

## Cuba foils US bid to form opposition group

HAVANA (Cuba), Aug 31: Cuba's Intelligence Services said on Friday they had foiled a US-backed attempt to create an opposition group on the communist-ruled island, reports Reuter.

Colonel Eduard Delgado Rodriguez of the State Security Department told a news conference in Havana that security agents had obtained a letter sent by a leading Cuban anti-government exile in Spain, Carlos Alberto Montaner, to five prominent anti-communist

### Premadasa urges politicians to resolve crisis peacefully

COLOMBO, Aug 31: Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, facing the biggest challenge to his 32-month rule, has urged politicians to solve their differences peacefully, reports Reuter.

"Whatever differences, be they political or otherwise, must be resolved peacefully and amicably so that all could live with honour and dignity," he said on Friday.

Addressing a gathering in the northern town of Anuradhapura, Premadasa said different opinions characterised democratic values and human independence.

Elected in December 1988 for a six-year term, Premadasa is facing a challenge to his presidency from about 120 opposition and government parliamentarians

dissidents in Cuba. The letter called on the five to set up a so-called democratic platform to foment opposition against Cuba's one-party communist government led by President Fidel Castro.

Delgado described Montaner as an agent of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and said the plan had the full backing of the US Security Services.

"The United States has for some time been trying to build up an internal opposition in Cuba," he said.

The US administration has in the past denied accusations by Cuba that it backed opposition and human rights groups, which are outlawed by the Cuban authorities.

Delgado said the letter, a photocopy of which was distributed to journalists, was brought from Spain to Cuba in early August by a Spanish journalist, Xavier Domingo, working for the Spanish magazine Cambio 16.

Domingo visited the island during the August pan-American games and returned home on August 11 after handing over the letter to the dissidents, he added.

Asked if any action had been taken against the five dissidents, Delgado replied, "They are all at their homes."

Cuba's announcement of the foiled attempt came a day after the government distanced itself from the continuing swing away from communism in the Soviet Union, saying it would maintain its one-party communist system.

## Yeltsin seeks information

# 'CP has millions of dollars hidden in foreign banks'

MOSCOW, Aug 31: Moscow's liberal city leaders said on Friday the Communist Party had millions of dollars hidden in foreign bank accounts, and called on countries to freeze party assets abroad, reports Reuter.

"Russian President Boris Yeltsin has written a decree which includes an appeal to governments of the world to give information about party assets abroad," Alexander Muzykantsky, administrator for central Moscow, told a news conference.

After a presidential confiscation order local officials across the Soviet Union have begun sealing Communist Party

newspaper offices and finding new uses for party buildings. Gorbachev, angry over party complicity in a putsch by hard-liners, quit as communist leader on August 24 and ordered the handover of party property to city governments.

But Moscow city officials stressed they were not claiming direct ownership of the property, but simply taking inventory.

Final ownership would be determined either by a law on nationalisation of party property or by its voluntary surren-

der to the city, they said.

Muzykantsky said party assets in the Soviet Union were estimated to be worth 5.4 billion roubles (three billion Dollars at the commercial rate). Party publishing house were valued at 3.4 billion roubles (1.8 billion dollars).

A compound of buildings housing the Communist Party headquarters was alone estimated to be worth one billion roubles (550 million dollars).

"But all these figures are based on fixed state prices, and have nothing to do with real market value," Muzykantsky said.

"Taking into account the commercial price, the value will be much higher."

City officials said the buildings could be used for public housing, hospitals and nursing homes. Others could be turned into headquarters for the country's numerous new political parties now fighting to take the communists' place.

AFP adds: General Mikhail Moiseyev, former Chief of Staff of the Soviet Army, has said he had complete personal control of the country's nuclear weapons during last week's attempted coup and that "the world was not threatened."

In an interview with the Italian newspaper Il Corriere Della Sera, published Saturday Moiseyev also said that the nuclear codes were cancelled when communication was lost with President Mikhail Gorbachev.



BAKU, Azerbaijan: Thousands of pro-independence supporters demonstrate in central Baku August 29, as Azerbaijan declared its independence August 30. — AFP/UNB photo

## BJP moves bill to bar aliens from holding posts of President, PM

NEW DELHI, Aug 31: The pro-Hindu opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) moved Friday a non-official bill in parliament that would limit the posts of Prime Minister and President to those born in India, reports AFP.

