

International

BRIEFLY

Iraq kills 2 POWs? : The Allies believe Iraq tortured and killed two airmen held prisoner of war probably British, a high-ranking officer said Saturday, reports AP.

The allegation and the fates of the 13 allied POWs, including nine Americans, and their immediate return will be the first item of business at a battlefield rendezvous with Iraqi commanders, officials in Dharran said.

"Several military intelligence sources are sure the men were tortured and killed," said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the Desert Storm coalition, is scheduled to meet with Iraqi generals at an undisclosed location near the Iraq-Kuwaiti border to negotiate terms for a permanent cease-fire and the release of POWs.

'Allied war a great defeat' : Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei Saturday in Tehran said the US coalition aggression against Iraq was a great defeat militarily and politically, reports IRNA.

He said the US is an aggressor and should quit the region as quickly as possible otherwise the hatred and grudge of the regional nation against it will escalate and it would have to pay for what it has done.

Khamenei described US President George Bush as a most hated man before Muslim nations and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein a blight for his people.

Iraqi mines kill 2 US doctors : Two American doctors were killed early Friday by Iraqi mines when they stopped to deal with a group of Iraqi soldiers who were surrendering, the US military said, reports AP.

At a late-afternoon briefing, Marine Brig. Gen. Richard Neal of the US Central Command in Riyadh said the doctors were riding in a vehicle when they saw the Iraqis surrendering. They drove toward the area and struck a mine, killing one doctor; then another doctor got out of the car, and was killed by another mine.

The driver was injured, Neal said.

In another incident, US troops stopped two Iraqi army buses and a flatbed truck headed west on Highway 8, Neal said. The first bus complied with directions to stop, but the US troops were fired upon by the second bus and returned fire, destroying the bus and taking nine Iraqi prisoners. There were no American casualties.

Chaos reigns in Basra : Chaos reigns in Basra, Iraq's second-largest city, as the aftermath of the Gulf War has brought "a total breakdown of civil control," US military sources in Riyadh said Saturday, reports AP.

The sources said aerial surveillance had revealed a city clogged by throngs of people, traffic paralyzed in its main streets and nearby roads lined with hundreds of tanks, trucks and other military vehicles parked in haphazard fashion.

The ancient port on the Shatt-al-Arab waterway, 300 miles (500 kilometers) southeast of Baghdad, is the arrival point for thousands of Iraqis fleeing northward from Kuwait following their army's devastating defeat by troops of the US-led coalition.

The sources said the aerial picture, supplemented by information from other sources, indicated there were up to 400 military vehicles stalled in the Basra area, with as many as 200 infantry milling about, after fleeing across the Euphrates River.

Boomerang for Egyptians : Iraqi fired Egyptian-made arms and missiles against advancing Egyptian troops in Kuwait, according to the semi-official Al-Ahram newspaper, reports Reuters from Cairo.

The daily said in an early Saturday edition that Iraqi troops on withdrawal left behind Egyptian-made weapons, including Sakr missiles, which Cairo had supplied to Baghdad during its 1980-88 war with Iran.

Angolan judges launch strike : Angolan judges have launched the first formal strike in the Southern African nation since a leftist regime banned walkouts after independence from Portugal in 1975, the Portuguese news agency Lusa reported Saturday, reports AP from Lisbon.

Lusa cited the Angolan National Radio as saying the magistrates began a six-day strike Friday to press for better working conditions and greater independence from political authorities.

Current legislation, reportedly soon to be revised, bans strikes.

The government has promised to rewrite Angola's Marxist-inspired constitution enshrining a one-party regime and a low multiparty politics by next April.

The reforms are expected to speed the end of a 16-year civil war between government forces and US-backed UNITA rebels fighting to share power. Both sides have said they want to sign a cease-fire this year.

The Angolan civil war, a lingering Cold War conflict, has resulted in the deaths of more than 350,000 people and left more than two million hungry.

18 killed in Sudan : At least 18 people were killed and 32 others injured in a road accident in northeastern Sudan, Sudanese news agency SUNA reported on Saturday, reports AFP from Khartoum.

