

International

UN calls for complete cessation of hostilities in Congo

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 16: The UN Security Council on Wednesday called for a "complete cessation of hostilities by all sides" in Congo and deplored "foreign interferences" there, reports AFP.

months of fighting. Sassou-Nguesso's forces claimed victory Wednesday against the government of President Pascal Lissouba after seizing the capital Brazzaville. The Angolan army crossed the border and captured the second-largest city, Pointe Noire.

On Tuesday, Secretary-General Kofi Annan suggested that the council impose an arms embargo on both sides and dispatch an advance military team to neighbouring Gabon to prepare for a larger UN peacekeeping force if the two sides accepted a ceasefire.

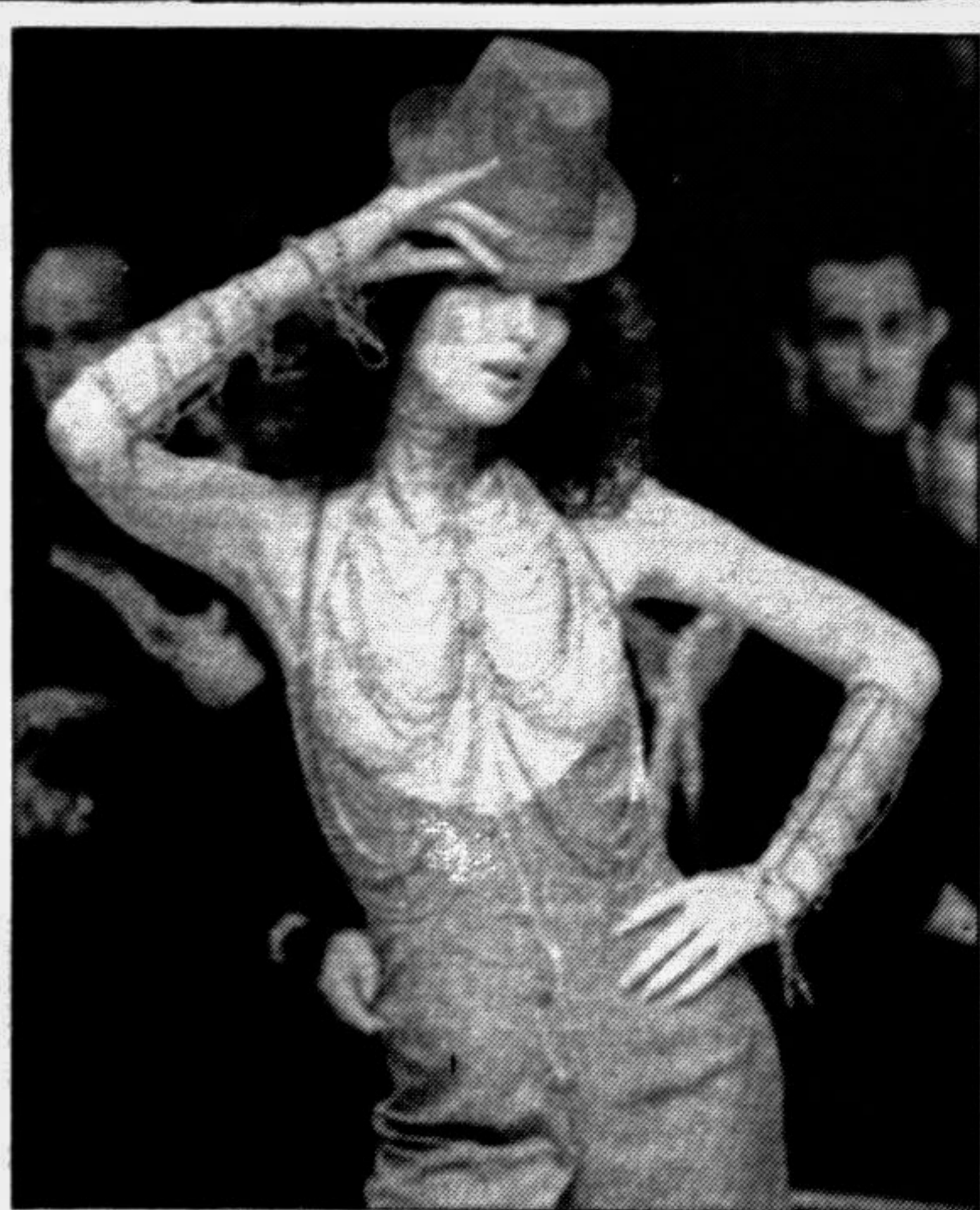
Ranariddh for int'l war crimes court to prosecute Hun Sen

