

Bush to welcome new govt in Baghdad

Rebels capture 12,000 Iraqi troops, seize arms

Kuwait looks for Iraqi assets abroad

KUWAIT, Mar 25 : Kuwait is searching for Iraqi assets abroad which could be used to pay reparations ordered by the United Nations...

In an interview with Reuters, he said Kuwait had teams working in London and New York to identify Iraqi assets.

"We are working with our friends in different parts. We are trying to find and identify Iraqi available assets in order for reparations to be paid at least partly from these assets," he said.

The governor said Kuwait was in touch with the United Nations about setting the level of reparations to be paid by Iraq in compensation for its seven-month occupation.

DAMASCUS, Mar 25: Syria's official news agency said on Sunday anti-government rebels have captured an entire Iraqi army division with heavy weapons in northern Iraq...

The Sana agency said the unidentified division at full strength about 12,000 troops — fell into rebel hands after a battle.

Most of northern Iraq is now reported held by Kurdish rebels.

Iranian radio has already reported that an Iraqi Brigadier General was captured by rebel 'popular forces' fighting to overthrow President Saddam Hussein.

Another report adds from Washington: President George

Bush insists the United States has no direct role in unrest spreading in Iraq, but he is sending signals to dissidents that he would welcome a new Iraqi leader interested in 'the ways of peace'.

Bush, who shifts to compassionate tones when speaking of the Iraqi people, does little to conceal his contempt for President Saddam Hussein — whose name he spits out as soon as it forms on his lips.

Ever since the Gulf war ended with a ceasefire, Bush has tried a walk a diplomatic tightrope in discussing the regional rebellions spawned by the Allied defeat of Iraq.

"I think it's fair to say that there's enormous consternation and turmoil inside Iraq

today," Bush told journalists late on Saturday at the White House, he added. "We're playing no part in that, but it shows... great unrest with the rule of Saddam Hussein."

The President, speaking after talks with Turkish President Turgut Ozal, said the United States could not restore normal relations with Baghdad while Saddam remained in power.

The President brushed aside a government shakeup in Iraq in which Saddam appointed a 24-man government, bringing in seven new ministers and making Deputy Prime Minister Saoudun Hammadi, a Shi'ite Muslim, Iraq's Prime Minister — a position Saddam had held.

"As I have said before, normal relations with the United States cannot be effective with Saddam Hussein still calling the shots, still in power," Bush said.

He was asked about Iraqi rebellions that began in the South with Muslim Shi'ite dissidents and in the north among the Kurds. Now, the fighting is reported to have spread to Baghdad itself.

Bush challenged a claim by Saddam that unrest in southern Iraq had been quelled. "Apparently the rebels are still fighting hard. I think Saddam Hussein made a claim that it was put down, but that is not correct."

Then Bush, who over the years has become skilled at avoiding issues he does not want to discuss, plunged into the subject of life after Saddam with no prompting.

"I think it would be inappropriate to try to shape, or suggest even, what government should follow on," Bush said.

"I would hope that it would be one that could work very compatibly with the western powers, Western countries, and live happily ever after without threatening its neighbours."

The message clearly was not directed at the handful of reporters listening to Bush at the White House. He was reaching out to insurgents half a world away.

"What we're looking for is stability," Bush said. "We're not looking for disorder, we're looking for somebody that is going to lead that country in the ways of peace."

He said he would like to see a leader in Baghdad willing to take the enormous resources they have, pay off their obligations to others, and then raise the standard of living for their own people who've been in a war situation for too many years already.

Another report from Ankara says: Turkish journalists who crossed into Kurdish-held northern Iraq said they saw Napalm victims in a Zakhko Hospital, a newspaper reported Sunday.

We visited Zakhko Public Hospital and saw many women and children with Napalm burns on their bodies, quoted the liberal Milliyet newspaper an eyewitness account by four of its reporters.

The reporters were just back from a four-day trip across the mountains into rebel-controlled northern Iraq near the Turkish border.

Two Peshmerga (guerrilla) leaders, Kemal Kerkuklu, Central Committee member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and Melle Ramazan, in charge of Zakhko, told them forces loyal to President Saddam Hussein had used Napalm in recent fighting.

