

Shevardnadze warns of further instability

USSR, Sept 20 : Eduard A. Shevardnadze warned Thursday that further instability can be expected in the Soviet Union unless economic reforms are successful, reports AP.

"I think that if we are not successful in making the economy healthy, in helping the people — in improving the conditions of life — we have no guarantees that tomorrow or the day after we won't face more serious events," Shevardnadze said in an interview with Soviet television.

"May be they will be spontaneous or of some other nature. But there is no guarantee," he added.

Shevardnadze's statement echoed those of other legislators and leaders who fear that hunger and other social needs might create the climate for another hard-line coup, similar to the failed putsch of Aug 18-21.

Shevardnadze resigned last December 20, warning that the Soviet government was in the hands of hard-liners who dominated President Mikhail Gorbachev — a warning later proved accurate. He now heads the Soviet Foreign Policy Association, an independent think tank.

Turning to his native Georgia, Shevardnadze called on President Zviad Gamsakhurdia to enter into a constructive dialogue with the opposition in recent days, the Georgia leader arrested three

opposition leaders in defiance of thousands of opponents. "Naturally I cannot stay indifferent to what is happening to the land," Shevardnadze said.

There is a process of democratisation, and the only thing that is needed now is a reasonable and civilized dialogue with the opposition. "I think that without such a dialogue we cannot speak of true democracy," he said.

Yang Shangkun reappears in public

BEIJING, Sept 20: China's President Yang Shangkun, who missed a diplomatic ceremony because of illness this week, appeared again in public today, Chinese reporters said, reports Reuters.

Yang 84, was admitted to hospital on Wednesday suffering from a high fever and exhaustion, Chinese sources said. The Foreign Ministry said on Thursday he had caught a cold and advised reporters not to make a fuss over his health.

The reporters said he appeared at the State Guest House to bid farewell to Boswana President Quett Masire.

Yang, one of the most powerful of China's aging leaders because of his close links with the army, was in hospital for several weeks last year with appendicitis.

Zagreb prepared to confront federal force Huge tank column heads towards Croatia as fighting continues

ZAGREB (Yugoslavia), Sept 20: A huge column of Yugoslav army tanks, military vehicles and artillery headed toward Croatia as violent fighting continued there despite repeated ceasefires, reports AP.

Nearly 500 people have died, thousands have been wounded, and the republic's economy has been nearly wrecked in battles that followed Croatia's June 25 declaration of independence.

The continued fighting between the warring republics of Serbia and Croatia as well as the federal government has called into question just how much control the republics and military leaders have over their fighters.

Despite the violence, the European Community on Thursday decided against dispatching an armed peacekeeping force to Yugoslavia. However, the EC foreign ministers, meeting in the Netherlands, agreed to study the possibility of a later deployment.

Among the latest victims French journalist Pierre Blancher of the newspaper *Nouvel Observateur*, who was killed Wednesday in Petrinja, 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of Zagreb. Patrick Riganti, a reporter of Switzerland's *Radio Suisse Romande*, was wounded, hospital officials in nearby Sisak said. Croatian TV said Blancher was killed by a mine.

The military convoy that rolled out of Belgrade on Thursday was at least 10 kilometers (six miles) long, made up of about 100 battle tanks — T-55s and M-84s — armored personnel carriers, and trucks towing 155 mm howitzers.

Its destination was not known, but it was traveling on the main highway to Zagreb, the Croatian capital. Thousands of people turned out to cheer the convoy, tossing cigarettes and sandwiches

to the soldiers. The mobilization appeared to be an attempt by the military to intimidate Croatian fighters, who have blockaded federal garrisons in several key towns in the republic since Saturday.

At a Cabinet meeting Wednesday, federal Premier Ante Markovic demanded that Defense Minister Veljko Kadijevic resign, and assailed increasing army involvement in the fighting in Croatia, the Belgrade daily *Borba* reported.