PHNOM PENH, Oct 16: Ousted Cambodian co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh today called for an international war crimes court to prosecute the country's leader Hun Sen for allegedly ordering scores of opponents executed, reports Reuter.

General Krouch Yoeum, under-secretary of state for defence, from a shallow grave off a country road 40 kms (28 miles) north of Phnom Penh, rights workers said they believed a grave nearby was that of senior royalist official, General Chao Sambath.

Colombo blast death toll rises to 18

COLOMBO, Oct 16: Colombo police and hospital officials reported today that the death toll had risen to 18 from a bomb blast and gunbattles in the capital's business district, reports Reuter.



A model sports an open buttons grey long dress with a matching hat and necklaces as part of Givenchy's 1998 spring-summer ready-to-wear collection designed by Britain's Alexander McQueen and presented in Paris Wednesday. — AP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

10 Israelis held in Jerusalem: Ten Israelis have been arrested on suspicion they sold explosives to Palestinians from the West Bank, Israel radio reported Wednesday, AP says from Jerusalem.

Islamic militants have carried out more than a dozen suicide bombings in Israel since 1994, and Israel is on high alert for more attacks. The Israelis, all Jews from Jerusalem, were arrested earlier this week and found to be in possession of over 200 kilograms (440 pounds) of explosive material, the report said.

Narayanan congratulates Arundhati: The President, KR Narayanan, on Wednesday congratulated Arundhati Roy for winning the prestigious Booker Prize for her novel 'The God of Small Things', PTI reports from New Delhi.

Pickering leaves for India, Pakistan: US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering headed for India and Pakistan Wednesday to prepare for President Bill Clinton's visit early next year, AFP reports from Washington.

Canada's envoy to Israel returns: Canada's ambassador to Israel returned to the Jewish state on Wednesday following assurances that Israel would stop using Canadian passports in secret Mossad operations, Reuter reports from Tel Aviv.

Another quake shakes Italy: Another strong earthquake, centred near this heavily damaged Umbrian town, jolted central Italy Thursday, waking up people as far away 175 kilometres (110 miles) in Rome, AP reports from Sollano.

AIDS awareness campaign in Vietnam: Vietnam with the help of the United Nations has launched a drive 635,000 AIDS prevention campaign, official media reported Thursday, AP reports from Ho Chi Minh City.

Strong quake rocks China: A strong earthquake jolted a remote mountainous area in China's Xinjiang region early Thursday, the official Xinhua News Agency reported, AP reports from Beijing.

WW-II bomb found in Germany: About 2,500 people were evacuated from their homes in Bremen late Wednesday as a precaution, after a dredger on the Weser river pulled out an old World War II bomb from the murky water, AP reports from Bremen.

Yeltsin halts Communists' no-confidence vote against his govt: MOSCOW, Oct 16: Boris Yeltsin's dramatic last-minute intervention Wednesday ahead of a no-confidence vote against his reformist government confirmed the president as Russia's dominant political figure, analysts said, reports AFP.

That was enough to send Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov and his leftist allies scuttling for consultations before they voted to back off from an immediate showdown with the Kremlin chief.

Four years after he used tanks to settle his dispute with parliament about who ran the country, the Russian President needed only a shot across the legislatures bows to halt attempts to unseat his pro-reform government.

