

International

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.

Reuter adds from Houston: President George Bush said on Saturday that Iraq's cease-fire 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 April 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 cease fire order was handed down, the sources told the newsweekly.

A report from Reuter: 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 Kurtobbe Alptemocin, 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.

Alptemocin 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 plane loads of French aid for the Kurds arrived in southeast Turkey on Saturday. Britain has also sent two plane loads 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.

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.

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 Reuter.

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.

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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.

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 started 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 Reuter.

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 for 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.

They don't hold the

hostages but they can be very

influential in the release

of the hostages, Bush said at a

press conference. And it

would incur enormous good

will 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 Reuter.

A statement from the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) said Physicist Ishfaq Ahmad would succeed to Munti Ahmad Khan, 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.

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Saturday, who headed the

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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.

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Hussein Kamel Has-

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