

Baath Party to have sole right to operate Armed Forces

Iraqi parliament okays multi-party system

BAHGDAD, July 5: The National Assembly passed a law Thursday that for the first time will permit opposition parties to operate, but they will not be able to amass much power, reports AP.

The assembly speaker said the law eventually will lead to national presidential elections.

However, the law has a few catches.

For one, any new party must appreciate the achievements of Iraq's 1968 "revolution," the coup d'etat that brought the ruling Baath Party and Saddam Hussein to power.

The law forbids members of any party but Baath from joining the military and Saddam's much-feared security police. Most security police are already believed to be Baath members.

The so-called multiparty law also given Saddam's Cabinet the right to dissolve

any party that "undermines the security of the state... and national unity" — a clear reference to the Kurds and Shi'ite Muslims who rebelled following the Gulf War.

Although the new law promises limited change, it represents Saddam's latest effort to quell discontent following the Gulf War and uprisings by Kurds and Shi'ite Muslims.

In recent weeks, the Iraqi president has held conciliatory talks with delegations from rebellious Shi'ite towns, boosted food rations and opened government storehouses to poor people's cooperatives.

Analysts believe another key reason for the law's passage is to legitimize the now-illegal Kurdish parties of the north, a region still partly occupied by allied troops.

As part of his effort to persuade the United Nations to lift 11-month-old trade sanctions, Saddam has been trying

to negotiate semi-autonomy for the Kurdish rebels. That could wed them to his regime and convince the allies to leave.

The agreement, however, has reportedly been held up by Kurdish resistance to Iraqi demands, including recognition of Baath Party supremacy.

The multiparty law was passed by a show of hands in a scene filled with the statecraft of democracy; a large domed chamber, camera lights and even some vigorous debate.

The debate had its limits, however. One assembly member who described herself as independent, Rajaa Al Shawi, insisted in an interview that the new law does not require allegiance to the Baath Party.

But she added stonily: "The Baath Party is the party of all the Iraqis and all the Iraqis love the Baath Party. Those people who want to form a new party democratically should follow what is done by the Baath Party."

Sadi Mehdi Saleh, speaker of the assembly, said the law will "allow parties that oppose the Baath Party" and which can nominate presidential candidates, although he excluded the exiled opposition parties now in Damascus, Syria.

The president will be elected directly by the people and not through the parliament for a term of six or

seven years, said Saleh.

He added that Iraq "will be happy to invite" international election monitoring groups. He would not say when such an election might be held.

New political parties will be allowed to publish newspapers and magazines and own property. They can even criticize Saddam, said Saleh.

There is nothing legally to prevent people from criticizing the president," he said.

The new law also outlaws religious parties.

Israel wants to maintain edge in weaponry over Arabs

CAIRO, July 5: Israel is seeking for a sum of 2.5 billion US dollars in the annual US military aid with an aim of maintaining an edge in weaponry over Arabs, reports from Jerusalem said yesterday, reports Xinhua.

The reports quoted Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens as saying yesterday that Israel needs an increase of nearly 40 per cent in US military aid to meet the requirements of its arms procurement and research and development.



KARACHI: Former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and her husband Bukhtawar (L) are about to leave early Thursday morning for London on a three-week European tour. Bhutto expressed apprehensions that the government might raid her house to malign her in false cases and indulge in massive arrest of her party activists on charges of alleged involvement in terrorist activities. —AFP/UNB photo

1.5 lakh Indians enter Pakistan illegally

ISLAMABAD, July 5: About 150,000 Indians have entered Pakistan illegally in the last 10 years and the majority of those still in the country are under surveillance as suspected "terrorists," the official Associated Press of Pakistan said Thursday, reports AFP.

A number of terrorists have infiltrated Pakistan under the garb of immigrants to disturb law and order," the news agency reported, citing unidentified sources in the Interior Ministry and federal investigation agency.

"It is believed that most of these Indian nationals are involved in gruesome terrorist activities all over the country, particularly in Sindh and Punjab provinces," the report said.

"There might be the possibility of a few Indian nationals

disappearing, but the majority of them are under strict observation", it said.

The report came as the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif imposed a series of measures primarily aimed against illegal weapons, to quell the violence that breaks out regularly throughout Pakistan.

Mr. Sharif cancelled after the last minute an important trip to Japan and Hong Kong after two massacres in his home province of Punjab.

