

## International

# Milosevic's govt appears to collapse after day of revolt

BELGRADE, Oct 6: Jubilant crowds roamed the streets of Yugoslavia's capital early today celebrating the apparent collapse of Slobodan Milosevic's government and heeding calls to remain vigilant against counterattacks by remnants of the discredited regime, reports AP.

Through the night, tens of thousands danced and sang in celebrations led by the excitement of having seized Yugoslavia's parliament and other key symbols of the Milosevic regime. The 13-year rule of the Yugoslav president appeared to have collapsed.

The Tanjug news agency, taken over by the opposition, said army commanders were meeting in Belgrade and that a statement was expected.

The whereabouts of Milosevic and his family were unknown, although opposition campaign manager Zoran Djindjic said he was believed to have fled to a hide-out outside of Bor near the borders with Romania and Bulgaria.

Djindjic later said he felt "the critical period" overnight when Milosevic's military could have counterattacked against the opposition supporters "was over."

Governments of the two Balkan neighbours ordered their armed forces to remain alert against any attempt by Milosevic or his allies to slip out of Yugoslavia Sept. 24.

Despite the euphoria of the crowds, aides of opposition leader Vojislav Kostunica remained wary, suspicious that their old adversary might yet find a way to strike back.

Kostunica also appealed to people from the countryside to stream into Belgrade for more rallies Friday to secure the victory he claims he won during disputed presidential elections Sept. 24.

"The most critical moments are not over," said Vuk Obradovic, a former general turned opposition leader. "It is very important that people stay in the streets."

Momcilo Perisic, a former army chief of staff and now an opposition figure, warned that Milosevic and his closest associates were "determined" and may be planning a counterattack from somewhere "outside Belgrade."

Perisic said he had contacted Yugoslavia's military leaders, however, and that they had promised not to intervene.

Western governments were

heartened by the prospect of an end to Milosevic's 13-year rule. At the White House, US president Bill Clinton said: "The people are trying to get their country back." British Prime Minister Tony Blair said of Milosevic: "Your time is up. Go now."

The regime began teetering Wednesday when police caved in to defiant coal miners striking in central Serbia, Yugoslavia's main republic.

After that, the movement gained stunning momentum. Opposition leaders had called on supporters from across the country to converge Thursday on Belgrade for a final push to force Milosevic to concede defeat by Kostunica in the Sept. 24 elections.

The crowd included tough miners, factory workers and farmers from opposition strongholds south of Belgrade, and when they arrived, they stormed the doors of Yugoslavia's parliament, smashing through a cordon of riot police before taking control of the building. They set fires, tossed portraits of Milosevic out of broken windows and chased the feared riot police away.

Soon the state television building was on fire, too, its front door crushed by a front-loader that farmers from Cacak had driven more than 100 kilometers to the capital. Then came word that at least two police stations had also succumbed to the crowds.

Faced with the mob's fury, many police tossed away their clubs and shields, absorbed by joyous flag-waving crowds surging across central Belgrade through clouds of tear gas. Others were beaten senseless by angry, often intoxicated young toughs.

The crowds showed little mercy to some of the symbols of the Milosevic regime. The director of Serbian state television and one of Milosevic's closest allies, Dragoljub Milanovic, was punched, kicked and pummeled with sticks as he tried to flee his television station.

"What we are doing today is making history," Kostunica proclaimed during an evening speech in front of Belgrade's city hall.

The government's Tanjug news agency, which defected to the opposition, said two people were killed and 65 injured in the rioting.



A crowd of Yugoslav opposition supporters gathered in front of the Federal Yugoslav parliament building tries to escape a cloud of tear gas fired from nearby Serbian police shortly before demonstrators stormed the building on Thursday. --AFP photo

## Massive quake rocks southwest Japan

TOKYO, Oct 6: Hundreds of thousands of residents in southwestern Japan had a lucky escape today after a potentially catastrophic earthquake of 7.3 on the Richter scale caused only minor damage and injuries, reports AFP.

The quake was stronger than one of 7.2 intensity that levelled the western city of Kobe in January 1995, killing more than 6,400 people.

But the damage was limited to 12 properties in towns in Tottori prefecture 500 kilometres southwest of Tokyo, and at least 21 injuries, the National Police Agency said.

There was very good luck in this misfortune since there is no report of major casualties. Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori told reporters, according to Jiji Press news agency.

The quake of "7.3 on the Richter scale was actually bigger than the Great Hanshin Earthquake (Kobe)," he said.

However, local authorities urged more than 8,000 residents in Saihaku town near the epicentre to evacuate as more than 100 aftershocks rattled the region.

"We called on a total of 8,242 residents in the town to voluntarily evacuate to 14 places such as school gyms and community

centres as aftershocks were occurring quite often," said Saihaku official Akira Kato.

