



The stars of "Batman & Robin" actors Arnold Schwarzenegger (L) and George Clooney (R) pose with their costumes Mr Freeze and Batman Friday at Planet Hollywood in Beverly Hills, where the costume will be on permanent display. Schwarzenegger, who will play Mr Freeze, recently had heart surgery. — AFP/UNB photo

# Opposition parties protest irregularities in elections in Algeria

ALGIERS, June 7: Algeria's opposition parties cried foul after allies of President Liamine Zeroual emerged victorious from elections held after five years of bloodshed blamed by the authorities on militant Islamic fundamentalists, reports Reuters.

All but one of the main parties which won National Assembly seats in Thursday's election protested to the Constitutional Council about the integrity of the vote.

The complaints fuelled doubts whether the election could lead to an end to the civil violence which has claimed an estimated 60,000 lives and was triggered by the cancellation of 1992 polls which radical Islamists were poised to win.

Interior Minister Mustapha Benmansour hailed the election as historic and said it was fair and free. Official figures showed 65.49 per cent of the 16.8 million eligible voters cast ballots.

The national Democratic Party (RND), grouping staunch supporters of Zeroual won 155 seats in the 380-member lower house well ahead of the second-place Movement of a Peaceful Society (MPS) of moderate Islamist Mahfoud Nahnah with 69 seats.

The MPS, the National Liberation Front (FLN), which won 64 seats, the Nahada Movement, with 34, and the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) and the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), both with 19, all complained of electoral irregularities.

The Constitutional Council has three days to rule on their protests. It must determine whether the poll was free and fair or, if it accepts the complaints order by-elections.

But all the protesting parties indicated they would take their seats in the National Assembly and would use only peaceful means to achieve their goals.

The alleged irregularities ranged from direct vote-rigging by the authorities in favour of the RND and missing voter lists, bans on party officials from supervising voting and vote counting.

"We are certain that the Constitutional Council will play a key role in preventing the country from slipping further into problems," Nahnah told a news conference.

Responded to Benmansour a statement that the election went smoothly, he said: "I say things proceeded aggressively,

# Army offensive against LTTE claims 111 lives

COLOMBO, June 7: Up to 95 Tamil Tiger guerrillas were killed and more than 200 wounded in heavy fighting during a recent army offensive in Sri Lanka's north, the Defence Ministry said today. The army lost 16 soldiers, including two officers, while 36 soldiers were wounded in Friday's action in which the army captured Periyamadu, an area near the fortified rebel-held junction town of Puliyanakulam, about 245 km (150 miles) north of the capital Colombo, it said, reports Reuters.

Military officials said troops have recovered the bodies of more than 15 Tamil Tiger guerrillas after overcoming heavy rebel resistance during the drive into their northern Wanni region stronghold.

Several Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas were missing, they said.

"Around noon, a large group of terrorists engaged the advancing troops, brought down mortar fire and simultaneously launched five assaults," the Defence Ministry statement said.

"Troops successfully repulsed all attempts of the terrorists by engaging them in close proximity, inflicting heavy casualties," it said. Troops had recovered weapons and equipment left behind by the rebels, it said.

Military officials said the rebels' failure to recover their own dead indicated they had been forced to fall back in disarray in the face of the advance by government troops backed by tanks, artillery and air support.

Some 20,000 troops are advancing on two flanks into the mostly jungle-covered Wanni region. Residents in Vavuniya, the gateway to the Wanni some 25 km (16 miles) to the south of Puliyanakulam, reported a lull in aircraft movements today.

The army had earlier captured the towns of Omanthai, 14 km (nine miles) north of Vavuniya, and Nedunkeni, 40 km (25 miles) northeast of Vavuniya, in an offensive codenamed 'Operation Jaya Sikuru', or sure of victory, that was launched from Vavuniya on May 13.

Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte told a news conference on Friday the offensive's aim was to open a land supply route to Jaffna, 100 km (60 miles) further north, that would help rehabilitation work there.

The north-south highway has been closed for more than 10 years due to battles between the rebels and government forces.

The LTTE, fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in mainly Sinhalese Sri Lanka's north and east, has accused the military of systematically demolishing Tamil towns through artillery attacks, forcing civilians to seek refuge in the jungle.

The military has denied their shells were aimed at civilians, saying they fired only at identified rebel targets.

The rebels also said Tamil property and food were looted by the armed forces at Nedunkeni. The Defence Ministry spokesman denied the charge.

Independent confirmation of the events was not possible as international media have not been allowed in the war zone.

The government says more than 50,000 people have been killed since the war began in 1983. The rebels say the toll is higher.



