

Former KGB chief organised coup: Yeltsin

Kremlin to withdraw troops from Lithuania by year end

MOSCOW, Sept 8: Federal troops are to start withdrawing from Lithuania before the end of the year under an agreement reached Saturday between Moscow and the newly-independent state, Interfax news agency said, quoting a senior Lithuanian official, reports AFP.

The pact was forged a day after Moscow recognized the independence of the Baltic republics of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia.

Soviet Interior Ministry troops whose role is "merely symbolic" will be first to leave, followed by those who guard prisons, Lithuanian Deputy Interior Minister Yuozas Matonis said, according to Interfax.

Ministry representatives are expected in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius Monday to make an inventory of the headquarters of the special "Black Beret" forces, who have already left the republic.

Lithuania's Attorney General will be allowed to interview former Soviet KGB chief Vladimir Kryuchkov and former Soviet Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov in connection with the storming of the Lithuanian television centre by Soviet troops in January which left 14 people dead.

Both men were arrested for their involvement in the abortive coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev last month.

Another report adds: Russian President Boris Yeltsin accused the KGB, and its former Chairman Vladimir Kryuchkov in particular, on Saturday of being the main organisers of last month's abortive coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Yeltsin levelled the charge against the KGB in an interview with several foreign television stations, extracts of which were reported by the official Soviet news agency Tass and the unofficial agency Interfax.

He said files from the State Security Committee (KGB) archives showed that Kryuchkov personally ordered all of his telephone calls, business and private, to be monitored.

Following the collapse of the three-day coup, Kryuchkov was arrested on charges of involvement and is now awaiting trial.

"The KGB played the main role. I don't think (Former Vice-president Gennady) Yanayev started it. He doesn't have the know-how for that," Yeltsin said, though he refused to give names of leaders he believed responsible for the coup attempt.

Even after being elected President of the Russian Federation Yeltsin said, he had been placed under police surveillance, along with members of his family, "on the direct orders" of Kryuchkov, with even his phones being tapped.

Yeltsin described his relations with Gorbachev as "direct and balanced."

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3,099 killed in Punjab in 3 months

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: As many as 3,099 people were killed in Punjab in the terrorist violence from January last year to March this year, the 1990-91 report of the Home Ministry has said, reports PTI.

While 2,467 people including 493 personnel of the security forces lost their lives in the border state last year, 522 persons and 110 security men were killed till March 31 this year, the report said.

The security forces kept up their pressure on terrorists killing 1,221 militants last year and 494 in the first three months of this year. From January last year to March 31 this year, 2,401 militants were taken into custody, it said.

As part of efforts to improve law and order in Punjab and to create an atmosphere congenial for the political process, the report said a multi-pronged action plan was formulated and a campaign of people's conferences begun in the first week of August with a view to elicit active participation of people in development and planning processes.

Pakistan, she said, could not be singled out on the nuclear issue which should be resolved on the regional basis.

Benazir seeks regional army to restore peace

ISLAMABAD, Sept 8: Former Pakistan Premier, Ms Benazir Bhutto has called for setting up regional armies under the supervision of the United Nations Secretary General for intervening in regional conflicts for restoring peace, reports PTI.

"I have proposed that regional armies be established under the UN Secretary General for regional disputes. I have also proposed setting up of a regional Islamic Army under UN Secretary General as a peace keeping force for intra-Muslim countries and to assist Muslim countries to resolve their disputes without outside intervention," she stated, reports PTI.

In an interview to a French journalist, Ms Bhutto who is now touring France, reiterated that Pakistan has the knowledge to meet any nuclear threat.

Pakistan, she said, could not be singled out on the nuclear issue which should be resolved on the regional basis.

She suggested that not only there should be a Camp David sort of treaty between India and Pakistan on the nuclear issue, but there should be also a mutual arms reduction treaty for the region.

As regards the Islamic Jamhoori Ittehad government's threat to try her for treason, Ms Bhutto said "I challenge them to do it. It shall end their duplicity and bring to record as to what they want and where they actually stand on the nuclear issue."

Since Ms Bhutto's remarks that Islamabad had the potential to make a nuclear bomb, Pakistani leaders have been speaking in different voices.

While some leaders maintain that Pakistan's nuclear programme was only for peaceful purposes, others say Ms Bhutto should be tried for high treason for revealing "national secrets."

Ms Bhutto said during last year's election campaign, the IJI had claimed that once it was returned to power, it would explode an atomic bomb.

Responding to a question, Ms Bhutto said she had been under great pressure to quit politics. "As a matter of fact, my husband (Asif Ali Zardari) is being used as a hostage to my political career. I am not afraid of anything. I have a very strong belief in religion and in the day of judgment as well as natural justice."

His remarks come one day after charges by the Iraqi delegation attending a ministerial session of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Ghanaian capital that Kuwait had refused to take back a number of the detainees.

