

'I'm recurrence of last week's coup bid'

Yeltsin takes over all government communications in Soviet Union

MOSCOW, Aug 25: Boris Yeltsin announced on Saturday that his Russian republic was taking over all government communications, traditionally controlled by the Kremlin, reports Reuters.

In the most dramatic of a series of decrees undercutting the authority of President Mikhail Gorbachev, Yeltsin said he was recurrence of last week's coup bid.

The decree, published by Tass news agency, said the Russian Federation's KGB security service would assume responsibility for all government communications in the republic, including telephones and "coded information."

The Russian Ministry for Communications, Information Technology and Space, would take over all communications enterprises in Russia now answering to the central government.

The decree, if implemented, would involve a vast encroachment on the authority of central government three days after the collapse of the coup.

As an example of the vital importance of communications, Gorbachev said he first knew the coup was underway when he found his special telephones had been cut off at his holiday home.

The undermining of central authority has accelerated the process of disintegration within the country's republics. Latvia and Estonia have declared full independence, as has the Ukraine, subject to a referendum later in the year.

In decrees issued earlier in the week Yeltsin suspended publication of several newspapers deemed to have supported the coup, including the Communist Party daily Pravda, suspended the Russian

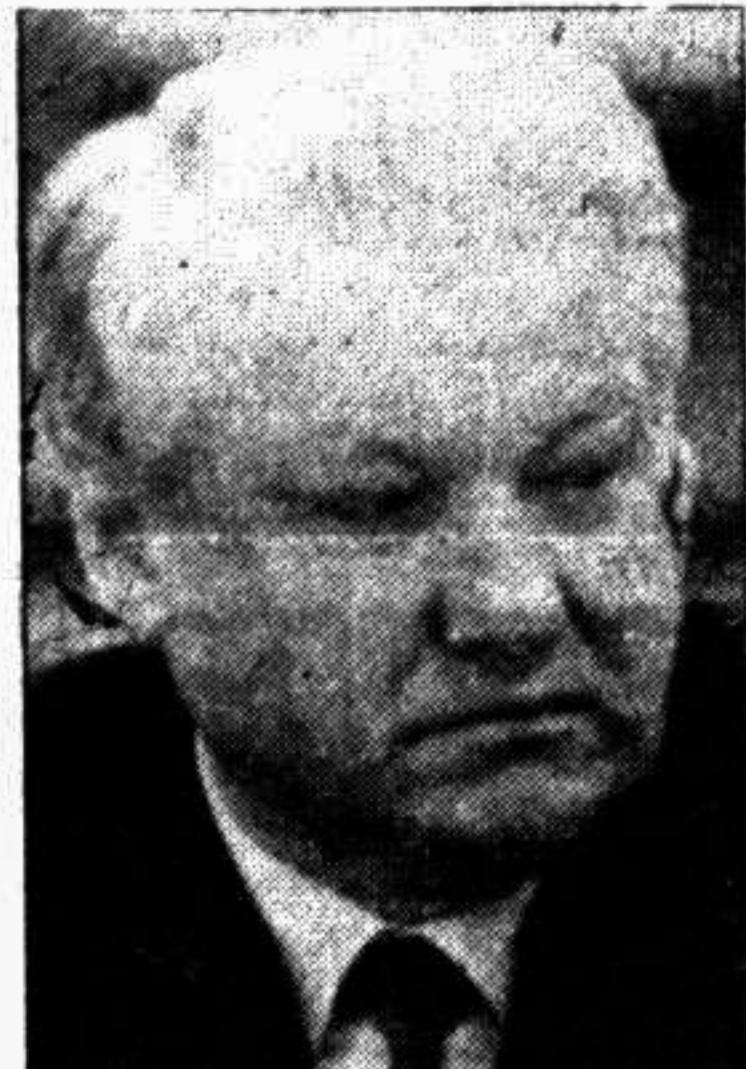
Communist Party, dismissed the head of Soviet television and sacked a number of local officials.

He has also demanded substantial changes to the union treaty which was to have redrawn lines of jurisdiction between central authority and the republics.

The treaty was to have been signed by Yeltsin and two other leaders on Tuesday, the day after the coup began.

Russian Federation Prime Minister Ivan Silayev pressed home his republic's bid to extend its jurisdiction, effectively making several federal ministries on Russian territory subservient to his government.

One of a series of ministerial orders explicitly barred the Soviet economics ministry from operating on Russian territory and ordered it to transfer its assets to its Russian republican counterpart.



Yeltsin: On the move
The orders appeared to have been issued before Gorbachev appointed Silayev to head an interim government to replace the team largely dis-

credited for failing to condemn the coup.

Another report adds: Muscovites hailed President Mikhail Gorbachev's decision to resign as Communist Party head and destroy it as a political force, but many warned against driving the once dominant organisation underground.

