such acts are dangerous to the continuation of the peace talks. Speaking on Israel army ra-

dio, Bar-Illan said Israel had to "examine seriously whether we have to continue talks with people who represent such fascist theories.

Netanyahu, in a separate interview with army radio, said the killings had been carried out with the help or the encouragement of Palestinian offi-

necessary to bring justice to the victims and prevent more murders," he said. The Israeli daily Haaretz re-

"We will take all the steps

ported that 16 Palestinian land dealers who sold or planned to sell land to Jews were on a hit list compiled by the Palestinian Authority. The newspaper said the information was based on a secret Palestinian report obtained by Israeli security officials. The report said the Pales-

eliminate any land dealer who sells to Jews. On Sunday, Jerusalem Police Chief Yair Itzhaki said a highranking Palestinian security official was behind the murders of two Palestinians suspected of

tinian Authority had decided to

He didn't name the official, but Israel Radio identified the man as Col. Tawfik Tirawi, who is based in the West Bank city of Ramallah. The radio said Israel

selling land to Jews.

may seek his extradition. Itzhaki called a news conference after Israeli police arrested six Palestinians, some of them armed, and said they were caught near Jerusalem attempt-

land dealer, Assad Rajabi. "We have firsthand evidence of the involvement of a head of security in the Palestinian Authority," Itzhaki said.

ing to kidnap a Palestinian

On Saturday, police found the body of Ali Jamhour, the third suspected land dealer killed in the past month. Two of those killed had Israeli citizenship.

The attack followed warnings by Palestinian officials that the death penalty should be imposed on anyone who sold land to Jews.

Justice Minister Freih Abu

Medein denied any involvement by Arafat's government in the deaths and said the accusation was "part of a campaign against the authority."

Medein said Israel was responsible for the killing, since Jamhour's body was found in an Israeli-controlled area of the West Bank. Medein said Israeli intelligence agencies killed Jamhour after using him to conclude the land deals.

Ikrema Sabri, the Palestinian-appointed chief Muslim cleric in Jerusalem, said Jamhour's body could not be buried in a Muslim cemetery because of his land-dealing.

Hafez Barghouti, editor of the al-Hayat al-Jadida newspaper in Ramallah, said he had received a telephone call Saturday claiming responsibility for the killing.

The caller, speaking in Arabic, said "We, the guardians of the Holy Land, declare our responsibility for the killing of Jamhour because he sold land to Jews," Barghouti said. The group had not been known previously.

Martin Indyk, the US ambassador to Israel, said Sunday that the United States condemns the killings "unreservedly."

"These killings must stop," he told The Associated Press "Beyond the unacceptability of extra judicial killings, they send a terrible message to Israelis and they're having a damaging impact on the Palestinian Authority's standing in Washington."

Presidential elections in Bolivia

Former military dictator emerges as victor

LA PAZ, June 2: A former military dictator who promises to fight poverty emerged victor in Bolivia's presidential elections. But with no candidate receiving a majority, Congress will end up picking the country's next leader, reports AP. Retired Gen Hugo Banzer

Suarez led the field of 10 candidates with 22 per cent of the vote, according to results compiled by ATB Television network and the La Paz daily La Razon. That total came with 88 per cent of the votes counted.

Sen Juan Carlos Duran, 48, of the ruling Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, placed second with 18 per cent of the

votes counted at the polling stations are technically unofficial but widely considered reliable and accepted even by the government. Only minimal variations in the voting results are expected

The results compiled by the

television network and the

newspaper from the actual

when they are announced by the Election Board later this week. If no candidate wins a ma-

jority, Congress will choose between the top two vote-getters. Such a vote would be held when lawmakers convene their new session on August 4.