

CIS forms unit to fight terrorism

40-16
By Vladimir Radyuhin anti-terrorist centre.

MOSCOW, DEC. 1. Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) have approved the establishment of an anti-terrorist centre to fight religious extremism and separatism.

The decision, initially taken by the Interior Ministers of the organisation last March, was ratified on Friday by CIS heads of state at a one-day summit in Minsk, capital of Belarus.

The Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Igor Ivanov, said the centre was unprecedented in world practice and would coordinate efforts to fight "international terrorism" chiefly in two regions — the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Russia is waging a second military campaign against Islamic separatists in Chechnya in the North Caucasus and is giving military assistance to ex-Soviet Central Asian states in fighting the scourge of Islamic extremism from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

The CIS leaders have appointed General Boris Mylnikov of the Russian Federal Security Service to head the

The centre will have a staff of 60 and will be financed jointly by CIS states. A joint data bank on terrorists and their financial supporters has already been set up in Moscow.

In a separate meeting during the CIS summit, the Russian and Belarussian Presidents, Mr. Vladimir Putin, and Mr. Alexander Lukashenko, signed an accord on introducing a single currency for their two countries in keeping with last year's treaty on creating a Russian-Belarus union state.

Under the agreement, Belarus will switch over to using the Russian rouble as its currency from Jan. 1, 2005. Three years later, the two countries will establish a joint currency.

The Minsk summit was attended by 11 out of 12 CIS leaders.

The President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Saparmurad Niyazov, stayed out, saying he was not interested in the anti-terrorist centre directed against the Taliban, with which Turkmenistan maintains good relations.

THE HINDU

- 2 DEC 2000

CIS to deploy troops in Uzbekistan

10-10 By Vladimir Radyuhin *2/16*
MOSCOW, JUNE 20. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) may deploy a multinational military force in Uzbekistan to repulse a possible Islamist intrusion from Afghanistan, a Moscow daily has said.

The proposal to station a rapid reaction force in Uzbekistan, which shares a border with Afghanistan, was discussed at a meeting of the CIS Defence Ministers held in Moscow on Monday in the run-up to the Commonwealth's summit on Wednesday, high-ranking sources told the *Izvestia* daily.

The rapid reaction force will be part of a CIS anti-terrorist centre that is being set up in Moscow. The Foreign Ministers of the CIS states on Tuesday approved the centre's charter. According to *Izvestia*, the request to deploy a military force in Uzbekistan has come from its President, Mr. Islam Karimov, who fears attacks of ethnic Uzbek rebels based in Afghanistan. The newspaper quoted a participant in the CIS Defence Ministers meeting as

describing the situation on the alliance's southern borders as "fraught with war" rather than "local incursions by drug traffickers and Islamic extremists."

Russia's Interfax news agency reported last week that Afghanistan's Taliban was massing men and arms close to the border with Uzbekistan in what looked like preparations for an attack on Kunduz and Baglan, strongholds of the opposition Northern Alliance. Interfax said the Taliban had stationed up to 250 men as well as tanks and missiles at the river port of Khairoton, 15 km south of the Uzbek border town of Termez. It said 12 tanks, 15 Stinger missile launchers, several large-calibre machine guns, armoured troop carriers, and anti-aircraft guns had been deployed near a railway bridge connecting Afghanistan with the former Soviet Union.

Tensions between the Taliban and the former Soviet states of Central Asia escalated after a series of threats by Russian officials to launch "preventive" strikes on Taliban bases allegedly used to train rebels from Chechnya.

21 JUN 2000

21 JUN 2000

MOSCOW SUMMIT / U.S. PLANS RESISTED

CIS leaders defend ABM treaty

MOSCOW, JUNE 21. In a united show of resistance to U.S. plans to deploy a national missile defence shield, the leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) called today at their Moscow summit meeting for the preservation of the 1972 ABM treaty.

The Presidents of the 12 former Soviet republics said in a statement that the anti-ballistic missile treaty signed by the United States and the Soviet Union must remain the "foundation of global strategic stability, international security and peace around the world."