BRIEFLY

1,000 Albanians back home: About 1,000 Albanians returned home from Yugoslavia on Sunday when authorities agreed to examine a demand for open borders...

The Albanians had crossed into Yugoslavia earlier on Sunday before agreeing to return, the agency said. The incident came one day after Albanian border guards opened fire with automatic weapons at more than 900 refugees fleeing into Yugoslavia killing one person.

Deng elected as NPC Member: Senior leader Deng Xiaoping was elected Sunday to the presidency of the annual session of the national People's Congress (NPC) China's parliament, the Xinhua news agency in Beijing reported, says AFP.

Mr. Deng, 86, officially retired from his last post — the Head of the State Central Military Commission — at last year's session of the NPC. The senior leader, who last appeared in public February 14, has also been elected to the presidency in past years, but has not attended. An empty seat has been symbolically left on the presidency in his honour.

Fighting in Georgia: Heavy fighting was reported in the South Ossetia region of Soviet Georgia during the weekend, with militants in the ethnic dispute exchanging grenade and rocket fire, Tass said Sunday, reports AP from Moscow.

Shells were fired at the regional capital of Tskhinvali on Saturday night, the official news agency reported. On Sunday, residents were beaten in two South Ossetian villages, and homes set ablaze in two other villages, it said.

There have been four straight days of fighting in the Georgian village of Eredvi and the Ossetian village of Denist, in the northern part of the republic. Eight Ossetians have been wounded in those battles, Tass said, but it did not report on whether anyone was injured in the grenade and rocket attacks.

Iraq slates US for rigidity: Iraq Sunday criticizes the United States for putting forward severe terms for a Gulf war ceasefire as interfering with Iraq's sovereignty, reports Xinhua from Baghdad. The states run daily Al-Jumhuriya said the American proposal aims at usurping Iraq's sovereignty, mortgaging its will and holding it's wealth.

Parliament Speaker Saadi Mehdi Saleh also said the proposal is a continuation of the U.S double-standard policy.

One lakh homeless in Iran: Floods in eastern Iran have destroyed 10,000 homes leaving more than 100,000 people homeless in the past 45 days, the Iranian news agency IRNA said Sunday, reports AFP from Teheran.

Thousands of hectares of farmland were also damaged. More than 90 villages were under threat of being cut off by the rising water in the Sistan region near Afghanistan, according to IRNA, which quoted the Governor of Zabol.

A breakwater on the Sistan river had been breached in two places by the huge volume of water pouring into it, IRNA quoted the governor as saying.

Tents, food fuel and boats were needed urgently in the flooded areas, he said. 20,000 Thai prisoners to be freed: About 20,000 prisoners in Thailand are expected to be freed soon on a royal pardon, the Bangkok Post reported in Bangkok, Monday, says Xinhua.

The royal pardon was announced late last year to mark the Princess mother's 90th birthday and has been effective since last November 18.

Israeli housing in West Bank: An official source from the Foreign Ministry in Cairo considered Monday the Israeli Government's intention to establish 12,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank as 'astonishing', reports Xinhua.

Commenting on newspapers' reports on Israel's intention, the source said Egypt regrets over the continuation of the Israeli settlement in the occupied Arab territories, saying this 'raises doubts in the seriousness of the Israeli stances' expressing willingness to reach peace in the Middle East, the official Middle East news agency MENA reported.

Poster war in Nepal, poll code violated

KATHMANDU, Mar 25: Nepal's political parties are waging a poster war here, with skirmishes erupting among rival party workers, as the country's general election draws near, reports AFP.

The Nepali Congress Central Election Publicity Committee issued a statement Sunday urging campaign workers not to put up posters in religious places, archaeological sites, embassies, police stations, army buildings, government offices and unauthorised private places.

Referring to scuffles here between Nepal Communist Party and Nepali Congress

Saddam worth \$10b

NEW YORK, Mar 25 : Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein has built a worldwide conglomerate providing a huge personal fortune and with his family has taken Iraqi oil profits worth over 10 billion dollars, according to a US television report broadcast on Sunday, reports Reuter.

