

## Saddam's reprisals to be halted

## US ready to set up security zones for Kurds in Iraq

LONDON, Apr 7: The United States wants to set up security zones for refugees in Iraq to protect civilians against reprisals by President Saddam Hussein's Republican Guards, the Sunday Times reported here, says AFP.

Quoting an American official, the paper said the plan was based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 condemning repression of civilians in Iraq, especially Kurds.

The official was quoted as saying that if Mr. Hussein accepted the resolution, then we could declare refugee security zones and warn that there must be no military action inside them.

If the Iraqis continued to attack, he added, then we blow them away.

Both Washington and London have said repeatedly over the past few days that they would not give military help to the Iraqi insurgents.

Reuters adds from Houston: President George Bush said on Saturday that Iraq's response to tough United Nations ceasefire terms appears to be positive and could help speed the withdrawal of US troops from southern Iraq and the Gulf region.

My intention is to take our forces out just as quickly as

possible Bush told reporters during a brief news conference with Secretary of State James Baker, who was meeting the President in preparation for a Middle East peace-making trip.

Bush said UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar had received a lengthy letter from Iraq Foreign Minister and that US analysts were studying its contents. It appears to be positive, the President said, adding that a permanent ceasefire would enable the United States to move more quickly to withdraw our forces from southern Iraq.

Bush said he hoped a formal end to the Gulf war would also bring an end to Iraqi reprisals against Kurdish and Shi'ite rebels.

Some dissidents have expressed concern that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein would intensify his crackdown after US forces left the region, but Bush said this would not affect the pace of the US withdrawal.

A Washington report says: A senior US military official has said the war against Iraq was halted prematurely, news weekly US News and World Report said Saturday.

"We stopped too damn soon, a senior military source insisted, one week after

Commander-in-Chief President Bush for stating the Allied offensive against Iraq should have been continued.

"They can argue about it all they want, but that is the truth, the same military source said. If the attack had continued, it would have bottled up the Republican Guard inside Basra and they would have surrendered.

The magazine report said the ceasefire order on February 28 came just 90 minutes before Allied forces were preparing to launch an offensive on the city of Basra in southern Iraq.

Military sources told the magazine the Operation Desert Storm Battle plan was allotted

144 hours to complete the goals of liberating Kuwait and isolating remaining Iraqi soldiers in Basra.

Coalition forces were operating 36 hours ahead of schedule and need just six hours to complete both objectives when the ceasefire order was handed down, the sources told the newsweekly.

A report from Reuters: Turkey said on Saturday that about 1,500 Iraqi Kurds had died of hunger, cold or disease during their flight from President Saddam Hussein's avenging army.

"A grave humanitarian crime is being committed," said Foreign Minister Kurt Coban Alptemecin, appealing for the

world to rapidly provide aid.

The Minister, quoted by the Anatolian news agency, said there were now about 280,000 refugees in Turkey or close to the border and 700,000 on the move deeper inside Iraq on their way to Turkey or other countries.

Iran says 315,000 Kurds have taken refuge there so far and the total may eventually reach 1.5 million.

Alptemecin said Ankara was trying to help the Kurds as it had done in the past but appealed to the world not to leave Turkey alone.

The Minister said almost a million people had been forced to desert their homes and begin escaping to neighbouring

countries to save their lives since the crushing of the Kurdish rebellion in northern Iraq.

The situation has reached a dimension that poses a threat to regional peace and security.

Turkey hopes that Iraq will put an end to the oppression of these innocent people and will announce that it guarantees the security of these people.

Iraq on Friday offered an amnesty to Kurds who staged an insurrection in the north but rebel Kurds dismissed the announcement as a sick joke.

Turkey initially said it could not admit all the Kurds but maintains its borders are in fact open to the fugitives.

Two planeloads of French aid for the Kurds arrived in southeast Turkey on Saturday. Britain has also sent two planeloads of supplies and is sending two Hercules C-130 transport aircraft to drop aid direct to the refugees.