Tadao Ando, an official in the cabinet's crisis-management office in Tokyo, said rescue workers were still combing rural areas.

"But we have so far estimated that large-scale injuries or casualties are unlikely," he said.

The epicentre lay 10 kilometres below western Tottori, in a rural area close to the towns of Hino and Mizoguchi, the Meteorological Agency said.

An agency official said hundreds of thousands of residents to the epicentre's north, including in the city of Yonago and the peninsular town of Sakaiminato, had a narrow escape.

Twenty-one people were injured in Tottori and neighbouring prefectures, it said, with the worst cases involving broken bones.

Two people suffered slight injuries when a mudslide swamped their car on a bridge in Mizoguchi, said Tottori fire department officer Noboru Uraki.

"We received two reports of fire, but they turned out to be false," he said.

Two nuclear reactors at Shimane Nuclear Power Plant near the epicentre suffered no damage, their operator Chugoku Electric Power Corp. said.



A local resident, holding his baby in his arm, looks at a collapsed house at Sakaiminato in Tottori prefecture, 700 km west of Tokyo, yesterday after a massive earthquake hit western Japan. --AFP photo

## Kulsoom offers 'honourable exit' to army regime

ISLAMABAD, Oct 6: The PML is ready to offer an honourable deal to the military regime provided it returns to barracks, restores parliament and allows deposed Premier Nawaz Sharif to complete his full term in office, his wife Kulsoom has said, reports PTI.

I offer an honourable exit to the military regime and... it should be understood well that Nawaz is the only hope for this country and its besieged people, so let him complete five years, Kulsoom exhorted, while delivering a leadership lecture here yesterday.

The main emphasis of her lecture was on the performance of military government in one year as the criticized the rulers for their failure in every area of national activity, including foreign policy, economy, and politics.

Kulsoom while holding out an olive branch to army, said the only answer to the country's myriad problems was Nawaz Sharif.

Let him come out and complete five years as this is not the time to harbor personal egos and grudges for the sake of national interests. I assure that we will not pursue any vendetta, as if we too, became reactionary, then it will not be good for the country, Kulsoom emphasized.

## Israel seals off West Bank, Gaza Strip

JERUSALEM, Oct 6: Israel sealed off the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on Friday as the security forces braced for renewed unrest in what leading Palestinian groups have billed as a "day of rage," reports AP.

The immediate Israeli aim was to keep huge numbers of Muslims from traveling from the volatile territories to Friday's midday prayers at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem's Old City the emotionally charged spot where the trouble erupted last week.

Week-long battles between Israeli forces and Palestinian rioters, which have claimed 68 lives and wounded 1,900 of them, eased Thursday as both sides worked to reduce tensions. The Israelis withdrew tanks from several of the most explosive sites, and the Palestinians sought to keep rioters in check.

However, Friday was expected to be extremely tense. The fiery sermons by Muslim clerics at Friday prayers often call for worshippers to defend to the death Arab control of the compound, Islam's third-holiest site.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement and the militant Islamic opposition group Hamas declared Friday a "day of rage," calling for confrontations with Israeli soldiers.

Israeli police said Palestinians have made preparations for large-scale clashes after the noon prayers. The nearest hospital to Al Aqsa said its staff was on alert for potentially heavy casualties.

The violence began after right-wing Israeli politician Ariel Sharon visited the mosque compound on Sept. 28. Muslims run the hilltop compound in east Jerusalem, which they call the Noble Sanctuary, while Israel claims sovereignty and Jews are allowed to visit what they call the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism.

The Palestinian territories were closed at 4 am Friday and will remain sealed until sundown Monday, the end of Yom Kippur, a day of fasting and atonement and the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. Israel often closes the territories during major holidays, but it has done so early this time in response to the latest violence.

However, most of the fighting has taken place in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Palestinians are still free to move around in those areas.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak expressed determination to halt the fighting and somehow get the battered peace process back on track. But on both sides, mistrust and bitterness were readily apparent, despite an agreement that field commanders would seek to exercise restraint.

At a memorial service Thursday for paratroopers killed in past wars, Barak, a former general, said "the time has not yet come to beat our swords into ploughshares." But he pledged to "seek any way to bring true security and peace to this tortured and suffering land."

Arafat, speaking Thursday in Gaza, was asked whether the door remained open to future peace negotiations.

"We hope so," he replied. "But first of all, we have to stop the massacres against our people."

Despite consistently blaming one another for the carnage, the two sides were beginning to work together to contain it.

## BRIEFLY

**Nobel laureate Smith dead:** Michael Smith, who won the Nobel Prize in chemistry and was one of Canada's leading cancer researchers, died of the disease he worked to understand. He was 68, AP reports from Vancouver.