This June 6 photo provided by the White House shows US President Bill Clinton (R) and Chelsea Clinton (C) holding her diploma from Sidwell Friends Academy in Washington, DC as First Lady Hillary Clinton looks on after the graduation ceremony. Clinton gave the commencement address to the group of graduating seniors. — AFP/UNB photo

# Jupiter atmosphere has deserts, tropics like Earth

PASADENA, California, June 7: Jupiter's atmosphere has wet and dry areas like the deserts and tropics on Earth, data and images from the unmanned Galileo spacecraft have found, reports AP.

When Galileo's atmospheric probe plunged through the outer layers of Jupiter's bottomless atmosphere on December 7, 1995, scientists expected to detect lots of water; instead, they found dryness.

"We had suspected that the probe landed in the Sahara Desert of Jupiter," Andrew Ingersoll, a planetary science professor at the California Institute of Technology, told reporters Thursday at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Now that additional analysis has revealed moisture surrounding such dry spots, Ingersoll happily proclaimed: "Jupiter is wet."

But although Jupiter's weather may be more Earth-like than first believed, the giant planet lacks a solid surface, making it highly unlikely it could sustain life, Ingersoll said.

Robert Carlson, an investigator for Galileo's Near Infrared Mapping Spectrometer, showed a water map of a South America-sized expanse. It included bone-dry areas with 1 per cent humidity, akin to Death Valley in California, and other places so wet, "it's either going to rain or it is raining right now."

Glenn Orton, another JPL scientist, said the superdry spots make up perhaps 2 per cent to 5 per cent of the planet.

Tobias Owen, a University of Hawaii planetary scientist, explained that the abundance of elements found in Jupiter's atmosphere suggests it was seeded by comets.

"We think the same bombardment ... also brought the same important elements to Earth," he said.

NASA also released Galileo's images of Jupiter's very thin auroras, which glow in a narrow ring around the poles like the Northern Lights and Southern Lights above Earth's poles.

Auroras occur when electrically charged particles crash into Jupiter's atmosphere, but "where these charged particles come from is a mystery," Ingersoll said.

Galileo, launched in 1989 aboard a space shuttle, is more than halfway through a two-year orbital tour of Jupiter and its four major moons: Io, Europa, Callisto and Ganymede.

# Fresh fighting erupts in Kinshasa

KINSHASA, Democratic Republic of Congo, June 7: Forces loyal to the incumbent president of Congo-Brazzaville and the country's former military strongman, traded heavy artillery fire in the capital late on Friday after two days of clashes which have left the city split into two hostile camps, reports AP.

One sector of Brazzaville is controlled by government forces loyal to President Pascal Lissouba and the other by a private militia run by former head of state Denis Sassou Nguesso.

Several units from the government side, including tank and naval troops have reportedly defeated the Nguesso side and have seized positions in the city centre and near the airport formerly held by Lissouba's Loyalists.

An expatriate questioned by telephone from Kinshasa, said sporadic heavy artillery firing was going on at 9:30 pm (2030 GMT) Friday. "It looks as if it will last all night, there will be a lull between midnight and 3:00 am."

# 'Chinese supply of M-11s to Pakistan should be operational'

BEIJING, June 7: While the United States has still not confirmed China's sale of M-11 ballistic missiles to Pakistan, a recent report in a reputed defence journal has said the M-11s with Islamabad should be considered operational with a nuclear warhead, reports PTI.

The Jane's Intelligence Review, quoting a US insurgency intelligence report of May 1996 presented by the Weapons and Space Systems Intelligence Committee, said the Chinese supplied M-11s in Pakistan should be considered operational.

"Although the presence of components for 30 Chinese supplied M-11s was publicly revealed in 1992, this marks first time the US intelligence community has classified the M-11s as 'completely operational' missiles," the journal said in an article describing Islamabad's missile programmes and nuclear procurement activities.

Previously, it was believed that the missiles, stored in a crates at Pakistan's Sargodha Airfield, had not been assembled. However, some US intelligence officials said China later provided specialists to assemble the missiles and to train Pakistani personnel in their use, the article said.

Quoting the same officials, it said Pakistan has probably completed the development of a nuclear warhead for the M-11, based on a highly reliable design provided by China in 1983.

The design, tested by China in 1966, is for a warhead small enough to be carried on an M-11, it added.

The journal said US officials believed that Pakistan, with equipment and design information provided by China, is building a factory for the production of short-range ballistic missiles.



