

# 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.

Demonstrations 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 Gulicheva 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 "guerrilla 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 demand for Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to go.

## India releases top Kashmiri separatist

NEW DELHI, May 2: India released a top jailed Kashmiri separatist today taking the number of recently freed rebels to six, a Kashmiri Muslim forum said, reports AFP.

Shakeel Bakasi, a leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front group, was released from prison in the southern Kashmir town of Udhampur, said G.M. Butt, a spokesman for the Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference -- an amalgam of some two dozen Kashmiri separatist parties.

Some 25 Hurriyat members were arrested in September and October last year for organising a boycott of general elections in Kashmir.

The authorities have freed six of them, including Bakasi. Two others were released from prison in the Kashmir winter capital Jammu late Monday, and three were released last month.

Hurriyat sources said Yasin Malik, a headline leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front and a top Hurriyat figure, was also likely to be released from New Delhi's high-security Tihar jail later Tuesday.

## 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 Tziporin 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 militia was slightly injured overnight Monday during an attack by the Shiite 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 Yediot Aharonot 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 powerbroker 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 Iraq-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 appropriate time," said INA.

Palestinian residents of the Baladiyah 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 Baladiyah where the capital's Palestinian community is concentrated.

That attack, in apparent retaliation for a Mujahideen-claimed mortar strike on March 13 near the headquarters of the Revolutionary Guards in Tehran that wounded four people, was also blamed on Iran.

# Lanka under pressure to seek US, Indian help

## Troops positioned to defend 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 Palla 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 Palla, 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."

# Kidnappers threaten to kill 2 hostages in Philippines

TALIPAO, Philippines, May 2: Muslim extremists threatened today to behead two of the 21 hostages, including 10 foreign tourists, they are holding in a mountain hideout if the Philippine military does not withdraw troops encircling the area, reports AP.

Abu Sayyaf, a leader of the Abu Sayyaf rebels, said the troops were so close that the kidnappers could see them.

If the government does not pull back the soldiers, "We will surprise them," he said in an interview with local radio station DXRZ. "Maybe two heads for tomorrow."

The hostages were kidnapped on April 23 from a Malaysian diving resort by Philippine Muslim extremists and brought to Jolo island in the Philippines, about one hour away by boat.

Another group of Abu Sayyaf rebels holding a separate group of 27 hostages on neighbouring Basilan island claimed two

weeks ago to have beheaded two of their captives, triggering a military assault on their stronghold which so far has failed to find the hostages.

The 21 hostages in Jolo have also appealed to the Philippine government to pull back the troops encircling them to avoid clashes and allow the kidnappers to obtain food for them.

The kidnappers "can't get much food, much water because the camp is surrounded by the Philippine army and so they can't get anything for us," Stephanie Loisy, a hostage from France, told journalists. "We eat only rice, and the only water we have is the water from rain."

Nur Misuari, the government's negotiator, said he was told Tuesday by the military that the encirclement of the area would stay "as is."

He said the Abu Sayyaf rebels have refused to begin formal negotiations if the troops are not removed. "They are demanding that government forces must with-

draw from their present position to a safe distance," he said. "And as soon as that happens they are ready to open talks with me."

The Abu Sayyaf is the smaller of two groups fighting for a separate Islamic state in the impoverished Mindanao region of the southern Philippines.

Government troops were also battling rebels Tuesday from the larger group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, who occupied a major road in central Mindanao.

Fierce clashes which began Friday in Maguindanao province spread to nearby North Cotabato province, said Col Ernesto de Guzman, chief of staff of the military's Southern Command.

He said many MILF rebels were killed in the fighting, but gave no figures.

As of Sunday, 36 guerrillas and four soldiers had been killed, according to the military.

## Myanmar newspaper warns

# Suu Kyi, followers could face death penalty for treason

YANGON, May 2: Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her followers could face the death penalty or life imprisonment for committing high treason because of alleged links to outlawed rebel groups, a government newspaper said Tuesday, reports AP.