A parallel campaign has meanwhile been launched against the Al-Zulfikar group, which the authorities associate with former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and to Pakistan's traditional rival, India.

Rathore to retaliate any bid for removal

MUZAFFARABAD (Pakistan), July 5: Pakistan-ruled Kashmir's rebellious Prime Minister Mumtaz Hussain Rathore vowed on Thursday to retaliate if Pakistani authorities used violence to remove him, reports Reuter.

"If one bullet is fired, a thousand bullets will be fired in reply," he told cheering supporters in the Azad (free) Kashmir capital Muzaffarabad.

The jubilant supporters loosed off with automatic weapons as he spoke to a crowd on his return after four days' in Islamabad, where he annulled last week's regional elections after accusing Pakistani officials of massive rigging to defeat him.

Earlier in Islamabad, he said he would throw out the territory's Pakistani police chief if the chief ignored his orders to leave.

He said the Pakistani chief Secretary controlling the state bureaucracy had returned to Islamabad and the Police Inspector-General "will also be on his way out very soon."

Two days ago Rathore ordered both officials to leave, accusing them of rigging the state legislative assembly elections won by All-Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (AJKMC) Party backed by Pakistani Premier Nawaz Sharif.

But Islamabad told them to stay at their posts.

Rathore a follower of Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, has ordered a fresh vote on September 27. But the Pakistani government and the AJKMC say the decision is illegal and that the previous election process will be completed.

Rathore's allegation were endorsed on Thursday by a meeting of senior members of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) as well as some of his political opponents in Kashmir.

Pakistani authorities have previously sacked or arrested Kashmiri leaders for defying Islamabad but political sources said Islamabad had shown restraint to avoid embarrassment in view of a Muslim revolt in Indian-ruled Kashmir.

Pakistan rules one-third of the disputed mountain region and strongly supports politically the uprising in the two-thirds governed by India.

Dalai Lama to visit USSR

NEW DELHI, July 5: Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, will visit the Soviet Union this month to promote Buddhism in the communist country, a spokesman said today, reports AFP.

BRIFFLY

Jordan to lift Martial Law next week: Jordan's 23-year-old Martial Law will be lifted next week when Prime Minister Taher Masri presents his government's policy to the Lower House of Parliament Wednesday, sources here said, reports Xinhua from Amman.

The lifting of Martial Law has already been approved by the cabinet, added the sources who requested anonymity.

The Martial Law, imposed after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war was frozen by the former government led by Modar Badran when he came to power in December 1989. Badran promised to lift the Martial Law during his term of office, but did not achieve that goal because of the outbreak of the Gulf crisis and subsequent war which delayed many activities of his government.

The sources also said the government is starting to work on enacting a temporary law which would cover cases of financial corruption, land use and economic security.

Mandela only candidate for ANC chief: Nelson Mandela emerged as the lone candidate Thursday for presidency of the African National Congress, signifying the respect he commands from both militants and moderates in the broad-based organization, reports AP from Durban.

Mandela, 73, holds the No 2 post as deputy president but has effectively led the ANC since his February 1990 release from 27 years' imprisonment.

The current president, Oliver Tambo, has been in poor health since suffering a stroke two years ago and said he would not run for the post again.

Mandela's charisma, good relationship with President F W de Klerk, and name recognition among South African youth have given him broad support among moderates and young militants and made him a natural for the presidency.

UK to cut defence staff: British Defence Minister Tom King on Thursday announced plans to cut military and civilian staff at the Ministry in London from 14,500 to 7,000 in the next two to three years, reports AFP from London.

King last July announced a 20 per cent in armed forces personnel as part of general defence cuts made possible by the ending of the cold war.

In a written statement to parliament Thursday, he said the cuts in London would be part of a decentralisation and regrouping programme.

The Ministry has said that a 20 per cent in civilian personnel working for the armed forces will mean the loss of about 35,000 jobs, 20,000 in Britain and 15,000 abroad.

John Major to visit China: British Prime Minister John Major will visit China to sign an agreement on the construction of a new Hong Kong airport, Downing Street announced yesterday, reports Xinhua from London.

The agreement memorandum of understanding concerning the construction of the new airport in Hong Kong and related questions has been initiated by the Chinese and British sides.

The agreement has been reached as a result of intensive discussions on the subject conducted by the two sides for the last few months.

According to British officials, Major welcomed the initialing of the document which was made public yesterday, and said this was an important confidence booster for Hong Kong.