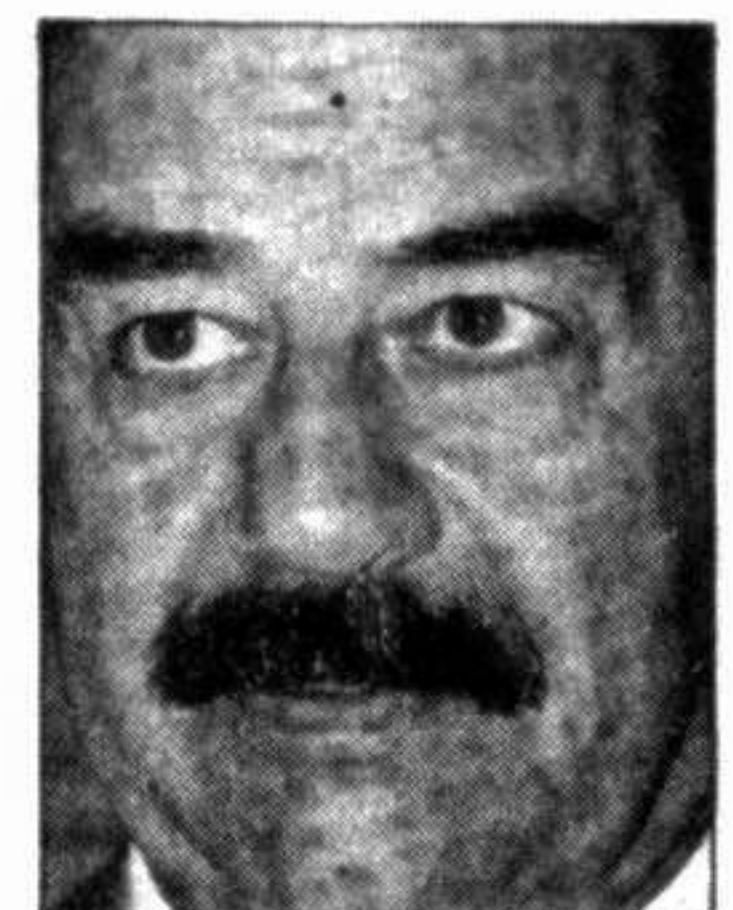
According to a CBS television "60 minutes" report quoting private investigator Jules Kroll, Saddam and his family have over the past 10 years taken five per cent of Iraq's oil sales for themselves.

Kroll, an investigator hired by the Kuwaiti government to trace Saddam's fortune, told CBS the Iraqi leader had taken "between 10 and 11 billion (dollars) just on oil transactions."

Kroll, who the network said had in the past tracked down the fortunes of deposed leaders such as the Philippines' Ferdinand Marcos and Haiti's Jean-Claude Duvalier, added that Saddam's international network held "vast, vast assets."

He said Iraqi front companies stretched across Europe to the United Kingdom as well as to "several parts of the United States," including a machine tool company in Ohio and an engineering firm in Los Angeles.

Kroll also told CBS: "Every time Japan does business with Iraq, two and a half per cent goes into a Japanese bank account for



Saddam.

He added that Saddam's financial empire was based in Geneva, Switzerland and through its holding company Montana management owned 8.4 per cent or 67 million dollars' worth of Hachette, the sixth-largest media company in the world.

Hachette publications include "elle", "car and driver" and "woman's day."

Saddam's half brother Barzan Al-Takriti, contacted by the network in Switzerland, denied that the Iraqi government or Saddam's family owned any interest in Montana management.

Kuwait's central bank Governor told Reuter on Sunday that his country was searching for Iraqi assets abroad that could be used to compensate for Iraq's seven-month occupation of Kuwait and widespread destruction wrought by Iraqi troops.

Gen Beg denies imminent military takeover

ISLAMABAD, Mar 25 : General Mirza Aslam Beg, Chief of Pakistani Army Staff, has dismissed rumours of an impending military takeover as baseless, reports Xinhua.