British Prime Minister Tony Blair (L) shakes hands with locals as he receives an enthusiastic welcome, accompanied by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (R) upon his arrival in Bonn Friday. It was Blair's first visit as prime minister hosted by a foreign government. — AFP/UNB photo

# US should desist from using unfair dominance over India: Joshi

NEW DELHI, June 7: BJP leader Dr Murli Manohar Joshi Friday said the United States of America should desist from using "unfair dominance or bullying tactics" against India as this country was sovereign and knew its problems better than USA, reports PTI.

In a statement here, he said the reports emanating from the United States regarding deployment of Prithvi missiles by India along the Indo-Pak border was "nothing but diplomatic strategy to create confusion" on the eve of Indo-Pak talks.

He said it was "an uncalculated statement" by the United States on the deployment of Prithvi as "it would unnecessarily alert China who is also known to improve relations with India. The position emanating on this issue is totally unfair and unfortunate."

# Blair, Kohl pledge to strengthen relations

BONN, June 7: British Prime Minister Tony Blair and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl pledged Friday to strengthen relations between the two countries and work together for the success of the European Union summit and other upcoming international gatherings, reports AP.

"I'm sure, prime minister, we will do a very good job, the chancellor told Blair before they went into the talks, which lasted some two hours and had been expected to concentrate on European issues. No statement was issued or planned after the talks ended, officials said.

It was the British premier's first official visit hosted by a foreign government, but not the first time he has held direct talks with Kohl — he got the red carpet treatment in Bonn a year ago when he was a leader of Labour Party in opposition.

Kohl said he appreciated that Blair had come to Germany for this first official visit, taking it as a sign of his desire — which the chancellor said he shared to ensure that relations between their countries continue to be very warm.

For Germany it is of "fundamental importance" that the two countries continue along the same road together as they had over the past 40 years, Kohl said.

"We are standing in the middle of dramatic change in the world and in Europe," the chancellor said.

In a few days, he recalled, they would have to negotiate and sign a revision of the Maastricht treaty at the European summit in Amsterdam on June 16 and 17, followed by a meeting of the Group of Eight countries in Denver and then the special NATO enlargement summit in Madrid in July.

# Brigitte Bardot Sues ex-hubby

PARIS, June 6: Raising the stakes in a battle of books and law suits, Brigitte Bardot Friday asked a court to grant her 300,000 francs (dhs 51,000) in privacy and copyright damages from her ex-husband, reports AP.

Three months after the animal-rights activist and one-time movie idol was forced to pay 250,000 francs (dhs 43,000) for violating her ex's privacy in an autobiography, Bardot also asked that his kiss-and-tell response be banned.

Jacques Charrier's "My Answer to BB" gives his side of their three-year marriage, which ended in divorce in 1962. Among other details in the book, Charrier discusses their love life and said the former actress often slept late.

Bardot's lawyer, Wallerand de Saint Just, said that in addition to violating Bardot's privacy, the book's use of letters Bardot had written to Charrier violated her rights as the letters' author.

In March, Charrier, and their son, Nicolas, successfully sued for her autobiography, "Initials: BB."

Bardot had written that she was devastated to discover she was pregnant and said she felt the fetus was like "a tumor growing inside me."

# Opposition party protest alleged vote rigging in Indonesia

JAKARTA, June 7: A Muslim-based opposition party protested Saturday against suspected vote-rigging and intimidation in the May 29 parliamentary election, reports AP.

Ismail Hasan Metareum, head of the United Development Party, or PPP, said that his party had found many cases of irregularities by the election officials in favour of the Golkar.



Supporters of the National Democratic Rally (RND) celebrate Friday in Algiers after their party gathered 155 seats in Thursday's legislative elections. The RND, founded four months ago by Algerian President Liamine Zeroual loyalists including Prime Minister Ahme Ouyahia, took 155 seats in the 380-seat National People's Assembly, not enough for a majority on its own. — AFP/UNB photo

# BRIEFLY

## HK man jailed in Vietnam:

A Vietnamese court has sentenced to 10 years in prison a Hong Kong man convicted of smuggling young women out of the country to work as prostitutes in Cambodia and Macau, AP reports from Ho Chi Minh City.

## 3 anti-govt activists held in ROK:

Three anti-government activists were arrested Saturday on charges of manslaughter in the beating death of a factory worker during student riots demanding the president's resignation, AP reports from Seoul.

## Niger govt, rebels sign peace deal:

The government and rebels operating along the Chaud and Libyan borders, signed a peace accord Ndjamena on Friday providing for a ceasefire beginning June 10, AP reports from Ndjamena.