The BJP move came amid local press reports that some activists in the ruling Congress (I) Party favour the gradual takeover of the Prime Minister's job by assassinated former Premier Rajiv Gandhi's Italian-born widow, Sonia.

Gandhi, 47, was killed May 21 in a bomb attack blamed by

investigators on the Sri Lankan militant group the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The bill, introduced by Vishwanath Sharma of the BJP, officially recognised as India's main opposition party, faces strongly opposition by the ruling party.

The bill, says the constitution should be amended to bar foreign-born Indians from holding high constitutional offices such as President and Prime Minister.

Minister of State for Law and Parliamentary Affairs

Rangarajan Kumaramangalam said the Congress (I) was "strongly opposed" to the right-wing Hindu party move.

A large number of Congress (I) activists have collectively and individually appealed to Sonia Gandhi to assume the party leadership.

They have also urged her to run for parliament in the vacant Amethi seat in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, which was won by her husband in the May-June election.

Sonia Gandhi has, however, so far spurned the demand and has kept away from public life.

The BJP had earlier ridiculed the idea of her taking over as Prime Minister by noting that she is foreign born, although she has Indian citizenship.

Sonia Gandhi, with her son, Rahul, and daughter, Priyanka, left August 21 on her first private overseas visit since her husband's death. There destination was kept secret for security reasons, but Congress (I) sources said they had gone to the United States.

PTI adds: The All India Muslim Youth Convention, Friday condemned the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for demanding establishment of full diplomatic relationship with Israel.

In a statement, the General Secretary of the convention and a prominent leader of the All India Babri Masjid Action Committee, Jawed Habeeb said "the BJP has once again shown its Zionist colours, this time more decisively, in demanding full diplomatic relations between India and Israel."

The demand, Mr Habeeb said was "undeniably a sinister move to deal another blow to India and its international prestige aimed at disturbing our foreign policy perspective, particularly, with Arab countries."

While strongly condemning the BJP for its move, Habeeb appealed to the Prime Minister, PV Narasimha Rao, to reject the demand.

He also urged all secular, democratic and patriotic forces to exert pressure on the government not to concede to the BJP on this score.

## UN accuses Iraq of landing 80 armed men on Kuwaiti island

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 31: The Security Council authorised its President on Friday to warn Iraq against any repetition of recent incursions into Kuwait, including the alleged landing of some 80 men on strategic Bubiyan island, reports Reuter.

"I will remind the Charge D' Affaires of Iraq that Iraq is responsible for whatever happens in its territory or from its territory which... touches the neighbouring territory of the state of Kuwait," council president Jose Ayala Lasso of Ecuador told reporters after brief closed-door council consultations.

He said a full report was still awaited from the UN Secretary General on the Bubiyan incident, in which Kuwait charged that some 80

Iraqis, armed but in civilian clothes, landed on the Kuwaiti island on Wednesday, supported by a number of boats.

Kuwait said it captured about 45 of the intruders and destroyed seven boats.

Some United States, Kuwaiti and British officials have suggested the Iraqis might have been trying to recover weapons abandoned by their troops on Bubiyan during the Gulf War.

Iraq has called the charges a fabrication and accused Kuwait of fomenting tension to justify the continued presence of United States forces in the Emirate and the continuation of UN sanctions against Iraq.

The UN Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM), which patrols a demilitarised zone straddling the borders, is

still investigating the incident and will see the prisoners.

Ayala Lasso said preliminary information about the incident and recent similar border infractions raised concern among council members, who wished to prevent any repetition.

He was referring in particular to a shooting incident on August 14 in which Iraqi police damaged a Kuwaiti police vehicle in the demilitarised zone, drawing a strong protest from UN officials.

British UN representative Sir David Hannay told reporters the Bubiyan incident was the most serious since the Gulf ceasefire because of the number involved and the sensitivity of their area. The situation now appeared calm, he added.

# Poland faces gravest ever political crisis

WARSAW, Aug 31: The resignation of the solidarity government in a clash with ex-communists who still domi-

nate parliament threatens Poland with its gravest political crisis since the overthrow of communism, reports

Reuter.

The Sejm (Lower House) is due to vote today (Saturday) whether to accept or reject

the resignation of the eight-month-old government of Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, under fire from deputies for his plans to cut the budget.

