

Arafat wants to resume dialogue with US

ALGIERS, Sept 29: Palestine Liberation Organisation leader Yasser Arafat called on Saturday for a dialogue between the PLO and the United States to be restarted, noting that a PLO leader whose presence had caused a rift with Washington eighteen months ago had now resigned, reports AFP.

Zairean President forced to share power with opposition

KINSHASA, Sept 29: Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko, after more than a quarter century of iron rule, has been forced to share power with his opponents following massive civil unrest this week and intense western pressure, reports Reuter.

waiting for the reaction of the US administration, and hoping it would restart the dialogue. The ball is in the court of the Americans, the Israelis, the European Community and the United Nations, Arafat added, everything depends on their ability to impose peace. The PNC meeting on Friday mandated the Palestinian leadership to pursue negotiations on a proposed Middle East peace conference and also heard of the resignation from the PLO Executive Council of faction leader Abu Abbas. Abbas is the leader of the Palestine Liberation Front a PLO grouping which in 1985 hijacked an Italian cruise liner in the Mediterranean killing an elderly Jewish-American passenger. The US administration broke off a nascent dialogue with the PLO in May last year after the PLF was also implicated in an abortive commando raid on an Israeli beach. At several points during the press conference Arafat stressed that the PLO had chosen the path of peace.