Gorbachev, coming to terms with the party's complicity in last week's failed coup, quit on Saturday as party boss, ordered the seizure by the state of its property, banned it from all state organisations and suggested it dissolve itself.

Many in the Soviet capital, centre of world communism for 70 years, were delighted.

"I'm very happy. The party has kept us slaves for far too long," said young factory worker Sasha Dinovich, out for a midnight stroll through red square.

"Fantastic things will be much better now," said mining engineer Vladimir Yarimov, 46, standing beside the Red Amble Mausoleum Housing the body of state founder Vladimir Lenin.

"This party has spilled too much blood. No party in the world has annihilated so many people as the Soviet Communist Party," he said.

However, there were no joyous celebrations, no crowds in the streets cheering or drinking champagne.

"This is just the start. Our rebirth will take a long time. The party heads in the regions are firmly entrenched and will put a brake on reforms for many years to come," Yarimov said.

"Gorbachev resigning? No, no, you've been misled, you've got that totally wrong," Vladislav Livinets, 28, said.

Majority of emergency body didn't know what was going on: Pavlov

MOSCOW, Aug 25: Former Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov has joined the roll-call of misunderstood Soviet conspirators, declaring as he was being arrested that most of the unsuccessful plotters did not know what was happening, reports Reuters.

He also presented a comic and incoherent picture of an intrigue that was in disarray from its inception.

Five days ago, troops were on the streets to support a hardline coup. On Saturday night, Russian television news showed a video of a prosecutor arresting Pavlov, one of the main conspirators, in his office.

Before Pavlov was led away, an interviewer asked him to explain why the eight-man emergency committee he said on his failed to topple President Mikhail Gorbachev.

"The majority of the emergency committee didn't know what was going on," Pavlov replied. "Many people were thinking about something completely different but became involved in a game they weren't aware of."

The cameras also showed the arrest of Pavlov's fellow

committee member, peasants union chief Vasily Starodubeyev. He said he did not realise he was taking part in a plot.

The heavy-jowled Pavlov, normally ebullient and verbose, looked dispirited and listless and had trouble finding words.

At times he was comical in his portrayal of the emergency committee's actions under then Vice-President Gennady Yanayev, who was acting head of state during the 'abortive coup'.

Gorbachev, said by Yanayev to be sick, was trapped in his Crimean villa for three days.

"When there was talk that the President was ill, and no one could explain properly what was wrong with him... everyone started wondering whether we should go to the supreme Soviet (parliament)," Pavlov said.

But he said parliamentary Speaker Anatoly Lukyanov had told the committee the earliest he could convene a session was August 26, one week later. Pavlov said the committee has started to disintegrate right then over whether to impose an emergency regardless.

Two flogged publicly in Hyderabad

ISLAMABAD, Aug 25: Two men have been flogged publicly in the southern Pakistani city of Hyderabad for raping a six-year-old girl, the official APP news agency said today, reports Reuters.

Both men, found guilty by an Islamic court, were lashed 30 times on Saturday in front of hundreds of onlookers, it said. They have been sentenced to 25 years in prison.

The flogging was the first carried out in public since the death of military ruler General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq in 1988.

Zia introduced harsh Islamic punishments such as flogging and stoning to death for rape and adultery, and chopping off of hands for theft in the early years of his 11-year military rule. These remain on the statute book.

The situation looked strange," he went on. "That's why it turned out that (Foreign Minister Alexander) Bessmertnykh was immediately taken ill and I was carried out of there."

Gorbachev's top military aide commits suicide
MOSCOW, Aug 25: The top military adviser to Mikhail S Gorbachev has committed suicide in the wake of a failed hard-line Communist coup against the Soviet president, a spokesman for Gorbachev said Sunday, reports AP.

Spokesman Karen Karagezian said Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev killed himself Saturday night, but gave no details. He was 68.

A spokesman for Russian Federation President Boris N Yeltsin said he knew of no evidence linking Akhromeyev to the coup plot.

"He was not a politician. He was a military person. May be he was just tired of life," said the spokesman, Valentin Sergeyev.

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Gorbachev counting on US support

MOSCOW, Aug 25: President Mikhail Gorbachev faced with collapsing power structures and a disintegrating economy, has told new US Ambassador Robert Strause he is counting on American support for accelerated reforms, reports Reuters.

Strause presented his credentials in the Kremlin on Saturday after the most dramatic week in Soviet politics since the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.

The President (Gorbachev) said the grim experience should become a good lesson for us, Tass news agency reported.

The week started with a coup by hardline communists which ran into popular resistance and failed three days later. It ended with Gorbachev's resignation as Communist Party leader.

Now we are especially counting on the understanding and practical support of the

United States and other countries, Gorbachev was quoted as telling Strause.