It said a bus carrying more than 70 passengers collided with an oncoming truck on the Khartoum-port Sudan motorway, not far from the city of Wad Madani.

UK polls likely in June : British Prime Minister John Major is expected to call a General Election this year, most probably in June, to cash in on popular support for his role in the Gulf war, polls published in two Sunday newspapers in London predicted, reports Reuters.

An election must be held by mid-1992 and the media has speculated that Major, leader of the Conservative party, may call a vote as early as May or June.

A Sunday telegraph poll of 115 Conservative members of Parliament found 58 per cent believed the election would be this year, while 21 per cent said Major would wait until 1992.

The Gallup survey said 43 per cent wanted an election in June of October.

Ariane rocket blast-off : An Ariane rocket with two satellites aboard blasted off from the Europeans space centre in the south American jungle at 8:36p.m. (2336 GMT) on Saturday, the Arianespace agency said, reports Reuters from Kourou.

After a one-day delay the Ariane 44LP rocket, equipped with two liquid and two solid boosters, carried into space an Astra 18 broadcasting satellite and a MOP 2 weather satellite for European customers.

The flight from French Guiana was the 42nd in western Europe's Ariane programme.

'Iraq, with Saddam in power, can't join international community'

SUNNINGDALE (ENGLAND), Mar 3: British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said on Friday Iraq could not return to the community of nations while President Saddam Hussein remained in power, reports Reuters.

He said it was not up to the Allies to prescribe who should govern Iraq and Saddam could not be personally brought to account for atrocities committed by his government.

"But Iraq cannot expect to return to the community of nations while it has a delinquent regime," Hurd said in a speech at Sunningdale, Southern England.

Iraq needs a leadership which will respect her commitments as a member of the United Nations and the Arab League.

He said he had no confirmation of a report in the French newspaper Le Monde saying Saddam as seeking asylum in Algeria.

If he were to leave power or be driven from power then it would be certainly much easier to settle the peace and settle Iraq's place in the future, he said.

Hurd said he was encouraged that Allied and military commanders were to meet near Basra in Southern Iraq Saturday to discuss the cease-fire.

He said sanctions had to be maintained to ensure Baghdad meet allied demands.

"Sanctions should not be lifted prematurely or lightly. The Iraqis cannot begin to rebuild their country in earnest without oil revenues and without access to foreign technology," he said.

"Sanctions are now, in these circumstances, a vital lever in ensuring Iraq's full compliance with her international obligations."

But Hurd added that the international community would have to consider sending humanitarian aid to Iraq at an early stage.

UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said earlier on French television he opposed maintaining sanctions if their aim was to overthrow Saddam.

Another report says Iraq's UN Ambassador Abdul Al-Anbari denied on Friday that President Saddam Hussein was seeking asylum in Algeria.

"I hate to be impolite to anyone, certainly not to jour-

nalists, but frankly this is a silly question," he said when asked about a report from Algeria in the French newspaper Le Monde that Saddam had decided to step down and had asked the Algerian authorities for asylum.

Asked if he were denying the report, Anbari replied, "Of course."

Speaking to reporters after conferring with Security Council President Peter Hohenfelsner of Austria, he said resolution being discussed privately among council members should provide for a cease-fire.

"After all, we have met all the requirements of the Security Council. The fighting has stopped and Iraq has completed its withdrawal from Kuwait. So I don't see why we don't have a cease-fire."

Council members are privately discussing a United States draft demanding that Iraq implement provisions of 12 council resolutions that Baghdad says it fully accepts and carry out other measures, including the immediate return of prisoners of war and detainees. But it does not provide for turning and informal truce declared by the Allied coalition since Thursday into a formal cease-fire.

Other sources said the Soviet Union and China had objections to key provisions of the draft.

Anbari said a meeting between coalition and Iraq military leaders scheduled for Saturday to discuss details of a ceasefire would be held somewhere near the southern Iraq city of Basra.

He said he assumed Iraq would be represented by an officer of similar rank to General Normanschwartzkopf, the Allied commander who will head the coalition team.