Sheikh Salem denied these allegations and said Kuwait would not be asking for the return of its prisoners and "yet refuse them."

These charges, he said, are "unacceptable to anyone who thinks."

He added that Iraq had started returning "the gold which they had stolen from the (Kuwaiti) Central Bank" but that many other items were still missing, including expensive medical equipment.

The minister said Kuwait will respect its international commitments, adding that they had managed to put out more than half of the oil wells set ablaze by Iraqi forces who occupied the Emirate for seven months until they were driven out in February by a US-led coalition of forces.

"Top prove to the world that we honour our word and we think of this world and our role in it, we have produced and exported 50,000 barrels (of oil)," (Sheikh Salem added.

Ronald Venetiaan elected Suriname President

PARAMARIBO, Sept 8: The candidate of the New Front Party, Ronald Venetiaan, has been elected as Suriname's new President and Head-of-State, the SNA news agency said Saturday, reports AFP.

Venetiaan, 55, on Friday won 80 per cent (645) of the 817 votes in the specially constituted united people assembly grouping representatives from the national assembly, district and local council.

The assembly was called to elect the new President after none of the three candidates had been able to secure the necessary two-thirds majority in two election rounds at the national assembly.

Of the other two candidates, NDP leader Jules Wijdenbosch received 14 per cent (116) votes at the assembly.

The presidential vote follows general elections held in late May in the wake of a military coup in this former Dutch colony in December last year.

Venetiaan, who will be sworn in on September 16, said after his election that his government's first priority would be to improve bilateral relations in the region, the SNA agency said.

The former Education Minister said the forging of better links with other nations could preclude the possibility of another military coup in Suriname.



THE HAGUE: Ethnic Albanian demonstrators wave Albanian flags in front of the Peace Palace September 7 to protest the exclusion of Albanians from the EC peace conference on Yugoslavia. Most of Yugoslavia's three million ethnic Albanians live in the Serbian province of Kosovo, and have been barred from participating in negotiations on Yugoslavia's future since their autonomy was suspended by Serbia in 1989. — AFP/UNB photo

Tamils kill 5 soldiers in Lanka

COLOMBO, Sept 8: Tamil guerrillas ambushed and killed five soldiers, raising to nine the death toll in embattled northeastern Sri Lanka, a military spokesman here said today, reports AFP.

Four soldiers died instantly when a surface mine planted by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) blew up the army jeep in Mannar district Saturday, the spokesman said. One more wounded soldier died in hospital Sunday.

The spokesman said troops today continued a hunt for LTTE guerrillas in the coastal region as ground troops in northeast Mullaitivu region continued to consolidate in areas captured from the rebels.

Military officials said security forces were preparing to advance deep inside LTTE-held territory

Nepalese PM has no bank account All 16 ministers have below \$1m assets

KATHMANDU, Sept 8: The Prime Minister of Nepal has no bank accounts, and owns only a house and 4.5 acres (1.8 hectares) of land in his hometown it was revealed Saturday, reports AFP.

Facts about the personal wealth of Prime Minister Gijra Prasad Koirala and his 16 Cabinet Ministers came to light as a result of a public disclosure policy aimed at checking corruption and ensuring clean government.

It was the first government leaders in this Himalayan Kingdom have ever declared their assets.

Koirala, whose hometown is Biratnagar, in the South East corner of Nepal, told his ministers last May 29 that they would have to make their personal wealth known to citizens.

The richest member of the government appeared to be Gopal Man Shrestha, the Commerce Minister.

He has 6,75,000 rupees (16,130 dollars) worth of bank deposits and company shares, plus gold and silver worth rupees 5,42,000 (12,907 dollars), three medium sized houses and a quarter acre (half hectare) of land.

The total assets of all 16 ministers does not exceed one million dollars, an official source said, adding that many Ministers have no bank accounts or significant cash holdings.

Nepal ended three decades of non-party "Panchayat" rule in 1990 after 10 weeks of popular unrest elections

Iraq still holds 2,473 Kuwaiti POWs

ACCRA, Sept 8: Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem al-Sabah al-Salem on Saturday accused Iraq of still holding 2,473 Kuwaiti prisoners of war, including women and children, reports AFP.

His remarks come one day after charges by the Iraqi delegation attending a ministerial session of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Ghanaian capital that Kuwait had refused to take back a number of the detainees.

Sheikh Salem denied these allegations and said Kuwait would not be asking for the return of its prisoners and "yet refuse them."

These charges, he said, are "unacceptable to anyone who thinks."

BRRIFFLY

Campaign to persuade HK boat people: British advertising group Saatchi is working on a campaign to persuade Hong Kong boat people that life is better in communist Vietnam than in a refugee camp, a British newspaper reported, reports Reuter from London.

