

Vladimir Lenin wins reprieve from oblivion

MOSCOW, Aug 27: Vladimir Lenin, the founder of the Soviet Union, won a reprieve from oblivion on Thursday when the Russian central bank decided to let some notes with his portrait to stay in circulation until the end of the year, reports Reuters.

Court confirms seizure of Montedison's assets

MILAN (Italy), Aug 27: A Milan court on Friday confirmed the seizure of 500 billion lire (312 million dollar) worth of assets of former executives of Montedison, Italy's largest agricultural and chemical group, reports AP.

Effects of intl' sanctions to linger for 2 yrs in Haiti'

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Haiti), Aug 27: International sanctions pressured Haitian lawmakers into approving a government that would restore democracy, but the cost was thousands of Haitian deaths, particularly among children, according to AP.

Haitian Rep Duly Brutus estimated that 10,000 Haitians died because of the sanctions. The president of the lower house, Dr Antoine Joseph, demanded foreign nations cancel Haiti's foreign debt as reparations for the suffering.

And while the sanctions will soon end, doctors and researchers say the effects will linger for years because of failed inoculation programs and a greater dependency on food handouts.

"I don't think anyone around here said, 'Let's starve Haitians,'" John Morill, director of the 53-member US Congressional Hunger Caucus, said Wednesday by telephone from Washington. "It was always, 'Give it another day or two' or 'Give it another month or two.'"

Things were tough in Haiti long before President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's overthrow by soldiers in 1991, but the resulting sanctions forced many Haitians to sell off household assets or even eat roots to survive.

Despite the hardships, Aristide's supporters, including many slum dwellers, insisted the sanctions be maintained until the military agreed to allow a return to democratic rule.

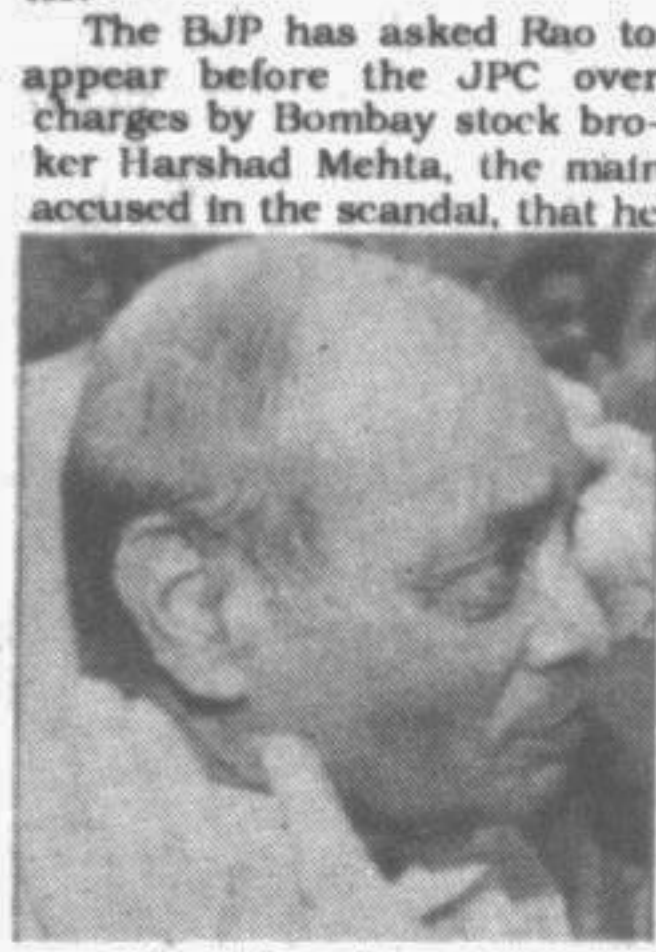
By this year, many had run out of means of cope, humanitarian officials said, and the death toll rose during the protracted political negotiations on restoring democracy.

The world community increased the political pressure without taking responsibility for protecting Haiti's poor from the fallout, said a Harvard researcher who examined the effects of the sanctions.

BJP accuses govt of scuttling probe into Bombay scam

NEW DELHI, Aug 27: India's main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accused the government of scuttling a probe into the nation's worst financial scandal because Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao was involved, reports Reuters.

Minister is directly responsible for. The BJP has asked Rao to appear before the JPC over charges by Bombay stock broker Harshad Mehta, the main accused in the scandal, that he



gave Rao 10 million rupee in payoffs. Rao has denied Mehta's charges, but opposition parties have accused his Congress party deputies on the JPC of

preventing him from giving testimony on the issue. The BJP says corruption in high places would be a major issue in a crucial election campaign due in December.

