

Havel's resignation hastens Czech split

PRAGUE, July 21: Czechoslovakia moved a step closer to splitting in two with the resignation of President Vaclav Havel, the playwright who led his country's peaceful revolution against communism, reports AP.

"The Czech and Slovak federative republic does not have a president anymore," state radio said Monday as the resignation took effect at 6 pm (1600 GMT).

"I am not sad. I have a feeling of certain relief, of certain alleviation," Havel told journalists at Lany, a presidential residence 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Prague.

Havel said he regretted the impending split of Czechoslovakia, but added: "It would probably be nonsense to try to prevent it."

He said he considered the inability to save the federation "a big failure of us all, not only mine personally, but, of course, also mine."

"I say that as a citizen who believed in the sense of this federation, and who is sorry that it is probably sentenced to

extinction." The CSTK news agency said about 400 people shouted "We want Havel" and sang the Czech anthem as the presidential flag was lowered over Prague castle, main seat of the federal presidency.

Havel announced his resignation plans Friday, moments after the parliament of the poorer eastern republic of Slovakia declared sovereignty in a move sure to split the country into Czech and Slovak states.

His term technically was to expire October 5, but an early resignation was expected as the breakup he fought to prevent became inevitable.

He was elected the country's first post-Communist president in December 1989, and again the next year.

Havel might continue in politics as the president of an independent Czech republic, although the country's breakup has yet to be settled and so such post now exists.

"It depends on whether my candidacy will be supported by several relevant political forces," Havel said.



WEST VIRGINIA: Democratic Presidential candidate Bill Clinton waves to the crowd as he boards his bus following a July 19 visit at Weirton Steel. Gov. Clinton and running mate Sen. Al Gore are continuing their cross-country bus tour to St. Louis with stops in Ohio on Monday. — AFP/UNB photo

Bahamas parliament dissolved

NASSAU (Bahamas), July 21: The Bahamas parliament was dissolved on Monday and general elections were set for August 19 in which Prime Minister Sir Lynden Pindling will seek his seventh consecutive term, government officials said, reports Reuter.

The last election was held on June 19, 1987. Opposition leader Hubert Ingraham criticised the ruling party for delays in calling for the election which he said is "typical of a regime that has been permitted to rule for far too long a time."

But Pindling predicted in a statement on Monday that the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) will win 38 out of the 49 seats comprising the house of assembly, which is the elected body of the Bahamas parliament.

Pak army to back democracy?

ISLAMABAD, July 21: Pakistan's army promised the country's civilian rulers on Monday it would back democracy and accept the limits of their powers to tackle political and criminal violence in the Sindh province, reports Reuter.

Army Chief General Asif Nawaz gave the assurance at a meeting with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif a day after the army won a battle for controversial extra powers to press ahead with its anti-crime crackdown.

A military statement quoted General Nawaz as telling them the army "fully

supports the democratic order."

"Let me categorically state we fully accept that policy-making is the prerogative of the elected government while the armed forces are one of the instruments that execute this policy," Nawaz was quoted as saying.

The statement apparently sought to scotch widespread rumours that the army was contemplating seizing power as it has repeatedly done in the past.

Hundreds of posters appeared in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad last week featuring a picture of General Nawaz and implicitly urging an

army takeover.

A presidential decree issued on Monday gave the army powers to launch search-and-arrest operations in support of the civil government and to use as much force as required.

It gave soldiers legal immunity from prosecution for their actions, backdated to when the army launched its anti-crime Sindh operation in late May.

Previously, troops had to be accompanied by police during raids against bandit gangs in the rural interior of the province.

Military spokesmen had said that was one of the impediments to their crackdown and the army had

been seeking a much stronger legal framework for the operation.

Sharif ordered the military into action in May mainly to tackle the gangs of bandits terrorising much of interior Sindh.

But last month they switched attention to his former coalition partners in the ethnic Mahajir National Movement (MQM) which dominate the Sindh capital Karachi and its second city Hyderabad.

