

Bush administration not doing enough for Russia: Nixon

NEW YORK, Mar 10: Former President Nixon has sharply criticised the Bush administration for not doing enough to guarantee democracy in Russia, according to published reports, says AP.

Nixon criticised the administration for what he called their pathetic support of democratic revolution in Russia.

Nixon made the charges in a memorandum circulated among friends and foreign affairs experts, according to reports in Tuesday's The New York Times and Washington Post. A less critical version of the memo was published in Time magazine this week.

"The stakes are high, and we are playing as if it were a penny-ante game," Nixon was quoted as saying in the critical memo.

He said the Bush administration was missing one of the historic opportunities of this century, and also faulted Bush and the other presidential

candidates for ignoring the issue during the campaign.

In the memo and his Time essay, Nixon argued that if President Boris Yeltsin fails to establish a free-market democracy in Russia, all progress gained during last year's revolution would be lost.

Nixon also warned that a failure in Russia could weaken democratic forces and embolden dictators around the world.

The United States' support has included 3.75 billion dollars in commercial credits to buy American grain and an international aid conference that produced an airlift of medical supplies and food.

Nixon argued that the administration and Western allies should provide more humanitarian aid, reschedule debts until a new market economy is in place, and create a multi-billion dollar fund to help stabilize the Russian ruble as soon as Russia gets control of its money supply.

US shared intelligence with Iraq two months before Kuwait invasion

WASHINGTON, Mar 10: The United States was sharing intelligence with Iraq as late as two months before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, according to documents released Monday by the House Banking Committee Chairman, reports AP.

The documents released by Rep Henry Gonzalez show that intelligence cooperation with Iraq was on the agenda of a National Security Council meeting in the White House Situation Room on May 28, 1990.

The meeting, which included then-NSC deputy Robert Gates, was called to discuss options for toughening US policy toward Iraq, Gates now heads the Central Intelligence Agency.

The documents did not come to light during the Senate Intelligence Com-

mittee's exhaustive confirmation process last year for Gates to become CIA director and appear to be at odds with some of the panel's conclusions.

The panel examined the extent to which the United States had tilted toward Iraq during its war with Iran in the 1980s. Intelligence sharing began in 1984 when President Reagan issued a National Security Decision Directive, an order which twice was broadened in 1986.

In a section of its report on the Gates nomination, the committee concluded that "intelligence sharing (with Iraq) continued on a sporadic basis until 1988 when the war between Iraq and Iran ended."

"This clearly raises some new and unanswered questions," said one congressional intelligence official, speaking

only on condition of anonymity. The information suggests either that the Senate committee was not thorough enough in its investigation of Gates, or that it was misled by the Bush administration, the official said.

An Intelligence Committee spokesman, Zach Messitt, said the panel was still "looking at all the facts" and would have something to say about the matter within a few days.

The Senate report is misleading, Gonzalez said in a House floor speech, noting that it portrayed the intelligence sharing as a relatively routine liaison exercise between the two countries, aimed at helping Iraq enhance its war-fighting ability against Iran.

The classified documents show that the relationship

was thought of, and used, as a foreign policy tool. The paper shows that intelligence sharing was an important policy consideration because it provided the United States with access to the highest levels of Iraq's government," he said.

One document on policy options lists ending intelligence cooperation as among 15 potential sanctions the United States could apply.

As an argument in favour of doing so, it states that the exchanges "still provide Iraq with limited information on Iranian military activity that would be missed," if they were cut off.

But on the other hand, "ending this contact would close off our very limited access to this important segment of the Iraqi establishment," the paper said.

Off the Record

Charles and friend return to skiing accident spot

KLOSTERS, Switzerland: Prince Charles accompanied a friend on her first skiing expedition since an avalanche nearly killed her four years ago, a newspaper reported Sunday, AP says.

The tabloid Sonntagsblick said the heir to the British throne skied extra slowly and gave Patti Palmer-Tomkinson constant reassurance during Saturday's excursion.

The prince wore a special balloon that can be inflated in the event of an avalanche, the newspaper said.

Mrs Palmer-Tomkinson broke both legs in the March 10, 1988, snowside and another friend of the prince, Maj Hugh Lindsay, was killed. The six-member party, led by Prince Charles, was skiing away from marked trails.

A prosecutor concluded the party caused the avalanche, but cleared the prince of personal fault.



World's biggest sandwich

ATLANTA: From the Goody Publicity Stunt Department: the world's largest peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich, AP reports.

