

Pavlov ill, replaced : Latvian PM arrested

Yeltsin takes over command of all Soviet Armed Forces in Russia

MOSCOW, Aug 21: Russian President Boris Yeltsin has taken over command of all Soviet Armed Forces inside Russia, a Presidential statement issued here said, reports AFP.

"I am taking over command of the Soviet Armed Forces in Russian territory from 5 pm local time (1400 GMT) on August 20, until the activity of the constitutional bodies and institutions of state power is fully restored," Yeltsin said in a decree.

"My full control over the Soviet Armed Forces on Russian territory will end when the President of the Soviet Union resumes his functions or a new constitutional body is set up to lead the Armed Forces," Yeltsin said.

He said that "all Soviet military detachments and KGB troops deployed in Russia must stay in their usual bases".

All forces currently away from their usual deployment sites must return to base, the statement said.

Defence Minister Dmitri Yazov took part in the coup that toppled Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, and so all orders he has issued since August 18 were superseded, Yeltsin said.

In an earlier decree Tuesday, Yeltsin named a Defence Minister for the republic, Konstantin Kobets, who has served as Chairman of the State Committee for the Defence of the Russian Federation.

Reuters from Washington adds: Boris Yeltsin told ABC television on Tuesday he believed his telephone contacts with US President George Bush and British Prime Minister John Major had dissuaded communist hardliners from mounting a tank attack against his stronghold.

The US network quoted the Russian Federation President as saying: "don't write any obituaries about us, we're not dead yet."

Yeltsin gave the brief interview from his Headquarters in the beleaguered Russian Parliament building in Moscow on Tuesday morning. "We are not leaving the battlefield," Yeltsin said, according to the network.

ABC quoted a source inside the Russian Federation building, which is guarded by thousands of Yeltsin's supporters, as saying some passages in the building had been mined in anticipation of an attack.

Another report says: Soviet



MOSCOW — The Soviet resistance leader and Russian President Boris Yeltsin greeting thousands of his supporters of defiance against the Emergency State Committee.

Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov has fallen ill and was replaced Tuesday, by his first deputy Vitaly Duguzhtev, Soviet Television reported.

The report said Pavlov suf-

fered a malaise caused by high blood-pressure on Monday but was able to chair a government meeting Monday evening.

Since then his condition had worsened and he had been

forced to take to his bed, according to a communique read on television.

Duguzhtev had been asked to take over as Prime Minister in a temporary capacity, it said.

Earlier, Tuesday Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh was also reported to be sick.

Bessmertnykh, 57, was in his office on Monday and arrived for work on this morning, but then left, saying he would be away for two days, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

AP reports: Soviet troops arrested Latvian Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis after surrounding the government center in Latvia and ordered its defenders to lay down their arms or be killed, according to a Latvian spokesman in Stockholm said.

AFP further says: The Head of the KGB secret police in the Soviet Central Asian Republic of Kirghizia has asked to go into early retirement, according to the official Soviet news agency Tass.

Tass quoted from a Kirghizia official decree relieving General Djumabek Asanklov of his duties.

No reasons were given for the decision or links suggested to the ouster of President Mikhail Gorbachev.

WHO receives no request to examine Gorbachev

GENEVA, Aug 21: The World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Tuesday it had received no request to examine Mikhail Gorbachev to verify whether he is in fact in poor health but added it would be unable to act on a request from Russia alone.

Russia leader Boris Yeltsin is asking for an international

team of medical doctors to examine Gorbachev to check on claims by the hardliners who led the coup that they deposed the Soviet leader because he was unwell.

"We have not received any formal or informal request from the Soviet Union," WHO spokesman Thomas Netter told Reuters.

In any case, he said, the UN agency would not be able to act on a request from the Russian Republic.

"Russia is not a member state of the WHO. We operate through member states. Member states have to ask us for action on their own terrorism," he said.

In addition to the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic are formally also members of the WHO and other UN bodies. No request regarding Gorbachev has been received from them either.

"If we get a request, we will consider it. I can't say what we'd do," Netter said.

Gorbachev's blunder

PARIS, Aug 21: Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev blundered by leaving Moscow for a Black Sea holiday at times of tension, former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

A Hardline Emergency Committee seized power while Gorbachev was away, and he was reported held at his holiday retreat in the Crimea.