Kadijevic is a Serb and Markovic a Croat, although the

latter has a reputation of being even-handed. "The army cannot be considered to be Yugoslav ... if it is involved in the civil war on the side of one of the warring parties," Markovic was quoted as saying. "It is impossible to explain, much less to justify, the use of tanks, ships and helicopters in attacks on cities."

The Yugoslav news agency Tanjug reported that Croatian forces were attacking federal barracks in the coastal city of Sibenik, Belgrade radio reported heavy shelling by tanks and cannons as the army fought to break the siege.

It is reported shelling and shooting in and around Osijek, eastern Croatia's main city. Barracker and nearby Vinkovci, in eastern Croatia, were also under attack, Tanjug said, citing a military statement. Street fighting broke out in Gospić, near the Adriatic.

Croatian media said Thursday several towns in the east came under heavy mortar fire. They claimed an air force jet opened up with machine gun fire near the port of Split, which is under naval blockade.

Serb guerrillas and hard-line Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic have demanded that Croatia give up Serb-populated areas if it secedes; these areas and others in Croatia have been captured by Serbian forces in the past two months. Croatia's 4.75 million people include about 600,000 ethnic Serbs.

AFP adds: Croatian Information Minister Branco Salaj on Friday said the Republic was prepared to confront a column of Yugoslav army vehicles if it penetrated Croatian territory.

Salaj, interviewed in the Croatian capital by AFP after a meeting with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, said measures had been taken to face the "formidable force" arrayed against the republic.



SISAK, Yugoslavia: A woman cries over her 21-year-old son's coffin during his funeral here September 19. The young man was killed two days ago in the battle for Petrinja. — AFP/UNB photo

Hindu militants take to streets next month to claim hundreds of mosques

NEW DELHI, Sept 20: Hindu militants are preparing to launch a potentially explosive campaign across India against legislation seeking to end their claims to hundreds of Muslim shrines, reports AP.

The powerful Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, or World Hindu Council) has said it will take to the streets from next month to protest the bill, which has been welcomed by India's media and almost all political parties.

"This bill is against Hindu interests. It is a black law," said Acharya Giriraj Kishore, the VHP's number two. "It is a sheer appeasement of the Muslim community."

Kishore, 70, said that from October 2 thousands of VHP activists would stage more than 5,000 protest rallies, where they would burn copies of the bill, and that they would greet MPs who voted for it in parliament with black flags in their constituencies.

"We are determined to oppose the bill tooth and nail whatever the consequences," said Kishore in an interview, accusing the Indian government of "driving Hindus towards anarchy."

India's parliament last week passed the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Bill, freezing the status of religious shrines in the country as they were on August 15, 1947 — the date of India's independence.

Under the legislation, violators can be jailed for up to three years or fined, and legislators, including MPs, opposing the bill can be disqualified.

The only shrine excluded from the bill's purview is in Ayodhya town, where the VHP has laid claim to a 16th century mosque.

The case dealing with the dispute over the Ayodhya shrine is pending before a court.

Security forces shot dead 24 people in October and November 1990 when frenzied Hindus stormed the shrine in a bid to demolish it, bringing to a climax a VHP campaign which has left hundreds dead in rioting between Hindus and Muslims.

The Ayodhya campaign played a key role in helping the Hindu revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) win 117 seats in the federal parliament in its best ever election performance in the polls this summer.

The campaign catapulted the BJP, or Indian People's Party, to power in the northern province of Uttar Pradesh — home to the Ayodhya shrine and two other sites where the VHP claims two major mosques.

BJP politician's noisily rejected the Shrines' Bill, almost coming to blows with centrist and leftwing opposition MPs.

The BJP leader, Lal Krishna Advani, said, "My party cannot associate with this legislation," a statement one Hindu MP supported by tearing up a copy of the bill before storming out.

Kishore said he was hopeful that the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh would "remove all hurdles" in the way of temple construction. He added that the new legislation would be no obstacle to the VHP, which has reportedly collected millions of rupees and is buying all the land near the disputed Ayodhya site for a grandiose Rama temple.

"Hindus will not yield an inch. The temple will be built. Work (on it) will begin soon," Kishore said. "After Ayodhya, we will fight for Kashi (Varanasi) and Mathura."