Militants kill 4 villagers in Kashmir

JAMMU, India, Oct 16: Muslim militants shot and killed four villagers and injured two others in the northern Indian state of Jammu-Kashmir, police said Thursday, reports AP.

Militants fired at residents of Kotedhara village Wednesday night when they were walking toward an army picket to tell soldiers about the rebels hiding in the nearby mountains, police said.

The villagers were armed but did not fire back because their guns were not sufficient to counter the militants sophisticated weapons.

Kotedhara village is 200 kilometres (130 miles) north-east of Jammu, the winter capital.

After the incident, soldiers search the mountains for the rebels, but were unable to find them.

Muslim militants in Kashmir have been fighting for independence or union with Pakistan since 1989.



Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, at right, welcomes Sister Nirmala, the head of the Missionary Sisters of Charity, as she arrives at Rome's Quirinale Presidential Palace, Wednesday. — AP/UNB photo

AI urges ROK candidates to improve HR records

SEOUL, Oct 16: Presidential contenders in South Korea should promise now to release political prisoners and improve other human rights if they're elected, Amnesty International said Thursday, reports AP.

With two months left in the presidential campaign, the London-based human rights group sent an open letter asking candidates to commit to 18 measures it said would advance rights in South Korea.

Among other things, the letter from Amnesty Secretary General Pierre Sanz repeated the group's years-old proposal that Korea amend its National Security Law. The espionage law is aimed at Communist North Korea but has been used to repress political opposition in Democratic South Korea through a provision making it illegal to "praise or encourage" the northern government.

There is clearly a need for national security in South Korea, Amnesty said in a statement issued in Seoul. "But too many South Korean govern-

ments have used the threat from North Korea as an excuse to crack down on opponents." Other suggestions include establishing an independent human rights commission, promoting rights in schools, giving human rights training to government officials and law enforcement agents, improving prison conditions and ending the practice of forced "conversions," in which political prisoners must renounce communism as a condition for release.

In his letter to candidates, Sanz urged all of them to make public their positions on the suggestions.

To date only presidential front-runner Kim Dae-jung of the opposition National Congress for New Politics has promised change on human rights issues if elected.

He said he would revise the security law so that the nation's main spy agency would concentrate on gathering information about North Korea and other nations, and not involve itself in domestic politics.

'Seshan concealed information about threat to Rajiv's life'

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: TN Seshan, who had served as cabinet secretary and the secretary (security) in the Rajiv Gandhi government, had allegedly concealed information about the threats to the life of late premier, the AICC counsel, RN Mittal, told the Jain Commission yesterday, reports PTI.



When he appeared in the box, he should have clarified, but he had concealed, Mittal alleged. The AICC counsel also blamed the then Congress government, headed by PV Narasimha Rao, for having bungled the matter.

The commission had on several occasions charged successive governments at the centre with being non-cooperative and failing to supply crucial documents and records of various central agencies which were essential for its probe.

New Pak air chief appointed

ISLAMABAD, Oct 16: Air Vice Marshal Parvaiz Mehdi Qureshi has been appointed new chief of Pakistan Air Force (PAF), replacing Air Marshal Abbas Khattak who is retiring next month, the defence ministry said Wednesday, reports AFP.

He will take over command from Air Marshal Khattak on November 8, the sources said.

Qureshi has also been promoted to the rank of air marshal from the date of his appointment.

Khattak is to retire on November 7 after the completion of his three-year tenure. Khattak accompanied by his successor called on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who extended his facilitation to Qureshi on his appointment.

UK to spend \$162m on 7 new N-missiles

LONDON, Oct 16: The British government is to spend almost 100 million pounds (162 million dollars) on seven new nuclear missiles for its trident submarines, the Daily Telegraph reported today, says Reuter.

The newspaper said the move would be seen as a sign that the government's strategic defence review, due at the turn of the year, will aim to keep trident as the backbone of Britain's nuclear deterrent well into the next century.