The Sunday Times said the European Commission was paying the advertising firm 350,000 pounds sterling (\$62,500 dollars) to draw up a poster, video and leaflet campaign to encourage Vietnamese refugees in the British colony to return to their native land.

There are not going to be any fancy pictures or clever slogans," the Saatchi executive in charge of the campaign Rodertick Moore, was quoted as saying.

Avalanche kills 5 in Philippines: A 15-foot (5-meter) high wall of steaming debris from the Mount Pinatubo volcano thundered down rivers in central Luzon. Early reports indicated four people were killed and three others injured, police said Sunday, reports AP from Philippines.

The volcanic avalanche poured down rivers and gullies near Bacolor, about 60 miles (110 kilometers) north of Manila, during heavy rains late Saturday, police at regional headquarters here said.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said sensors reported the debris slides along two major river systems, but reports of damage and casualties were incomplete due to poor communications.

Referendum on Macedonia's independence: Voters in Macedonia, Yugoslavia's southernmost republic, go to the polls Sunday for a referendum on whether the region should declare independence, as Slovenia and Croatia did not June 25, reports AFP from Belgrade.

A majority of the republic's 1.3 million voters will tick "yes," against the question "are you for a sovereign and independent republic of Macedonia having the right to belong to an association of sovereign Yugoslavia states", according to analysts here.

Promoting the vote for independence are fears that Macedonia will find itself in a Yugoslavia abandoned by Slovenia and Croatia and dominated by Serbia.

Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic is known to consider that Macedonia should be annexed to the southern part of Serbia.

5 Croatian guards killed in clashes: Five Croatian National Guards died in clashes with the Federal Army on Saturday as leaders of Yugoslavia's feuding republics outlined their grievances at the start of a European Community peace conference, reports Reuter from Belgrade.

Zagreb radio said the men were killed in villages around Okučani where the army and Serbian guerrillas have blocked the last remaining road link between central and eastern Croatia.

Lankan troops asked to remain neutral

COLOMBO, Sept 8: Sri Lanka's army chief warned his men to remain neutral amid reports of several officers meeting with dissidents campaigning for President Ranasinghe Premadasa's overthrow, press reports said today, reports AFP.

Lieutenant General Hamilton Wanasinghe told his senior commanders last week to be impartial in the current political battle triggered by an unprecedented impeachment resolution against Premadasa.

The Sunday Times newspaper said the army as contemplating disciplinary action against at least one senior officer who is alleged to have visited a dissident from the ruling United National Party (UNP) after the crisis.

"Wanasinghe told his men to refrain from taking sides and warned them not to spread rumours by talking amongst themselves," the Sunday Times said.

Immediately after the Speaker Mohammad Haniffa Muhammad accepted a motion to impeach Premadasa, the Army, Navy and Air Force commanders and police chief issued a statement August 29 declaring allegiance to the Constitution.

The dissident group is led by former national security minister Lalith Athulathmudali and at least two other former cabinet ministers. They have ruled out the possibility of military intervention in the crisis.

Premadasa late Saturday told a group of loyalists that his life may be in danger and reiterated that the Israeli secret service, the Mossad, was behind moves to overthrow him.

"The stage is coming when I may have to sacrifice my life."

Honecker likely to seek refuge in China

BONN, Sept 8: Former East German leader Erich Honecker, will seek refuge in China if he is not allowed to stay in the Soviet Union, his lawyer is quoted as saying in the German paper Bild Am Sonntag, reports AFP.

China is still open to him. It would be the last-ditch solution, but it would give all the parties involved a way of saving face, Friedrich Wolff was quoted as saying.

Wolff said he believed the Soviet authorities would have a hard job stopping Honecker from leaving if the latter wished to do so. "Honecker can move about freely in the Soviet Union within the limits imposed by security and his own desire to live in seclusion, his lawyer said.

'Burmese junta killing villagers'

BANGKOK, Sept 8: Burma's armed forces are deliberately killing and ill-treating villagers belonging to ethnic or religious minorities, according to the London-based human rights organisation Amnesty International, reports AFP.

The accusations are contained in a report made available here Saturday, following interviews conducted by Amnesty earlier this year along the Thai-Burmese border.

"The victims include people who were detained or targeted for shooting because soldiers suspect they may sympathize with or support ethnic minority guerrilla groups that have been fighting the 'Tatmadaw' for many years" the report said.

Tatmadaw is the Burmese name for the armed forces, whose generals seized power in Rangoon in a bloody coup three years ago.

The victims also include people seized by the 'Tatmadaw' and compelled to perform portage — carrying food, ammunition and other supplies — or mine-clearing work, the report said.

Rangoon's central government has been battling a dozen ethnic minority insurgencies fighting for autonomy since Burma won independence from Britain in 1948.

"Among those who allegedly have been killed or ill-treated are members of the Karen, Mon and Indian ethnic minorities, which groups people belonging to the Christian, animist and Muslim religious minorities," the report said.