"I think the fact that he left Moscow, he left his post was a mistake, a big mistake," Shevardnadze told French television TF-1 in an interview from Moscow.

"I must say that in his place, in such a complex situation, in such difficult social and political circumstances, I would not have gone on holiday, I would not have left the capital," he said.

Shevardnadze warned of the danger of a takeover by hardliners when he resigned last December.

Govt under fire for failing to capture Rajiv's killers alive

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: The government and police came under fire Wednesday for failing to capture alive the Sri Lankan militant who allegedly masterminded the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, reports AP.

The one-eyed Tamil militant known as Sivasaran shot himself in the head Tuesday as police closed in on his hideout in a quiet south Indian village.

Six other militants swallowed cyanide capsules that killed them within minutes, police said.

The suicide set back hopes of uncovering the role of Sivasaran's organization, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The Tigers, who denied involvement in Gandhi's slaying are engaged in a deadly 8-year struggle for Tamil independence in neighboring Sri Lanka where ethnic Sinhalese predominate. An estimated 19,000 people have died in that conflict.

Opposition politicians in the Indian Parliament questioned whether police mishandled the raid on Sivasaran's hideout.

"The government has bungled the entire issue," Madan Lal Khurana, of the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, was quoted as saying by Press Trust of India.

Khurana accused the government of the covering up security lapses preceding Gandhi's assassination, the agency reported.

Gandhi was killed at an election rally May 21 in Sriperumbudur near Madras in south India by a suicide bomb strapped to the waist of a young Sri Lankan woman. She, Gandhi and 16 others died in the explosion.

Sivasaran, 28, reportedly a top intelligence officer of the Tamil Tigers, was photographed at the meeting by a cameraman who also was killed in the blast. Sivasaran was posing as a journalist and

was pictured standing next to the suicide bomber.

Sivasaran and a 22-year-old woman accomplice named Subha, who was among the suicide victims, had eluded the biggest manhunt in India's history for 90 days.

During the search, police stumbled across a huge support network of arms factories and supply lines for the Tamil militants based in northern Sri Lanka, 25 miles (40 kilometers) across the Palk Straits.

Acting on a tip, police put the hideout in Konanakunta, 12 miles (20 kilometers) south of Bangalore, under surveillance on Sunday evening.

By Monday evening, hundreds of police surrounding the single-story brick house exchanged gunfire with the militants. But it was another 11 hours before police commandos stormed the building to find everyone dead by suicide.

Blackout in Moscow city

MOSCOW, Aug 21: Moscow's streetlights went out abruptly early today, plunging the city into darkness, reports AFP.

Shortly afterwards, an unidentified official at the Russian Parliament, where opponents of the Soviet coup have gathered to back Russian President Boris Yeltsin, called on supporters to "prepare yourselves, something is going to happen in 10 minutes."

BRIEFLY

Attempt on Indian envoy in Bucharest: India's Ambassador to Romania was wounded in an assassination attempt on Tuesday and anti-terrorist troops shot dead one of his attackers and wounded two more, police in Bucharest said, reports Reuters.

The terrorist wanted to kill the Ambassador. One terrorist was shot dead and two others were wounded. They are now under arrest. The fourth attacker managed to run away but he has little chance of escape, police colonel Gheorghe Preda said.

PAP wins Singapore polls: Singapore's ruling People's Action Party (PAP) secured a parliamentary majority Wednesday when opposition parties conceded 41 of the 81 seats without a fight, state-owned Singapore Broadcasting Corp said, reports Reuters.

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong last week called a snap general election for August 31, more than two years earlier than required. All nominations for Parliamentary seats were due at noon (0400 GMT) on Wednesday.

New judge for Smith's trial demanded: The prosecution in the William Kennedy Smith rape case filed a motion on Tuesday demanding that a new judge be appointed for the trial, reports Reuters from Florida.

The motion, filed late on Tuesday afternoon, asked Palm Beach Circuit Judge Mary Lupo to step down on the grounds that she was biased and had personal and professional conflicts in the case.

Tehran-Moscow ties to suffer: Iran remembers Mikhail Gorbachev as the man who increased religious freedom for 50 million Muslims and pulled Soviet troops out of Afghanistan, reports Reuters.