Bielecki on Friday accused the Sejm, two-thirds of whose members are ex-communists and their former allies, of making it impossible to govern.

"This is all about the government's real ability to take decision Bielecki told parliament, ignoring calls to withdraw his resignation."

He has said the government will not stay on in a caretaker capacity if it is voted out, opening the prospect of two months of uncertainty until Poland's first fully free postwar parliamentary elections in October.

Parliamentary leaders delayed the vote overnight after failing to reach agreement on Friday on how to resolve the crisis.

Bielecki and President Lech Walesa have repeatedly accused the Sejm of blocking solidarity reform legislation intended to transform Poland into a full democracy and free market economy.

Bielecki said the country was paying for the mistake of

## Off the Record

### Lenin now flat on his back in Riga's graveyard

RIGA (Latvia): Lenin looks out with unflinching gaze, his arm raised in greeting. But the founder of the Soviet Union now flat on his back in Riga's Monuments' graveyard, reports Reuter.

By Friday, in its second week of self-proclaimed independence, Latvia had already removed most of the symbols and taken over the institutions which marked its 51 years as a Soviet republic.

The KGB headquarters flew Latvia's maroon-and-white flag. Local militia guarded its airless corridors, linked by caged lift shafts to basement prison cells.

The Lenin statue was seen as particularly provocative, located as it was on freedom street in the centre of Riga," said Rolands Blezures, an aide to Vice-President Dainis Ivars.

Within hours of a city council vote on Monday, the 25-tonne bronze figure was heading for a corner of the national cemetery reserved for old flagstones and statues of yesterday's heroes.

"We wanted to preserve it intact. Maybe one day it could be put in a museum," Blezures said.

Removing the plinth with Lenin's name turned into a night-time festival. A mobile crane complete with demolition ball felled the red marble pedestal before a cheering crowd.

Many took chips of the plinth home as souvenirs. "Socialism kaput, we want to live in Europe," Andris Faurans, foreman of the municipal gardeners who levelled the ground and sowed grass seed, told a reporter.

Flowers left at the site the same evening, perhaps a tribute by one of the city's Russian-speaking majority had disappeared by daylight.

### Venus geologically alive

PASADENA (California): Venus is geologically alive and well and even experiences "venusquakes," judging from a huge landslide detected on the planet by the Magellan space probe, scientists said Friday, reports AFP.

"It's very exciting," said Steve Saunders, Magellan Project Scientist at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Jet Propulsion Laboratory here.

"It's another piece of a big puzzle." A scientist comparing radar images taken by Magellan in November and July noticed that a mapped area had disappeared in the interim.

"Where there was once a plateau now there is a pile of rubble," J.J. Plaut, the research associate who made the discovery, said of the area eight kilometers by three kilometers (about five miles by two miles).

"The best explanation we can come up with is, we're seeing a giant landslide," Saunders said. Project scientists concluded that the landslide was almost certainly caused by tectonic activity, he added.

"We think there probably are venusquakes and venus is still alive," Saunders said.

The landslide released energy equivalent to an earthquake measuring 5.0 on the Richter scale, Saunders said.

### Kenyan goes to jail for cutting off wife's ear

NAIROBI: Kenyan magistrates jailed a man for seven months for cutting off his wife's ear after she said, at 11 am that she had not prepared lunch, reports, Reuter.

The court in the port city of Mombasa also sentenced Mwero Shakoma to two strokes of the cane for brutality, the Daily Nation newspaper reported on Friday.

## 16 more dissidents arrested in Burma

BANGKOK, Aug 31: Burmese military authorities have arrested another 16 dissidents and charged them with having links with terrorist insurgents and creating unrest in several major towns, the official radio Rangoon said Friday, reports AFP.

The radio said in a dispatch monitored here that two of the suspects were male members of the youth wing of the outlawed parallel government set up in ethnic Karen insurgents' territory, while 14 others — including three women — were their supporters.

They were apprehended by military intelligence agents between August 20 and 25, the radio said.

The parallel government known as the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma was formed by Sein Win, a former member of Burma's main opposition political party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), and has its headquarters in a jungle

area controlled by Karen National Union ethnic insurgents.

Authorities also seized anti-government pamphlets, video and cassette tapes possessed by the 14 suspects, the radio said.

All of the suspects are being detained and intelligence agents are looking for people connected with them, it said.