A commentary in the Mirror daily accused Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, of being "power crazy," bent on blocking foreign aid and investment and trying to foment disunity among the country's ethnic minorities.

The accusations came as the military regime played host to economic ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Japan, China and South Korea, its biggest diplomatic event since Myanmar was admitted into ASEAN in 1997.

The government, often criticised by Western nations for human rights abuses, has recently arrested members of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy for alleged links to

rebel groups who maintain a fading armed struggle against the regime along Myanmar's border with Thailand.

"There is evidence that Suu Kyi has contacts with dissidents and armed terrorist groups," the commentary said. "Hence Daw Suu Kyi and her accomplices could face death penalty or life imprisonment under high treason." Daw is an honorific.

People in Myanmar, also known as Burma, are losing confidence in Suu Kyi and wanted the government to take concrete action against her in the national interest, the newspaper said.

Nearly all newspapers in Myanmar are run by the government. Editorials and commentaries often rail against Suu Kyi, who was vaulted to world prominence during an uprising against military rule in 1988 that was bloodily crushed.

Suu Kyi was placed under what became six years of house arrest in 1989, but a year later her party swept general elec-

tions. The military, surprised that parties it had supported lost, never allowed parliament to convene.

The National League for Democracy espouses nonviolence. According to international human rights groups, hundreds of its members have been jailed for their political views.

Last week, Aye Thar Aung, a senior party official responsible for issues related to ethnic minorities was arrested, reportedly accused of connections to anti-government rebel groups.

The Mirror lashed out at Suu Kyi, whose activities are severely restricted, for smuggling videotapes out of Myanmar, which it said were sent to international conferences to discredit the government.

In one such interview smuggled out last Thursday, Suu Kyi said military authorities had arrested more than 40 NLD youth members during a public holiday in mid-April.



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 taped 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 on 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 by authorities as 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.

## Pakistan rejects US charges

ISLAMABAD, May 2: Pakistan has rejected US allegations that it turns a blind eye to terrorist activity on its soil but politicians on and commentators today urged the government to take the charges seriously, reports AFP.

A foreign office spokesman described as "unfounded" allegations levelled in a US State Department report on Monday that Pakistan along with Afghanistan was becoming a major terrorist hub.

Pakistan has always cooperated with the international community, including the United States, to combat terrorism, the spokesman said in a statement.

He said Pakistan had also handed over a number of suspected terrorists to the US and to other countries and the annual US report "acknowledges" its efforts to tackle terrorism.

He said the government of General Pervez Musharraf had launched a drive to confiscate illegal arms held by militants and extremists.

The State Department report for the first time singled out Pakistan and Afghanistan as major sites of terrorist activity.

Afghanistan remains a "major terrorist threat" for still harbouring Saudi exile Osama bin Laden.

## BRIEFLY



This handout picture released from Kyoto University's Primate Research Institute on Monday, shows 23-year-old genius chimpanzee Ai (R) nursing her first baby Ayumu in Inuyama city, central Japan. Ai, known for her ability to recognize some letters, numbers and figures will be back to training to study numbers soon. Researchers will study Ai and see if she will pass along her acquired abilities to her baby. — AFP photo