13 presidential guards killed in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan, Oct 16: Several dozen unidentified gunmen attacked the headquarters of Tajikistan's presidential guards early Thursday, killing 13 guards, including five officers, news agencies reported, says AP.

Off the Record

Genital herpes rates jump in young whites

NEW YORK: Despite the emphasis on safe sex to prevent AIDS, genital herpes has increased fivefold since the late 1970s among white teen-agers and doubled among whites in their 20s, reports AP.

In all, about one in five Americans over age 12 has the sexually transmitted infection, and most of them don't know it, the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention reported.

Dr Michael St Louis, who wrote the report with colleagues at the CDC, said it was surprising that herpes went up during the 1980s despite publicity about AIDS. Other sexually transmitted diseases, such as gonorrhoea, declined.

He said other studies have shown that young people increased their rates of unprotected sex, premarital sex and multiple sex partners. And condoms appear to be less effective in blocking herpes than other diseases because the virus can be transmitted from parts of the body not covered by a condom.

Gray Davis, president of the Herpes Advice Center in Durham, North Carolina, said the study shows many people ignored safe-sex warnings about AIDS in the 1980s.

"What these numbers are telling us is that the young, sexually active white population didn't consider themselves at risk for HIV," she said. "So the HIV message, while it was very effective in the gay population, where it was targeted to, didn't reach the rest of the population."

One reason for concern is that herpes sores may make a person more vulnerable to infection with the AIDS virus, the researchers said in the study, published Thursday in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Experts said it is time to get tougher on herpes. They said new steps could include screening for its in patients at clinics for sexually transmitted diseases and in pregnant women, whose newborns could die if infected.

"We're screening for HIV, we're screening for hepatitis B, we aren't screening for genital herpes," said Dr Lawrence Corey of the University of Washington.

Children from broken homes likely to be shorter!

LONDON: Children who live with warring parents or come from broken homes are more likely to be shorter, according to a British study published Wednesday, reports AP.

And children who grow slowly may suffer from psychological problems caused by stress that have lifelong consequences, according to the report in the Archives of Disease in Childhood, the journal of the Royal College of Paediatrics.

"It may be that family conflict begins a spiral of disadvantage that results in the accumulation of health risks throughout life," the researchers said.

Serbs will surrender heavy weapons, hopes US

WASHINGTON, Oct 16: The United States is optimistic that Bosnian Serbs will soon bow to demands to surrender heavy weapons and comply more with the terms of an arms control agreement, a senior US official said Wednesday, reports AP.

"Six months ago, the projections were kind of alarming," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "It looked as if the parties would be far out of line with the ceilings, particularly the Bosnian Serbs."

The Serb refusal to part with their overwhelming advantage in tanks and artillery has often been cited as one of the principal violations of the US-spon-

sored Dayton peace accord that ended the Bosnian war almost two years ago.

Other transgressions include the Serbs' refusal to allow the return of displaced Bosnian Muslims and Croats in significant numbers and their reluctance to hand over indicted war criminals to an international tribunal.