A peanut butter company, a bakery and a hotel celebrated National Peanut Month by creating a (4.5-by-3-meter) Sandwich out of 226.5 kilos of peanut butter, 90.6 kilos of jelly and specially-baked 15-cm-thick bread.

The sandwich, which took more than two weeks to create, went on display Sunday in the Atlanta Penta Hotel's lobby. It will remain there for a week.

"If it starts to look too bad, we're going to take it down," said Kelly Boykin, spokeswoman for the project.

The companies involved are donating regular-size sandwiches to an Atlanta day-care center for homeless children, but there are no plans to serve the big one.

"After a week, if someone really wants to eat it, they're welcome to," Ms Boykin said.

Diana empathizes hearts of broken family

LONDON: Britain's Princess Diana, whose 10-year-old marriage to Prince Charles is said to be under strain, spoke on Monday of the tears and anguish caused when families break up, reports Reuter.

The 30-year-old princess, whose parents divorced when she was a child, said all members of a family suffered an enormous amount of hurt when a marriage was unhappy.

She told the marriage guidance organisation relation in a speech that she had visited several relate centres and seen the pain caused by divorce.

"I have seen the tears, the anguish, the raw emotions, hurt and pain caused by the split between couples and between parents and children," she says.

"When family life is working well we are so much better able to contribute, to give something back to our friends, our jobs and communities," she added.

Diana married the heir to the throne in 1981 in a fairy-tale wedding. The couple have two sons but Britain's gossip tabloid newspapers say they no longer share a bedroom and are no longer living happily ever after.



Pan Am, Uta bombings Libya must comply with UN resolution: Major

LONDON, Mar 10: Libya must comply with a U.N. Security Council resolution over the bombing of civilian aircraft of "face further measures," British Prime Minister John Major warned Monday, reports AFP.

The Security Council's Resolution 731 called on Libya to cooperate fully with U.S. British and French investigations into the blowing up of two civilian airliners in 1988 and 1989.

A total of 440 people were killed in the bombing of a Pan American world airways jumbo jet in 1988 over Lockerbie, Scotland, and of a French UTA airliner over the Niger desert a year later.

The U.S. and British courts have demanded the extradition of two Libyans accused of taking part in the Lockerbie bombing.

In a written answer to parliament, Major again called for the extradition of the two men, but did not specify what "further measures" might be applied against Libya.

Newspaper reports here have suggested such measures might include a ban on air links and the sale of aircraft parts to Libya, an arms embargo and the downgrading of diplomatic ties.



PANAMA CITY: Panama's First Lady, Ana Mae Diaz de Endara, (R), 24, addressing a protest rally attended by some 300 people in front of the office of Attorney General Rogelio Cruz. Mae and her followers are demanding the resignation of Cruz because he and the other members of the judicial system have reportedly not dealt severely with members of the Noriega regime.

China joins NPT

LONDON, Mar 10: China formally acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty on Monday and pledged to help prevent the spread of nuclear arms and work for nuclear disarmament, reports Reuter.

Foreign Minister Qian Qichen handed the articles of accession to Prime Minister John Major and called the move a "major step in a process towards complete prohibition and through destruction of nuclear weapons."

Major, speaking after accepting the articles as leader of an NPT depository power, said China's move was an "immensely important step" and added that the Gulf war had shown the "vital importance of non-proliferation."

China, the last major nuclear power to become an NPT signatory, had come under increasing international pressure to join the treaty.

Concern over Yangon's treatment of Muslims

Malaysia summons Myanmar envoy

KUALA LAUMPUR, Mar 10: Malaysia summoned the Myanmar envoy today to express concern over Yangon's treatment of its Muslim minority, reports Reuter.

"We called the ambassador U Ko and officially informed him about the government's position," Abdul Halim Ali, Deputy Secretary-General of Malaysia's Foreign Ministry, said by telephone. He declined to elaborate.

A Myanmar embassy official

confirmed the meeting but gave no details.

Malaysia, a predominantly Muslim nation, has called on Myanmar to stop oppressing its Muslim minority and to allow tens of thousand of Muslims who have fled into Bangladesh to return home without persecution.

Up to 170,000 Myanmar Muslims, known as Rohingyas, have crossed into Bangladesh since last December, saying

Myanmar troops burned their homes, stole their belongings, raped their women and killed anyone who protested.

Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said on Sunday that Malaysia viewed with grave concern the action taken by the Myanmar army against the Rohingyas.