Elections are due in four northern Indian states because Rao last year dismissed the BJP governments there. The committee stands to lose its focus and secondly its purpose will be perverted if it is prevented from submitting its report in time," Singh said.

The JPC was set up last year to probe the scandal in which brokers and bankers are charged with colluding to divert funds from illegal securities trade to fuel the then booming Bombay stock exchange. It is now due to report by late December.

India to raise grain storage centres

AFP report adds: The Indian government plans to in-

crease the number of grain storage centres as annual food losses due to poor storage facilities have exceeded one billion dollar, a minister said Thursday, reports AFP.

Minister of State for Food Kalp Nath Rai said 11 million tonnes of cereals and grains worth 1.1 billion dollar rot every year because farmers do not have proper storing facilities. Almost 10 per cent of grain stored by farmers goes to waste as a result.

"This is by any standard a loss the country can ill-afford," Rai told an MPs' watchdog panel, adding that several projects have been launched to boost India's food storage capacity.

India's annual food production is estimated to be 170 million tonnes. The government claims to be holding comfortable buffer stocks after a chain of good monsoons resulted in bumper harvests.

Pakistan to get \$ 1.5b IMF soft loans

ISLAMABAD, Aug 27: Pakistan should receive around 700 million US dollar by the end of 1993 as the first tranche of a 1.5 billion dollar soft loan package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other multilateral donors, a senior official said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

"The total package is around 1.5 billion US dollar", Saeed Qureshi, head of the Finance Ministry's planning commission, told reporters. "We hope to get 600-700 million US dollar in the first phase, that is, to the end of calendar 1993."

Qureshi said about one billion US dollar of the package would come from the IMF as balance of payments support, with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) providing the rest.

Government and donor agency officials said they expect the loans to be approved formally next month. The package has been agreed on the basis of major economic reforms by Pakistan's caretaker government.

Blair House Agreement Kohl favours maintaining EC schedule for economic union

BONN, Aug 27: German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said here Thursday that he favoured renegotiation of certain points in the "Blair House Agreement" on world farm trade in connection with long-running talks under the auspices of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT), reports AFP.

And on another point, said he favoured maintaining the EC schedule for economic and monetary union, or even speeding it up. The Blair House accord was concluded in Washington last November between the United States and the European Commission, and calls for some limits on agricultural output and subsidies. France has sharply opposed it and there have been doubts about it in some other European Community members.

Kohl said at a joint press conference with visiting French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur that "the preliminary agreement entails certain problems, even for us."

The German leader told correspondents that "we have to find a compromise acceptable to all. There are certain points unacceptable to the French... that is not the whole agreement. But a part of it, and it is that part that must be discussed."

That was the first time Kohl has gone so far in supporting France in the longstanding dispute over farm trade, a key issue that has blocked a general GATT agreement on expanding and liberalising world trade.

But while Kohl mentioned "certain points" in the Blair House agreement, Balladur told the news conference after two hours of talks with Kohl that "anything going beyond the reform of the EC common agricultural policy is unacceptable. We do not want to go beyond that."

The French premier said he would give Kohl two documents early next week on the French position on farm negotiations and on the desirable organisation of world trade. In the French view.

Algeria faces daunting race to revive economy

ALGIERS, Aug 27: Placing together Algeria's third government in two years of crisis, Prime Minister Redha Malek faces a daunting race to transform a debt-burdened economy and end instability and daily killings, reports Reuters.

"Algeria is all right to pay its debts this year, despite the drop in oil prices, but next year could bring problems it can well do without," said one European economic expert.

Kick-starting the moribund economy is seen by many as a key to helping end the violence blamed on Muslim fundamentalists who find ready recruitment among disenfranchised young jobless.

"The killing seems to be getting worse and unless they can provide some hope for the future, work and housing, it won't go away," said a western diplomat.

Malek has a little room to manoeuvre as his predecessor Belaid Abdesselam, but is less bound by the ideology of nearly 30 years of socialist centralised management, say diplomats. They suggest he has three possible economic options.

"Rescheduling foreign debt via the Paris club, after rebuilding bridges, apparently damaged by Abdesselam, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

An even more draconian clampdown on imports, reaching a separate agreement with the IMF to tide the country over until 1996.

Foreign debt of some 25 billion US dollar is blamed for most of Algeria's woes, highlighted by long bread queues and rotting rubbish lying uncollected in Algiers because of broken vehicles.

