

## International

## Protests, violence mark May Day

BERLIN, May 2: The world marked May Day with demonstrations and scattered violence on Monday, while trade unionists in strife-hit Zimbabwe rallied against the government, ignoring calls to stay at home, reports Reuters.

Violent protests turned violent in several parts of Europe and hundreds of protesters took to the streets in US financial centres.

Leftists briefly clashed with hundreds of neo-Nazis in Berlin and later fought pitched battles with police. About 50 people were injured in separate clashes in the port city of Hamburg.

Hundreds of leftist and anarchist demonstrators fought police armed with water cannon, clubs, tear gas and riot shields in Berlin's Kreuzberg district on Monday night in what has become a May Day tradition.

In Russia, where for decades May Day was marked by colossal workers' marches choreographed by the communists state, tens of thousands joined rallies. But protests were smaller than previous post-Soviet gatherings.

"We were all free and happy then," pensioner Dina Gulcheva said of the Soviet era. "These democrats have taken everything away from me."

Mass visits to tourist spots marked May Day in China after the government declared the whole week a holiday, in a move intended to stimulate consumer spending.

Masked demonstrators fought riot police in London as an anti-capitalist demonstration degenerated into what British Prime Minister Tony Blair called "mindless thuggery."

Parliament Square was

sealed off after the grass in the centre was ripped up and laid across the road by eco-activists staging what they called a "guerilla gardening" protest. A statue of wartime leader Winston Churchill was defaced, with a layer of green grass sod laid over his head, punk-style.

Swiss police fired teargas and rubber bullets at so-called "revolutionary" protesters who smashed windows and damaged cars at a BMW showroom during a march in Zurich.

Several people were hurt when anarchists and police clashed in the Polish city of Krakow.

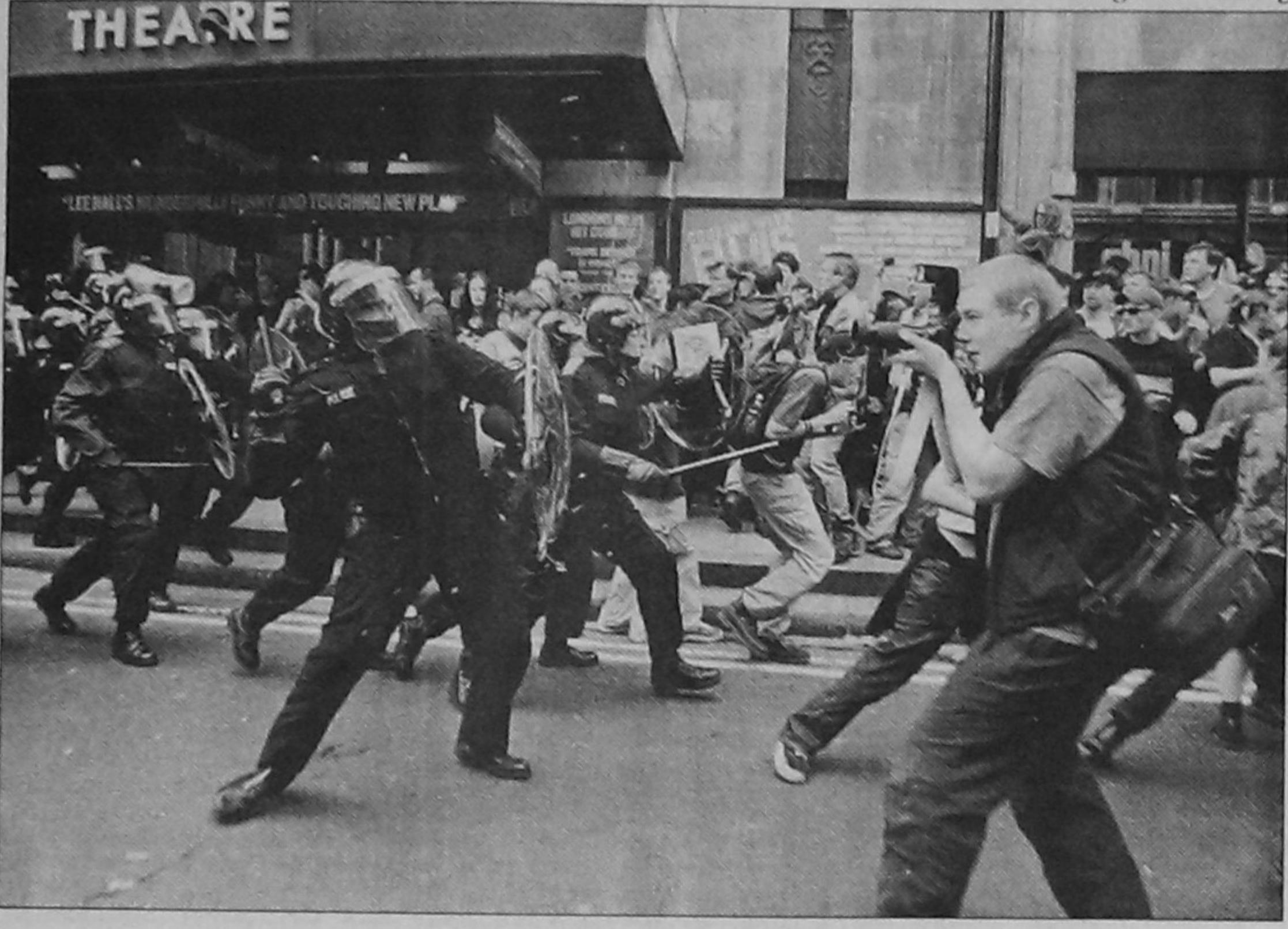
In southern Africa, about 3,000 people massed outside the Zimbabwean capital Harare to hear the country's main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), urge them to work to defeat President Robert Mugabe's ruling