The MQM, which represents Muslim migrants from India, recently, quit Sharif's coalition in Islamabad and the Sindh government, sparking a crisis in Karachi.

VP suggests Rao quit if he fails to deal with Ayodhya issue

NEW DELHI, July 21: The former Prime Minister and Janata Dal leader, V P Singh, today said the Narasimha Rao government should quit office if it failed to take effective steps immediately to deal with the Ayodhya developments, reports PTI.

Addressing a news conference here, the Janata Dal leader said his party would support "any action" of the centre including dismissal of the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh for its failure to stop the ongoing construction work at the Ayodhya complex inviolation of the court orders.

Strongly criticising the centre for its "inaction" in dealing with the latest developments in Ayodhya, the former Prime Minister said it was the primary responsibility of the centre to ensure that there was no violation of the

constitution.

If dismissal of the UP government was necessary to deal with the situation, the Janata



Dal would support the centre, Singh said. He said even now it was too late to initiate a national

effort to bring both the contending parties to the negotiating table for an amicable settlement of the vexed problem. But the on-going construction work has to be stopped forthwith, Singh asserted.

Meanwhile, the Congress yesterday dismissed the possibility of the government acquiring a land at the disputed structure at Ayodhya and said that consultations, negotiations and consensus was the key to resolve the vexed issue.

A party spokesman, Chandulal Chandrakar, told reporters that the government has no plan or proposal to acquire land at Ayodhya.

Chandrakar, who faced a volley of questions from newsmen on the Ayodhya issue, maintained that the Prime Minister, PV Narsimha Rao, was not helpless in tackling

the issued and was dealing with it patiently.

Describing the Ram Janmabhoomi (Babri Masjid) issue as the most ticklish question faced by the country, he said expressing confidence that the country would be able to find a solution to the vexed issue whereby there was no bloodshed.

Asked why the government was just waiting and watching, and was not taking any action, he said sometimes one has to wait. He said the Prime Minister was still having consultations and contacts with all concerned and a decision would be taken after involving political parties like the JD, left parties and the BJP.

In this regard he also pointed out that the senior BJP leaders are meeting in Lucknow today to take stock of the development in Ayodhya.

100 Iraqi troops killed, claim Shi'ites

NICOSIA, July 21: Iraqi Shi'ite Muslim rebels claimed Monday they killed more than 100 troops and shot down a helicopter during a new government offensive against their hideouts in southern Iraq, Tehran radio reported, says AP.

The state-run radio quoted officials of the Tehran-based Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq as saying government forces used warplanes in their attack on

the southern marshlands, including the city of al-Amarah near the Iranian border.

The report could not be independently confirmed. The Iraqi government bars foreign reporters from covering the fighting in the south.

It was the second reported Iraqi attack on the marshes in five days. Rebel sources claimed 100 Iraqi troops also had been killed during the first attack in the al-Amarah area last Thursday.

Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency, monitored in Nicosia, said its reporters in southern Iran could hear explosions from the Iraqi side of the border Sunday and Monday.

IRNA quoted unidentified rebel sources as saying the Iraqi attack killed many people and that they had appealed to international organisations to intervene to stop the attacks on civilians in the south.

The latest attack came four days after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein conferred with his top military commanders to discuss the completion of a project to drain the southern marshlands, which are used as a haven by the Shi'ite rebels.

The official Iraqi News Agency, which reported the meeting, did not explain why Saddam was conferring with his top generals to discuss what is officially described as a project to build a huge irrigation canal.

The agency said Saddam on Monday ordered salary bonuses totalling 25 million dinars, the equivalent of \$80 million at the official rate of exchange or \$1.7 million on the black market, to be paid out to labourers and engineers involved in the project.

It did not say how much money each person would receive, and the number of people involved was unknown. It said Saddam decided on

the bonuses "to express his appreciation for the distinguished sacrifices made by these labourers who have been toiling around the clock to complete the project."

Rebels continue attack on Lima

LIMA, July 21: Guerillas of the Maoist Shing Path continued their attacks on the capital for a fifth day, bombing a school and prestigious social research centre, reports AP.