Tehran's leaders are now worried that his overthrow may damage their improved relations with Moscow and send a new flood of refugees into the country.

While Iraq, Iran's enemy in the 1980-88 Gulf war, gloated over Monday's Kremlin coup, Tehran reserved official comment.

EC summit on Soviet crisis: The European Community summit on the crisis in the Soviet Union planned for Friday will take place in the Hague, a Netherlands Foreign Ministry spokesman in Amsterdam said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

He said it would begin at 4 P.M. (1400 GMT). EC Foreign Minister met in the Hague on Tuesday in emergency session to consider a response to the overthrow on Monday of President Mikhail Gorbachev by Kremlin hardliners.

The ministers demanded his reinstatement and suspended over one billion dollars' worth of aid to Moscow.

Iraq seeks Arab League intervention: Iraq on Tuesday called on Arab League intervention for an end to Turkish military operations on its territory, the official Iraq news agency (INA) reported, reports AFP.

Foreign Minister Ahmad Husseini Al-Khodair, in a statement to the league's Secretary General Esmat Abdel Meguid in Baghdad said Iraq wanted "rapid and efficient intervention in the form of pressure on the Turkish government to withdraw its troops from Iraqi territory," INA reported.

Deng, 87 today, still stalks politics

BEIJING, Aug 21: Deng Xiaoping turns 87 Thursday, but the occasion will pass unnoticed by the vast majority of Chinese as the retired patriarch celebrates quietly with his immediate family, reports AFP.

Despite maintaining the lowest of profiles, there is little doubt among observers here that Deng, who has held no official office since March 1990, continues to exert a strong influence on China's affairs — a supposition borne out by recent decisions announced by the Chinese leadership.

Virtually no information is available regarding the activities or health of Deng, whose last public appearance was more than six months ago when state television showed him talking to aged party cadres in Shanghai at Chinese New Year.

However, one of his sons, Deng Pufang, recently declared that his father is in very good health.

Meanwhile, Chinese political life seems frozen during the wait for his death, an event that would hold serious ramifications for the leadership.

When Chinese are asked how they see China developing in the future, they inevitably reply that everything will depend on the reaction to Deng's demise.

Deng Xiaoping himself seems satisfied with his health, having stated his intention of being in Hong Kong

when the British Colony reverts to Chinese rule in 1997.

A photograph taken by one of his daughters — the painter

Deng Lin — in late July, showed a smiling Deng Xiaoping relaxing on the verandah of his villa in

Beidaihe — the coastal resort favoured by top Chinese leaders. The photo showed the Chinese leader looking tanned but also rather puffy, which some observers put down to the effects of medication.

Deng Pufang also said his father closely followed current events and was kept well informed of the catastrophic floods that hit China this summer, and had made a contribution to those affected.

While Deng Xiaoping no longer attends major policy meetings, his shadow looms large wherever decision-makers gather. The leadership, worried above all else about stability in the country, has on occasion announced personnel changes that would appear to bear Deng's stamp.

Most notable was the promotion to the vice-premier-ship in April of Zhu Rongji, the former Mayor of Shanghai and a pragmatic reformer favoured by Deng.

The promotion could, one day, provide the stepping stone that sees Zhu replace premier Li Peng, a deeply unpopular figure in China who is not regarded as one of Deng's acolytes.

Li has been a belated and lukewarm supporter of the open-door policy and is held by many to be directly responsible for the crushing of the pro-democracy movement in June 1989.



BEIDAIHE (China): Former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping relaxes at the seaside resort of Beidaihe as photographed by his daughter Deng Lin July 20, 1991. This is the most recent photograph released of Deng, who celebrates his 87th birthday today (Thursday). — AFP/UNB photo

Israel starts expanding Jewish enclave in WB

JERUSALEM, Aug 21: Israel began expanding a Jewish enclave in the West Bank city of Hebron on Wednesday by moving a cluster of mobile homes into a former Arab bus terminal, reports AP.

The move came despite repeated warnings by US President Bush for halt to Jewish settlement building, which the United States considers as an irritant in arranging a Middle East peace.

Israel reports said that four mobile homes were moved Wednesday morning to the site next to the Jewish quarter and inside Hebron's

marketplace. The station has been used by the army as a military outpost since 1983.