Trident programme to go ahead: Tom King

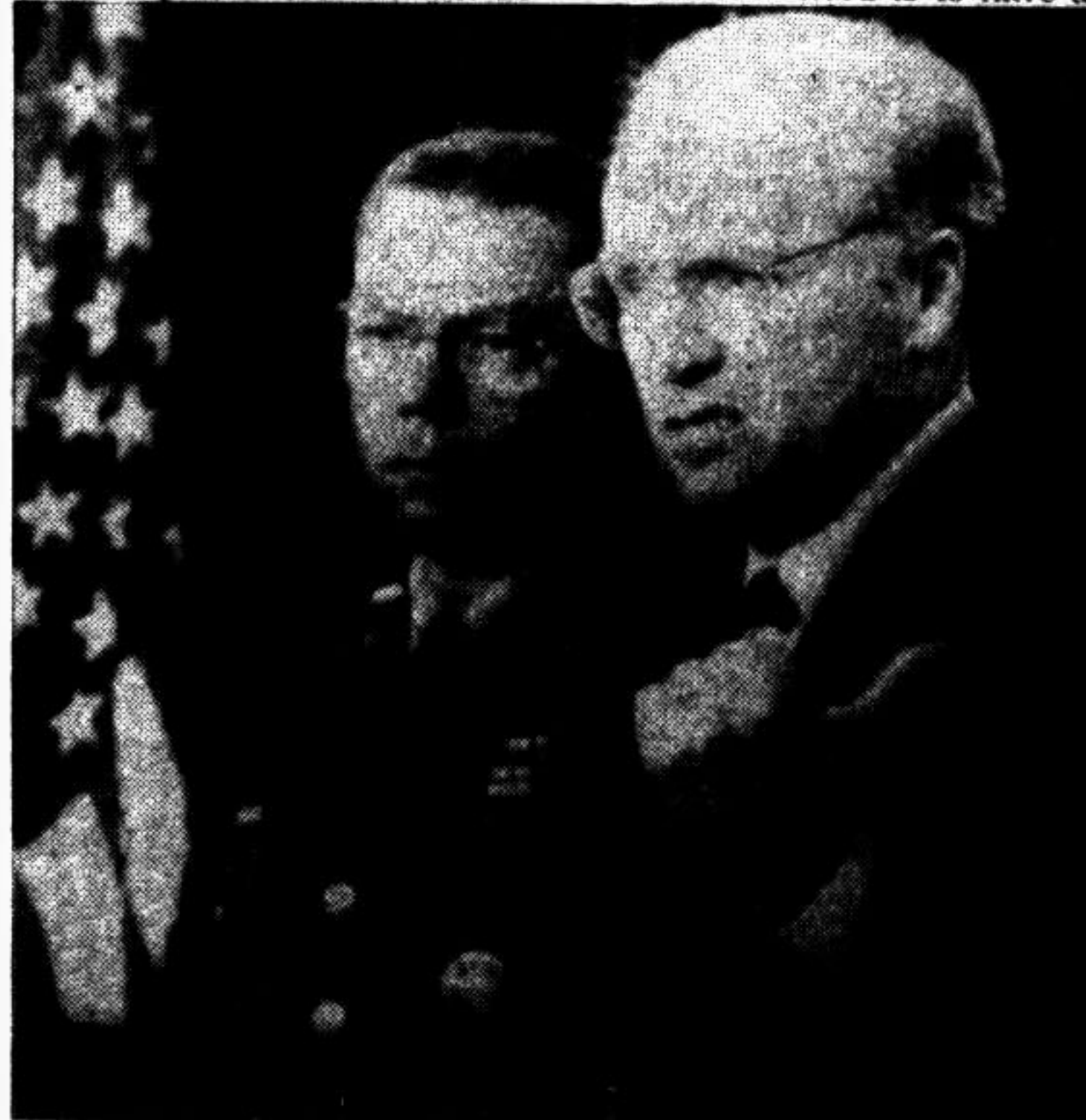
Britain to scrap N-arms

LONDON, Sept 29: Britain Saturday joined the US in announcing cuts in its short range and battlefield nuclear weapons but made it clear that there would be no let up in the country's nuclear programme, reports PTI.

The plans for a new missile system for the Royal Airforce would continue and that Trident system will replace Polaris nuclear submarine the British Defence Secretary Tom King told newsmen after President Bush said the US was scrapping all short range nuclear weapons. Reuter adds: Britain said on Saturday it will scrap some tactical nuclear weapons to complement US disarmament moves but go ahead with its Trident programme to boost the Navy's nuclear firepower. Defence Secretary Tom King said short-range and battlefield nuclear weapons will be unilaterally axed as Britain's contribution to sweeping arms cuts announced on Friday by US President George Bush.

cuts in a British radio interview, said nuclear depth bombs used by aircraft against enemy submarines will no longer be carried on naval vessels. But Britain would retain its high-profile Trident programme, in which the Navy's nuclear-armed Trident will be replaced by a more potent system in the next few years.

King said the survival of Trident, a controversial arms update that would greatly increase the fleet's nuclear firepower, was vital if Britain was to maintain a credible policy of nuclear deterrence.



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of Defence Dick Cheney (R) explains the impact of US President George Bush's proposed arms reduction. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Colin Powell stands by September 28 at a Pentagon news briefing. —AFP/UNB photo.

credible deterrent and we have to therefore have a deterrent which carries some punch," King told British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) radio.

King defined Britain's minimum nuclear deterrent commitment as having at least one nuclear-armed submarine at sea at any one time.

AP from Washington says: The United States has removed hundreds of its nuclear weapons from 24-hour alert, but its defence chiefs say sufficient fire power and readiness remain to confront any threat.

On Saturday, Defence Secretary Dick Cheney urged the Soviets to respond with equally bold steps, cutting their tactical nuclear arsenals and negotiating with the United States on further reductions in the superpowers' long-range arsenals.

Cheney signed an executive order removing 40 long-range bombers and 450 long-range Minuteman missiles from their full-time alert. It was the first step toward implementation of a package of sweeping reductions announced Friday night by President Bush in US nuclear arsenals.

This is the single biggest change in the deployment of US nuclear weapons since they were first integrated into our forces in 1954," Cheney told reporters at a rare Saturday Pentagon briefing. It will make the world a safer place.

In the most dramatic reduction of US weaponry since the Cold War, Washington is to scrap its entire stock of battlefield nuclear arms built to repulse a Soviet invasion of Western Europe and remove nuclear-tipped cruise missile from submarines and warships. Britain's response will see destruction of its 12 ageing lance short-range nuclear missile launchers and around 70 missiles. King, announcing the

German gangs attack foreign workers' hostels

BONN, Sept 29: Right-wing German gangs hurled stones and petrol bombs at hostels for foreign refugees and workers as a wave of violence against immigrants entered its second week, police said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

No one was injured in the overnight hit-and-run attacks in East and West Germany on eight centres housing third world and East European foreigners working or seeking asylum, police said.

The head of Germany's

Jewish community, Heinz Galinski, said the attacks recalled the Nazi pogroms and described them as a "shame for united Germany."

Mainly young extremists have attacks refugee and immigrant worker housing almost daily since a fire blamed on arsonists killed a Ghanaian refugee in a hostel in the western town of Saarlouis on September 19.