An official source said this morning that the Army Chief made the dismissal in response to questions by the news one of the Pakistani english newspapers, at the investiture ceremony held at the Presidency here on March 23 to mark the Pakistani National Day.

Beg said he did not know who was spreading such rumours.

Pointing to the Prime Minister's Adviser on Information,

Sheikh Rashid, who was standing beside him at the ceremony, Beg said it is for the government to put an end to such rumours and speculation. To this, Sheikh Rashid replied that perhaps the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) was the appropriate body to do this, the source said.

AFP from Peshawar: An earthquake measuring five on the open-ended richter scale rocked this northwestern Pakistani city early Sunday, local television reported.

No loss of life or property was reported, the report quoted official sources as saying.

'Acid being sprayed on Iraqi rebels'

DAMASCUS, Mar 25 : An opposition group accused government forces of spraying acid from helicopters on rebels fighting for control of two Iraqi cities, reports Reuter.

"We got confirmed information that they sprayed the rebellious people with phosphoric acid in the cities of Amara and Mosul on Sunday," the Shi'ite Muslim Islamic Action Organisation (IAO) said in a statement in Damascus.

It was the second time in five days that rebel spokesman had reported acid attacks by the troops of President Saddam Hussein.

There has been no independent confirmation of the use of acid as a weapon, but Turkish journalists who visited

and area of northern Iraq controlled by Kurdish rebels reported seeing victims of napalm in a hospital in the town of Zakhko.

The IAO statement said Baghdad, the Iraqi capital, was in a state of siege with extra units of the Republican Guard — Saddam's best-trained and most loyal troops — deployed "in expectation of a military coup."

It said the guards had set up a defensive screen around Saddam's residence in the capital.

Iraqi speaker urges UN to reject US resolution

BAGHDAD, Mar 25: Speaker of Iraq's National Assembly Saadi Mehdi Saleh Monday appealed to the United Nations to reject a US-proposed Draft Resolution seeking to impose conditions on Iraq before a permanent cease-fire agreement is formally signed, reports Xinhua.

The speaker told the Iraqi news agency that this 'unjust draft resolution' was seeking to take away Iraq's national will.

"The United States practices a policy of two weights, two measures in its way of dealing with international crisis and problems and this Draft Resolution is a violation of all international law and conventions," he stressed.

He said "the acceptance by the (UN) Security Council of this Draft Resolution will hurt not only Iraq, but the entire international community." He urged the international community to reject it.

Gorbachev, Yeltsin get what they wanted from polls

from Roman Barashev

MOSCOW, Mar 25: Mikhail Gorbachev has got a majority vote for the preservation of the USSR at an all-union referendum, and Boris Yeltsin, at a Russian referendum, a yes vote to the post of Republican President and his election by general voting. Both leaders have got what they wanted from the referendum but this victory will hardly give them confidence in the success of their policies.

Gorbachev faces the challenging task of having a Union Treaty signed. In a situation when the three Baltic republics, as well as Moldova, Georgia and Armenia officially refused to hold the plebiscite and polling in the referendum was limited, when Moscow and Leningrad, the largest cities of the biggest republic — the Russian Federation — gave slightly over half of their votes for the union, which is just over one-third of the electorate lists, the referendum results cannot be too cheerful for the Soviet President, although they allow him to

speak on behalf of the "majority of the Soviet people". Although most of the republics, including the Russian Federation, the Ukraine, and the Central Asian ones, are in principle for a new Union Treaty, the six that refused to take part will not accept the opinion of the "majority" as an



MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

News Analysis

argument in favour of the treaty, even in its new wording when the republics are granted far greater sovereignty. It means Gorbachev will have to take unpopular measures to keep the union together in its old form.

The President's predicament is compounded by two further serious factors. One is political instability in miners' regions hit by strikes that are increasingly going over from economic to political requests, demanding particularly the resignation of the President and central government. The second is the retail price rises announced for April for practically all foodstuffs and manufactured goods with partial compensation. The price increases, possibly needed to stabilise the country's economy are likely to undermine the already volatile trust in the new cabinet of ministers.

