

International

Peruvian election

Fujimori heads for lopsided victory

LIMA, May 29: President Alberto Fujimori headed to a lopsided victory in his bid for an unprecedented third term, with the first official return showing him triumphant in an election boycotted by his challenger and questioned by foreign observers, reports AP.

Angered at what they considered a rigged election process, hundreds of demonstrators trying to march to the presidential palace were pushed back Sunday by riot police firing volleys of tear gas. There were no immediate reports of injuries, and tens of thousands of Fujimori foes demonstrated peacefully nearby.

With just over half of the vote counted, Fujimori had 50.3 per cent of the ballot to Alejandro Toledo's 16.2 per cent, election officials said late Sunday, adding that 32.4 per cent of the ballots had been defaced and 0.8 per cent left blank.

With final results not expected before Wednesday, Fujimori made no public appearance Sunday after the voting ended.

Tens of thousands of Toledo supporters massed on a central Lima Plaza in a nighttime outpouring to shout their opposition to a Fujimori victory.

A breakaway group of students tried to march toward the palace, Fujimori's official residence, but were repeatedly driven back by riot police. Some 1,000 riot police guarded the palace and blocked the way. On the San Martin Plaza six

blocks away, the scene was peaceful.

"I've come to tell the people of Peru, 'Enough of this dictatorship!'" said Toledo, 54, addressing a roaring, festive crowd on the nearby San Martin Plaza. "Fujimori has taken off his mask, and killed democracy in Peru!"

He reiterated calls for "peaceful resistance" to the reelection outcome after a day in which riot police fought sporadic, street clashes in downtown Lima against Fujimori opponents. Only a few regular officers watched the crowd on the plaza as Toledo told them: "Let's not be provoked to violence."

'Israel-Lebanon border tense'

ISRAEL-LEBANON BORDER, May 29: Israeli soldiers and Lebanese supporters of the Hizbollah guerrilla group played a dangerous game of cat-and-mouse on Sunday along a frontier fence that could not contain years of hatred and suspicion, reports Reuters.

Four days after Israel's lighting end to 22 years of occupation, tension continued to rise at the border, where Israeli soldiers fired bullets and threw stun grenades at Lebanese who hurled rocks or tried to squeeze through the fence.

The Israeli army said it wounded at least three Lebanese demonstrators during a day of confrontation in which one group of protesters managed to cross the border and plant a Hizbollah flag.

"It was live ammunition," a military spokesman said, noting that soldiers first fired warning shots in the air before aiming for the legs.

On the diplomatic front, a UN Middle East envoy shuttling between Beirut and Jerusalem, held talks with Israeli leaders aimed at verifying that Israeli

forces had withdrawn completely from Lebanon under a 1978 UN Security Council resolution.

Terje Roed-Larsen, in a statement after meeting Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Foreign Minister David Levy and Justice Minister Yossi Beilin, said he believed UN cartographers would be able to confirm the pullout within a short period of time.

"I conveyed to them my assessment that the withdrawal process is proceeding very well from the point of view of the United Nations, which has been assigned the task of confirming whether Israel's withdrawal conforms to Security Council Resolution 425."

Israel extracted its army from a "Security zone" in South Lebanon last Wednesday, six weeks ahead of schedule, after the collapse of its local South Lebanon Army militia.

Since the pullout, Lebanese — many of them supporters of the Hizbollah group that fought Israeli occupation — have vented their anger by massing near Israel's Fatima Gate border crossing and hurling rocks.



Lebanese run for cover as the Israeli army opens fire at stone-throwers at Fatima Gate in Kfar Kila Sunday. Lebanese civilians opened the Fatima Gate passageway and ventured a few meters into Israel, prompting confrontations with Israeli troops. Three Lebanese and a Palestinian were wounded in the clashes, the first casualties since Israel pulled out of Southern Lebanon four days earlier. — AFP photo

Civilians being killed in Sri Lanka's civil war: UN

COLOMBO, May 29: UN workers have come across hundreds of families carrying their wounded out of the northern war zone, where they say civilians are being killed, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said Monday, reports AP.

In a statement issued in Colombo, the UNHCR said it field staff members were coming across hundreds of families fleeing the war theater with their wounded.

"In interviews with UNHCR staff members, these persons indicated they were fleeing hostilities. There were injured among them," the statement said. "They stated that there were civilians who were killed and injured during military actions over the past two weeks."

Separatist rebels from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are fighting government troops in the north to carve out an independent

homeland for Sri Lanka's 3.2 million minority Tamils. They say they face discrimination by the Sinhalese, who make up 14 million of Sri Lanka's 18.6 million people.