In the most spectacular case, dozens of skinheads

checked on by neighbours besieged two hostels in the depressed East German industrial town to Hoyerswerda for nearly a week until the foreign workers and refugees were evacuated last Monday.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl's conservative-led government has condemned the violence but says it shows Bonn's liberal asylum laws must be tightened to stem abuse by foreigners coming to Germany for economic rather than political reasons.

Rebels blow up rly track in Punjab

CHANDIGARH, Sept 29: Militants blew up a portion of the railway track in Hosiarpur district and three militants were among eight persons killed and nine injured in Punjab since last night, reports PTI.

Militants also kidnapped a businessman while another was rescued by security forces during this period.

Railway traffic was disrupted on Khichain-Mukerian Section of the northern railway in Hosiarpur district as a result of bomb explosion which damaged some portion of the railway line last night. Repair work was on, reports said.

An unidentified militant was killed in an encounter with security forces near Barota village in Bhatinda District. A pistol and some cartridges were recovered from the spot.

Imelda returns to Manila Friday

HONOLULU, Sept 29: Imelda Marcos says she will return to the Philippines on Friday with the body of former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, and says the US government has dropped its ban on taking his body with her, reports AP.

The former Philippine first lady said Saturday she will change her plans only if the Philippine government extends her permit to enter the country. The permit expires next Saturday.

"I thank President George Bush and the United States government for their enlightened decision," Mrs Marcos said at a news conference on the second anniversary of her husband's Sept. 28, 1989 death in exile in Hawaii.

Mrs Marcos and her late husband fled the Philippines after the 1986 "people power revolution" that deposed the former dictator and propelled Corason Aquino into the presidency.

At the news conference, Mrs Marcos said she had learned of a US decision made Friday to lift the ban on leaving the United States with her husband's body. Federal officials did not announce any decision.

Tough tactics, sweet talk fail to make Pakistanis part with arms

ISLAMABAD, Sept 29: Neither tough tactics nor sweet talk has succeeded in making Pakistanis part with their illegal arms, reports IPTS.

Though the government in Islamabad has offered to compensate their owners and thrice extended the deadline for surrendering unlicensed weapons, only a few have been deposited at police stations throughout the country.

In an effort to end the wave of violence that has engulfed large parts of the country, the seven-month-old government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif launched in July a million dol-

lar drive to unearth illegal arms.

But the tough new measures and harsh penalties — life imprisonment for anyone with illegal arms and the death sentence for kidnappers and separatist rebels — have made little difference.

In Karachi, a huge port city of five million people where according to unofficial estimates there are 40,000 AK-47s less than 20 were deposited.

Feuding ethnic groups armed with automatic rifles and mortars have turned the huge southern metropolis

which has earned notoriety for its "Kalashnikov culture" into a battleground.

The beleaguered government has also not been able to rein in gangs of brigands terrorising people in western Sind province.

In late July, newspaper reported seven incidents of banditry in Pakistan's most volatile province, in which nine people were killed, 13 kidnapped and 100 cattle burnt to death.

Hundreds of people have been abducted in Sind over the past six years.



Pakistan opposition leader Benazir Bhutto attended a luncheon recently hosted by High Commissioner of Bangladesh CM Shafi Sami at his residence in Islamabad. Photo shows Benazir Bhutto with the High Commissioner (right) and Begum Saiqa Sami (left).

No more veil of secrecy on Soviet leaders' health

MOSCOW, Sept 29: Boris Yeltsin's failure to attend the opening session of Russia's Parliament last week because of a minor heart complaint has again drawn public attention to the problem of Soviet leaders' health or rather availability of information on this subject, reports IAN.

Traditionally such information has been a closely guarded secret in the Soviet Union. There was probably some logic in this practice when the Soviet Union was a totalitarian society: it made little difference whether the public knew anything about their rulers' health. But as Soviet people won the right to elect their leaders, information about

their health became of crucial importance.

However, little has changed in this sphere. When first Presidential elections were held in Russia last summer, people went to the polls largely ignorant about the health condition of any of the six candidates, including Boris Yeltsin.