Boris Yeltsin, Head of the Parliament of the Russian Federation, who is eager and has the chance to become Presi-

dent of the Republic (the yes vote in favour of the Russian presidency may be viewed in a way as a yes personally to Yeltsin), faces an uphill struggle at the Congress of People's Deputies of Russia at the end of March.

Yeltsin concedes that he and his supporters do not have a guaranteed majority at this Congress, which is expected to adopt a constitutional amendment on the Presidency. What is more, there is expected to be a bitter clash between the two largest parliamentary groups: democratic Russia (which backs Yeltsin) and the communists of Russia (who support the Soviet Communist Party and the Russian Communist Party). Observers believe that the referendum results will lead to the adoption of the amendment, but the second group will try to dislodge Yeltsin from his post of Chairman of the Russian Federation Supreme So-

viet. According to Nikolai Travkin, Leader of the Democratic Party, if Yeltsin has to

Off the Record

Rushdie, Wiggins set to divorce

LONDON : Salman Rushdie, author of the controversial novel 'The Satanic Verses' and his wife, Marianne Wiggins, are to divorce, according to a report in the Sunday Express, reports PTL.

Rushdie, who is in hiding under police protection since late Ayatollah Khomeini passed a death sentence on him two years ago for alleged blasphemy against Islam in his novel, said his wife is "very, very depressed".

Wiggins told the paper that they will begin divorce proceedings later this year. She left Rushdie in July 1989 and moved to America because she could not stand the tight security.

She said, "Rushdie has isolated himself from his former friends and he's developed a very thin skin recently and can't take criticism".



Open-air mosque

OSH : Mt. Tash Suleiman in the very centre of the city of Osh, south of Kirghizia, has been minutely inspected by local scientists, reports IAN.

It turned out that this mountain, widely known in the Central Asia as a sacred Muslim place was considered holy long before Islam emerged.

Numerous findings, including credence tables, giant imprints with solar signs and intricate cryptographs resembling webs, directly indicate that at a very early stage of human development this mount was an open-air mosque.

Scientists assert that in its historical importance Mt. Tash-Suleiman equals the monuments of ancient Greece and Rome, together with other hallmarks of civilization. The data obtained by researchers were submitted to the appropriate UNESCO Commission so that the mountain be put on the list of the unique historical places.