Servicing the debt takes about nine billion US dollar a year out of 11 billion US dollar in exports of oil and gas which

bring in over 90 per cent of all foreign earnings.

Former Treasury Minister Ahmed Benbitour blamed the debt structure, much of it short-term, for holding an intrinsically wealthy nation of 26 million people hostage to misfortune.

Writing only of "lessons for the future," he said that in the years from 1989 and 1991, Algeria repaid 25.2 billion US dollar equivalent to its total debt, which remained undented.

Official figures last June put repayments in the next three years at 17 billion US dollar principal plus six billion US dollar in interest.

From 1996, Algeria's gas exports will jump when a pipeline to Europe comes on stream. The target, with most of the gas already sold in advance is 60 billion cubic metres a year, double the present figure and earning the country more than another three billion US dollar annually.

"Algeria is an ideal case for rescheduling, one of the main arguments against rescheduling is whether the country will be better able to pay its debts in a few years time. For Algeria, there is no question," said a western economic expert.

Successive governments have opposed rescheduling, saying it undermined sovereignty and gave foreigners unaware of local social problems power to impose unrealistic conditions.

Rescheduling is not formally on Malek's agenda but "the head of government remains open to all possible economic options, as long as these options do not threaten the interests and sovereignty of the country," the official news agency APS quoted an authoritative source as saying this week.



A worker unloads cases of 33cl bottles of Heineken beer yesterday apparently unaware of the recall of thousands of bottles of the famous export beer, announced earlier in the morning by the Heineken's Hong Kong agent. The bottles are being withdrawn from Britain, Sweden, Hungary, Israel, Finland, Austria, Canada and Hong Kong after glass splinters were found in some bottles. — AFP photo

Food, fuel shortages grip DPRK

SEOUL, Aug 27: North Korea may face an acute food shortage as unusually cool weather is certain to hurt its harvest this year, agriculture specialists said Thursday, reports AP.

There already have been widespread reports of food and fuel shortages in the hard-line Communist state.

Low temperatures were causing widespread crop damage in North Korea, perhaps the worst since 1980, said Kim Sung-hoon, a professor at Joong-ang University in Seoul.

Kim said he and other South Koreans conducted three weeks of field research along the border between North Korea and China this month.

Kim said his research was based partly on accounts by Chinese officials and others who visited North Korea's rural

areas during his stay in China. The professor predicted that North Korea might lose more than 30 per cent of its harvest this year if temperatures remain low in the next four weeks.

Then Pyongyang would have to import at least 2.5 million tons of grain, he added.

South Korean officials say North Korea has had food shortages since 1980, when both Koreas suffered devastating crop damage.

Since early May, average temperatures across the Korean peninsula have been two degrees Celsius (3.6 F) low than in previous years.

South Korea also is expected to suffer widespread crop damage, and officials estimate this year's rice production will be more than seven per cent below last year's 5.3 million tons.

On Tuesday, Im Young-sun, a North Korean defector, said there have been widespread food shortages and irregular food distribution in North Korea.

Im, who said he was a platoon leader in an army engineering unit in Pyongyang, said insufficient food was prompting growing dissent in the Stalinist state.

North Korea strictly controls information about its domestic situation. Earlier this week, however, it denied Western reports of food riots that were suppressed by the North Korean army.

"It is a fact known to the whole world that (North Korea) has attained self-sufficiency in food long before and its people are supplied with food by the state at prices next to nil," its official news agency said.

3 CIS states' move for single economic zone praised

By Andrew Wilson

An agreement by the Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian presidents to put their countries into a single economic zone has been hailed as the first instance of former Soviet republics combining to act on hard economic facts as opposed to ideology.

If their parliaments approve, and the accord is signed in September, goods, services and capital will be able to move freely among the three states, hopefully leading to increased production.

Some commentators have called it a breakthrough. This could be oversteering the facts. Ever since the June meeting of the world's seven most industrialised nations (G7), optimism has been clutching at straws to show that, at least in Russia, things are going less badly.

The rouble is said to be stabilising; privatisation has reached 11 per cent of the trading and services sector, and the monthly inflation rate could be down to single figures by December.

Another hopeful sign is a slowing in the decline in production, which dropped 18-20 per cent in the first half of the year. Nonetheless, all three states' economies show signs of being crippled for a long time to come.

In Russia, millions of workers are about to be thrown out of jobs, with no social security net, as market reforms close loss-making industries. Western investors, afraid of instability, have stayed on the sidelines.