ZANU-PF party in forthcoming elections.

Hundreds of demonstrators marched in US financial centres, protesting political and economic exploitation and demanding amnesty for illegal immigrants.

In New York, where 600 people massed at Union Square, police arrested 19 who called themselves anarchists. In Chicago, where the US May Day protest movement was born 114 years ago in pursuit of the eight-hour work day, about 900 people ended a day of traffic disrupting marches through the city centre with a rally in Daley Plaza.

Thousands of Serb workers and supporters gathered in central Belgrade to back a May Day union demand for Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to go.



Riot Police charge protesters at Whitehall in central London after violence broke out near a McDonald's fast food restaurant during a May Day anti-capitalist rally on Monday.

— AFP photo

## Espionage trial in Iran

## Jewish spy suspect confesses to relations with Mossad

SHIRAZ, Iran, May 2: The prime suspect in Iran's Jewish espionage trial has confessed to being a trained Israeli agent who spied both for money and for love of the Jewish state, the judiciary said on Monday, reports Reuters.

In the first glimpse at the state's case in the closed-door trial, Shiraz judiciary chief Hossein Ali Amiri said Hamid "Danny" Tefileen had confessed to passing classified information to Israeli intelligence, the Mossad, and asked for a pardon.

State television broadcast a tap-tap interview with Tefileen in which he said he had received training in Israel and gathered information for the Jewish state.

"My charge is spying for the Israeli government ... I accept this accusation. In connection with my political ... economic and social activities, I spied for Israel," Tefileen said, in response to questions by an unidentified interviewer.

Defence lawyer Esmail Nasser denied his clients were

guilty, saying any acts they may have committed did not meet the legal standard for espionage and that confession alone was not sufficient for conviction.

Amiri told a news briefing after the hearing, "Tefileen has confessed to relations with Mossad, to being trained in Israel, to being in the (Mossad) payroll and to giving classified information to Mossad."

Tefileen said they were acting as a team, not individually, fuelled by both financial motives and love of the notion of the promised land, Amiri said.

