

Iraq blames Cuellar for sabotaging peace efforts

BAHODAD, Mar 9: Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz has accused former UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar of sabotaging efforts to secure peace between Iraq and Iran during their 1980-1988 war, reports AFP.

Perez de Cuellar, whose mandate ended last December, acted "on orders from hostile western and Zionist forces that wanted to prevent a peace accord" between Iraq and Iran, according to Aziz.

He told Iraqi television on Saturday that Perez de Cuellar "had sabotaged all initiatives or actions" aimed at ending the war. He did not explain.

Perez de Cuellar has been seen as the principal factor in an Iran-Iraq ceasefire that has been in effect since August 1988.

While Iraq has now accepted all Iranian demands for a formal end to the war, an official peace treaty has not been signed between the two countries.

Aziz in his remarks Saturday questioned "the sincerity of Iranian intentions toward Iraq" despite several peace overtures from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Shevardnadze seeks aid for Georgians

TBILISI, Georgia, Mar 9: Former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, back in his native Georgia to pursue a political career, appealed to the west on Sunday for aid for the transcaucasian republic, reports Reuter.

"The economic situation here is worse than I had expected", he told a news conference after 36 hours of talks with government leaders.

"I'll be straightforward: Without aid from our friends — real democrats in all states of the world — we will find it difficult to solve all our problems."

After 13 years as local communist party leader, Shevardnadze left Georgian politics in 1985 to become the standard — bearer of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's assault on the Cold War.

Now 64, he is seen by many Georgians, fed up with economic ruin and political mayhem, as a last hope.

About 100 supporters of ousted President Zviad Gamsakhurdia held a protest on Sunday against Shevardnadze's return from Moscow the previous day.

25 killed as bus, truck collide in Philippines

MANILA, Mar 9: Twenty-five people were killed when their minibus collided with an 18-wheeler truck in the Northern Philippines, police said today, reports Reuter.

They said the accident happened in Nueva Vizcaya province, 220 km (140 miles) North of Manila, on Sunday.

Witnesses said they saw the (minibus) move into the lane of the truck and crash into its side.

BRIEFLY

19 blacks killed in S Africa: Nineteen black South Africans were killed in political violence nationwide at the weekend, police said Sunday, many of them being slain at funerals, reports AFP from Johannesburg.

In the worst incident, seven men were killed by gunmen who raided a squatter camp before dawn, Sunday, at Malukwazi near Isitpingo in strife-torn Natal province, the seat of violence between chief Mangosuthu Buthe's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC).

Three people, including a municipal policeman, were killed by a mob of some 200 armed men rampaging through Kaithehng township east of here at dawn Sunday.

Solanki to visit Seoul March 15: Indian Foreign Minister Madhaysinn Solanki will visit Seoul March 15-18 to strengthen bilateral ties, the foreign Ministry said Monday, reports AP from Seoul.

Solanki will meet with Foreign Minister Lee Sang Ock and other top South Korean government officials to discuss ways to promote economic and other ties, it said.

Sharif bans feasts during Ramadan: Pakistani prime Minister Nawaz Sharif issued orders Sunday banning feasts at state expense during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, reports Reuter.

The orders were issued to all ministries, departments and autonomous and semi-autonomous organisations of the federal government, the official APP news agency said.

Sharif advised provincial governments to do the same to save money, APP said.

Iran ready to recognise Bosnia: Iran said Sunday, it was ready to recognise Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state, along with Slovenia and Croatia, reports Reuter from Nicosia.

Many foreign governments have recognised Slovenia and Croatia but Iran would be first to acknowledge the independence of Bosnia, the most ethnically mixed of Yugoslavia's constituent republics.

Iran takes a special interest in Bosnia because of its large Muslim minority. Muslims and Croats generally supported independence in a referendum last weekend which was boycotted by many of the republic's Serbs.

Mandela urges whites to vote 'Yes' African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela Sunday urged white South Africans to vote "yes" in the March 17 referendum on reform, reports AFP from Johannesburg.

Mandela made the call, in an article published in the Sunday Times, despite fears that over ANC support for president Frederik De Klerk and his ruling National Party could drive floating voters into the "no" camp.

"A 'yes' vote means we will sit round a table as South Africans and work out the best method of installing a democratic system in which all the country's inhabitants feel secure," he wrote.

"A 'no' vote will be a declaration of war against the majority in this country."

4 scientists of former Soviet Union apply for jobs in India

NEW DELHI, Mar 9: Four scientists of the former Soviet Union have applied for jobs in India but New Delhi has not taken a decision on their requests, newspapers reported Monday, says AFP.

The Observer and other newspapers here quoted a spokesman for the Department of Science and Technology (DST) as saying that India must grab this opportunity and welcome them.