Smith died of leukemia Wednesday night at Vancouver General Hospital after a two-year battle with the illness, said Barry McBride, academic vice president at the University of British Columbia, where Smith was professor emeritus. Smith and Kary B Mullis of the United States won the Nobel Prize in chemistry in 1993 for developing two new methods that led to decisive progress in gene technology. Smith was recognised for his work on a method for altering DNA to determine its function.

**NASA delays launch of Discovery:** NASA called off Thursday's launch of space shuttle Discovery because of last-minute concerns over bolts on the external tank. AP reports from Cape Canaveral. A valve problem found later in the shuttle's main propulsion system delayed liftoff until at least Monday. The valve, which controls the flow of fuel, appeared to be sluggish during routine operations. Workers will have to enter Discovery's engine compartment to check the valve; to replace it, if necessary, will take three days.



New Taiwanese Prime Minister Chang Chun-hsiung (C) escorts his predecessor Tang Fei (L) as they walk outside the premier's office after Chang took over the leadership in a ceremony in Taipei yesterday. Chang was sworn in as the first prime minister from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party. --AFP photo

## Thai teacher wins top prize in TV quiz show

BANGKOK, Oct 6: A college teacher, who became the first Thai to win the top prize of a popular TV quiz show, said today he will donate the money to children's charity, reports AP.

Siksaka Banlertit, 40, a mass communications teacher at a Bangkok college, won 1 million baht (23,529 dollars) after correctly answering 16 questions in a row during the show taped on Thursday.

Game Sethi, Thai for "millionaire quiz show," is inspired from the original British show that became a hit in the United States as "Who wants to be a millionaire" and spawned several versions around the world. It has been on air in Thailand since March on Channel 3.

The last question posed to Siksaka was: "which animal has a heart with four chambers." Siksaka picked crocodile from among the four choices that included snake, turtle and skunk.

Siksaka said he had been preparing for the show for three months.

## Ransom offered for stolen Enigma machine

LONDON, Oct 6: A British museum is offering to pay a ransom for the return of a rare World War II encryption machine, known as Enigma, stolen in April, reports AFP.

The machine, whose capture from the Germans in World War II was recently the subject of a controversial film, "U-571", is one of only three worldwide.

Christine Large, director of the Bletchley Park Trust, told BBC radio this week the museum had collected the 25,000 pounds (35,000 dollars) demanded for the return of the machine.

"He has to get in touch with us. We have taken the decision to pay the ransom he has asked for," she said.

The anonymous blackmailer, who calls himself "The Master", has threatened to destroy the machine if he does not receive the money by Friday midnight.

The capture of the Enigma machine by the Royal Navy in May 1941 proved to be a turning point in the war.

## Women's confce focuses on economic empowerment

JOHANNESBURG, Oct 6: When women are in charge, there's less corruption, more transparency and resources are better used, former President Nelson Mandela said Thursday during the opening ceremony of the Global Summit of Women 2000, reports AP.

Mandela made a surprise appearance at the conference along with his wife, former Mozambican first lady Graça Machel, who delivered the keynote address.

"It has been proven that where the income is given to a woman of the family, the nutritional value to the family increases eight times more than when the money is given to the man," Mandela told the 400 women from 40 countries participating in the three-day conference.

"We must ask the question,

why is it that it is men who are on the forefront of society today?" he said, adding that putting women on the forefront would promote justice, peace and stability.

Machel said it was important that men not be excluded from the struggle to empower women and improve life for all.

"We have to go beyond what we can call women's struggle and make it become a societal struggle in which they, the men, also recognise that it's in their interest," she said, adding that more women are needed in top positions.

"We want women to be more and more successful but we want women to humanise political life and to humanise the struggle for power," she said. "We don't want women to be there to imitate what men have been doing as oppressors."

The Johannesburg meeting is the tenth annual Global Summit of Women. This year, the summit focuses on women's economic leadership and business achievements, and it aims to promote entrepreneurship among women.

South Africa was chosen to host the country as a tribute to the large number of female ministers, organisers said. Eight of South Africa's 27 ministers are women.

In a pre-conference meeting Wednesday, African delegates decided to form a committee that would work to create financial and insurance institutions to help African women get access to finance, Ugandan Vice President Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe said in her speech during the opening ceremony.

## Firms apply for patent on 'human-pig' hybrid cell

WASHINGTON, Oct 6: Two firms trying to find alternatives for organ transplants said on Thursday they had applied to patent a cloning process in which they fused human and pig cells, reports Reuters.

The environmental group Greenpeace attacked the researchers as "Frankenstein scientists," prompting the companies to deny they were trying to create a half-human, half-pig creature.

They said they were looking for ways to advance therapeutic cloning, which would involve taking a patient's own cells and growing them in the laboratory to create a source of stem cells or "master cells," which could then be developed into tissue or organs for transplant.

Instead of waiting in line for an organ donor, thousands of patients could, in theory, get transplants taken from their own cells. They would not need the drugs now used to suppress their immune systems so their bodies do not reject the transplant.