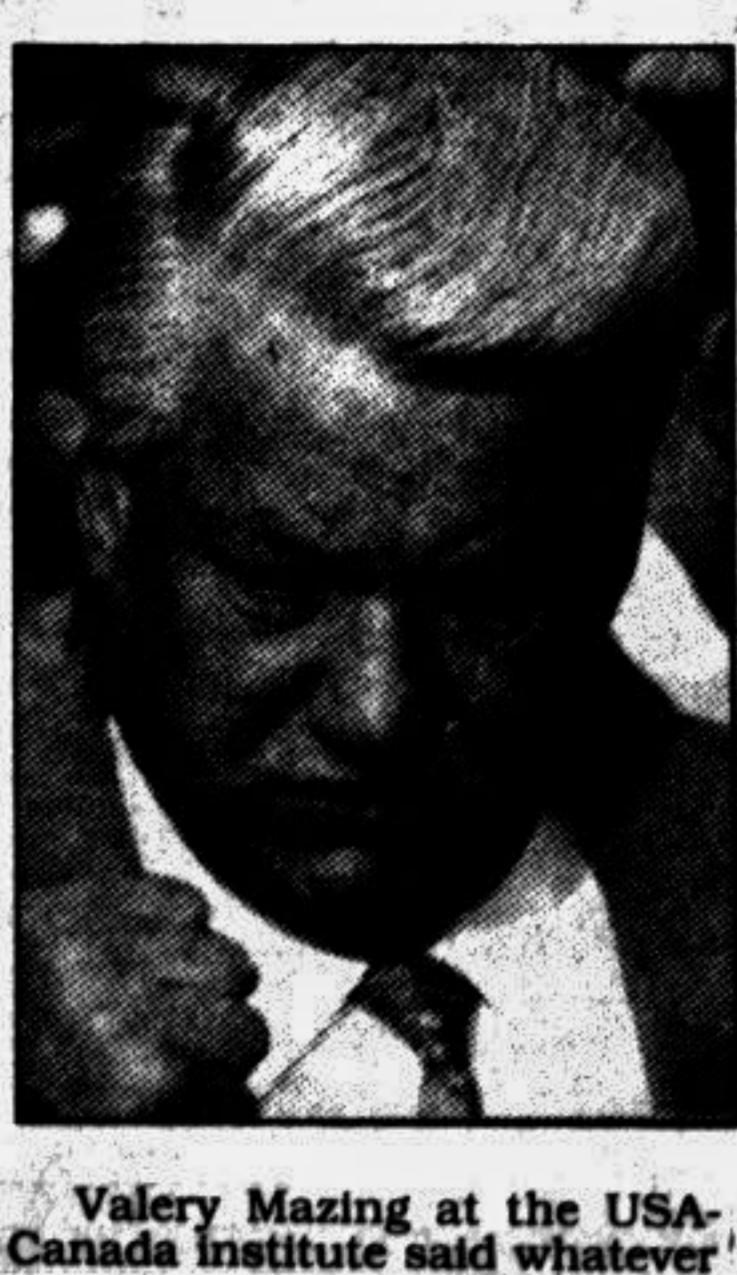
The peace accord includes disarmament provisions aimed at creating a balance of power in the war-torn nation. These allocate 273 tanks and 1,000 artillery pieces to the Muslim-Croat federation that forms one entity within a unified Bosnia. The other entity, the Serb Republic, was allowed 137 tanks

and 500 guns.

The deadline for the reductions is November 1. But several months ago, the Serbs still had 1,000 tanks and cannons over the limit, according to officials of the NATO-led peace force.

"We approach the... deadline with a much, much greater degree of comfort than we would have looking at it six months ago," the official said. "The gap between what is expected of them and what they're doing has reduced dramatically from the projections of a few months ago."

The Serbs acquired their weaponry from the Yugoslav army when Bosnia seceded in spring 1992.



Valery Mazing at the USA-Canada institute said whatever

the result of the vote. Yeltsin had room for manoeuvre. "I think this whole game will be resolved, and it will not really affect the government's work," each player knows his role," he said.

Chernomyrdin has emerged as a key asset to the president, the stocky, heavy-jowled technocrat, a proven loyalist, has better relations with the Communists than reformers Anatoly Chubais and Boris Nemtsov, who have become hate-figures for the hard left.

Quitting him would only see fresh elections or Chubais or Nemtsov, named interim premier, a post either could, in theory, hold indefinitely.

ment on most important matters.

Even if the communists muster the necessary 228 votes to pass the no-confidence vote next Wednesday, Yeltsin only has to sack Chernomyrdin if deputies repeat the vote within three months.

When parliament sanctioned the government last year Yeltsin ignored it, the government presenting, and winning, a vote of confidence later which effectively annulled the initial censure vote. Chernomyrdin said Tuesday he would force an immediate second vote if his administration was censured.

Petrov said parliament's weakness meant crises sparked by censure votes had become the opposition's only real way of influencing government policy.