We shall move quicker to a new economy, a new federation and a new political system he said adding foreign help could make the transition easier and quicker.

Strause said he wanted to continue working with the Soviet leadership to create a new world order to replace decades of cold war hostility and a costly arms race.

He wants to help both the (Soviet Union) and the US continue the process of moving towards a new world, Tass said.

Gorbachev, who has disbanded his government and put radical reformers in charge of the economy, welcomed the statement by the new US envoy.

Strause a skillful negotiator and confidant of President George Bush said he hoped to confer regularly with the Soviet leader who outlined areas where support was most needed.

These included improving supplies of food and consumer goods to avoid inflation as price controls are lifted.

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Malaysia's ruling party defeated in by-elections

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 25: Malaysia's ruling National Front was defeated in two by-elections in Kelantan state by an alliance of Muslim moderates and fundamentalists, the

Independent Elections Commission said today, reports AP.

The National Front's defeat in Saturday's polls confirmed former Trade Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's political stronghold in his poor northern state where Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's coalition failed to win a single seat in polls to the local assembly and federal parliament 10 months ago.

Candidates from Razaleigh's Semangat '46 (spirit of '46) won by reduced but still handsome margins in the Sungai Pinang and Limbongan constituencies after their predecessors joined Mahathir's United Malays National Organisation (UMNO).

The by-elections were called under a law barring the state legislature's 39 members from switching parties although the High Court last week ruled that both former

assemblymen were never legally Semangat '46 members.

Lawyers said the High Court ruling would not overturn the state assembly's earlier disqualification of the two assemblymen, Wan Mohd Najib Wan Mohamad and Nordin Salleh, who were fielded by UMNO in Saturday's contest.

The Election Commission said that Semangat '46 candidate Samat Mamat polled 5,808 votes to beat Wan Mohd Najib in Limbongan by a 1,560-vote majority while his colleague Mahmud Yaakub won the Sungai Pinang seat by polling 6,351 votes for a 1,994-vote majority over Nordin.

Analysts said the substantial victory margins were surprising even though UMNO officials had acknowledged that the fight was an uphill battle for them because of Razaleigh's personal popularity and the strength of his ally,

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Off the Record

'Iraqi King who wanted to rule Kuwait'

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi director is about to begin a film celebrating the reign of an Iraqi King in the Thirties who sought the annexation of Kuwait, reports AFP.

The film, depicting the rule of King Ghazi Eady (1933-1939), would be the first devoted to an Iraqi monarch since the rehabilitation of the former royal family just after the Iran-Iraq war, which ended in 1988.

King Ghazi, besides covering Kuwait, was likewise fiercely anti-British, and it is this characteristic that appealed to the director, Mohammad Shoukri Jamil.

In his final years, King Ghazi had guaranteed British interests in Iraq and established an alliance between the two countries.

Mr Jamil also said his film would depict first officers, who had several terms as Prime Minister and who wanted to keep Iraq under the control of the English.

Tannecl Di tantalises teasing tabloids

LONDON: Colour pictures of Princess Diana in a bikini on an Italian beach, rubbing in suntan oil, pushed the Beirut hostage drama off the front pages of Britain's tabloid newspapers, reports Reuters.

"Rub-a-dub-Di," said a headline in the Daily Star over a long-lens photo of tall, slim Diana.

"Tan-tan-tan," said the biggest-selling daily Sun newspaper. "Just tan-tastic," punned another tabloid.

The cruise is seen by royal watchers as a bid to squash rumours that their fairy-tale marriage could be on the rocks and the tabloids are calling it a second honeymoon.

Pictures mostly focused on Diana walking, swimming and adjusting her bikini top. Other showed her with Prince Charles, their friend Lord Romney and a police bodyguard she has nicknamed "smudger."

A ring of crisis

RIO DE JANEIRO: For gossip lovers and President watchers, the news hit like a bombshell: the wedding ring was gone from the hand of President Fernando Collor de Mello. The missing ring immediately became the subject of speculation in major newspapers that Mr Collor's seven-year marriage to Roseane Mello was on the rocks. "The vanished ring is the symptom of a grave conjugal crisis," the conservative O Globo of Rio said in a headline in its Sunday edition, reports AP.

Raisa not feeling well

MOSCOW: President Mikhail S Gorbachev's wife, Raisa, has fallen ill since the attempt to oust her husband from power, presidential spokesmen said Sunday, reports AP.

Mrs Gorbachev, 59, "is sick and is at home," said Igor Malashenko of Gorbachev's press office. The Gorbachevs were staying in their country home northwest of the city.

Gorbachev's chief spokesman, Vitaly Ignatenko, said the first lady "is sick. But I cannot say it is serious."

Neither Ignatenko nor Malashenko would specify her ailment.

"She hasn't been feeling well since being in the Crimea," Ignatenko said.