French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas described Iraqi repression of the Kurds as terrible. He said those fleeing towards Turkey were "caught in a real trap" between a Turkish border that is not completely open and Iraqi forces pressing forward from the other direction.

## Off the Record

## An irrelevant empire

WASHINGTON, Apr 7: The Soviet Union, once branded an "evil empire" by former US President Ronald Reagan, is fast becoming an "irrelevant empire", according to former US President Richard Nixon, reports Reuters.

Reagan was lambasted for calling the Soviet Union and evil empire. Today it is becoming an irrelevant empire, Nixon says in the April 15 issue of US News and World Report Magazine.

Nixon, the only US President to resign from office, has just ended a two-week visit to the Soviet Union that included talks with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and Russian Republic Leader Boris Yeltsin, and visits to Lithuania, the Ukraine and Georgia.

"In today's world, an empire that has only military power and is a third world economic power, falling hopelessly behind, will eventually become irrelevant," Nixon said.

The ex-President said the Soviet economic crisis is so severe "that it is diminishing the importance of concluding a Strategic Arms Agreement with Moscow, an accord long sought by President George Bush's administration."

In view of the enormous economic problems the Soviet Union has, the need for a treaty is not as great. They are not going to be able to afford the expenditures necessary for military modernisation, Nixon said.

Nixon served as President from 1969 to 1974, when he quit to avoid impeachment in the Watergate Scandal.

## One of the Eight arrested

LOS ANGELES, Apr 7: Actor Adam Rich, who played the youngest of eight kids on the 1970s TV comedy "Eight is Enough," was arrested Saturday for investigation of burglary, police said, reports AP.

Rich, 22, was arrested early Saturday near a pharmacy in the city's suburban San Fernando Valley, said police Sgt. J. J. Thompson. He was jailed in lieu of 5,000 dollars bail.

Thompson said Rich was arrested "a short distance away from a pharmacy that had been broken into," but had no further details.

Rich's publicist, Jeff Ballard, said he was unaware of the arrest.

Rich played Nicholas Bradford in the ABC-TV series that ran from March 1977 to August 1981. The series starred Dick Van Patten as Tom Bradford, a newspaper columnist coping with a household of eight children.

Rich also played Danny Blake in the ABC adventure series "Code Red," which ran in 1981 and 1982, and Clovis in the 1983 CBS comedy series "Gun Shy."

## 8,000 animals in London zoo risk being destroyed

LONDON, Apr 7: London Zoo, the world's oldest, will be forced to close in September because of a cash shortage and many of its 8,000 animals risk being destroyed unless saved by government funds, reports Reuters.

A spokeswoman for the department of the environment confirmed a newspaper report that a decision was taken "in principle" to close the zoo in London's Regent's Park.

The Sunday Times newspaper reported in a front-page story that the decision to close was made by the zoo's council in a unanimous vote on March 12 after a meeting with government officials.

It said the zoo, built 160 years ago, would need 13 million pounds sterling (23 million dollars) to stay open.

The newspaper quoted an internal memorandum as saying many of the animals, including Orang-Utans, Chimpanzees, Giraffes and Camels, would be "humanely destroyed" because it would be difficult to find alternative homes for them.

The rare animals would be difficult to place because they need expensive and specialised facilities, the newspaper said.

The memorandum shows zoo officials and the government are aware of the public outcry such action would provoke.

## Iraqi secret service chief heads defence

MANAMA, Apr 7: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's choice as his new Defense Minister demonstrates his plans to rebuild the advanced military that suffered a devastating defeat in February, observers in Bahrain said, reports AFP.

It was Hussein Kamel Hassan, named to the new post Saturday, who headed the country's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes and developed a secret international network to obtain the technology.

The appointment of a man from Iraq's secret services to head the Army also shows the fears of a regime on the defensive and one which depends more than ever on security services for its survival, a

western military source said.

The promotion of Mr Hassan, who is Mr Hussein's 33-year-old son-in-law, also means members of the Presidents' clan now hold all of the country's most powerful posts.

The Vice Chairman of the ruling Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the Interior Minister, and the heads of all the nations secret services are related to Mr Hussein.