The Karens and the Mons are living along the country's border with Thailand.

Curfew in Lahore

ISLAMABAD, Sept 8: A central Pakistani city was placed under curfew Saturday as attacks linked to Muslim sectarian strife left nine people dead, police and religious sources said, reports AFP.

Four died and 24 were injured in a grenade attack on a public meeting of anti-Shi'ite Anjuman Sipah-e-Sahaba (ASS) in Lahore, Punjab's capital, late Friday, sources said.

Five other people were shot dead Saturday by gunmen on motorcycles outside the central Punjab city of Jhang, where a curfew was immediately imposed, sources in Jhang said.

The victims members of a group belonging to the Sunni fundamentalist Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Organisation, were driving to another town when the gunmen opened fire, the sources said.

The gunmen escaped and no arrests were reported.

Markets in Jhang were immediately shut as news of the bloodshed spread, and authorities ordered a curfew in the city where many have lost their lives in recurring sectarian violence.

The ASS, based in Jhang, has been campaigning against Shi'ites, whom they regard as non-believers of Islam, since the murder of ASS founder Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi about two years ago.

Pakistani Shi'ites and Tehran in turn have blamed the ASS for the assassination of Iranian diplomat Sadiq Ganji in Lahore in December 1990.

Off the Record

Gravity, electromagnetism identical?

NEW DELHI: A controversial theory has been proposed by an Indian who says that gravity and electromagnetism are identical forces in nature and that gravity force exhibited by planets "is only a manifestation of electromagnetism generated within their interiors," reports PTI.

A K Lal, a civil engineer-turned physicist says his theory might bring to end years of search for the unification of gravity and electromagnetism.

Lal, who is Assistant Director in the National Buildings Organisation, says he arrived at this "interesting conclusion" by studying the existing models of the interiors of various terrestrial planets.

In a paper prepared for publication, he claims that earth's gravity is 'intrinsically related' to the generation of electromagnetism within its interior.

Earth has a magnetic field believed to be generated by the electrically conducting outer fluid core. According to Lal, the so-called gravitational pull experienced by an object is nothing but attraction between a giant magnet (earth) and another feeble magnet (the object). He says all objects possess some magnetic property even though it may be very feeble.

The gravity force exhibited by Mars, Venus, and Mercury is also a manifestation of their electromagnetism generated within these planets, says Lal.

According to him, HSI hypothesis that gravity and electromagnetism are same forces is in line with theories very recently proposed by some Western scientists who have said that the universe was shaped trillions of years ago not by gravity but by electricity and magnetism.

Laboratory experiments in the West have shown that electromagnetic forces can pull hot gases into distinct structures confirming by theory, Lal says.

'We knew we would prevail'

TALLINN, Estonia: A day after the Soviet Union recognized the independence of Estonia, along with that of Latvia and Lithuania, there were no public celebrations here Saturday, reports AFP.

Even Tallinn's Cathedral, perched atop the old city overlooking the Baltic Sea, failed to ring bells to mark the Soviet's recognition that their occupation, which started in World War II, had ended.

World to face persistent hunger

WASHINGTON, Sept 8: A transcontinental intellectual grouping — the Club of Rome — in its publication "The First Global Revolution", has said hunger will prove the most persistent problem of the world if poverty stays as in India, reports PTI.

"In 1987, says the publication entitled "The First Global Revolution", authored by Alexander King and Bertrand Schneider, "it was estimated that world food production was sufficient to provide some 19 per cent more calories than was necessary to provide a reasonable diet for every person on earth.

Yet vast areas of hunger and malnutrition persisted, worsened by drought, famine and warfare. It seems, therefore, that the existence of plenty of food in the world has little relevance to the persistence of hunger."

The co-existence of glut and famine seems intolerable and gives rise to problems in the surplus as well as in the deficit countries."

The Club of Rome does not entertain the argument that it is possible to grow food for a world population as high as 20 billion. "This is probably technically so," says the publication, "if agriculture is considered in isolation."

The book stresses the urgency of improving the economic conditions in the poor countries and at the same time to introduce effective means of population control.

Landscape Arch collapsing

ARCHES NATIONAL PARK: Landscape Arch, the longest stone arch in Arches National Park and one of the longest in the world, may be in danger of collapsing, park officials said, reports AP.

At least three slabs fell from the 306-foot (100-meter) span last week and officials expect more to flake off soon.

On September 1, several tourists saw a 60-foot-long, 8-foot-wide and 4-foot-thick (20-meter-long, 3-meter wide and 1.3-meter thick) slab drop from the underside of the arch near the centre of the span, the Park Service said.

"Amazingly enough, no one was injured," a Park Service statement said. "The arch was only 16 feet at its thickest point. With 4 feet less for support, it must have seemed that barely anything was holding it up."