The problem gained further urgency during the August coup attempt. In the absence of any official information about the health of President Mikhail Gorbachev the putschists' claim that he was incapable of performing his duties for health reasons threw the country into confusion. Ironically, the three-day

abortive coup revealed more about the Soviet leaders' health than the previous six years of perestroika. It transpired that President Gorbachev suffered from radiculitis but little else, that ex-premier Valentin Pavlov and high blood pressure, while ex-Vice-President Gennady Yanayev hit the bottle.

Still people know pitifully little about the health of their leaders. Yeltsin's indisposition last week was a good case in point. Apart from the brief announcement at the session of Russian Parliament there was no official communique explaining the causes or nature of his heart complaints. As a matter of fact Yeltsin's health has been less of a secret than that of other Soviet leaders.

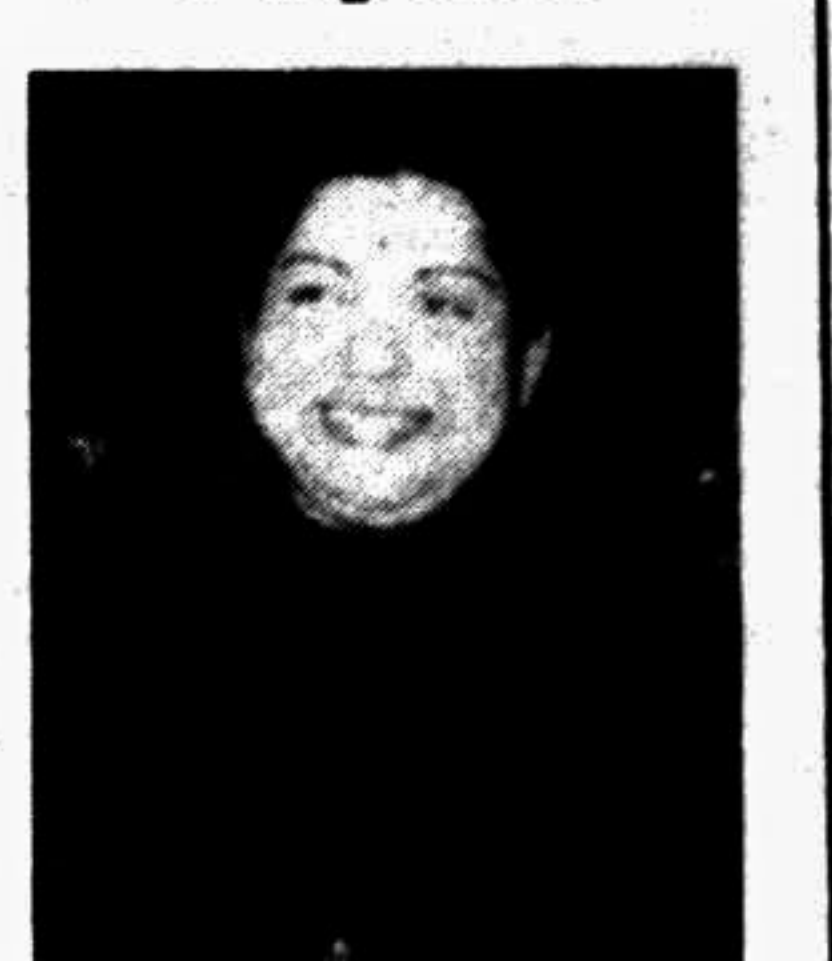
But the news that he had some heart trouble came as complete surprise. He is known to be a healthy robust man, who at 60 still goes in for volleyball and tennis. His doctor says that an airliner crash landing last year and a traffic accident earlier this year in which Yeltsin was involved practically have not affected his health.

Yet, a lack of full independent information gives rise to various rumours. Many believe that Yeltsin is given to imbibing, which however has always been a sign of good taste with the Soviet elite. More seriously, earlier this year Soviet historian Roy Medvedev virtually questioned Yeltsin's psychological stability by alleging that he had attempted suicide

Off the Record

Don't call me all-powerful, Jayalalitha asks deputies

NEW DELHI: A former screen goddess, fed up with being worshipped in the South Indian State Assembly she now rules, reprimanded deputies on Saturday for routinely referring to her during debates as "the All-Powerful", reports Reuter.



Many impoverished rural voters in film-crazy Tamil Nadu, where heroine Jayalalitha won a landslide state election victory in June after starring in 117 movies, refer to her as "the Guardian Angel" or "the primordial power".