The spokesman said Russia and other ex-Soviet republics would also need them, but if they want to come to India and if they could be useful to us, we would certainly throw a red carpet.

Bush, Clinton head toward crucial primaries today

WASHINGTON, Mar 9: President Bush and Democrat Bill Clinton head toward crucial primaries in southern US states this Tuesday after scoring big weekend victories, reports AP.

Bush faces a determined but winless Patrick Buchanan, the main Republican Party challenger who vowed Sunday to take his candidacy all the way to the Republican convention in Houston in August.

Clinton will now compete against only two major Democratic candidates, Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin decided to quit following a series of disappointing finishes, two Iowa Democratic officials said Sunday.

Meanwhile, former California Gov. Jerry Brown won the Nevada Democratic

caucuses on Sunday, beating out Clinton and former Massachusetts Sen. Paul Tsongas.

In the US presidential race, state wide elections are first held in which voters cast

ballots for their choice of a party nominee. Each candidate is awarded a percentage of a state's delegates based on the proportion of votes received in the primary.

A caucus is the first in a series of meetings in which members of a political party choose delegates to national nominating conventions.

There are 11 Democratic races and eight Republican ones on Tuesday, most of them in the South.

Buchanan strategists are now looking beyond the so-called Super Tuesday — where they are not optimistic of scoring wins — to the March 17 showdown in Michigan as a make-or-break state for the conservative TV commentator.

Bush's 67 percent win over two conservative Republican

challengers and Clinton's 63 percent dominance of the Democratic field in South Carolina's primary on Saturday are likely to spill over into Tuesday's contests.

"We've got a good victory out of South Carolina and Wyoming and Arizona. But I need Texas on Tuesday," Clinton said while campaigning across Texas on Sunday.

Clinton won Wyoming on Saturday with 28 percent of the vote. Former Sen. Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts narrowly outpolled Clinton in Arizona in the overall vote, but Clinton won more delegates there.

Harkin was the lone traditional liberal of the field. He promised deep defense cuts, and a massive public works programme designed to create

jobs and revitalize the nation's infrastructure.

Bush extended his winning streak with the South Carolina race.

"The president comes on stronger and stronger, and the important thing is he's winning them all," Bush campaign chairman Robert Moshbacher said Sunday.

Buchanan trailed Bush with 26 percent of the vote in the South Carolina primary. David Duke, former leader of the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan, finished distant third, with 7 per cent of the vote.

Still, the combined Buchanan and Duke vote amounted to the roughly on third of the vote that Bush has lost in each race.

Buchanan, interviewed on CBS-TV's "Face the Nation," said the South Carolina results were "another indication that we got a president who is very, very weak in his own party." Buchanan is trying to tap dissatisfaction among conservative Republicans, saying the president reneged on his pledge not to raise taxes and has betrayed other conservative causes.

Five Bangladeshi doctors working in Malaysian Armed Forces

KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 9: Five Bangladeshi doctors have begun serving two-year contracts in the Malaysian Armed Forces, Bernama reports, reports Xinhua.

They are the first of a batch of foreign doctors recruited by the armed forces to ease the doctor shortage. All hold the rank of Major.

Opening a five-day orientation course for them, the Director of the Armed Forces Medical Corps, Brig-Gen Dr Haji Basir Ismail, said the Armed Forces would continue to recruit foreign doctors until the doctor shortage was overcome.

'Defeat for Yeltsin will be severest blow to reforms'

CIS may collapse: Gorbachev

MUNICH, Germany, Mar 9: Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, warning on Sunday that the Commonwealth of Independent States could collapse, criticised Russian President Boris Yeltsin for making mistakes, reports Reuter.

"Foolish things have been done," he told guests during a question-and-answer session following a speech in a fashionable Munich theatre.

Yeltsin, who was his political rival in the last days of the Soviet Union, made one big mistake by permitting Ukraine to drift away from Russia, Gorbachev said, without elaborating.

However, Gorbachev said it was crucial that Yeltsin remain in power to preserve the CIS and that the West back the reforms he started in the former Soviet Union.

A defeat for Yeltsin "would

be the severest blow to this (reform) movement, for the whole world," he told the audience which included German Finance Minister Theo Waigel and Gorbachev's wife Raisa.

He appealed to individual states to preserve the unity of the CIS, or else it would result in "never-ending problems" for the former Soviet republics who formed the Commonwealth.

"The people do not accept that there is no longer a single country," said Gorbachev, who is on his first foreign trip since stepping down as Soviet President in December.

Citing the German federal system as a model, Gorbachev said the CIS states must maintain common structures to coordinate their security, foreign and economic policies.

The level of cooperation between republics in the former Soviet Union had been "higher than in the European community," and to give that up would be a severe set-back, he said.