Because of the recent reports, the UNHCR appealed "again to the government and the LTTE to ensure security for civilians and their freedom to move to safety," the statement said.

In response, Defence Ministry spokesman Brig Palitha Fernando said, "You cannot blame us all the time for deaths of civilians. The terrorists all the time are using artillery and some of them are falling on civilians areas."

He said the ministry was doing all it could to ensure the safety of 500,000 civilians trapped in the northern Jaffna peninsula, but did not elaborate.

No comment was immediately available from the rebels.

They had offered a unilateral 12-hour cease-fire Saturday to allow civilians to leave the battle zone.

TamilNet.com, a web site that gives the Tamil Tigers' perspective on the war, accused the military of not respecting the cease fire.

The government, on the other hand, said the rebels did not honour their own cease-fire and shelled the military repeatedly Saturday.

The veracity of their claims could not be verified because neither side allows journalists to visit the war zone. The government has also imposed censorship on war reporting by the local and foreign media and has shut down telephone service to Jaffna.

Hundreds of civilians have fled from Jaffna to neighbouring India, which already hosts 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamils who have fled the 17-year-old civil war.

US won't pressure Taiwan to accept conditions for talks

TAIPEI, May 29: The United States will not pressure Taiwan to accept China's conditions for talks between the two rivals, the top US representative in Taiwan said Monday, reports AP.

The comments by Raymond Burghart, director of the American Institute in Taiwan, were apparently aimed at calming Taiwanese who fear that Washington might team up with Beijing and try to force Taiwan to the bargaining table.

New Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian has offered to meet with Chinese leaders. But Beijing has insisted that before talks begin, Chen must agree that Taiwan is an inseparable part of "one China."

Chen has said he would discuss the issue during a summit, but he has said he would not agree to any preconditions for

the meeting.

On Monday, Burghart repeated Washington's assurance that it would not pressure Taipei to accept Beijing's precondition. He also said that Taiwan and China should solve their differences on their own.

"We will accept any arrangement that is voluntarily agreed to by both sides," Burghart, the de facto US ambassador to Taiwan, said at a conference of scholars.

Like most nations, the United States does not have formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan, which split from China amid civil war 51 years ago.

Beijing considers this island to be a breakaway province and uses its political and economic clout to discourage nations from forming official ties with it.

Malaysian opposition party faces attack from cyberspace

KUALA LUMPUR, May 29: An opposition party led by jailed politician Anwar Ibrahim's wife faced attacks from cyberspace today, including a demand that two of its top leaders step down, reports AP.

After more than a year of criticising the government, at least five Malaysian websites dedicated to issues of political reform have suddenly turned against the opposition National Justice Party.

The attack comes at a crucial time for the year-old opposition party, which is contesting against Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's ruling party in a closely watched parliamentary by-election next month.

Over the past week, several party members have been quoted by local newspapers as saying that many people are about to abandon the Justice Party in favour of Mahathir's United Malays National Organisation.

"We know they're offering our people all sorts of rewards and government contracts," said Tian Chua, Justice Party's vice-president. "This is a dirty trick, but that will not affect the position of the leaders and the unity of the party."

He, however, acknowledged that some party members were unhappy and that his party was aware of the criticisms on the anti-government websites.

But he said: "These websites have the freedom to criticise us."

The dissent is reportedly aimed at the party's secretary-general, Anwar Tahir, and its deputy president, Chandra Muzaffar. Some party members have accused the two of being too autocratic.

"To those whom we criticize, take a positive attitude; it you aren't the best of the best, then give way to others and don't practice the attitude of Mahathir," said a statement posted on the websites today.

The websites did not mention names of any of the leaders.

Mahathir, prime minister for 19 years, is often chided for staying in power for so long.

Soon after the 74-year-old prime minister sacked Anwar as his deputy in 1998, Azidah Ismail created the party to carry on her husband's campaign.

The opposition relied heavily on the Internet, including some anonymously run websites, to drum up support for its cause. Its leaders accuse the tightly-controlled mainstream dailies of being biased.

Anwar was sentenced to six years in jail for corruption in April 1999. He is now on trial for sodomy, a crime in predominantly Muslim Malaysia. He faces 20 more years imprisonment if convicted. Anwar denies all the charges.

Many Muslim Malays who supported UMNO for decades were disillusioned by Mahathir's treatment of Anwar.

BRRIFFLY

Irish man found dead in Thailand: An Irish man was found dead with slashed wrists at his home at the Thai beach town of Pattaya. Thai police said Monday, AP reports from Bangkok.

The body of Bernard Leo Bain, 52, was found Saturday. Police investigating the case believe he committed suicide. Bain had lived in Pattaya, 110 kilometers (68 miles) south of Bangkok, for several years running a ceramics company, police said.