The Press Trust of India said her supporters in the assembly called her parasakthi, "the All-Powerful", once too often. Jayalalitha, 43, told them to shorten their speeches by dropping the adulation and confining their remarks to their voters' problems, the agency said.

Stepmother sells Diana's heirlooms

LONDON: It has been a running story calculated to titillate the fancy of the royalty- fixated, tabloid-reading British public and, not incidentally, boost newspaper circulation.

It had all the ingredients: Aristocracy; Her Royal Highness, Diana, the lovely Princess of Wales; her father, John Earl Spencer; her sisters, Lady Jane and Lady Sarah; and her brother, Charles, Viscount Althorp.

Castle: Althorp house, the Spencers' 80-room, 300-year-old ancestral home, set amid 13,000 acres in Northamptonshire. And Spencer House in London.

Conflict: Father and children deeply embittered; esteemed family of queen-to-be barely on speaking terms.

Money: The Spencer family fortune is said to run into millions of dollars, and the story revolves around cash.

Wicked Stepmother: The Countess Spencer, Raine, daughter of the romantic novelist Dame Barbara Cartland and second wife of Earl Spencer.

Plot: Wicked Stepmother accused of selling off family heirlooms to redecorate the castle in a style that offended the Spencer children, who compare the decor to that of a Parisian brothel.

Raine, who was once the wife of another Earl, Lord Dartmouth has not been popular with her stepchildren since she married John, Earl Spencer, in 1976.

Still, by all accounts she behaved nobly when, two years after their wedding, he had a serious stroke and she was widely credited with bringing him back to health. At 67, he seems vigorous and deeply in love.

Since then, the elder Spencers have privately sold off valuable pictures, including a dozen Van Dycks, furniture and silver worth more than 200 items in all that eventually fetched a tidy fortune for dealers and auctioneers.

But in her haste to gather cash, the stories say, Countess Spencer, 62, has sold the family possessions at ridiculously low prices, enabling art and antique dealers to make a killing, while leaving gaps on the family walls.

One picture ended up in the National Portrait Gallery after reportedly being sold for three times the price the Spencers received.

The Spencers also are said to have put up for sale a couple of dozen cottages on their estate, forcing out tenant farmers. In addition, the sales included the Fox and Hounds, the only pub in Great Brington, the village nearest to the estate.

These moves masterminded by countess Spencer, according to the accounts, have alienated son and heir Charles, who manages the estate, as well as Princess Diana and her sisters. Charles says he was not apprised of the removal of the art works to London dealers.

500-year heritage: So angry is Charles Spencer reported to be that he refuses to set foot inside Althorp House, though he lives in a cottage on the estate.

According to the Daily Mail, which first reported the story, a household staff member reported that Charles accused his father and stepmother of "destroying 500 years of family heritage."

The newspaper added: "He said that in the past 15 years more damage had been done than in the last four centuries. He reminded his father that his role should be to look after the house during his lifetime."

Nepali communists may join Congress

KATIMANDU, Sept 29: Nepal's communist opposition alliance is slowly unravelling, with arguments about the celebration of the party founder's birthday and accusations of hobnobbing with the country's King souring links just five months after elections here, reports AFP.

While hardline members of the Nepal Communist Party United Marxist-Leninist (UML) have said the party has been unaffected by the abortive coup in the Soviet Union, political observers here believe that many members are likely to move towards founding a social democratic movement and may even join the ruling Nepal Congress.

Reaction to the Soviet coup from the NCP was muted, with party leaders emphasising they had few links with other communist parties but many believe the demise of socialist

regimes in Eastern Europe was had a significant affect on morale.

The math split, between the Marxist (NCP-UML) Committee members accused the party leadership of moving away from communist ideals and threatening parliamentary democracy by associating with Nepal's King Birendra.

They said the party was moving closer to the Soviet Union and the United States when their founding policy had always been to establish links with China and keep the other two major powers at arms length.

UML General Secretary Madan Bhandari last month had a two-hour meeting with the king, after which he described the constitutional monarch as a major political force.

BRIEFLY

'Indian media ignores Soviet role': The West Bengal Minister for Information and Cultural Affairs, Buddhadev Bhattacharjee, has said that the Indian mass media had not objectively reported the recent changes in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, reports PTI from Calcutta.