If the CIS collapsed, then there would reappear "15 monsters," as opposed to the single monster of centralisation in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev added.

Eleven of the 15 former Soviet republics are members of the CIS.

Gorbachev repeated calls for the West to support the CIS with economic aid and investment. He appealed for countries not to be selective in dealings with individual Commonwealth states.

He also assessed the effect of the reforms he introduced in the Soviet Union and which led to last August's abortive coup against him and eventually the demise of the communist superpower.

"I have lived more lives in the last seven years perhaps centuries," he quipped.

Gorbachev is on an eight-day visit to Germany, where he is being afforded the status of a world leader, partly as Bonn's way of thanking him for helping make German unification a reality.



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Japan's ruling party loses another seat in by-polls

TOKYO, Mar 9: Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) suffered its second seat-by-election loss to an opposition coalition in a month, serving a fresh blow to Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa's scandal-hit government, reports AFP.

Koki Hagino, a candidate of the political arm of Japan's largest labour federation, Rengo, backed by the socialists, the Democratic Socialists and other opposition parties, won an upper house seat in the election in the rice-growing region of Miyagi.

He beat LDP candidate Nobuo Onodera by a narrow margin, overtaking him with only three per cent of ballots left to be counted. Communist candidate Hisashi Tsuruta was a distant third.

India to urge US to include Israel, Iraq in NPT

NEW DELHI, Mar 9: India will urge the United States to incorporate Israel, Iraq and former Soviet Central Asian republics into a regional anti-nuclear proliferation plan, official sources said today, reports Reuter.

India rejects a Washington-backed plan for a five-nation non-proliferation accord which would include its one-time enemy China and its neighbour and arch-foe Pakistan.

The sources said Indian Foreign Secretary JN Dixit was prepared to discuss a more

comprehensive alternative, including Israel and newly-independent Muslim republics, during four days of official-level talks in Washington, starting on Monday.

Diplomats say both India and Pakistan are threshold nuclear powers and that awareness of the region as a potential flashpoint has increased since the end of the cold war.

Both India and Pakistan insist their nuclear programmes are for peaceful purposes. They have fought three wars since independence from Britain in 1947 and tensions simmer over the Himalayan border territory of Kashmir.

India fought a brief border war with China in 1962, but there has been a gradual thaw in relations between the two countries in recent years.

Dixit is expected to hold rare third-party talks on relations with neighbouring Pakistan and raging Muslim insurgency in the two-thirds of Kashmir which India controls.

India has avoided discussing Kashmir with other countries, saying it was a bilateral issue with Pakistan.

Rebels kill judge, 8 others in Peru

LIMA, Mar 9: At least nine people, including a judge, were killed in rebel attacks throughout Peru this weekend, police said Sunday, reports AFP.

About 80 heavily armed rebels both men and women attacked two rural communities in the Gorgor District, 180 kilometers (110 miles) Northeast of Lima Saturday, and killed six peasants, police

said.

The victims, most of them community leaders, were bound hand and foot and tried in a "people's court" for allegedly collaborating with security forces, and then killed with machetes in front of their relatives and neighbours, police said.

The rebels painted messages on walls and threatened residents before fleeing shortly before police forces arrived.

The region, considered a "red zone" by authorities because of continuing rebel attacks, has no standing police protection. Security is left in the hands of the peasants.

In Pachaconas, 850 kilometers (530 miles) Southeast of the capital, a suspected column of Shining Path rebels Saturday killed District Judge



Bethlehem — Masked Palestinian youths from the PLO call the residents to reject Arabs collaborating with the Israeli authorities, during a march. Some 400 Palestinians accused of collaboration were killed by masked people since the beginning of the uprising.

— AFP/UNB photo

20,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Mar 9: Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has said that his government pursues the policy of extending all possible cooperation to the Bhutanese refugees, reports Xinhua.

He told the ongoing parliamentary session that the number of Bhutanese refugees had reached 20,000 in Nepal and the increase rate had been 100 to 200 each day.

A proper place is being searched to resettle the refugees, he said. Many of the

refugees of the Nepal origin who fled the country's turmoil live at Kankal and Tmai camps in Jhapa, eastern Nepal.

A committee headed by the Jhapa District Chief Officer was engaged in providing all possible assistance to the refugees and a committee has been constituted at the social level to coordinate the world of local non-government organizations, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and its affiliated organizations.

An agreement had been signed between the Nepalese government and the World Food Programme, to provide foodgrains to 15,000 refugees for a four month period, the Prime Minister revealed.

In line with moral support for democratic movements everywhere, he said Bhutanese leaders are being given permission to stay in Nepal and their vehicles are being provided temporary permits.