Asked whether she was receiving medical care, Ignatenko said: "Of course there is a doctor there, but one cannot speak about treatment," he declined to elaborate.

ABC also quoted Russian Prime Minister Ivan Silayev as telling it "that when he saw Mrs Gorbachev — this was just after the coup failed — she was suffering from partial paralysis and from slurred speech; in his mind."

After the coup collapsed, they flew back to Moscow, landing early Thursday morning.

At a news conference later Thursday, Gorbachev said that house arrest had been trying on his wife.

"Raisa Maximovna and my daughter took it very hard. Yesterday, Raisa Maximovna was not well." He did not elaborate.

BRIEFLY

Shangkun leaves for Mongolia:

President Yang Shangkun leaves Beijing Monday for the first visit in 31 years by a Chinese leader to Mongolia, carrying with him key economic assistance for the northern neighbour, reports AFP.

Yang was to sign several economic cooperation agreements during the four-day official visit, including a commercial loan package to help tide Mongolia over a severe economic crisis, officials said.

"The trip is a milestone in bilateral relations," a Chinese official in the Mongolian capital Ulan Bator said. Relations were normalized in 1989 after a three-decade ideological rift that mirrored the Sino-Soviet split.

Turkey holds elections in October:

Turkey will hold early general elections in October which political analysts said were likely to produce a coalition government, reports Reuters from Istanbul.

State-run television said parliament on Saturday night passed a bill setting voting day on October 20 — one year ahead of schedule.

"The government chose to go to early polls because it wants to renew confidence and because it trusts itself. Now the ballot is in front of the nation," Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz said in a statement.

Trucks with arms explode in Kuwait:

Several trucks with captured Iraqi weapons exploded accidentally at a military base Saturday, causing traffic jams as nearby residents fled in panic, a Kuwaiti official and witnesses said, reports AFP.

"Four or five trucks filled with Iraqi weapons found in the desert exploded accidentally" at the Kuwaiti military academy located west of here, a Ministry of Interior spokesman said.

They were among a convoy of 21 trucks containing abandoned Iraqi weapons, the official said, adding there would be an investigation into the cause of the accident.

An explosion set off a series of blasts that lasted 20 minutes.

Thousands flee western Sahara:

Thousands of men, women and children have been fleeing before the Moroccan army in western Saharan territory for the past two days, the Polisario front said here Saturday, reports AFP.

Moroccan forces were advancing inside Polisario-held territory in the western Sahara and driving thousands of civilians before them into areas where there was no water and extremely hot temperatures.

"Faced with this situation, the Sahrawi government calls on the whole world, particularly the peoples of the maghreb, to intervene to prevent Morocco committing this genocide of civilian populations which it is driving from their homeland," the front said.

Mujahideen fire 10 rockets:

Mujahideen gunners Saturday sent at least 10 rockets crashing into the vicinity of the Kabul airport, but a government spokesman said only one person was reported wounded, says AFP from Kabul.

Planes, which had been flying from the military side of the airport during the morning, appeared to have stopped by afternoon, but it was not clear if the airport had been closed or if any damage had been inflicted at the facility.

"There have been 10 (rockets) so far in the vicinity of the airport. Only one person has been wounded," the spokesman said.

UN team talks ways to monitor Cambodian peace

BANGKOK, Aug 25: Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen arrived here today (Sunday) on board a special flight from Phnom Penh to attend peace talks aimed at resolving the 12-year-old civil war in his country, Thai officials said, reports AFP.

Hun Sen and his delegation were immediately whisked away in a motorcade by a Thai security unit.

Diplomats said the Phnom Penh leader was to have a meeting later today with Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the Head of Cambodia's Supreme National Council (SNC), ahead

of SNC meetings tomorrow through Wednesday at the Thai beach resort of Pattaya.

The SNC groups representatives of Cambodia's warring factions, Phnom Penh's Vietnam-installed government and a guerrilla coalition dominated by the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge.

The inter-Cambodian talks are to be followed, also in Pattaya, by meetings on Cambodia of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council — the United States, China, the Soviet Union, France and Britain.

AP adds: A UN team in Cambodia on Saturday discussed ways of monitoring a cease-fire as warring factions prepared to sit down at the negotiating table next week.

The Phnom Penh news agency SPK said the 12-member team, led by Maj. Gen. Timothy Dibuama of Ghana, talked with defense ministry officials Saturday about its mission in Cambodia. The team arrived in Phnom Penh Friday.

The team was dispatched by UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to see how the United Nations should monitor a June 24 agreement

among the Cambodians for a truce and a halt to receiving arms supplies from foreign countries.

The world body's role in the peace process is expected to figure in talks scheduled to begin Monday at the Thai seaside resort of Pattaya.

The Hanoi-backed Phnom Penh government is seeking to minimize UN involvement.

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