

IKEA IS set to open a \$150 million shopping mall in Moscow this week. — PAGE 5



# RUSSIA



RUSSIA'S Railways Ministry is increasing its spending to 126 billion rubles next year. — PAGE 6

## Briefs

### Extradition requested

Russia on Monday formally requested the extradition of Chechen rebel envoy Akhmed Zakayev, who traveled to Britain after Denmark refused to hand him over to Russia.

Zakayev, a top envoy of Chechen rebel leader Aslan Maskhadov, was arrested in Britain and released on bail last week. An extradition hearing is scheduled Wednesday. Russian authorities say Zakayev was a senior Chechen military commander who helped kill at least 300 Russian security personnel in 1996.

Interfax reported that Robert Zdelkhanian, head of the international department of the Prosecutor General's Office, said prosecutors asked Britain to hand over Zakayev. "We believe that the evidence provided with the application will be sufficient to have Zakayev extradited," he was quoted as saying. "(Britain) is a country of great democratic traditions and a robust judicial system, which is why we hope that the authorities of that country will honor its international commitments."

### Treaty to Duma

President Vladimir Putin has submitted the nuclear arms treaty he and U.S. President George W. Bush signed last spring to parliament for ratification, the Kremlin said Monday.

Putin submitted the treaty to the State Duma, the lower house, on Saturday, the Kremlin press service said in a statement. It said the Duma would discuss the treaty in hearings shortly. The treaty, signed at a May summit in Moscow, calls for the United States and Russia to cut their deployed strategic nuclear arsenals over the next decade to 1,700-2,200 warheads each, down from the approximately 6,000 each has now.

### Aide sentenced

A court in southern Russia on Monday sentenced a top intelligence aide to Chechen separatist leader Aslan Maskhadov to 13 years in prison for murder, Russian media reported.

The Volgograd regional court convicted Khamzat Khasarov of premeditated murder and other charges including illegal weapons possession, Russia's NTV television said. Khasarov and three accomplices were accused of opening fire with automatic weapons on a crowd of people outside a Volgograd restaurant in 1993, killing three and wounding three more, the Itar-Tass news agency reported. He was arrested in Odessa, Ukraine last year and extradited to Russia to stand trial, the reports said.

— AP

# Terror threat prompted operation

As Putin thanks Georgia, Tbilisi launches fresh crackdown in Kutaisi

By Misha Dzhindzhikhashvili  
The Associated Press

TBILISI — Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze said the weekend anti-crime crackdown in the capital Tbilisi was prompted by the threat of large-scale terrorist attacks against his Caucasus Mountain nation, where police launched a similar operation Monday in the second-largest city.

On Saturday, police set up roadblocks throughout the capital and conducted identity checks for foreigners, sometimes taking entire families to police stations for questioning. Twelve people were detained, including several Chechens.

Georgia also extradited to Russia a Chechen accused of helping carry out a series of apartment house bombings in Russia in fall 1999, one of the reasons cited by officials for sending troops back into Chechnya. Another suspect in the bombings was among five gunmen killed Friday in a battle with Georgian security forces near the town of Lagodekhi, 110 km northeast of Tbilisi, Georgian officials said.



GEORGIAN PRESIDENT Eduard Shevardnadze said Monday that extremist groups were planning wide-ranging terrorist acts in Tbilisi, prompting Saturday's crackdown.

In his weekly radio interview, Shevardnadze said Georgian intelligence had information that "extremist groups were planning to carry out wide-ranging terrorist acts in Tbilisi."

He also noted "published threats" against Georgia, apparently referring to Georgian media reports that Chechen rebel spokesman Movladi Udugov had warned of retaliation if Tbilisi extradited three Chechens demanded by Moscow. Finally, Shevardnadze said that his government had paid too little attention to several assassination threats

against him. "This will not be repeated. All data and signals will be studied carefully," Shevardnadze said.

On Monday, police launched a crackdown in the western region whose seat is Kutaisi, Georgia's second-largest city. Interior Ministry spokesman Paata Gomelauri said large quantities of firearms, grenades and ammunition were confiscated and three murder suspects were detained during the operation, which he said involved hundreds of police.

Police plan to conduct such oper-

tations throughout the nation, Gomelauri said.

Shevardnadze was targeted in assassination attempts in August 1995 and February 1998. Georgian investigators concluded that the second attempt was planned in a militant training camp in Chechnya.