Mr Hassan, who is now the second most powerful man in Iraq after the President, had previously held the posts of Minister of Industry and Military Industrialization, and Interim Oil Minister.

He was replaced in both jobs by Amer Hammoudi Al-Saadi, INA said.

## Pak involvement in Khost plunder alleged

ISLAMABAD, Apr 7: Afghanistan on Saturday accused Pakistan of joining the looting of the rebel-held eastern town of Khost and demanded the return of all stolen material, the official Kabul Radio said, reports Reuters.

The broadcast, monitored in the Pakistani capital Islamabad, said the charge and the demand were made in a note handed to the Pakistani Charge d'Affaires in Kabul.

It said a large number of Kabul citizens demonstrated in front of the Pakistani Embassy on Saturday to protest against the alleged Pakistani involvement in the rebel capture of

Khost last Sunday after a two-week offensive Pakistan denies the charge.

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's cabinet on Saturday urged UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to try to find a peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict, a government spokesman said.

Sharif's Information Adviser Sheikh Rashid Ahmed told reporters the cabinet also decided to contact the United States, the Soviet Union, Saudi Arabia and Iran in search of an Afghan settlement.

## 4 die in ethnic violence in USSR

MOSCOW, Apr 7: Four people have died in ethnic violence in the southern Soviet Republic of Georgia, the Independent Interfax News Agency reported on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Interfax quoted Georgia's Interior Minister as saying two bulldozer drivers, building a new road in the republic's breakaway region of South Ossetia, were killed on Friday by unidentified attackers. Two others died in a gun battle on Friday.

Georgia's nationalist-dominated parliament dissolved the autonomous status of South Ossetia late last year, triggering fighting between Georgians and pro-Moscow Ossetians.

## US urges Iran help free hostages

HOUSTON (Texas), Apr 7: President George Bush on Saturday said the United States wanted better relations with Iran, but that it was indispensable that Tehran first help in freeing the six US hostages in Lebanon, reports AFP.

"They don't hold the hostages but they can be very, very influential in the release of the hostages," Bush said at a press conference. "And it would incur enormous goodwill for Iran in this country if they did that."

Iran's Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, said Friday that the hostage issue was deadlocked because the United States had not dealt with the kidnappers' demands, such as Israel's release of Arab prisoners.

The hostage issue was rekindled by rumours that the western hostages in Lebanon, many believed held by pro-Iranian groups, might be freed soon.

## Top Pak nuclear official named

ISLAMABAD, Apr 7: Pakistan, widely suspected in the West to be trying to produce nuclear weapons, on Saturday named its new top nuclear official who it said was committed to a peaceful use of nuclear energy, reports Reuters.

A statement from the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) said Physicist Ishfaq Ahmad would succeed to Munir Ahmad Khan, a nuclear engineer who held the job for nearly two decades.

Dr. Ishfaq Ahmad brings to this key assignment a richness of academic accomplishment, a wealth of professional experience and an unwavering commitment to the pursuit of a peaceful use of atomic energy, the statement said.

Pakistan denies charges it is producing nuclear weapons and says "its nuclear programme is peaceful and geared to meet the country's future energy needs."



HAKKARI (Turkey): A husband and wife help their exhausted daughter across the bridge joining Iraq to Turkey April 6. There is an estimated 150,000 Iraqi Kurdish refugees who are escaping to freedom. However the Turkish government still refuse to open their border.

— AFP/UNB photo

## Nancy smoked marijuana, had an affair with Sinatra

NEW YORK, Apr 7: Nancy Reagan smoked marijuana with her husband when he was governor of California and had long affair with Frank Sinatra, Elizabeth Taylor and former first lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, worked on the Reagan book for four years. Its contents have long been the topic of speculation in Washington society circles. But the Reagans have professed little concern about the book and have said they don't plan to read it.

"No friend of Nancy Reagan's is going to read that scummy book," Sheila Tate, Mrs. Sheldon Davis, Bloomingdale's former executive assistant, recalls in the book that his boss gave the Reagan's the marijuana and they tried it, giggled and said "they couldn't see what the big deal was."