Addressing a seminar on "future of Socialism: Role of the Mass Media" in Calcutta on Saturday, he said that the profound influence of the changes in international relations and human values were not reflected in the media.

"It is true that we shall have to be introspective about the setback to socialism in the Soviet Union. But does it have no contribution to human civilisation? Selective reporting has failed to highlight the positive side of socialism," he said.

"We can understand the euphoria of the Western media. But how is it that the Indian media had forgotten the role once played by the USSR in the development of our country?" the Marxist leader asked.

Croatia violates ceasefire: The Yugoslav army has accused Croatia of continuing to blockade and attack military bases, violating a fragile ceasefire agreed a week ago, reports Reuter from Belgrade.

Croatian radio reported fresh rounds of fighting in eastern and central Croatia on Saturday, forcing the International Red Cross to suspend operations in the rebel republic until it receives guarantees of safety from the warring sides.

Three Red Cross workers were injured in Croatia on Friday when their vehicle was hit by bullets and crashed into a ditch.

"Units, commands and institutions in the area of the fifth military district (which includes most of Croatia) are still under blockade and attacks on military facilities also continue," Tanjug news agency quoted an army statement as saying on Saturday.

Cholera claims 18 in Mexico: At least 1,226 cholera cases have been reported and 18 people killed in Mexico since the outbreak of the disease was confirmed in June, the state news agency Notimex said on Saturday, reports Reuter from Mexico City.

It quoted a report from the Health Ministry as saying 151 new cases had been detected over the past week alone, including at least eight in Mexico's densely populated capital, where some health experts have said the disease threatens to spread like a wildfire.

Notimex said health officials had launched a sweeping crackdown on the tens of thousands of Mexico City street vendors in a bid to halt the spread of the disease, which has killed over 3,000 south Americans this year.

3 killed in Srinagar: Three persons including a militant were killed and four securitymen injured in continued clashes between militants and the security forces in the valley since last night while militants abducted an assistant sub-inspector of police Sunday, reports PTI from Srinagar.

Meanwhile security forces stepped up search operations in different parts of the valley for nine abducted persons including former Jammu and Kashmir Minister, Mrs. Khemlata Wakhloo.

Jazz musician Davis dead: Jazz musician Miles Davis, the trumpeter, band leader and composer whose work inspired a generation of musicians, died Saturday, a hospital spokeswoman said. He was 65, reports AP from Santa Monica.

Davis died of pneumonia, respiratory failure and stroke, said Pat Kirk of St. John's Hospital and Health Center. Mrs Kirk said she was reading a statement issued by Davis' doctor, Jeff Harris.

Davis, who had a long history of poor health, was hospitalized earlier this month. He previously had been treated for diabetes and had a hip joint replacement.

Jakarta for new order: Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said Friday that the "new world order" must be managed so as to serve the interests of all nations "large and small, strong and weak," reports AFP from New York.

"If we are to build a viable new world order, then its architecture and management must be comprehensively conceived and not be made dependent on the military and economic might of individual countries or groups of countries," he told the UN General Assembly.

He was echoing the views of several Third World delegations alarmed at what they see as the growing muscle-flexing of the United States, now seen as the only real superpower of the world following the decline of Soviet power.

Sarawak govt returns to power: The government of Malaysia's Sarawak state returned to power on Saturday, reports Reuter from Kuching of Malaysia.

Election officials said results showed Chief Minister Taib Mahmud's ruling National Front Three (NFB) had taken 29 of the 56 seats in the expanded state assembly to give it a simple majority.

The main opposition Bangsa Dayak Sarawak Party (PBDS) took only three of the 34 seats it contested, losing heavily in some traditional strongholds.

It was a stunning defeat for the tribal party, which champions Dayak nationalism in the rainforests of Borneo Island.

Baker welcome PLO decision: US Secretary of State James Baker welcomed Saturday the decision of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) Executive Council to support plans for a Middle East peace conference, reports AFP from New York.

"Any time we see support for the prospect of trying to create a peace process in the Middle East we're very glad to see that," Baker said after a meeting with his Mongolian counterpart Tseregniyin Gombosuren.

The PLO Executive meeting in Algiers gave a major boost to US-Soviet proposals for a peace conference by the end of October by saying they would not pose any conditions prior to such a conference.