Shevardnadze denied that the weekend anti-crime sweep was aimed against Chechens and expressed hope that the Chechen civilians who have found refuge in Georgia would understand authorities' need to establish order. He said that Georgia had done much for the refugees, in spite of the fact that Chechen rebels had been fighting against Georgia alongside Abkhazian separatists in a 1992-93 war, and would continue to help the elderly, women and children.

"But Georgia has never been and never will be a haven for terrorists," Shevardnadze said.

In Moscow, President Vladimir Putin thanked Shevardnadze "for decisive action in the struggle against terrorism," Interfax reported.

He said that Georgia's recent anti-terrorist actions were in keeping with the agreement he and Shevardnadze had reached in October on cooperation between their countries' security services, and that they could lead to a great improvement in their often troubled relations. ■

## Yakovlev appears to gain from vote



Special to The Russia Journal

VLADIMIR YAKOVLEV

Reuters

ST. PETERSBURG — An old adversary of President Vladimir Putin appeared to have a good chance of gaining a third term as St. Petersburg's governor after elections for a city assembly, his opponents conceded on Monday.

Preliminary results of balloting to decide a new 50-seat legislature for Russia's second city indicated a rough parity between supporters and opponents of Gov. Vladimir Yakovlev.

Yakovlev's name was not on the ballots, but the run-up to Sunday's election was dominated by a furious debate over whether the new assembly should allow him to run again.

He can secure a third term if the new city assembly votes by a simple majority to change city rules that now limit governors to two terms in office.

A spokeswoman for a main anti-Yakovlev party conceded the results suggested it would be impossible to stop the governor gaining enough support for a third term, starting in 2004.

"We fear that now we cannot

block a decision for a third term by the governor," said Yekaterina Shuvalova, press secretary of the regional branch of Yabloko party.

"According to our calculations, right-wing [anti-Yakovlev] forces will have only 17 votes in the new Legislative Assembly," she said. "Our mood in general is somewhat pessimistic."

Accusations of dirty tricks marked the campaign, threatening to tarnish the image of the Tsarist-era capital, which is undergoing a face-lift approaching next year's major international summit crowning the 300th anniversary of its founding.

With daytime temperatures low, only about 26 percent of voters cast ballots, according to preliminary results — just enough to make the vote valid.

Since Yakovlev took charge in 1996, the birthplace of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution — loved for the grandeur of its many palaces — has gained a reputation as Russia's crime capital because of high-profile assassinations and gangland murders. ■

## Refugee camps to close this month

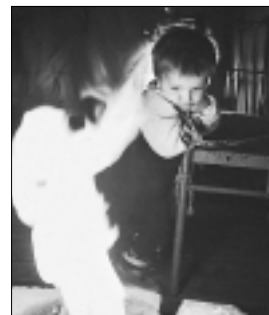
By Yuri Bagrov  
The Associated Press

V LADIKAVKAZ, Russia — Authorities told Chechen refugees living in two camps in the neighboring region Monday that the camps will be closed this month and they will have to return to Chechnya, an activist said.

Migration officials and representatives of the administration of the Chechen capital Grozny traveled to two camps outside the village of Slepsovsk on the border between Chechnya and Ingushetia, said Ruslan Badalov, chairman of a group called the Chechen Committee for National Salvation.

The authorities, accompanied by military officers, told residents both camps will be closed by Dec. 20 and that they will be sent to Chechnya, Badalov said by telephone. The warning appeared part of a campaign by the Russian government to return refugees from eight years of war in Chechnya to the region, which is still plagued by violence. The campaign has been criticized by aid organizations and human rights groups, who say refugees are being intimidated into returning.

Last week, the U.S. ambassador to Russia said the United States is concerned about the reports that some refugees are being coerced and about whether conditions in Chechnya make it safe enough to return. Ambassador Alexander Vershbow



MAREM ILICHEVA, 2, waits as her relatives pack up their tent while preparing to leave a refugee camp at Aki-Yurt in Ingushetia.

spoke after Russian officials announced the closure of a refugee camp that housed 1,500 refugees and said they planned to close down the remaining camps in Ingushetia in the coming weeks.

Russian officials and representatives of Chechnya's Moscow-backed administration deny refugees are being forced to return. They say temporary accommodation is being provided for refugees who return to Chechnya and to those few who choose to stay behind in Ingushetia. The U.N. refugee agency says 18,500 refugees are living in camps in Ingushetia, and another 110,000 are living in private homes, dormitories and makeshift shelters. ■