According to the book, Mrs. Reagan's affair with Sinatra began when her husband was governor of California and "continued for years." During Reagan's years as president, Sinatra would frequently enter the White House through a back entrance and meet Mrs. Reagan for lunches that

would last several hours, according to the book.

"When the first lady was with Frank Sinatra, she was not to be disturbed. For anything. And that included a call from the president himself," Kelley wrote.

Reagan himself continued to see his true love, actress Christine Larson, throughout his first year of marriage, and was with her when his daughter, Patti, was born, the book said.

"In tears, he told her that he felt his life was ruined" because Mrs. Reagan had "tricked" him into marriage, according to the book.

The former first lady has acknowledged in her autobiography, "My Turn," that she was pregnant with Reagan's child when the couple married.

The book also contends that Mrs. Reagan was a major player in political affairs. It quotes Reagan as once telling his aides to get his wife's approval for the agenda of his first meeting with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev before bothering to show it to him.

Reagan's former White House press secretary, said Saturday.

According to the book, Mrs. Reagan, who launched a nationwide crusade against drug use while in the White House, once used marijuana with her husband at a party thrown by Alfred Bloomingdale and attended by comedians George Burns and Jack Benny.

After a rocky start, the marriage flourished when the two found they had such common interests as astrology and Republican politics, the book said.

Kelley, the author of controversial unauthorized biographies on Sinatra, Elizabeth Taylor and former first lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, worked on the Reagan book for four years.

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## BRIEFLY

**1,500 Kurd refugees die:** Some 1,500 Kurdish refugees have died of illness and because of the cold while fleeing Iraq toward Turkey during the past few days, Turkish Foreign Minister Kurt Coban Alptemecin said Saturday in Ankara, reports AFP.

Alptemecin said at a press conference that the dead had been buried along the various routes being used by Kurds to flee northern Iraq.

**Cuba train crash toll rises to 56:** A train derailed early Saturday in central Cuba, killing at least 56 people and injuring 241 others, Cuba's official Prensa Latina news agency reported in Mexico City, says AP.

At least six cars derailed about 4:30 a.m. just after passing Santo Domingo on a trip from Havana southeast to Guantanamo, the agency said in a dispatch monitored in Mexico.

A Prensa Latina newsmen said by telephone that two radio stations reported six cars derailed but that another government news agency said seven were off the track. It was not known how many cars were in the train or how many people it was carrying.

The crash site is 156 miles (253 kms) southeast of Havana.

**36 killed in Venezuelan road mishap:** A bus carrying 54 people had a tire blow out while entering a bridge Friday and crashed through the iron handrails, plunging into the Maracaibo Lake and killing 36 people. Civil Defense reported, in Caracas, says AP.

Thirty-six bodies were recovered and 121 and 11 survivors had been rescued by mid-day but authorities feared seven missing persons had also drowned.

Rescue workers at the accident site 706 kilometers (441 miles) west of Caracas said the accident occurred shortly before midnight.

**No room for infighting: Alia:** Communist party leader Ramiz Alia said in comments published Saturday there is no room for fighting between party conservatives opposed to reform and liberals favoring democracy, AP reports from Tirana.

His statement, appearing on the eve of the second round of Albania's first free elections in nearly 60 years, fed speculation of growing tension within the Communist Party of Labor of Albania on its future course.

"The PLA is against the splitting into clans," Alia said according to Zeri i Popullit, the daily of the Communists. "We must work together to push forward the process of democratic actions."

The Communists won 162 of 250 seats in the first round of elections last Sunday, making them unbeatable even in the unlikely event they lose all 19 seats still to be decided.

**58 killed in Sri Lankan fighting:** At least 58 people were killed Friday in fighting between government forces and Tamil rebels in strife-torn northern and eastern Sri Lanka, military officials said Saturday in Colombo, reports AP.

The victims included 17 security personnel, 37 Tiger rebels and four civilians.