Another six trailers were to be moved in later Wednesday, they said.

Settler leader Aharon Domb, director of Shavei Hebron Seminary, said they would house some of 160 Jewish students currently living at nearby Beit Romano.

The army declared Hebron a closed military area and said they would allow access to the site only to some journalists with army escort.

Hebron, a city holy to Jews, Muslims and Christians as the burial site of the biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is a flashpoint of tensions of the 44-month Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule in the occupied territories.

In all more than 80,000 Palestinians and about 500 Jews live in the mountainous city, about 25 miles (50 kilometers) south of Jerusalem.

Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the 1967 Middle East War.

Off the Record

Galileo mission to Jupiter fails

PASADENA (California): An attempt to free a jammed antenna plugging the 1.5 billion dollar mission of the US spacecraft Galileo to the planet Jupiter has failed, a spokesman of the NASA space agency said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Mission officials are concerned the antenna problem could prevent Galileo from sending back much of the data it will collect when it flies past Jupiter, the solar system's biggest planet, in December 1995.

Space engineers sent a stream of radio signals 150 million miles (240 million km) to Galileo to point the spacecraft away from direct sunlight for 50 hours last week to cool ribs of the antenna stuck in their stowed position.

But the manoeuvre, which also included turning off some of the spacecraft's electrical power to help the process, did not lead to sufficient cooling and the release of the antenna, said James Wilson of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Another attempt to cool the spacecraft's main antenna, which works roughly like an inverted umbrella, will be made in December when Galileo is further from the sun.

Galileo will pass the asteroid gaspra on October 29. That will be the first encounter between an asteroid and a spacecraft, but the main antenna will not be needed then.

Galileo, launched from a space shuttle in October 1989, is flying at 41,500 MPH (66,400 KPH). It passed Venus in February 1990.



MOSCOW: A woman applauds a speaker, August 20, in front of the Russian Parliament building, biting a poster reading "No to the Communist Junta". — AFP/UNB photo

A tragedy indeed

DIHARMAPURI: A girl's act of marrying a youth of her own choice without the knowledge of her parents has led to a heart-rending tragedy as her parents and four siblings, including a three-year-old girl, drowned themselves in the river Cauvery, 12 kms from Hogenakal in Dharmapuri district in Tamil Nadu, reports PTI.

The bodies of the six were recovered by her father's brother Monday night.

The father, P. Duraiswamy, aged 45, working in the southern railway as a blacksmith in Salem junction, and residing at Sooramagal near Salem with his family, had four daughters and one son. The eldest daughter, aged 16, fell in love with a youth, aged 25, living in the same street, and on August 7 eloped with him and married him without her parents' knowledge.

On learning this, Duraiswamy was heart-broken. He applied for two days' leave and without informing his neighbours left for Hogenakal with his wife and their other four children — three girls and a boy — aged between three and 13.

On August 9 Duraiswamy sent a letter to his superior officer informing him of his decision to commit suicide and the circumstances leading to this.

It is said he travelled in a boat with his wife and children and after getting down in a lonely place tied himself along with others with a dhoti and saree and jumped into the river.

Following a hectic search by his brother, the bodies of the six were found in a decomposed state on the river bank near Chengambadi Attur village within the Eriyur Police Station limits in Dharmapuri district last night.

After post-mortem, the bodies were cremated Tuesday. Police have registered a case and are further investigating.

Tribunal to probe attack on Benazir's motorcade

KARACHI, Aug 21: Pakistani authorities appointed a tribunal on Tuesday to inquire into a weekend attack on a motorcade of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, reports Reuters.

A Sindh province government announcement said the tribunal, headed by a provincial High Court judge, would submit its report within 30 days.

Earlier on Tuesday, Bhutto said bullets would not stop her protests.

The bullets will not silence the voice of dissent, she told reporters after unidentified gunmen fired three shots at the vehicle of a senior member of her Pakistan People's Party, Aftaz Ahsan in Karachi on Monday night.

Bhutto came under attack on Saturday when her motorcade was stoned and shots were fired when she drove through a part of Karachi nominated by her political foes in the Mohajir Qanun Movement



(MQM). The MQM, a powerful militant group representing Muslim migrants from India, has denied Bhutto's allegation it was responsible for Saturday's attack.