A car bomb exploded late Monday outside the Institute for Liberty and Democracy, ripping away a 4-metre (12-foot) wall surrounding the building and shattering windows 10 blocks away. At least two people were killed and four others wounded, police said.

The institute's director, Hernando de Soto, was in his office but was not injured.

Off the Record

He is his chauffeur

WARSAW, Poland: Who is that stern, bearded figure shadowing President Lech Walesa at every public appearance? He was Walesa's chauffeur, now he is Poland's secretary of state, and maybe there is more to his story, reports AP.

To hear defectors from Walesa's camp tell it, Mieczyslaw Wachowski is uncouth and arrogant, a cunning plotter who manipulates Walesa as "the dark mirror of the president's soul." Some even claim he is a Communist stooge, virtually ruling Poland from two steps behind the president.

Wachowski says nothing. He refuses to grant interviews, doesn't return phone calls and won't answer questions submitted in writing. The president's office will not provide the secretary of state's resume or comment on his role.

Walesa has been forced to defend him publicly and promise to produce him for journalists — someday. Meanwhile, Wachowski has become among the most scorned individuals in Poland's tumultuous political life, and among the most powerful.



"Just because a dog wets his newspaper"

SANTA CLARA, Calif. A man shot and killed his neighbour because he thought the neighbour's dog had urinated on his newspaper, police said, reports AP.

Michael DeBaets, 49, was held on suspicion of homicide after Sunday's shooting. He was to be arraigned Tuesday.

Police said DeBaets and his wife, Robin, had a history of confrontations with neighbour Martin Myslinski, 33, over parking, trees, Myslinski's dog and the DeBaets' cat.

"This is an ongoing type of thing that has gone on for two years and possibly more," Sgt Monte Maceer said. "It's just a silly disagreement that ultimately led to murder."

When the DeBaets found their newspaper wet with what they thought was dog urine, Mrs DeBaets put it in Myslinski's convertible. Myslinski then threw it back on the DeBaets' property, and Mrs DeBaets threw it back, police said.

Myslinski and Mrs DeBaets were discussing the matter

Kennedy's assassin a poor marksman

MOSCOW: A Russian man who knew Lee Harvey Oswald had told a Russian magazine that the assassin of US President John F Kennedy had a weak character and was a poor marksman while living in the former Soviet Union, reports AP.

The man identified as Pavel Golovachev made the comments in an interview to be printed in "Echo of the Planet," published by Itar-Tass news agency. Excerpts were carried by Itar-Tass on Monday, and an advance copy was obtained by The Associated Press.

The interview includes no revelations about Oswald or the assassination, but it offers some glimpses about Oswald's time in the former Soviet Union from the late 1950s until 1962.

Golovachev told the magazine that he met Oswald in the Belarusian capital of Minsk while the assassin was living and working there. Golovachev said they worked in the same factory.

"My attitude to Oswald was the same as if he were an extraterrestrial. It was interesting for me to know what this American was like," he was quoted as saying by the magazine.

Golovachev told the magazine that he found Oswald to be "a weak man, not very bright or intellectual."

The magazine quoted him as saying that Oswald at one point bought a hunting gun and joined a Soviet hunters' club, but that he rarely attended training sessions and was a bad shot.

"He failed to hit the target even once," Golovachev told the magazine.

Golovachev also said the KGB tried to recruit him to inform on Oswald, but that he refused.

'I'm not sure if Bush knows how to spell AIDS'

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands: Elizabeth Taylor had sharp criticism for President Bush during an appearance Monday at the world's largest AIDS conference, reports AP.

"I don't think President Bush is doing anything at all about AIDS," the actress said. "In fact I'm not even sure if he knows how to spell AIDS," she added.

Miss Taylor, chairwoman of the American Foundation for AIDS Research, spoke at a meeting of her organisation that coincided with the AIDS conference. The Eighth International Conference on AIDS has drawn more than 10,000 experts, researchers and people with AIDS to the Dutch capital.