The VHP has compiled a list of some 3,000 other shrines on sites where it says were Hindu temples were demolished and converted into mosques during India's Islamic era. The group wants the alleged original temple status to be restored to all of them.

The bill has been very necessary to close firmly the door on any future controversies over places of worship and remove one of the major causes of communal discord," the widely read Indian Express newspaper said last week.

The bill is an "attempt to provide a healthy environment in this country," said the Hindu daily, reflecting the feelings in most Indian political parties, almost all of which are controlled by Hindus.

Ahmed Bukhari, of the historic Jama Masjid mosque, said, "The Indian Muslim has won his case on the floor of parliament."

"However, the VHP's belligerence has raised fears of renewed Hindu-Muslim blood-letting, and at least one columnist known for his pro-VHP views said that the bill itself could not guarantee communal amity.

Israel to settle Jews in Arab half of Jerusalem

JERUSALEM, Sept 20: Israel is preparing to settle hundreds of Ethiopian immigrants in East Jerusalem, viewed by Palestinians as seat of their future capital and by the United States as occupied Arab territory, reports Reuters.

A spokesman for the Jerusalem Municipality said Mayor Teddy Kollek planned to house hundreds of black Jews from Ethiopia in mobile homes in an uninhabited area in the Arab half of the city.

He confirmed that Kollek had also reviewed a plan by housing minister Ariel Sharon for a Jewish neighbourhood in the heart of Arab East Jerusalem, although no action had been taken on it.

We are talking about temporary mobile homes for Ethiopian immigrants, city spokesman Menachem Roboy said late on Thursday.

"Hundreds of mobile homes are to be set up there but it is impossible to know with precision how many because this area was infested with mine fields for many years and it is still being cleared."

About 14,000 black Jews arrived in Israel four months ago in a secret airlift.

No hostage release until Israel frees more prisoners

BEIRUT, Sept 20: A pro-Iranian kidnap faction said Thursday it would not free any Western hostage until Israel releases 20 more Lebanese prisoners, reports AP.

The Revolutionary Justice Organisation is sorry to freeze the hope of an imminent release of a few hostages until the picture becomes clearer about the Israeli position and the United Nations' movement," said a communique from the group.

The handwritten Arabic-language communique was accompanied by a picture of American hostage Joseph Cicippio, 61, who is held by the group along with British hostage Jack Mann.

The 32-line statement dashed hopes raised over the last three days that Mann, 77, a former World War II pilot, was about to go free.

Also Thursday, Shiite leaders seeking a hostage-for-prisoner swap said two German captives may be excluded from the proposed deal. The move could be an attempt to bargain for the release of Lebanese terrorists jailed in Germany.

The Shites, who spoke on condition of anonymity, also claimed two of the 11 Western hostages — an Italian and Briton — had died in captivity.

Premadasa suspended the assembly two days after the impeachment motion was moved by virtually the entire Opposition and 47 ruling party MPs.

The President, however, assured MPs from the government United National Party (UNP) at a meeting Wednesday that he would not dissolve parliament because the government had to continue its development work for the next four years.

In a statement after the meeting ruling MPs made a direct attack on the Speaker for entertaining the 12-page impeachment charge-sheet, which contained allegations ranging from treason to corruption.

The statement expressed deep shock that a personality whose office demands the strictest adherence to the principles of neutrality had misled an opposition MP into signing the impeachment motion.

Off the Record

Karpov's Chernobyl aid appeal

NEW YORK, Sept 20 : Former world chess champion Anatoly Karpov, whose boyhood home in the Ural Mountains was in the path of a nuclear plant accident 36 years ago, is appealing for 10 million dollar in US aid for victims of the Chernobyl disaster, reports AP.

The Chernobyl accident deteriorating Soviet economy has led to reduced shipments of uncontaminated food to the region and that aid is urgently needed to provide food and medical treatment.

"The most important thing is to stay away from getting ill," he said. "People are still living there, still exposed to this radiation."