Therapeutic cloning is in itself controversial, with opponents saying such creation of a human

embryo for any reason is unethical. But scientists and others who support it say the mass of cells that would be created would not be an embryo in any real sense and would be a valuable medical tool.

"We support the prospect of human therapeutic cloning," Peter Mountford, chief executive officer of Melbourne, Australia-based Stem Cell Sciences, told Reuters in a telephone interview.

"At this point we are not pursuing the research, because there are bigger problems to solve and we think this is only one approach to providing a source of cells."

Stem cell sciences and Charlestown, Massachusetts-based BioTransplant Inc. confirmed they had applied to the European Patent Office for a patent on the process, but said Greenpeace had mischaracterised their work.

"The application shows that the firms have already transferred cell nuclei from human foetuses to egg cells from pigs and cultivated the resulting embryos for around a week in pigs and cultivated the resulting embryos

for around a week in the laboratory," Greenpeace said in a statement.

"Society should not reward these Frankenstein scientists with patents," it added. Mountford said his company had indeed used nuclear transfer to put a human cell nucleus into a pig's egg. Nuclear Transfer, the method used to create Dolly the sheep, the first cloned adult mammal, involves scraping the nucleus out of an egg cell and replacing it with the nucleus, which contains most of the genetic material, from another cell.

The process, if done correctly, re-programmes the nucleus and it starts to divide as if it were a fertilised egg. In effect, it regresses back to the very first stages of life.

These cell masses could be a source of embryonic stem cells, which have the power to become any type of cell in the body at all, including nerve cells, blood cells of organ cells. Stem Cell Sciences said it had shown last month that this could be done, using mice.

In the latest case, Stem Cell Sciences, working with a team at

Monash University, said it used a pig's egg cell and the nucleus from a cell taken from a cell line, or laboratory culture of cells.

After the nuclear transfer the cells divided, 4 or 5 times, to create a mass of either 16 or 32 cells. Mountford said the experiment proved that human and animal cells could be fused for the purpose of therapeutic cloning.

Another company has done similar work. In 1998, Advanced Cell Technology, based in Worcester, Massachusetts, said its scientists had fused human cells into cow eggs and let them grow as an embryo for a few days. Its aim is also to produce organs and tissues for transplant.

The reason for using cow or pig eggs is simple: they are more readily available than human eggs, which can be obtained only through difficult and painful surgery. Farm animal eggs are available at any slaughterhouse.

Julia Greenstein, chief scientific officer at BioTransplant, said her company had a long-standing arrangement to support and license Stem Cells' work.

## Floods, landslides kill 51 in Vietnam

HANOI, Oct 6: A total of 51 people have been confirmed dead in Vietnam's northern mountains after torrential rains sparked flash floods and landslides, officials said today, reports AFP.

Five entire families were wiped out when a wall of mud and water swept through the village of Nam Coong early Tuesday killing 40 people from the Tai ethnic minority, Lai Chau provincial official Nguyen Van Doai told AFP.

It took two days for news of the tragedy to reach the provincial capital of Dien Bien Phu because of poor communications in the remote mountain district of Sin Ho, more than 200 kilometres away on the Laotian border.

So far emergency teams have recovered just 10 bodies but they do not expect the death toll to rise further.

"The recovery operation has proved very difficult because the

bodies have either been swept away by the water or are buried under a mountain of stone and earth," Doai said.

Another 17 people were injured in the disaster and the authorities have disbursed an immediate 9,000 dollars in relief aid to the victim's families, he added.

Meanwhile 11 people, most of them schoolchildren, were killed in the mountain town of Bac Can early Thursday when flash flooding on the Cau river swept away a wooden bridge.

A total of 28 people were on the Duong Quang bridge when the disaster struck at 8 a.m. (0700 BST) but residents managed to rescue 17 of them from the floodwaters, provincial official La Thi Thinh told AFP.

Only eight of the bodies have been recovered so far as the swollen river carried them far downstream.

## Six rebels killed in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, Oct 6: Indian security forces shot dead six separatist guerrillas of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba militant group in a gunbattle in troubled Kashmir, an army spokesman said today, reports Reuters.

"Six militants of the Lashkar-e-Taiba were killed in a fierce encounter on the outskirts of Baniptore town last (Thursday) evening," the spokesman said, adding a lot of arms and ammunition were recovered from the site.

Baniptore town lies 57 km (35 miles) north of Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir.

Suicide squads of the Lashkar-e-Taiba have carried out a series of attacks on Indian security force camps since last year, killing many soldiers.

Officials say separatist violence has surged in the Himalayan state this year particularly after a frontline militant group, the Hizbul Mujahideen, called off a brief ceasefire in August.

Officials say at least 2,038 people, including 306 Indian security force personnel and 1,121 militants, have been killed since January this year.