Plane crash claims 3 in US: Three people died Sunday when a light aircraft crashed in a fast food restaurant parking lot in southern Los Angeles, police said, AFP reports from Los Angeles.

The plane, a single engine Piper Archer 46, crashed around 12:00 noon (2:00 BST) shortly after taking off from Hawthorne airport to the south of the city, according to police lieutenant Jim McInerney. The PA-46 was bound for Las Vegas, Nevada when it crashed close near a small shopping centre some 1.5 kilometers (one mile) from the airport.

Attempt on life of Khatami foiled

TEHRAN, May 29: Intelligence officers of Iran's Elite Revolutionary Guards recently foiled an attempt on the life of President Mohammad Khatami by one of his bodyguards, according to a prominent conservative politician, reports Reuters.

The Daily Bayan today quoted Ahmad Tavakoli, a former presidential candidate and newspaper publisher, as telling students the incident showed that future attempts should not be ruled out.

"Recently, the intelligence unit of the Revolutionary Guards arrested a presidential bodyguard who wanted to assassinate the president. Thus, the probability of such things happening cannot be ruled out," Tavakoli said.

Rumours of an attempt on the life of the popular president, who has angered hardliners with his social and political liberalisation, have been circulating for some time.

Conservative circles say the would-be assassin, a member of the guards' unit assigned to protect political leaders, had sought religious sanction for his plan from a hardline senior cleric.



Chinese President Jiang Zemin (R) laughs while escorting his Indian counterpart Kocharil Narayanan past China's top officials towards a honour guard inspection yesterday during a welcoming ceremony in Beijing. Narayanan is on a weeklong official visit to China, which is seen as a historic step toward improving ties between the world's two most populous nations, who fought a bitter war 28 years ago. — AFP photo

26 students die as bus plunges in China

BEIJING, May 29: Twenty-six middle school students were killed and several seriously injured when an overloaded school bus in northern China's Shaanxi province plunged over a cliff, reports said today.

Zhang Haijun, doctor at the Jiaxian Hospital, told AFP that 19 other on the bus were injured with nine seriously and four, including the driver, still in danger of losing their lives.

The 17-seat bus was crammed full with 45 students when it plunged over the cliff on Sunday afternoon, Zhang told AFP by phone.

Twenty-three of the students died at the scene.

"I think the driver of the bus should be held responsible for overloading the bus and for driving too fast," he said.

An investigation into the crash was still underway.

Truck-jeep collision in Nagpur leaves 13 dead

NAGPUR, May 29: Thirteen persons, including four children, were killed and four injured when the jeep carrying them collided with a truck coming from the opposite direction, near Parsoni, about 30 km from here yesterday, reports PTI.

According to rural police, nine persons died on the spot while four others succumbed to injuries in Ramtek Primary Health Centre.

The injured were undergoing treatment at the health centre, police said, adding that the truck driver had been arrested.

Army takes over Suva, imposes curfew in Fiji

SUVA, May 29: Fiji's army announced today that it had taken control of the capital, Suva, and imposed a 48-hour curfew after a mob of people supporting rebels holding the country's government hostage shot and killed a policeman and destroyed a television station, reports AP.

In another development, Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said that the rebels have threatened to kill one of their hostages in parliament — the daughter of President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who has been running the country since the coup began 10 days ago.

"This is a measure of the man," Downer said of the coup leader, George Speight. "This is an appalling thing to do to Mara's daughter, Adi Koila Mara, a Fijian legislator."

As negotiations to end a government crisis continued, hundreds of supporters of Speight entered the parliamentary compound where Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and more than 30 members of his government have been held hostage by masked gunmen since May 19.

Speight and his gunmen tried to distance themselves from the killing of the policeman on Sunday. Their spokesman, Joe Nata, told New Zealand's National Radio that the attack — the first fatal one in the hostage drama — was carried out by forces beyond their control.

In another sign of growing tension, the Fijian army, which is supporting the elected government being held hostage, ordered all its reservists to report for duty. It was not immediately clear how many reservists the army has.

The 48-hour curfew began at 6 pm today (12 noon BST). The streets in Suva were largely quiet throughout the day after police advised people to stay home and schools to close.

Speight, a member of the Fijian majority, wants Chaudhry, Fiji's first prime minister from its ethnic Indian minority, removed from power and Indians barred from ever leading the country again. A former insurance salesman, Speight was fired last year by Chaudhry as chairman of two local companies involved in managing Fiji's lucrative timber trade. He had been appointed to both posts by the previous government, in which his father was a senior member.

Atlantis returns to Earth

CAPE CANAVERAL, May 29: Space shuttle Atlantis and its astronauts returned to Earth early today and closed out a successful space station repair mission, reports AP.