Schwarzkopf won't seek Senate seat: Gulf war Commander General Norman Schwarzkopf has ruled out a bid for a seat in the US Senate in 1992, according to a magazine article released on Thursday, reports Reuter from Washington.

"No sir," he replied when asked whether he would seek election from Florida for a Senate seat, Parade magazine says in its new issue, "absolutely not."

But Schwarzkopf appeared to leave the door open to seeking political office at some later date. "What I've said is, never say never, because who knows? I may be 70 years old and decide that life is boring and I might want to be the local district commissioner or something like that."

NATO Secy—Gen visits Romania: NATO Secretary-General Manfred Woerner on Thursday hailed Romania's steps towards democracy, reports Reuter.

"This is a country on the move, on its way to democracy with a lot of dedicated democrats struggling for a better future in freedom," he said.

Woerner was speaking at a dinner in his honour given by Romanian Foreign Minister Adrian Nastase, during the NATO leader's first official visit to Romania since the collapse of communists rule in the December 1989 revolution.

"This country belongs to Europe and has now rejoined the spiritual family of European nations. You can count on our support, not only on our sympathy. We will not leave you alone," he said.

Amnesty for Honduran detainees: President Rafael Callejas of Honduras announced Thursday an amnesty for 13 political prisoners and more than 300 farm workers accused of seizing land illegally, reports AFP from Honduras.

The measures were included in a wide-ranging accord reached with business groups and labour and peasant organisations after 15 days of talks with the government.

The agreement also calls for raising the minimum wage by about 25 per cent from its current level of 50 dollars a month.

The amnesty will affect 13 Hondurans jailed on charges of shipping weapons to leftist guerrillas in neighbouring El Salvador and more than 300 peasants who were jailed in connection with land disputes.

Slovenia ignores ultimatum to pull back defence units

BELGRADE, July 5: The republic of Slovenia defied a Yugoslav government order to pull back its troops on Friday and vowed to keep Slovenian flags flying over its border, reports AP.

As Yugoslavia moved into the second day of a precarious peace, the independence-seeking republic showed no sign of complying with a series of demands made by the eight-member federal presidency.

Meanwhile, a news report indicated that Serbia, the largest and most influential Yugoslav republic, might no

longer oppose Slovenian independence.

But the report in the Belgrade newspaper Politika indicated that Serbia still strongly resisted independence for neighbouring Croatia, which has a large ethnic Serbian population. Both republics declared independence on June 25.

The nation's splintered federal presidency tested the limits of the fragile truce with new ultimatums on Slovenia.

The presidency on Thursday ordered Slovenia to withdraw its forces and release all federal prisoners by mid-

night (2200GMT), lift its blockade of federal army bases by noon (1000 GMT) Friday and turn over control of its border posts by Sunday.

The first deadline passed with no indication Slovenia had withdrawn troops from combat positions.

Slovenian forces in fact strengthened barricades in the republic's capital of Ljubljana on Thursday night, replacing buses and trucks blocking streets with iron girders fortified by barbed wire.