A fire and explosion at the Chernobyl plant on April 26, 1986, spread radiation over a large area of the Ukraine and the neighbouring republics of Russia and Byelorussia.

Thirty-one people were killed, and scientists estimate that cancers linked to the accident could ultimately claim thousands of lives.

Karpov directs Chernobyl-Help, a relief group in the Soviet Union, and helped form the US Committee for Chernobyl-Help. The group is seeking 5 million dollar cash donations and 5 million dollars worth of medicine, hospital services and others.

Karpov said part of his interest came from the suffering caused near his boyhood home because of accidents at a nuclear weapons plant.

An estimated 400,000 people were affected by radiation from an explosion near the Ural town of Chelyabinsk in 1957, a leakage in 1950s and another incident in 1967.

Karpov grew up about 40 miles (64 kilometers) away in the town was spared the ill effects, though a cousin died of leukemia thought to be related to radiation exposure in 1976.

Karpov, a former world chess champion who lost a bid last year to regain the crown from Garry Kasparov, still compete the highest levels of the game but said his time is increasingly devoted to Chernobyl aid.

"It's not easy to combine these things," he said. "It's a distraction from the game and I have less and less time for myself and my family."

The last mass funeral
SOWETO: Thousands of mourners cheered calls for self rule and called to overthrow of the government Thursday at a funeral for 10 people killed in political clashes.

"We wish the bereaved families to know that this is the last funeral the African National Congress and other liberation movements will witness in South Africa," said Winnie Mandela, one of several speakers at the 3 1/2 hour service.

Winnie, the wife of ANC President Nelson Mandela, said the ANC was "no longer going to tolerate the summary" killings of its supporters.

But six people were killed Thursday in two clashes in Natal province. The African National Congress and Inkatha Freedom Party blamed each other for the fighting.

Leaders of the ANC and Inkatha, the two largest black opposition groups, and the white-led government signed a peace pact Saturday that set codes of conduct for political parties and security forces.

But at least 35 people have died in township violence since the signing, increasing to more than 150 the number killed in a series of attacks and clashes that erupted September 8.



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A political blunder
SURAT: Ms Gajraben Chaudhury, the first wife of former Gujrat Chief Minister, Amarsingh Chaudhury, expressed her displeasure over the second marriage of her husband recently, reports PTI.

In a press statement, she said her husband, despite being a leader of the advent community had committed a blunder, by entering into a second wedlock which was unacceptable to her and their three sons.

While some women organisations have decided to socially boycott Chaudhury, Sahadev Chaudhury, Congress leader of south Gujrat and close aide of Amarsingh Chaudhury, has criticised the former chief minister for committing "political suicide."

Chaudhury married Ms Nishben Gameti, former chairperson of Gujrat State Welfare Board, under the Special Marriage Act which was registered on July 13.

The marriage was solemnised at Gameti's Ahmedabad residence. Ms Gameti has divorced her first husband.

'Chamorro makes Nicaraguans a joke'
MANAGUA: Former President Daniel Ortega Thursday urged fellow Nicaraguans to fight the decision by the administration of President Violeta Chamorro to withdraw a complaint against the United States before the Hague, reports AFP.

Ortega said withdrawing the former Sandinista government's demand for 17 million dollars in damages constitutes a "violation of human rights" and makes a Nicaraguans, especially victims of the country's decade-long war, a "joke."

The opposition Sandinista National Liberation Front could intervene to try and stop the Chamorro administration from withdrawing the complaint, Ortega said.

The Sandinista government brought suit before the Hague in June 1986 after the United States mined Nicaraguan ports in 1984 during the height of the civil war between the leftist government and the US-backed Nicaraguan rebels.

BRIEFLY

Haiti President sacks ministers: President Jean-Bertrand Aristide has sacked his Foreign Minister, who had been accused of responding feebly to reports that Haitian workers were being exploited in the neighbouring Dominican Republic, reports AP from Port-au-Prince.

Aristide, a leftist priest who was elected in December in Haiti's first free elections, also named a new Health Minister Thursday in his third cabinet shake-up.