However, he said Tefileen — a shopkeeper identified earlier as the suspect in the lead suspect in the alleged spy ring — denied he had recruited others to the enterprise or had tried to duplicate the Shiraz network in the capital Tehran.

Attorney Nasser told Reuters the acts committee by his clients did not constitute espionage.

The law says espionage consists of gathering classified information and giving it to a

hostile state with the intent of hurting the mother country," Nasser said.

The information gathered was, believe, not classified. Thus, the acts and omissions of the defendants do not constitute the crime of espionage."

The hearing was adjourned until Wednesday, when charges will be read against the other defendants, including Hebrew teachers, shopkeepers and religious instructors, in the revolutionary court of this southern city.

Earlier, an international human rights monitor was allowed to speak to the judge and see one of the defendants — the first contact by a foreign observer in a case being watched closely by Western governments and overseas Jewish groups.

She said the judge reaffirmed his intention to hear the case solely on the evidence and to ignore domestic or international pressure. She said was able to meet one of the accused.

## Israel begins pullout from Lebanon positions

JERUSALEM, May 2: Israel began pulling out of two fortified forward positions in southern Lebanon in preparation for its planned complete withdrawal from the zone by July 7, a military spokesman said, reports AFP.

Communications equipment was dismantled at Tzipporen fort in the north of the zone Israel has occupied for 22 years, while munitions from the small fort, 100 metres from the de facto Israeli-Lebanese border, were brought further back.

The same source said that a pro-Israeli militiaman was slightly injured overnight Monday during an attack by the Shi'ite Hezbollah against a position in the north-east of the occupied zone.

The Israeli press reported that the sand dunes around the two small fortified positions were flattened by tractors.

The daily *Yedioth Ahronot* said today that most Israeli security officials believe that the pro-Israeli South Lebanon Army (SLA) should be allowed to hang on to equipment provided by Israel, from light arms to tanks.

The Israeli security cabinet began discussions with military chiefs this week on the modalities of their retreat from the occupied zone.

Israel has pledged to withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon by July, whether or not it has reached a deal with Lebanon and Syria, the main powerbrokers in the country.

## Rocket attack on Baghdad

BAGHDAD, May 2: Eight civilians were injured in rocket attacks on a residential area of the Iraqi capital, the official news agency INA said today, pinning the blame on Baghdad's former foe Tehran, reports AFP.

"Agents in the pay of the Iranian regime fired six remote-controlled missiles at homes in Baghdad, injuring eight civilians who have been hospitalised," it said, without giving the exact location of the attack late Monday.

It came the same night as a mortar strike in northern Tehran that injured six people and was claimed by an Iraqi-based Iranian armed opposition group, the People's Mujahideen.

"Iraq holds the Iranian authorities responsible for this cowardly attack and reserves the right to respond at the opportune time," said INA.

Palestinian residents of the Baladiyat district of eastern Baghdad, meanwhile, told AFP that they heard the rocket attack, in the second time the area has been targeted since March.

On March 21, two Iraqis and two Palestinians were killed and 38 people injured in a mortar attack on Baladiyat where the capital's Palestinian community is concentrated.

But government sources say it is not possible to call elections this month, and legal experts believe the first week of June is the earliest possible date providing the election is announced this week.

According to Zimbabwean law, a least five weeks' notice

conservative Tehran Times, considered close to the judiciary, said the eight interrogators were arrested last week following complaints from suspects who were subsequently cleared of involvement in the murders. Several Iranian intellectuals and opposition figures, including secular nationalist leader Darlush Foruhar and his wife Parvaneh, were murdered within the space of several weeks in late 1998.

Political leaders and religious groups termed the views contained in the American report as biased in favour of India because they ignored the long-standing turmoil in Kashmir, where Indian forces have been engaged in suppressing a decade old Muslim uprising.

## Strong quake hits Kirgyzstan:

An earthquake measuring 6.5 on the Richter Scale hit Kirgyzstan overnight, without causing any injury or damage, the Kirgyz emergencies ministry said Tuesday, AFP reports from Moscow.