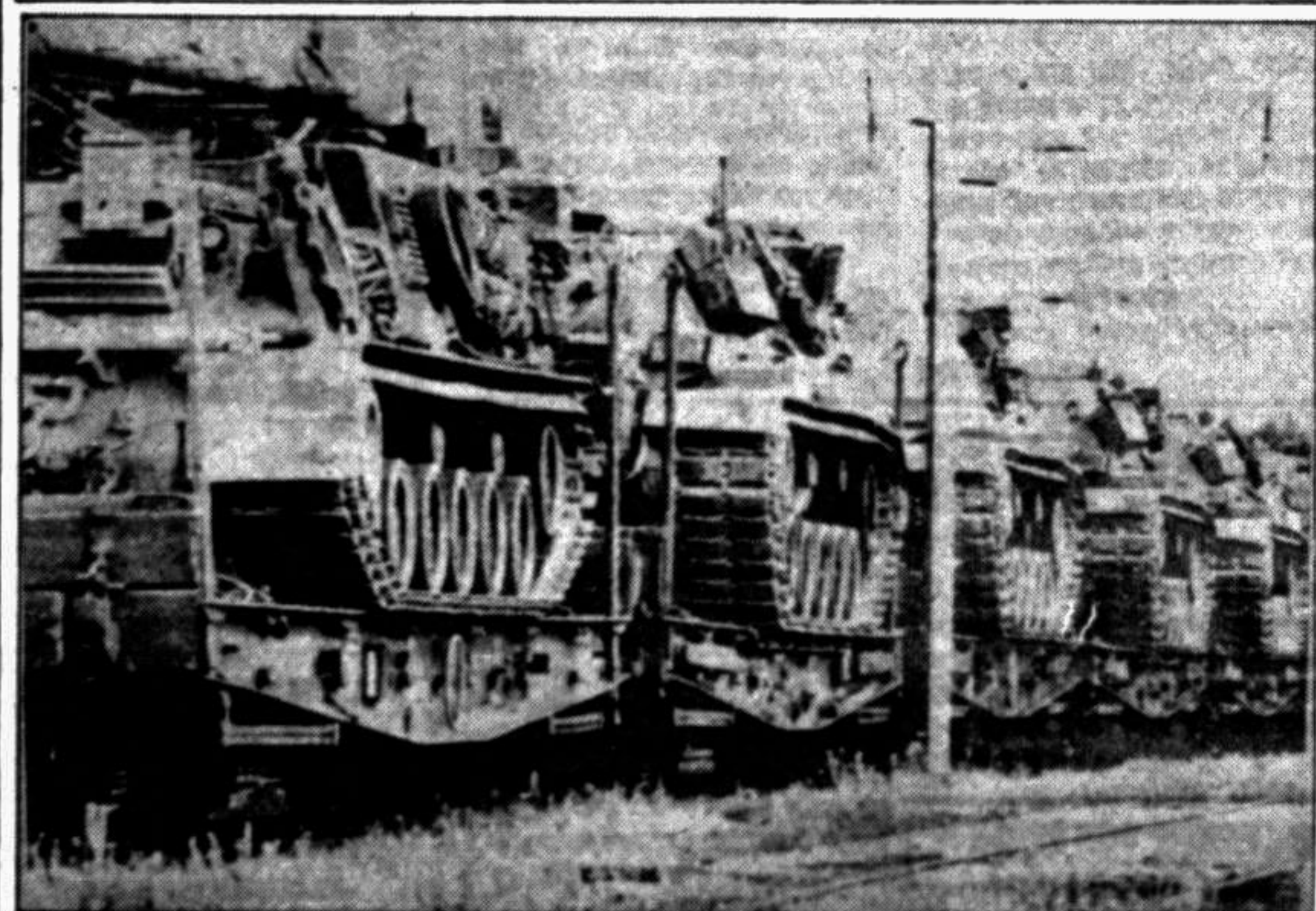
Slovenian leaders also said they would not agree to the demand to give back their

border posts, which now are marked by signs and flags of the "Republic of Slovenia," rather than of Yugoslavia.

Slovenia's seizure of its federal border posts last week triggered widespread fighting that nudged Yugoslavia closer to disintegration.

A truce reached early Thursday still held Friday morning, but the issues that plunged the two sides into combat during the past week remained unresolved.

There appeared to be no new threat of military action from the federal army, which has seemed to be operating independently of federal authority. Slovenia boycotted a meeting Thursday of the presidency, which is made up of representatives from Yugoslavia's six republics and two provinces.



LEIBNITZ, Austria: A train carrying the 560-man strong combat group of the Austrian 9th Armoured Brigade arrives at Leibnitz, southern Austria, near the Slovenian border on Wednesday. The combat group is equipped with 10 light assault tanks. —AFP/UNB photo

Many others will quit party: Yeltsin

Split in Soviet CP likely

MOSCOW, July 5: The chances of a formal split in the Communist Party increased significantly Thursday with the resignations of Eduard Shevardnadze, a leader of the democratic reformers that Mikhail Gorbachev is trying to keep in the fold, reports AP.

The former foreign minister renounced his party membership as he angrily refused to submit to an internal investigation of his role in founding a democratic opposition movement.

"Under no circumstances will I submit to such an investigation and kangaroo court, because if I agreed to it, I would be providing support to the return of the Communist Party leadership to repressive methods of crushing dissent," said Shevardnadze, 63, in his resignation letter.

Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, called Shevardnadze's decision a "personal matter" but said he believed many others would quit, too.

"That process will go pretty fast now, I think," said Yeltsin, who quit the party one year ago.

Fyodor Burlatsky, a prominent Soviet legislator and party member, predicted, that the departure of an internationally respected figure like Shevardnadze could prompt the defection of about one-quarter of the party membership, which plummeted from 19 million to 16.3 million last year.

