

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 counterattack by remnants of the discredited regime, reports AP.

Through the night, tens of thousands danced and sang in celebrations fed 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 hideout 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.

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's very important that people stay in the streets."

Moncilo 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 AP.

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 Saitama 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



A local resident, holding his baby in his arms, 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

Thai teacher wins top prize in TV quiz show

BANGKOK, Oct 6: A college teacher, who became the first that 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 Banluerit, 40, a mass communications teacher at a Bangkok college, won 1 million baht (23,529 dollar) 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 on 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 Graca 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 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 that 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.

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, 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

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 Bandipore town last (Thursday) evening," the spokesman said, adding a lot of arms and ammunition were recovered from the site.

Bandipore 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.



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

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.

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