Kuwaiti Ambassador Mohammed Abulhasan, who saw the council President after Anbari emerged, confirmed that the military teams would meet "inside the Iraqi territories... in the southern part of Basra, maybe."

He said Iraq should provide a timetable for the release of Allied prisoners of war and civilian detainees. They included some 22,000 civilian Kuwaitis and about 8,600 Kuwaiti prisoners of war, he added.

Another report adds: The Foreign Ministry said on Saturday it had removed the accreditation of a French journalist who reported that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had asked Algeria for asylum.

The Ministry said Georges Marion was guilty of disinformation and said it had decided with great regret to withdraw his accreditation.

In a report in Le Monde on Friday Marion said Saddam had decided to step down and had asked the authorities in Algiers for asylum.

The Algerian Foreign Ministry denied the report as a journalist's fable.

No one was immediately available at Le Monde's Paris headquarters to comment on the withdrawal of Marion's accreditation.



KUWAIT CITY: An oil pump station fire burns out of control on March 1. The station was set alight by Iraqi forces before they fled Kuwait. — AFP/UNB photo.

Red Cross begins visiting Iraqi POWs

GENEVA, Mar 3: Red Cross representatives on Thursday were to begin visiting some 30,000 Iraqi prisoners of war in Saudi Arabian camps, according to a spokesman for the international body, reports AP.

Alternative govt in Iraq soon?

MANAMA (Bahrain), Mar 3: An Iraqi opposition leader said Saturday that exiled political and military figures were discussing forming "a national salvation government" for post-war Iraq, reports AP.

Such a government, said Hassan Al-Naqeb, a retired army general, would start operating from the southern Iraqi province of Basra.

"It is only an idea among several alternatives we are probing," Naqeb told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. He was reached at a hotel in the Saudi capital of Riyadh.

He said Basra, up to a point 200 kilometers (120 miles) to the north, was under the control of the allied forces. US military sources in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, said Saturday there had been a "total breakdown of civil control" in Basra.

Naqeb, a former deputy chief of staff, has been living in exile since he was retired by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in 1979. He was commander of the Iraqi contingent in Jordan in 1970 and also served as ambassador to Spain and the Vatican.

Saddam, he said, "will soon disappear" from the scene. "Saddam is a limp body now and we have information of widespread rebellion among more than 90 per cent of the army and its commanders."

Naqeb also said there was widespread "revulsion" among the Iraqi masses and demonstrations in Iraqi provinces including Baghdad and Basra. He said Saddam was in hiding.

Naqeb said that about 50 to 60 opposition figures who had fled their country during

Iraq discharges army conscripts

BAGHDAD, Mar 3: Iraq said Sunday it had discharged army conscripts born in the years between 1953 and 1956 after "positive political developments," reports Reuters.

Baghdad Radio was quoting a statement from the ruling Revolution Command Council which it said was signed by President Saddam Hussein.

Iraq had a pre-war army of up to one million regulars or reservists. The Iraqi news agency said later the Defence Ministry was considering discharging more conscripts.

Earlier on Saturday Iraq said a military delegation would meet Allied counterparts on Sunday to discuss a permanent cease-fire.

It was not immediately known how many men would be officially discharged as a result of the council decision. Tens of thousands of reservists, many of them veterans of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, were recalled after the August 2 invasion of Kuwait.

Allied military officers say Iraq troops were routed in a 100-hour land war which ended early on Thursday.

Mass grave of 1,000 in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Mar 3: Kuwaiti officials on Saturday showed reporters mass graves of what they said were civilians killed by Iraqi occupation forces.

One official told Reuters to a suburban cemetery where gravediggers said about 1,000 people had been buried 75 per cent of them shot.

Ranks of long burial mounds, each said to contain up to seven or eight males, stretched one after the other across the cemetery in the southern district of Rigga.

There were 28 in one section, each about eight metres long. The cemetery workers, all volunteer professional men since the regular Palestinian gravediggers quit at the start of the war, said many more were interned in individual graves.

Mass graves were used only when bodies came in groups, they said.

Most bodies came in at the beginning of the invasion. For about a month, we would get five or six a day, sometimes more," said a gravedigger who gave his name only as Talal.