## Ex-governor held in Russia:

The former governor of the Central Russian region of Tula has been arrested on suspicion of corruption, Interfax reported Friday citing the prosecutor's office in the region, AP reports from Moscow.

## 3 hanged to death in Zimbabwe:

Three people convicted of murder, were hanged in the Zimbabwe capital Harare on Friday, it was announced, AP reports from Harare.

## 9 missing as tanker blasts in China:

A 40-hour blaze on a Chinese oil tanker carrying heavy crude oil has been extinguished, but nine people remain missing, Xinhua reported yesterday, AP reports from Beijing.

## Union leaders call for realistic policies from new French govt

PARIS, June 7: French union leader Nicole Notat Friday called for realistic policies from the left, warning that the working week could not be systematically reduced without pay cuts, reports AP.

Meanwhile, new Socialist Premier Lionel Jospin said that he does not want a softening of the entry criteria to join the euro, the European single currency due to come into effect in 1999.

Asked if he intended to renegotiate the Maastricht Treaty limiting the budget deficit of euro-participants by next year, Jospin said "those rumors are without foundation... when have you ever heard me say that."

The French premier spoke in an interview before addressing a meeting of European socialist leaders in Malmo, Sweden.

Notat, who played a significant role in ending transport strikes that paralyzed France in December 1995, said that any rise in the minimum wage, a cut in the working week or the creation of new jobs by the government had to be approached with caution.

The remarks, in an interview with Liberation newspaper, were directed at the Socialist's elections campaign promises.

The left-wing coalition, that includes Communists and ecologists, overturned the conservative government in parliamentary elections last Sunday.

"We have to negotiate the question of the amount employees contribute," said Notat, referring to the Socialist plan to cut the working week from 39 to 35 hours.

"It would depend on the level of pay," added Notat, inferring that higher wage earners would have to accept cuts for a shorter working week.

Jospin's pre-election job plan envisaged a reduction in working hours with no cut in pay.

Notat also said that the change in working hours should be flexible — as low as 32 hours in some cases — and implemented quickly and on a large scale in order to ensure that the change left vacancies to create new jobs.

According to a new poll, the French are also skeptical about the realities of Jospin's jobs programme.

On the left's plans to cut the work week from 39 to 35 hours without a pay cut, 50 per cent were opposed and only 35 per cent were in favour, a survey by Ipsos for the newsweekly Le Point said.

A study by the Labour Ministry published by Liberation indicated that only 14 per cent of people were prepared to accept a pay cut with fewer work hours.

Notat also said that social security "spending had to be reduced without rationing health care."

Welfare cuts, which sparked numerous strikes under the former conservative government, are considered vital to reducing France's budget deficit from 4.2 to 3 per cent of gross domestic product.

The labour leader also sounded a warning on the left's promise to create 700,000 jobs (350,000 in the public service).

"Systematic aid to enterprises so that they employ young people would be expensive for a result which is not justified," Notat told Liberation.

Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn is reportedly also guarded in his support of his premier's job creation promises.

The pro-euro minister backs the Socialists' call for creating 350,000 youth jobs in the private sector with a new payroll tax, but not the 350,000 youth jobs in the already bloated state sector that employs one-fourth of the nation's work force.

France's stock market remained steady Friday on the back of a sharp rise of over 2.1 per cent Thursday that was seen as an endorsement of Jospin's new cabinet.

Jospin plans to spell out his policies in a June 17 speech to the National Assembly.

The Ipsos survey, conducted by telephone June 4, questioned a nationally representative 834 people with a margin of error of plus or minus 2-3 per cent.

# Coalition partner reviving Khmer Rouge: Hun Sen

PHNOM PENH, June 7: Cambodia's Co-Prime Minister Hun Sen accused Norodom Ranariddh, his counterpart in the country's coalition government, Saturday of reviving the genocidal Khmer Rouge by holding peace talks with its hard-line leaders, reports AP.

"The Khmer Rouge is weak now militarily (but) Ranariddh's party is saving the Khmer Rouge from being demolished," Hun Sen said in a radio broadcast.

Ranariddh and Hun Sen share power in an increasingly tense and unworkable coalition. The disputes between their rival political parties and military factions has threatened to boil over into violence several times in recent months.

Military commanders loyal to Ranariddh's party said they are seeking a peace agreement with Khmer Rouge hardliners in their last remaining stronghold of Anlong Veng, near the Thai border.

The general in charge of the negotiations, who spoke with The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, said Saturday that the three top Khmer Rouge leaders, Pol Pot, Ta Mok and Son Sen, "escaped more than 10 days ago," with a small circle of loyalists. He had no further details on their whereabouts.