There was no immediate comment from Gorbachev, who indicated in a speech published Wednesday that he was still fighting to preserve the Communist Party's power and keep the reformist wing within it.

Shevardnadze and eight other leading reformers this week founded a democratic reform movement that could evolve into an opposition party challenging the Communists that have ruled here since 1917.

The party Central Control Commission launched an "investigation" of his call for an opposition party and demanded he appear before the panel last Monday. He did not show up.

Commission spokesman Konstantin Kachalin said Thursday that the panel discussed Shevardnadze's case Monday but "since he is quitting the Communist Party, we are not going to take further action."

The commission could have censured Shevardnadze and recommended his expulsion. The nine founders of the new democracy movement are all Communists, or ex-Communists turned reformers. Many have been or are still close to Gorbachev, who is both President and Communist Party leader.

Gorbachev has not opposed the new coalition, but in a speech published Wednesday by the Communist Party daily Pravda, he said the conflict between reformers and hard-lin-

ers was destroying the party.

"I must say that if this continues, if the party remains in such a condition, it will lose all political struggles and the elections we face in the near future," he said, speaking to a committee drafting a new, less Marxist party platform.

"People are simply turned off by the party: what can it give to society, if it cannot even get its own house in order?" Gorbachev said. "So the situation, I will say bluntly, is critical, and we must act to straighten it out."

The party, blamed by many ordinary Soviets for mismanagement and corruption, suffered a stinging defeat in the Russian Republic's June 12 presidential elections. Yeltsin trounced three Communists.

In one of Gorbachev's main reforms, the party relinquished its constitutional monopoly on power in March 1990. But it retains a firm grip on the country's military-industrial complex and much of the rest of the economy.

Off the Record

Whizzkid swindler

LONDON, 5: A 16-year-old Briton, posing as a whizzkid financier, flew in private jets, got a loan on a mansion and treated girlfriends to champagne suppers as he carried out swindles worth at least one million dollars, a court heard, reports Reuter.

Britain's The Sun newspaper dubbed Mark Acklom 'Kid Con' today after the courtroom statements about the boy's sensational spree.

A London prosecutor said he began by using his father's credit card. He shopped at Harrods, the upper crust London store, and entertained a girlfriend in the presidential suite of the Grand Hotel in the fashionable seaside resort of Brighton.

Later he conned a big loan company into giving him a mortgage of 466,000 pounds sterling (750,000 dollars) on a house in exclusive Dulwich, a London suburb where former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had planned to retire from politics.

Prosecutor David Fisher said that as a pupil at his elite college Acklom found he was able to deceive... people that he was a successful financier.

After leaving school he carried a mobile telephone to keep in touch with his contacts and duped people into thinking he was a highly-paid stockbroker aged 25.

One unpaid bill, for him and his guests' fly to Paris, Berne and Tenerife, came to nearly 35,000 pounds sterling (55,000 dollars).

But when police arrested him, he confessed that his bank account could guarantee a cheque for only... one pound.

Now 18, he admitted theft of the credit card and obtaining money, property and a mortgage by deception.

The court remanded him on bail on Thursday until August 2 pending reports.

The loan company said it had checked his credit worthiness. It was now re-examining its procedures.

Reversal of Japan's nemesis

TOKYO: Nearly one quarter of Japanese people believe that the United States has supplanted the Soviet Union, long considered Japan's chief nemesis, as the top threat to their nation, a newspaper said Friday, reports AP.

Some 24 per cent of respondents to a survey conducted last month by the mass-circulation Yomiuri newspaper said the United States has replaced the Soviet Union as the top threat to Japan, the newspaper reported.

Two years ago, in the last poll "of this type," the Soviet Union was named the top threat by 33 per cent of respondents, while 11 per cent said the United States topped the list.

This year, the Soviet Union was cited by 22 per cent of the 3,000 randomly selected respondents as the country's number one threat.

Younger respondents were more wary of the United States than their elders, with 33 per cent of those in their 20s citing the United States as the country from which Japan had the most to fear. Some 27 per cent of respondents in their 30s cited the United States as the top threat, while 24 per cent of those in their 40s and 19 per cent of those in their 50s made the same observation.

The erosion of bilateral relations because of trade frictions and US discontent with Japan's role in the Gulf war has made the United States more threatening while the end of the Cold War has diminished the danger posed by the Soviet Union, the paper quoted unidentified analysts as saying.

North Korea, China and South Korea were named as the next most threatening countries.