All the other workers similarly permitted only first names to be used. They said custom forbade attracting praise for voluntary work done for their nation.

The workers did not know exactly how many victims were buried here. They said Iraqi authorities took their records.

But they said they had taken pictures of most of the dead and had forwarded them to Kuwaiti officials.

However gravediggers showed reporters several individual mounds only about one metre long as well as one 18 metres long which they said were full of babies lying head to toe.

The workers said the Iraqis stopped the Red Cross from transporting bodies to burial places last October. Thereafter people had to bring their dead by private car.

Anand Panyarachun named PM Thai junta making a dictatorial constitution

BANGKOK, Mar 3: The new military junta is cementing its grip on the country with an interim constitution that sanctions its absolute powers and makes it dominant in a caretaker government before elections, analysts say, reports AP.

The document was promulgated Friday to replace the 1978 constitution the junta abolished after toppling Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan's elected government in a bloodless coup February 23.

The interim constitution says the election should be this year, but can be delayed for up to 120 days into 1992 if a permanent constitution is not drafted in time.

A week after the coup, reports Saturday said the junta was backing off from previous statements it would quickly lift martial law and hold elections within six months.

The Thai newspaper The Nation quoted the junta leader, armed forces chief Gen. Sunthorn Kongsompong, as saying an "underground movement" was trying to topple the junta and had hired foreign assassins. He could not give details, and a deputy junta leader said he didn't know anything about it.

"We will lift martial law only when the underground movement is stopped," Sunthorn said.

Martial law includes a ban on a political gatherings of more than five people. Fifteen university students who violated the ban with an anti-coup rally Monday were arrested, each faces up to six months in jail.

The interim constitution, which the constitutional monarch King Bhumibol Adulyadej approved Friday, replaced a 1978 document the junta abolished.

The junta has said a caretaker cabinet, to be announced within days, would be largely civilian. But the Bangkok Post newspaper on Saturday said junta leaders would get the key interior, defence and communications posts.

Article 27 of the interim constitution gives the junta unlimited powers to halt activities deemed harmful to national security, the national economy, the administration, public order and morality, national resources or public health.

"This constitution shows the military has no intention of restoring true democracy," said a Western diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The document says the junta formulates national policy with the cabinet. In joint meetings of the junta and the cabinet, the junta leader will be chairman.

The king appoints the Prime Minister upon the junta's recommendation, and can fire him if the junta recommends.

Another report says: Anand Panyarachun, named Prime Minister of Thailand's interim government Saturday, was a diplomat for a quarter-century and served as ambassador to the United States and the United Nations.

As a director-general at the Foreign Ministry in 1976, Anand reportedly was instrumental in negotiating an end to the American use of military bases in Thailand and in Thailand's re-establishing diplomatic relations with China.

After leaving the government in 1979, Anand embarked on a successful business career in the textile industry, banking and real estate and sat on many advisory boards and committees.



BANGKOK: Anand Panyarachun was appointed as the Prime Minister of Thailand one week after the military seized power in a bloodless coup. Mr. Anand is a leading businessman and former top diplomat.

Perez opposes UN sanctions against Iraq

PARIS, Mar 3: UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said on Friday he opposed maintaining United Nations sanctions against Iraq if their aim was to overthrow President Saddam Hussein, reports Reute.

"As Secretary-General I cannot agree with measures that are aimed at overthrowing the government of a country which is a member of the United Nations," Perez de Cuellar told France's Antenne Deux television station in an interview from New York.

"If the objective of pursuing sanctions is to topple the Iraqi regime, then I do not agree. I cannot agree."

Blast in chemical warehouse: 3 killed in Bangkok

BANGKOK, Mar 3: Explosions rocked a port warehouse containing toxic chemicals Saturday, touching off fires that burned hundreds of wooden houses in a nearby Bangkok slum, police and witnesses said, reports AP.

Three people were killed, all from the Klong Toey shantytown adjacent to the capital's main port, and seven others were injured, officials said.