Throughout Sunday, NASA had fretted that the crosswind might be too strong, but the wind eased to within safety limits, and Mission Control gave the crew the go-ahead to come home.

Atlantis glided onto the floodlighted runway at 2:20 a.m. (12:20 BST). It was only the 14th time in 98 flights that a space shuttle landed in darkness.

The rejuvenated International Space Station had passed over the Kennedy Space Centre just 10 minutes earlier, and was crossing the North Atlantic

when Atlantis touched down.

"Jim, congratulations to you and the crew on just a super mission to the international space station," Mission Control told Commander James Halesell Jr.

Halesell used both orbital-manoeuvring engines for the ride home. The left engine seemed to have a stuck valve during the climb to orbit May 19, but flight controllers later concluded the valve was fine and a bad sensor was to blame.

After the hectic pace of the past 10 days, the astronauts said they wouldn't have minded an extra day or two in space with little to do.

"As one person who is getting mentally prepared to spend six months up here, I think any extra day is a good thing," said

Susan Helms, a future space station resident.

Helms and Russian crewmate Yuri Usachev had the most important job of the mission — replacing four bad batteries inside the international space station. Their work restored full electrical power to the 1 and a half year-old outpost.

The seven-member crew also furnished the space station with a new antenna, construction crane, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and fans, and boosted the complex into a higher orbit.

Helms and astronaut James Voss said they were impressed with the space station, which next year will become their home.

Clinton, Jiang hold positive discussion

WASHINGTON, May 29: US President Bill Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin discussed Taiwan, proliferation, a key China trade vote in the US Congress and other matters in a "positive" conversation early Sunday, the White House said, reports AFP.

Jiang called Clinton around 9:30 am (19:30 BST), the two leaders spoke for about 30-40 minutes and "the overall tone of the discussion was positive," said spokesman Mike Hammer.

Regarding the US House of Representatives' vote to end 20 years of annual reviews of Beijing's trade status, "they both agreed that it's important for US-China relations," he said.

The House voted last week to grant Beijing permanent normal trade relations (PNTR), and the Senate is expected to follow suit in June in a move that would hand Clinton a major victory in his last year in office and boost China's chances of becoming a major world trade power.



Picture dated May 19, 1998 shows Indonesian President Suharto holding his hand in front of his mouth. Former president Suharto, currently under investigation for alleged corruption during his 32-year rule, has been put under house arrest, the attorney general's office announced yesterday. — AFP photo

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Notice Inviting Tender

Office of the Executive Engineer (RHD) Dhaka Road Divn. Banani, Dhaka

Tender No EE/E/M-70 of 1999-2000

Sealed tenders are invited in BD Form No 2911 for the undermentioned work as per terms and conditions stated below.

1. Name of work	Operation, maintenance and servicing of 6 Nos Bed Lift & 6 Nos Passenger Lifts (5-Stop) Lifts at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet for the year 2000-2001 (From 1-7-2000 to 30-6-2001) = 1 (one) year.
2. Estimated cost	Tk quoted amount.
3. Earnest money	Tk 2% (two per cent) of quoted amount.
4. Time allowed for completion of the work	from 1-7-2000 to 30-6-2001=1 (one) year.
5. Price of tender schedule	Tk 425/- (Tk four hundred twenty-five) only.
6. Place of selling and receiving tender	Office of the undersigned & office of all Executive Engineers, under PWD Circle, Sylhet.
7. Last date of selling tender	During the office hours upto 4-6-2000.
8. Eligibility of contractor/firm to complete in the tender	A) Special class/special class-I (combined)/ class-I, approved (E/M) contractor of PWD & class-II approved (E/M) contractor of PWD Chittagong Zone, Chittagong. Having valid ABC/BC contractor & supervisory licence for each & every agency for the undermentioned work. B) All the intending tenderers should have submit experience of performing the same nature of work & regarding experience certificate will have to be obtained from the Executive Engineer or equivalent or higher rank of Executive Engineer of concerned organisation along with the tender. C) Intending tenderers must VAT registration certificate. D) Attached copy of VAT registration/TIN & experience certificate to be enclosed alongwith the tender.
9. Date of receiving & opening of tender	At 12:00 Noon on 5-6-2000 & will be opened on the same day at 12:15 PM.
10. Lottery (applicable if necessary)	If more than one tenders are received having same rates lowest selection will be made by lottery to be held on 12-6-2000 at 12:30 PM in the office of the undersigned in presence of intending tenderers who may like to remain present at the time of lottery.
11. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason.	

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Executive Engineer (RHD)
Dhaka Road Divn. Banani, Dhaka