Typical of the new mood of realism is a report on the oil industry, where, according to a non-governmental organisation, the Moscow-based International Fuel and Power Association,

attempts to stabilise extraction are unlikely to be successful in the next 15-20 years.

In Ukraine, where privatisation began a year later than in Russia, the state of economy is even worse. The currency, the karbovanet, launched on a basis of equality with the rouble, is now worth only a quarter, and this year inflation is expected to reach 1,700 per cent.

To make things worse, September's referendum on confidence in the presidency and parliament is diverting attention from urgent economic problems to political ones.

Belarus has narrowly avoided a general strike by printing money to compensate citizens for an increase in the price of a "consumer basket" three times higher than the level of the national minimum wage. Inflation is 10 per cent more than in Russia, and privatisation, finally approved by parliament in June is hampered by a shortage of vouchers.

What is remarkable is that the agreement on a common economic zone should have been reached despite the tension existing between Russia and Ukraine over ownership of the Black Sea Fleet, the status of the Crimea, and Russia's demand for payment in hard currency for energy deliveries on which Ukraine is 90 per cent dependent.

In fact, the agreement appears to have addressed the last point by proposing a smooth transition to world prices, with Ukraine paying part of its energy bill in equipment for Russian oil and gas exploitation.

How did it all happen? according to Russian Deputy Premier Aleksandr Shokhin, the

idea began in "March or thereabouts" on the initiative of the Belarusian Prime Minister Vyacheslav Kebich.

At first the talks were bilateral between Belarus and Russia, then they became trilateral with the inclusion of Kazakhstan. Says Shokhin: "These discussions were rather

In May there was a change of direction. While the definitive meeting was still in preparation, Kazakhstan joined the Turkic-speaking Central Asian bloc promoted by Turkey, and its place in the tripartite discussions was taken by Ukraine.

There were still many problems with Ukraine. This has put enormous strain on President Leonid Kravchuk, who is anxious to have people forget his past, when his job as Communist Party propaganda chief was to repress nationalist impulses.

A turning point was the recent strike, when two million miners in the Russian-speaking Donbass region almost toppled the government with calls for territorial autonomy.

Another important event was on June 29, when the heads of five Ukrainian and five Russian frontier regions, meeting in Kharkov, agreed to institute the free circulation of goods and persons in their zone straddling the inter-republic border.

On June 18, the Ukrainian and Russian presidents reached agreement on a wide range of hitherto intractable-looking issues: energy supplies, nuclear weapons, the abandonment of territorial claims, and dual citizenship.

This paved the way for Ukrainian accession to the tripartite agreement, though there is no guarantee that this or any other agreement will be approved by the nationalist-minded Russian and Ukrainian parliaments. Even reform-minded Russians suspect applications for economic integration

what caused the Ukrainian and Kazakh governments to act as they did in the matter.

Of all participants in a move for economic union, Ukraine was the least likely, its evolution has been slower and harder than that of other republics, not least because of a problem of identity that has caused it to confuse independence with the feigning of anything even faintly resembling the former Soviet Union.

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US labour unions ask govt to protect workers

WASHINGTON, Aug 27: Five labour unions asked the federal government Wednesday to help protect workers—particularly in health care, social service and criminal justice—from exposure to tuberculosis on their jobs, reports AP.

"During the past decade, the growth of poverty, inadequate access to primary and preventive care and the epidemic of HIV/AIDS have combined to fuel an alarming resurgence of TB in the United States," the Labor Coalition to Fight TB in the Workplace said in its petition.

The coalition contended there has been a 20 per cent increase in cases 1985, which, together with the emergence of a strain of virus that resists many drugs, have left millions in danger of workplace exposure to the disease.

Its petition said it had been transmitted to workers in 13 per cent of the hospitals surveyed by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Hospital Association.

The coalition asked the US government's Occupational Safety and Health Administration to establish a safety standard that would protect workers, and immediately issue national enforcement guidelines.

Coalition members are the American Federation of Government Employees; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; the American Federation of Teachers; 1199 National Health and Human Services Union, and the Service Employees International Union.

They claim to represent more than one million workers.



confidential. The idea was that instead of trying to settle all the points of a new economic agreement with everyone, we should show the other CIS states how co-operation could be built up.

"Political obstacles are constantly re-emerging," says Shokhin. "But it was realised that neither Ukraine nor Russia could do without close economic union." Shokhin's account stops short of explaining