The state-run radio earlier reported that a total of 21 suspects had been arrested by Burmese military intelligence agents earlier this month on similar charges.

The NLD won a majority of seats in general elections held in May 1990, but the ruling Burmese military junta has refused to hand over power.

Another report says: A Burmese political party has for the first time denounced the breakaway National League for Democracy (NLD) government at the Thai-Burma border as well as former premier U Nu's parallel government.



BONN: German Chancellor and leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Helmut Kohl (L), and Party Secretary General Volker Ruehe held a press conference at the CDU headquarters August 30, after a session of the party executive to discuss Stasi allegations of the former East German CDU members. Ruehe was accused by former East German Prime Minister Lothar de Maiziere of leading a witch-hunt against the eastern CDU, plotting to "sideline people who do not fit in with pre-conceived ideas". — AFP/UNB photo

## BRIEFLY

### Albania, Cyprus establish ties:

Albania and Cyprus have decided to establish diplomatic relations between them, reports Xinhua from Tirana.

An Albanian T V news reported last night that out of the goodwill for developing their bilateral relations and cooperation, the Albanian government and the Cyprus government have decided to establish diplomatic relations.

But the report failed to mention when and where they had signed a related agreement.

### 'Sofia to withdraw support for PLO':

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Friday that Bulgaria had decided to withdraw its backing for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), reports AFP from Jerusalem.

He told reporters on his return from a four-day visit to Sofia that he was "convinced Bulgaria would contribute positively to promoting the Middle East peace process since it has decided to no longer support the PLO."

"Since it severed its ties with Israel 23 years ago, that country adopted a particularly hard line regarding US, but this now is in the past," he said.

Shamir also referred to a series of cooperation accords with Bulgaria he signed on his trip in the fields of agriculture, health and scientific research.

In Sofia, officials said the two countries had agreed Bulgaria would be a transit point for Soviet Jewish immigrants heading for Israel, becoming the second country, after Hungary, to receive large numbers of emigres.

### France to chair Security Council:

France's UN ambassador, Jean Bernard Merimec, takes over the presidency of the Security Council on Sunday for the month of September, reports Reuter from United Nations.

The Council presidency rotates monthly among the body's 10 non-permanent members and five permanent members according to the English alphabet.

France, along with China, Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States, is one of the five permanent members with veto power.

Merimec, who became France's chief envoy at the United Nations in April, succeeds ambassador Jose Ayala Lasso of Ecuador as president of the Security Council.

### Bush, Major talk changes in USSR:

President Bush and British Prime Minister John Major on Friday concluded two days of talks exploring how the West should respond to the momentous changes in the Soviet Union, reports AP from Maine.

"We've done an awful lot of business here, talking about the future," Bush said.

Major and his family, after two nights at the president's oceanfront vacation home, returned home. The prime minister will go to Moscow on Sunday as the first Western leader to visit the Soviet Union since the botched coup against Mikhail S. Gorbachev and the collapse of Communist rule.

Major said he was "impressed by the way the two nations have worked together to solve their differences peacefully, reports Reuter from Manila.

The report said that since the fighting began between Croatian forces, on one hand, and Serbian autonomists and the Federal Army on the other, the Croats have downed eight airplanes and destroyed 32 tanks, 41 armoured vehicles and 56 trucks.

It added that the Federal Army had to cope with an increasing number of desertions.

### 12 trapped in collapsed bldg:

A building under demolition in the Philippine capital collapsed Saturday trapping about 12 construction workers, police and witnesses said, reports Reuter from Manila.

Rescuers tried to pull out workers pinned down by huge concrete slabs. Two injured men were taken to hospital.

Radio reporters at the scene said six floors of the nine-storey commercial building in the Makati financial district collapsed.

"There are men trapped inside. We need cranes to lift the slabs that fell on them," a police officer said.

### 4 shot dead in Punjab:

Four relatives of a Sikh militant leader were shot dead in India's Punjab state on Friday and tens of thousands of villagers went on strike, alleging police killed the family to avenge a bomb attack on their chief, reports Reuter from Jaiana.

Police blamed a rival Sikh militant group for the pre-dawn killings of the grandmother, aunt, niece and nephew of Balwinder Singh, a district leader of the Babbar Khalsa Guerrillas.

The home they shared in the village of Jaiana was set ablaze after they were killed.