The epicentre of the quake was located in the south of the central Asian former Soviet Republic, near the border with Tajikistan, Itar-Tass quoted the ministry as saying.

Iran arrests 8 intelligence officers: Iran has arrested eight intelligence officers for misreating suspects in the 1998 killings of several dissidents and intellectuals, a newspaper said on Tuesday, AFP reports from Tehran.

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## Lanka under pressure to seek US, Indian help

## Troops positioned to defend Jaffna

Jaffna.

COLOMBO, May 2: As Tamil rebels prepared to attack the last military bastion defending Jaffna, pressure grew on the Sri Lankan government Tuesday to seek military help from neighboring India and the United States, reports AP.

On Sunday, the rebels overran the key Pallai base in their campaign to recapture Jaffna. They were now mounting pressure on the last military defense line, rebel sources and military officials said.

The guerrillas were fighting government troops barely 25

kilometres (15 miles) south of

Jaffna. The Defence Ministry admitted the loss of Pallai, but said its troops were positioned to defend Jaffna, a city of 500,000 people. Jaffna has been under government rule for the past five years.

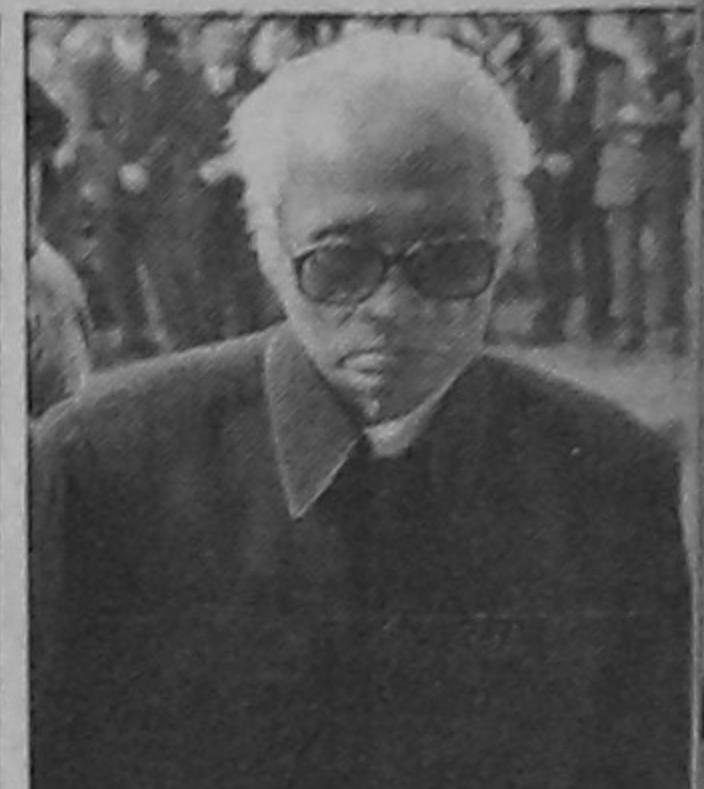
Meanwhile, the National Sangha Council, a group of powerful Buddhist monks, demanded that the Indian military should intervene to prevent the fall of Jaffna to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The monks had strongly protested when Indian troops

were sent to Sri Lanka to disarm the LTTE under a peace accord with Colombo in 1987.

"SOS", screamed a front-page headline in The Island, a pro-opposition newspaper. The editorial said there was an immediate need to seek foreign assistance if Jaffna was to be saved.

The government should make its first appeal to India. India may have good reasons to be reluctant to get involved in Sri Lanka. But Indians cannot remain aloof to what is happening across a few miles (kilometers) of sea on its southern coast."



Ex-Vietnamese PM Van Dong dead

HANOI, May 2: Former Vietnamese prime minister Phan Van Dong, one of the giants of the country's independence struggle, died in Hanoi at the age of 94, the communist party announced today. The funeral ceremonies will be held at the end of the week, party spokesman told AFP.