And now bees invade

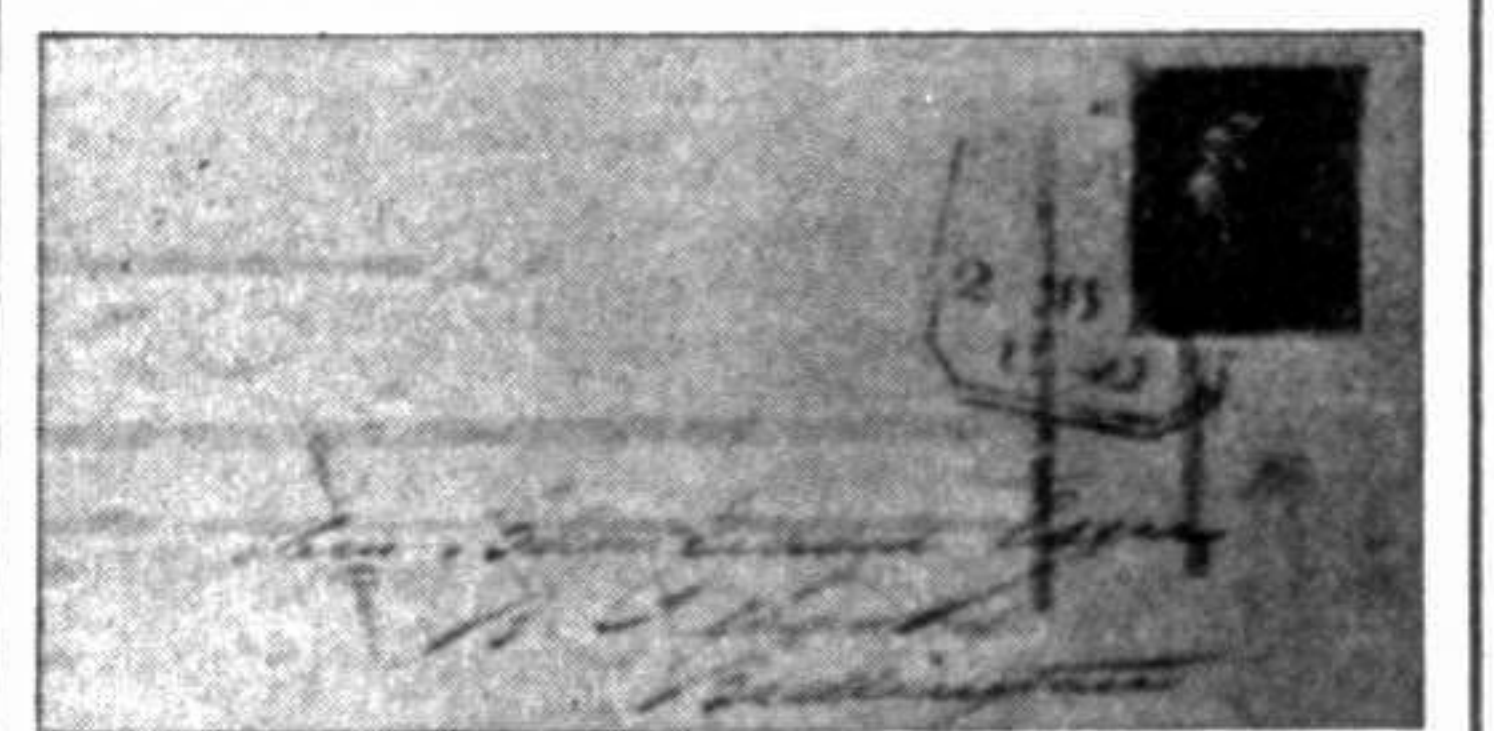
MEXICO CITY : Killer African bees — moving north from South America — have invaded Mexico city but fire fighters promptly destroyed the first swarm to be found, authorities said, reports Reuter.

The bees, which scientists say are capable of stinging people to death, were found last week, the Agricultural Ministry said in a statement released late on Saturday.

Firefighters smoked them out and destroyed them, a spokesman said.

The African bees, which have steadily spread to many parts of north America after they were first brought over to Brazil, are now known to be in 23 of Mexico's 32 states, the statement said.

The Ministry said it has given special training to some 75 firemen, Red Cross officials and other rescue workers in the capital in how to deal with the dangerous bees.



LUGANO (Switzerland): Picture of the envelope with a Mauritian "penny black" stamp that fetched a record 2.4 million dollars March 23 at an auction. The stamp was bought by unidentified Japanese buyers.

Son sells mother

BEIJING : A Chinese man has been executed for selling his mother, wife and three-year-old daughter for 3,050 Yuan (585 Dollars), an official report said, says AFP.

Liu Shiming, of Sichuan province in southwest China, made a total of 8,500 Yuan (1,635 Dollars) by selling 18 people between 1985 and 1990, the China social news reported.

"Crazed for money," Mr. Liu turned to his family, the newspaper said.

In 1987, he tricked his wife into leaving Sichuan to look for work elsewhere but instead sold her for 1,400 Yuan.

He then returned to his hometown and convinced his mother that his wife and daughter should be together. He took the three-year-old girl to northern Hebei province and sold her for 450 Yuan.

Not satisfied, he went home once more and told his mother that the child had become ill and needed attention. The mother left with him and ended up being sold for 1,200 Yuan.

Li rules out change in ideology of China

BEIJING, Mar 25 : Premier Li Peng said that China was "rock solid" on its socialist path and warned against attempts by outside forces to subvert its system, reports Reuter.

But, in an address to more than 2,600 deputies to the National People's Congress, China's rubber-stamp Parliament, Li reiterated the need to remain open to the West economically in order to raise living standards in the world's most populous nation.

"During the 1980s we experienced tremendous success and during the last two years we have continued to make progress even in the face of foreign pressure and domestic problems, enabling socialist China to stand rock solid in the East," Li said.

Delegates cheered when he declared there would be no change in the country's ideology.

—IAN