Miss Taylor announced her organisation was donating \$300,000 to community groups in Argentina.

The US government will spend about \$2 billion this year on AIDS, the same as it spends to fight cancer, according to federal statistics.



Police in China are like a criminal syndicate

HONG KONG, July 21: A highly-decorated police officer who recently fled China has provided an inside look at corruption in the Communist super power, accusing police of running smuggling, prostitution and car theft rings, reports AP.

"The police in China are like a criminal syndicate," said Gao Peiqi, who held a rank equivalent to that of an American police lieutenant (Britain — chief inspector) in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen. "Corruption is widespread and the government can't control it."

Using confidential documents and details from cases he had broken himself, Gao painted a picture of a Chinese police force riddled with malfeasance, lacking the ability

and will to stop it. He said in his seven years in the Ministry of Justice the problem had worsened.

Gao, 42, won three medals at his last position before fleeing China. In that post he was deputy leader of the serious crimes section in Shenzhen, a special economic zone of 2.5 million people bordering Hong Kong. One of the medals was for breaking China's first case of computer hackers stealing from a bank.

Gao said automobile theft was popular among police in Shenzhen because it is the only city in China where many people own cars. Gao displayed a document detailing the arrest this year of Lu Tingsheng, an officer who allegedly stole 23 automobiles.

"I received numerous letters reporting this man but my leaders didn't allow me to investigate because everybody is protecting everybody else," Gao said. The case came into the open when a hooligan, during a random beating by police, gave details of the case to several high-ranking officers, he said.

Gao's allegations illustrate the corruption that is wracking China 13 years after the beginning of a reform programme that opened the country to Western investment and influences. While the reforms have created booms in places like Shenzhen, where the per capita income is highest in China, they have also fueled social dislocation, alienation and crime.

An independent newspaper in Hong Kong reported in June

that a heroin smuggling ring involving about 100 police, military officials, Communist Party members and employees of state-run companies had been broken. The report said four police officers had been secretly executed.

Party officials have acknowledged the problem.

In June 1991, then Vice Minister of Public Security Tao Siju said in a speech that abuse of power was the most common complaints against the police.

"Problems such as abuse of power indiscriminate collection of fees, imposition of fines and apportionment of expenses should be firmly dealt with," Tao said.

Gao said he personally arrested seven police officers in Shenzhen in four years. Five of

them for car theft and two for smuggling. He also provided documentation of two officers who ran a prostitution ring in Bao'an County inside Shenzhen. Last month, authorities in Shenzhen broadcast a list of the "10 forbidden," including a ban on police frequenting halls and massage parlors.

"Before the revolution, the people use to say the Nationalists went to whore houses. Now they say the Communists run them," Gao said. Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party lost a civil war to the Communists in 1949 partly because of its reputation for corruption.

Gao said smuggling is an especially lucrative crime in southern China because of its proximity to Hong Kong, China's major source of smuggled goods. Gao said police

Bhandari blames West Bengal govt for giving free hand to Ghising

CALCUTTA, July 21: The Sikkim Chief Minister, Nar Bahadur Bhandari, Tuesday blamed the West Bengal government of giving a free hand to the GNLF chief, Subhas Ghising, to carry on his disruptive activities, reports PTI.

Bhandari told newsmen at the Calcutta Airport on way to Delhi that by being soft on the Gorkhaland agitation, the West Bengal government was now hard put to control law and order in the hills. He alleged that a vested interest group had tried to assassinate him by hiring professional killers in West Bengal, but the state government was yet to identify and punish the culprits.

Sino-Pak accord on Radio, TV programmes

ISLAMABAD, July 21: Pakistan and China signed here today an agreement on Radio and Television cooperation to strengthen friendship and cooperation between the two countries, reports Xinhua.

Under the agreement, the two countries will exchange music and radio programmes, TV films and professional delegations.

The agreement was signed by Mohammad Akram, Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of Pakistan, and Wang Feng, Vice-Minister of Radio, Television and Films of China.

Wang Feng is expected to call on Pakistan President Ghulam Ishaq Khan today.