Officials said the rebels, seeking independence for the Tamil minority in predominantly Sinhalese Sri Lanka, were stepping up attacks as a reaction to military successes against the Tigers' units in the past two weeks.

"The rebels have started attacking in several different places, possibly trying to divert attention," a senior military official said on condition of anonymity.

**UK, Israeli embassies attacked:** Suspected leftist guerrillas fired a rocket at a building housing the British and Israeli embassies in Peru and exploded bombs near the Japanese and Italian embassies, causing some damage, police and witnesses said on Saturday in Lima, reports Reuters.

Police said about 20 banks were also attacked with dynamite late on Friday after guerrillas sabotaged electrical towers, blacking out the Capital and much of Peru's coast.

It was the largest series of well-coordinated attacks in several months and coincided with a trip by President Alberto Fujimori to Japan to try to win Peru's re-entry into the World Financial Community.

**Imelda ready to confront Corazon:** Five years and countless accusations later, the fight for the Marcos money comes down to two widows: one rich, the other powerful, both seeking revenge, AP reports from New York.

Imelda Marcos, on the defensive throughout her U.S. exile, says she's ready to confront Corazon Aquino in her homeland, whether the Philippine President wants her or not. "Bring us home, get us tried and put us in jail if you can. This can go on no longer," Ms. Marcos, the widow of deposed Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, said in an interview at her New York townhouse.

The former first lady, accused of helping her husband loot the Philippine treasury, was acquitted last year of fraud and racketeering charges in a U.S. court but never has been charged in the Philippines.

## Alia fires CP leaders for sloop on rally

TIRANA, Apr 7: President Ramiz Alia has sacked Communist Party leaders in the northwestern town of Shkoder, where four people died when police fired on anti-communist protesters Tuesday, Albanian Television said Saturday, reports AFP.

It quoted Alia as saying the local leadership was sacked because of the tragic events and replaced with a temporary leadership.

Travelers returning from Shkoder said posters had gone up with pictures of the local officials marked "sentenced to death."

Protesters attacked the Communist Party Headquarters Tuesday after police fired into the crowd one of the four people killed was a representative of Albania's main opposition party, the democratic party.

Meanwhile, informed diplomatic sources here said almost 4,000 Albanians of Macedonian origin planned to cross illegally into Yugoslavia Sunday to celebrate the Greek orthodox Easter with relatives there.

Albanian authorities planned to prevent them crossing in the southern Prespa region, the sources said.

Three weeks ago border guards shot and seriously wounded four people when 1,200 ethnic Macedonians crossed the border near the northern of Debar, the sources said.

Macedonians form a community of 50,000 in Albanian, according to Yugoslav estimates. They formed an organization, Prespa, to promote their cultural and national rights which was legalized last week, diplomatic sources said.

The Greek minority formed a similar group, Omonia, last month and won

three seats in parliament in the first round of Albania's first free elections of the post-war era March 31.

Reuters adds: Albania's multi-party elections enter a second round on Sunday in a run-off vote which will decide the fate of the reformist Prime Minister and whether the ruling Communists will muster a constitutional majority.

The polls will decide a remaining 19 places in the 250-seat Assembly.

Of these, 17 are run-off in areas where no candidate won a clear majority in a first round last Sunday.

The remaining two are first round votes in constituencies where ballots had not been prepared in time.

Last Sunday's vote — Albania's first multi-party polls in nearly 50 years of Communist rule — gave a landslide victory to the ruling Communist Party of Labour (PLA) with 162 seats.

The PLA now needs to win only six seats to give it a constitutional two-thirds parliamentary majority.

The main opposition democratic party won 65 seats in the first round and the ethnic Greek Omonia Organisation

won three.

One seat went to the Communist-linked veterans committee.

Sunday's vote will also decide the fate of reformist Communist Prime Minister Fatos Nano, who has to compete in a run-off against little-known democrat Sokrat Nesturi after narrowly losing the first round in his Tirana constituency.

Communist president Ramiz Alia, Foreign Minister Muhamet Kapllani and leading reformist Spiro Dede all lost their seats in last Sunday's vote.