Off the Record

Soviet missile factory makes umbrella, toy guns

DNIEPROPETROVSK, Ukraine: For lack of any orders, the former Soviet Union's biggest rocket and missile factory has turned to making umbrellas, sausage, machines and even plastic toy machine guns, reports AFP.

It's been two years since the 50,000 employees of the Yuzhmash (southern machinery) plant here delivered their last missile.

Yuzhmash's Director General, Leonid Kushma, recalled how the plant developed generation after generation of space rockets and inter-continental ballistic missiles, from the SS-4 of the 1960s to the medium-range SS-18 of the 80s and the latest SS-24 and SS-25.

SS-18 missiles originally designed to carry nuclear warheads are now being modified to deliver payloads of up to four metric tons in space and other rockets as large as the French Ariane are also being assembled and shipped to the main Soviet space center at Baikonur, Kazakhstan.

But these orders are not enough, so in Ahangar across from a row of stacked rockets, Yuzhmash displays its new line of products: a startlingly varied array of consumer goods.

In addition to plastic guns, umbrellas and sausage-packing machines, there are kitchen appliances, music boxes and tractors.

But Yuzhmash suffers from the epidemic of shortages that has accompanied the slow collapse of the world's most centralized economy: rows of new tractors gather dust in a hanger for lack of batteries, which are made in Russia.

100 goldfishes swallowed in 3 days

WELLINGTON: Live goldfish cocktails at 10 dollar (\$5.50 US) a mouthful have caused a furor in New Zealand with complaints to the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals that the drinks are cruel, reports Reuter.

Wellington's Routes 66 bar offers patrons a goldfish layback cocktail made of Tequila lemon juice and a small Chinese carp.

It's a pretty sick sort of thing to do, said SPCA Director Ros McLaughlan.

But bar manager Lance Maxwell Burt said Monday that over 100 goldfish had been swallowed since Friday.

"It's good. I've had a couple," he said.

Nancy finds Reagan sentimental

LOS ANGELES: Former President Reagan and his wife, Nancy, renewed their marriage vows Sunday in a family celebration of the couple's 40th wedding anniversary, AP reports.

Hollywood actors who went on to ascend the heights of global politics, the Reagans reflected on the four decades since they stood at the altar on at The Little Brown Church of the Valley in suburban Studio City.

"Forty years ago, I entered a world of happiness. Nancy moved into my heart filling an empty spot with her love" Ronald Reagan, 81, wrote in a statement given to the Associated Press before the ceremony.

Mrs Reagan, 70, recalled how she met the future president on a blind date while they were both actors for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios. She said their March 4, 1952, wedding was a quiet affair attended by actor William Holden and his wife, Ardis.

"I'm a very lucky woman. Ronald Reagan is exactly what he seems to be to the public — honest, charming, compassionate, strong principled with definite ideas of what he believes in, and very sentimental," she wrote.

False teeth to become invalid

WELLINGTON: False teeth will soon disappear from dentistry as new forms of plastic coatings over teeth make them redundant, an American expert in new dental techniques said here Monday, reports AFP.

Gordon J Christiansen of the Utah based Clinical Research Associates, told the New Zealand Dental Congress that thin plastic resins which smooth out the food-trapping ridges in teeth, combined with the hardening effects of fluoride, would mean that today's children should never lose their teeth.

Other new dental technologies include the use of lasers, which can cut away soft mouth tissue virtually without pain or bleeding. Laser drills are also being developed, Christiansen said.

Also under development is the application of electrical stimulation to suppress pain, he said. Electrodes are placed on the cheek and tiny electrical pulses controlled by the patient suppress pain waves.

Turner buys Indian hunting land

GREAT FALLS, Mont: American TV tycoon Ted Turner has bought 1,080 acres (437 hectares) of land surrounding a cliff over which Indians stamped buffalo herds to kill them for their meat and hides, reports AP.

A state park incorporates part of the site, called Ulm Pishkun and located 20 kilometers west of Great Falls. The land Turner bought includes all of the jump not within the park.

Turner, who has extensive land holdings in Montana, may trade the land to the state, said Stan Meyer of the Cascade County Historical Society.

In a statement Friday, Turner said that "an important historic site like this should be preserved for future generations."

Hitler's stolen grand piano, guillotine recovered

HAMBURG: German police recovered a grand piano and a guillotine, presented to Adolf Hitler on his 50th birthday in 1939, which had been robbed from a Hamburg auction house in 1989, police announced Sunday, reports AFP.

Before the theft the value of the two objects had been estimated at 500,000 German Mark (300,000 dollar).

Police arrested two men, aged 60 and 54, as they prepared to hand over the German dictators' piano and guillotine to a journalist, posing as a prospective buyer and who tipped off the authorities.