Former Electoral Council President Jean-Robert Sabalot replaced Marie-Denise Jean-Louis as Foreign Minister, while Dr. Claude Jean-Francois took over for Dr. Daniel Henrys as Health Minister, according to state television Nationale.

In a demonstration Sept 13 in front of the National Palace, more than 1,000 protesters had called for Jean-Louis' ouster. Similar protests preceded other Cabinet shake-ups.

Aristide fired his Justice Minister on May 17 and changed his Social Affairs and Commerce Ministers on June 14.

Grassroots organizations charged that Jean-Louis had not done enough to protect Haitians working in the Dominican Republic. About 10,000 Haitians have been deported and another 40,000 left voluntarily, fearing confiscation of their property.

25 killed, 100 hurt in Guatemala quake: Some 20,000 people were left homeless after an earthquake rocked Guatemala's Pacific coast, killing 25 people and injuring more than a hundred, the National Emergency Committee said Thursday, reports AFP from Guatemala.

The earthquake which measured 5.3 on the open-ended Richter Scale struck several towns along the coastal range early Wednesday, jolting residents from their sleep and burying many beneath their homes.

Jorge Chang, Emergency Committee medical director, said the greatest number of victims and worst damage were found in the town of San Miguel Rochuta, 90 kilometers (55 miles) west of the capital in Chimaltenango province.

He said that by midday Thursday 17 bodies had been identified, while rescue workers were unearthing two more cadavers from beneath a building.

Some 85 per cent of the town's homes most built of mud and thatch — were destroyed in the quake, and Emergency Committee officials estimated that 20,000 of the town's 28,000 residents had been left homeless.

Cholera epidemic in Peru: Peru's cholera epidemic could rebound with about 50,000 cases in the next few months because of poor hygienic conditions, the head of a congressional panel on public health warned on Thursday, reports Reuters from Lima.

Deputy Julio Castro Gomez told reporters that studies by members of his committee detected "high percentages of the vibrium cholera" in waters from Peru's pacific coast, Lake Titicaca near the Bolivian border and the Amazon river, which flows into Brazil and Colombia.

Castro, a physician, said probably another 50,000 people will be struck by cholera (in spring and summer) due to the lack of fluoride in Peru's drinking water and street vendors peddling food under unhealthy conditions.

A health ministry spokesman told Reuters that there were likely to be more cases of cholera during spring, which in the Southern Hemisphere starts on Saturday, and summer but he added: "They will be minimal."

5 of a family killed in Murshidabad: Five members of a family were killed and two others injured when a bag full of country-made bombs exploded at Kabanagar in Murshidabad district Wednesday a delayed official report said, reports PTI from Calcutta.

The incident was a fallout of long standing dispute between two families of the village over the possession of a piece of land in the area.

The report said the explosion occurred when some members of a family, armed with bombs and other weapons, were on their way to attack the house of the rival family. All the five persons were killed on the spot.

Senior police officials have rushed to the spot. Two persons have been arrested.

NF-Janata-Left rally Sept 27: The National Front, Janata Dal, and the Left parties will hold an all India rally on September 27 to protest against the economic policies of the government, reports PTI from New Delhi.

The Janata Dal leader said the Congress (I) had not made known clearly as yet it stand on the Mandal recommendations.

"In my view there is no consensus within the Congress (I) itself as was evident by the statements of Welfare Minister Sitaram Kesari.

Berne requested to freeze CPSU assets: The Swiss Foreign Ministry said on Thursday it was studying a Soviet request to freeze any communist party assets held in Switzerland, reports Reuters from Berne.

There has been speculation in recent weeks in both Soviet and Western media that the party smuggled billions of rubles into the West and deposited them in bank accounts there.

The Foreign Ministry said in a statement the request was made in general terms and gave no precise details of specific funds suspected to be in Switzerland.

A similar request was made to other countries, it said.

After the failure of a hardline communist coup in August, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev suspended the party's ruling central committee and ordered party assets seized.