## Strong quake hits Kirgystan:

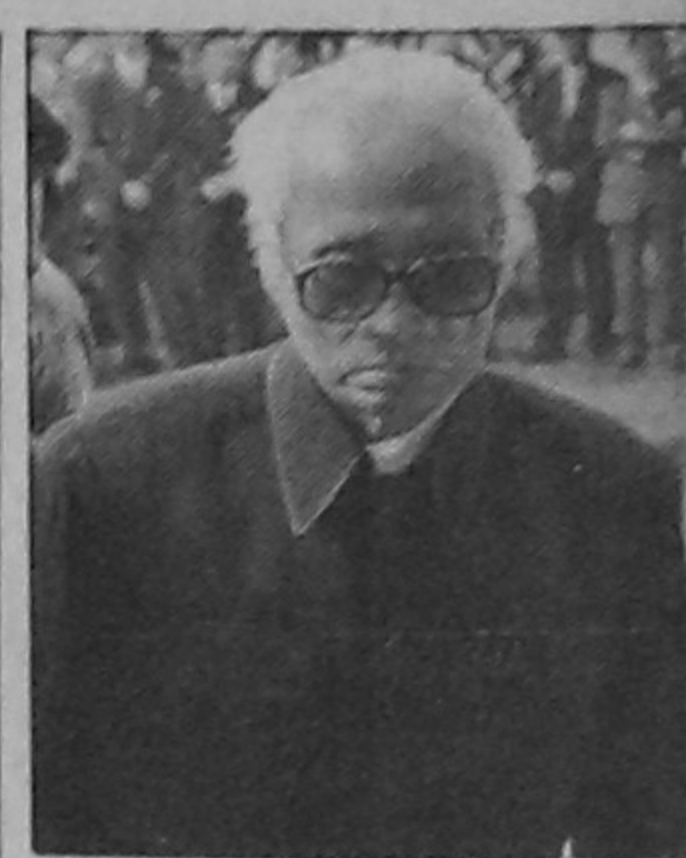
An earthquake measuring 6.5 on the Richter Scale hit Kirgystan overnight, without causing any injury or damage, the Kirgiz emergency ministry said Tuesday, AFP reports from Moscow.

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 mistreating suspects in the 1998 killings of several dissidents and intellectuals, a newspaper said on Tuesday, AFP reports from Tehran.

The 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 Dariush Foruhar and his wife Parvaneh, were murdered within the space of several weeks in late 1998.



## Ex-Vietnamese PM Van Donge dead

HANOI, May 2: Former Vietnamese prime minister Phan Van Donge, one of the giants of the country's independence struggle, died in Hanoi at the age of 94, the communist party announced today, reports AFP.

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 his health had deteriorated over the last few months, prompting several stays in hospital, the party spokesman said.

News of his death was kept from the Vietnamese public over the weekend and on Monday because of the national celebrations to commemorate the end of the Vietnam War.

Worldwide May Day celebrations on Monday.

Dong headed the Vietnamese delegation at the 1954 Geneva conference which resulted in France's withdrawal from its former colonial possession and 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 the pro-America regime in the south, until 1987.

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



Lara Dutta, Miss India 2000, poses for photographers on Monday in New Delhi before heading to an evening event for the 20th 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 indefinite curfew in the northeastern state of Tripura Monday after four people were killed in ethnic violence, officials said, reports Reuters.

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 Jiran about 20 km (12 miles) east of the state capital, Agartala.

In a burst of retaliatory violence two hours later, a mob of angry Bengalis intercepted a vehicle and beat its eight passengers. Two of the wounded passengers died later in hospital. Brigadier B K Panwar said troops had been deployed in the area because of the increased 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 plans to reshuffle the cabinet following his recent dismissal of two economic ministers, reports AFP.

"One thing that I have clearly said is that there is such 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 I 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 in the wake of his abrupt dismissal of two economic ministers last week.



Zimbabwean war veterans and Zanu PF supporters carrying a banner with President Robert Mugabe march to the magistrate's court in Harare yesterday. A fraud case against Chenerai Hunzvi, the leader of the War Veterans Association, continued yesterday as some 400 war veterans and Zanu PF followers came to show their support. — AFP photo

# 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.

of an election date must be given.

The forthcoming elections are the five-yearly polls for the country's parliament, while Mugabe himself does not face election until 2002.

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 despite calls for peace by the former guerrilla leadership.

Scores of workers were brutally attacked in the prime farming area of Mvurwi, north-east 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).

Several other workers were assaulted in the northern Karoi farming district at the weekend.

Two farm guards ferrying severely beaten in southern Zvishavane district.

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