Fire destroyed more than 500 houses in the slum, said a Deputy Governor of Bangkok, Col. Vimal Sompeng. A social worker estimated the 500 shacks would have housed about 3,500 people.

By nightfall the fire appeared somewhat contained, but a Port Authority official who did not give his name said: "It is still very dangerous. We continue to have explosions."

More than a dozen secondary explosions shook the area throughout the afternoon and early evening.

Off the Record

Hussein wanted Iraqi throne

AMMAN: As Jordan moved tanks and troops to the ceasefire line with Israel last week, 30-year-old Foreign Office papers released in London disclosed that Jordan's King Hussein once claimed Iraq's throne.

He made the claim in May, 1959, after his cousin, King Faisal II of Iraq, was murdered in a 1958 coup by Gen Abdel-Karim Kassem, according to a 1960 report by Selwyn Lloyd, then foreign secretary.

Gen Kassem was himself overthrown and executed in 1963 after a coup by nationalist officers and members of the Iraqi Baath Party.

The 1958 coup in Baghdad left Jordan as the only survivor of the two kingdom founded by Britain in 1921 for the sons of Sheriff Hussein of Mecca, members of the Hashemite family claiming descent from Prophet Mohammed.

The Sheriff Arab army fought with Lawrence of Arabia against the Turks.

In an account of a conversation with Christian Herter, American secretary of state in Geneva, Lloyd wrote: "Herter asked me whether I had heard anything of King Hussein's megalomaniac ideas. He had apparently gone to Turkey and said that the right policy for the West was that he should become the Hashemite King of both Iraq and Jordan. That was the answer to all the problems."

Herter said their feeling was that he was showing signs of mental derangement. I said there had been absolutely no sign of any such derangement in London. Herter said there had not been any when he was in America either.

"I said that when the King was in London he had indicated there might come a time when Syria and Jordan might draw closer together, but he had never mentioned the idea of uniting Iraq and Jordan into a joint kingdom. I could not believe this could be a very serious pronouncement of policy by the King."

Cabinet papers for 1960 also released last week reveal British worries about a possible Iraqi attack on Kuwait 30 years ago. A committee to the chiefs of staff was asked to "re-examine the practicability of an operation to dislodge Iraq forces from Kuwait."

He scales Buckingham to find 'lost love'

LONDON: A lovelorn Irishman who scaled the walls of Buckingham Palace grounds to talk to the queen about a woman he thought was her relation, was given a conditional discharge, reports Reuters.

Eugene Derek Smith was arrested as he entered the grounds in a desperate attempt to locate his lost love.

Smith, 32, who is unemployed, appeared, at Bow Street Magistrates' Court, central London, charged with carrying a piece of masonry without lawful excuse, with intent to destroy property belonging to the crown.

An earlier hearing was told that Smith had travelled to London from Dublin after becoming infatuated with a woman claiming to be the queen's niece.

He was said to have had such an obsession with seeing the queen in order to locate the woman that he picked up a piece of rock to smash his way into the palace if the doors and windows were closed.

Peter Codner, for Smith, told the court that Smith's only aim in committing the offence was to locate the girl. It was a strange thing to do, but sometimes people become so profoundly moved by their feelings they did peculiar things, he said.

After medical and social reports, Ronald Bartle, the magistrate, gave Smith, a man of previous good character who pleaded guilty, a conditional discharge.

Lenin still popular

MOSCOW: A recent poll conducted in the Soviet Union shows most Soviets positively assess the personality of Vladimir Lenin. About 59.1 per cent of those polled positively assessed his personality, 10.3 per cent negatively, and 30.6 per cent were undecided, reports PTI.

The poll was conducted among 2,000 Soviet people by the Marxism-Leninism Institute and the Soviet Sciences Academy at the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee, and the Independence Social Forecasts Centre. The results were published yesterday in the Pravda newspaper.

The rating of Lenin's activities is still higher. According to the poll 76.1 per cent of the people positively assessed his activities. Only 9.5 per cent were negative about them.

However, some categories of people were more critical: 19 per cent of scholars, 15 per cent of students, 13 per cent of engineers and 36 per cent of Moscovites gave him low marks.