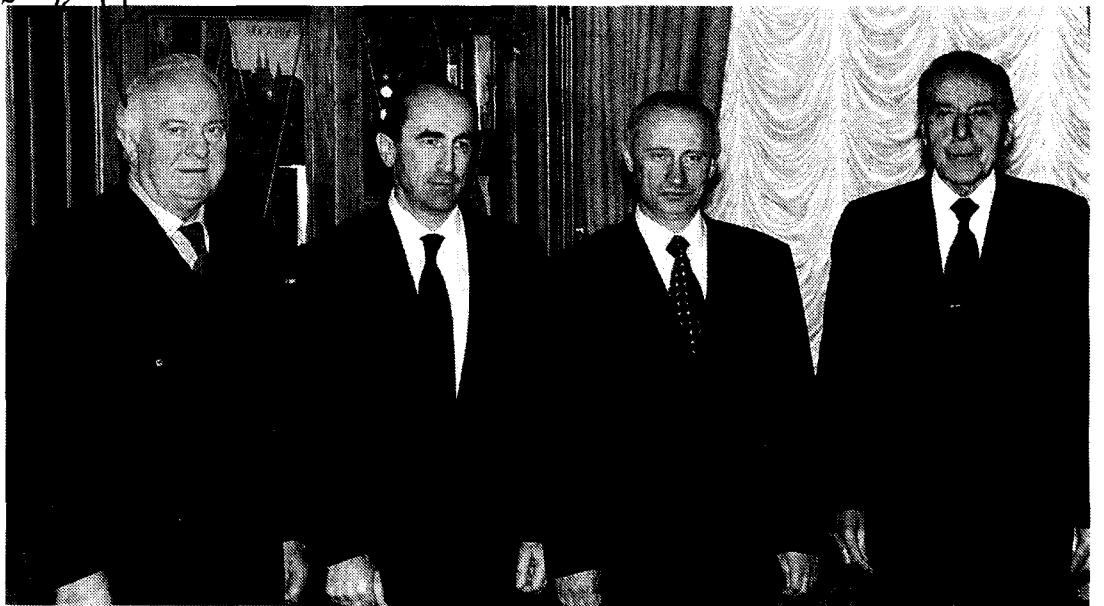
Failure to do so would undermine "steps toward the further reduction of strategic nuclear armaments," Interfax news agency quoted from the document.

The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, said the declaration was "a further small cornerstone contributed by the CIS states to international security."

It was adopted after discussion of U.S. efforts to bend the terms of the ABM treaty to allow deployment of an anti-missile umbrella against possible attack by third countries, he said.

Russia has for months fought U.S. plans for the shield, which it says could herald the collapse of a number of key existing defence treaties on nuclear and conventional military forces.

Mr. Putin then said during talks



The Georgian President, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze (from left), the Armenian President, Mr. Robert Kocharian, the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, and the Azerbaijani President, Mr. Gelder Aliev, pose during a summit of leaders of former Soviet republics in the Kremlin in Moscow on Tuesday. — AP

earlier this month with the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, and other European leaders that such a system might be broadened to include Russia and European members of NATO.

The one-day Moscow summit was still expected to focus on joint CIS efforts to combat international terrorism, which Russia mainly

fears in the form of Islamic extremists penetrating its southern frontiers.

At the start of the meeting, Mr. Putin called for deeper cooperation between the CIS member-states, the Itar-Tass news agency said.

Ahead of tomorrow's anniversary of the invasion of the Soviet

Union by Nazi Germany on June 22, 1941, Mr. Putin said, "all of our peoples and nations survived this test."

The CIS is currently a loose organisation comprising Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. — DPA

THE HINDU

7 JUN 2001

Ukrainians give a free hand to President

Referendum gives sweeping powers to Leonid Kuchma

Fred Weir
Moscow, April 17

VOTERS IN Ukraine have overwhelmingly backed a plan to strengthen presidential powers in a controversial referendum that could lead to fresh political turmoil in the huge post-Soviet country.

President Leonid Kuchma launched Sunday's referendum, complaining that the parliamentary system inherited from the Soviet-era was stifling reforms and bogging down executive decisions in endless political wrangling.

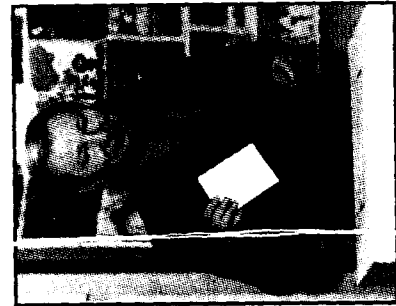
Ukrainian voters were asked to approve Constitutional changes that include restructuring the present 450-seat Verkhovna Rada (Supreme Soviet) into a leaner bicameral parliament. Under the plan, the immunity of lawmakers would be removed and the

President would acquire the right to dissolve parliament under certain conditions.

Incomplete results announced on Monday suggested that over 80 per cent of Ukrainians were supporting Mr Kuchma's demands.

"In Ukraine the political culture is not yet highly developed, the economy is stalled, and the public is very susceptible to the hands concentrating power in the hands of one man it will speed up reform," says Valery Fyodorov, a post-Soviet countries specialist.

"But this is a very risky strategy.



President Leonid Kuchma casting his vote: Photo: AP

In former Soviet countries this tendency has only replaced a Frankenstein parliament and a President".

Analysts say Mr Kuchma, who has been Ukraine's President for 5 years, has given little indication of what precise economic and external policies he would pursue.

"Kuchma doesn't really seem to know how to get Ukraine out of its deep economic crisis, and one suspects the struggle with parliament as a substitute for positive policies," says Mr. Fyodorov. "But once he achieves stronger powers, he will

have no excuses left". Former Russian President Boris Yeltsin faced down his oppositionist parliament in 1993, first obtaining popular support in a referendum and later dispersing the legislature with military force. He subsequently re-wrote Russia's Constitution to vest the lion's share of power in the Kremlin.

Parliamentarians will now be called upon to pass the necessary Constitutional amendments, even though it means undermining their own authority. The country's powerful Communist and Socialist parties have already indicated they may dig in their heels and refuse to grant Mr Kuchma the "dictatorial powers" he seeks.

On Monday Mr Kuchma threatened he might take steps similar to those Mr Yeltsin if the parliament fails to approve the changes the public have now supported.