Dong, born on March 1906, died Saturday on the eve of celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of the fall of Saigon — now Ho Chi Minh City — at the end of Vietnam War.

The former prime minister was hospitalised on Friday.

The cause of his death was not immediately known but it had deteriorated badly over the last few months, prompting several stays in hospital, the party spokesman said.

News of his death was known from the Vietnamese press over the weekend and on Monday because of the nationwide celebrations to commemorate the end of the Vietnam War a worldwide May Day celebrations on Monday.

Dong headed the Vietnamese delegation at the 1954 Geneva Conference which resulted in France's withdrawal from former colonial possession of the partition of the country.

The same year he was named prime minister of North Vietnam, a post he held for 33 years through the reunification of the country following the fall of pro-American regime in 1975.

The "favourite nephew" Uncle Ho Chi Minh then retired from public life but retained a role as special adviser to the communist party's central committee until December 1997.



Lara Dutta, Miss India 2000, poses for photographs on Monday in Nicosia before heading to the evening event for the 2000 Miss Universe pageant. Delegates from 79 countries are competing for the title Miss Universe which will be decided on May 13.

— AFP photo

## Curfew clamped in Tripura

AGARTALA, India, May 2: Indian authorities ordered an indefinite curfew in the remote northeastern state of Tripura Monday after four people were killed in ethnic violence, officials said.

Superintendent of Police Jaidev Das said tension broke out when National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) rebels shot dead two Bengali peasants in a paddy field in Jirian about 20 km (12 miles) east of the state capital, Agartala.

In a burst of racial violence two hours later, a mob of angry Bengalis intercepted a vehicle and beat its eight tribal passengers. Two of the wounded passengers died later in hospital. Brigadier B K Panawar said his troops had been deployed in the area because of the increasing tension.

Ethnic violence is common in predominantly tribal Tripura where tribal guerrillas are opposed to immigrant Bengali settlers.

## Wahid rules out cabinet reshuffle

JAKARTA, May 2: Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid said today that he has no plans to reshuffle the cabinet following his recent dismissals of two economic ministers, ports and transportation.

"One thing that I have clearly said is that there is such a thing as a reshuffle," Wahid said in press briefing. The Bina Graha presidential office in Jakarta.

Wahid acknowledged that he had dismissed the two ministers -- but the move should be seen as a complete cabinet reshuffle.

A reshuffle means that you change the whole cabinet at the whole policy. For me, the policy is still the same as before ... to encourage investments in Indonesia," he said.

Wahid's statements came the day after his abrupt dismissal of two economic ministers last week.

## Zimbabwe cabinet meets as farm violence resumes

HARARE, May 2: The Zimbabwean cabinet meets for its regular weekly session today amid mounting speculation that President Robert Mugabe is at last ready to set a date for upcoming elections in the southern African country, reports AFP.

The embattled leader, who is accused by the opposition of stirring up racial unrest in order to bolster his ZANU-PF party's chances at the already twice-delayed polls, had insisted that elections would be held in May.

But government sources say it is not possible to call elections this month, and legal experts believe the first week of June is the earliest possible date providing the election is announced this week.

The run-up to elections in the southern African country has been marked by violence and illegal occupation of white-owned farms by so-called veterans of Zimbabwe's war of independence from Britain 20 years ago.

At least 12 people, including white farmers and black opposition activists, have been killed in the violence since February.

Tuesday's cabinet meeting comes in the wake of renewed weekend assaults on farm workers by the squatters' self-serve calls for peace by the former guerrilla leadership.

The country's trade unions opted Monday not to celebrate May Day due to the political tension in the country.

Scores of workers were brutally attacked in the prime farming areas of Mvurwi, northeast of the capital Harare, as the war veterans' leader called for peace on occupied white-owned farms.

Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) said about 200 veterans beat up workers at four different farms near Mvurwi, accusing them of supporting the main opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).