"We have been observing developments following action taken against the community," said Abdullah Ahmad, quoted by Bernama news agency.

Malaysia and some of Myanmar's other southeast Asian neighbours have previously resisted western pressure to condemn the Myanmar junta.

The regime ignored the 1990 election victory by the opposition national league for democracy and is detaining its leader, Aung San Suu Kyt.

Kuala Lumpur has said persuasion rather than isolation is the best way to bring reforms in Myanmar.

BRIEFLY

Tareq Aziz in New York: Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz arrived in New York Monday to answer charges of Iraqi failure to comply with UN resolutions calling for the destruction of its weapons of mass destruction, reports AFP from New York.

Before his scheduled appearance Wednesday before the UN Security Council, Aziz was to meet with UN secretary general Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and separately with representatives of the Non-Aligned Movement during his first visit to the UN headquarters since the end of the Gulf war.

Diplomats expect the Iraqi official to denounce the UN embargo on Iraq before the council, and to underscore Iraq's assertion that it has complied with 90 per cent of council resolutions and that the remaining 10 per cent were too complicated to fulfil.

Two Palestinians shot dead: Two Palestinians were killed and 13 wounded in clashes with Israeli soldiers Monday in the occupied territories, which were paralysed by a general strike, Palestinian sources said, reports AFP from Jerusalem.

A 24-year-old man was shot dead when an army patrol opened fire after being pelted by stones in the village of Asira Al-Qibly near Nablus on the West Bank. Soldiers shot dead another Palestinian in the Al-Arubb refugee camp in the south of the West Bank.

The others were wounded in clashes on the Gaza strip. Leaders of the Intifada called the strike to mark the 53rd month of the uprising, which has claimed 868 Palestinian lives according to an AFP toll from Palestinian sources.

OIC to send team to central Asia: The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is to send a fact-finding mission to former Soviet republics of central Asia, where fighting is under way between Christian Armenian and Muslim Azeri forces, reports AFP from Jeddah.

OIC Secretary General Hamid Algabid expressed concern over clashes in Nagorny Karabakh, a mainly Armenian-populated enclave that is seeking independence from Azerbaijan.

He said in a statement here that the OIC would maintain "close contact with the Commonwealth of Independent States and would encourage all initiatives aimed at settling the dispute in Nagorny Karabakh peacefully."

An OIC fact-finding mission would be sent to central Asia, he added, but did not say which republics would be visited.

King Hussein begins Canada visit: King Hussein of Jordan arrived in Ottawa Monday evening for a two-day visit to Canada to shore up relations that suffered during the Gulf war, reports AP from Ottawa.

Jordan was plunged into economic chaos after it opposed the Allied coalition's stand against Iraq a year ago. Hussein tried to play peace-maker prior to the outbreak of war, calling on both sides to seek a diplomatic solution.

Despite the Gulf war differences, Canada views Hussein as a moderate who is vital to the future of the current Middle East peace talks.

"Jordan is key to a final solution in the Middle East," a senior official at the Ministry of External Affairs said Monday.

Cambodian PM to visit Japan: Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen will pay his fourth visit to Japan from March 21-23, a Foreign Ministry official said Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Hun Sen, paying an unofficial visit on his way to the United States, will meet Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe and other leaders.

Japan is seeking to play a major role in the reconstruction of Cambodia after last October's peace settlement.

Peace march in Mogadishu

NAIROBI, March 10: Some 100,000 women and children held a march for peace during a lull in fighting in Mogadishu as the U N Security Council prepared to discuss Somalia's this week, U N officials said Monday, reports AFP.

Hopes of an early end to Somalia's agony faded last week after shelling prevented a United Nations ship bringing-war-blasted Mogadishu its first big consignment of food aid in months from docking, despite a U N-brokered cease-

fire.

But relief officials in contact with Somalia by radio said the fighting had subsided over the weekend, with no shelling, though sporadic small arms fire continued. U N officials suggested that the cease-fire



JERUSALEM: Mourners follow the motorcade carrying the body of former Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin. Begin, 78, died early March 9 at Tel Aviv's Ichilov hospital where he had been admitted following a heart attack. According to Israeli police some 70,000 people gathered at the funeral.

Nagorno-Karabakh war can spark wider unrest: NATO

BRUSSELS, Mar 10: NATO allies, worried that fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh could spark wider unrest in the former Soviet Union, are to urge Azerbaijan and Armenia to find a peaceful solution at a Foreign Ministers' meeting today, reports Reuter.

The meeting, bringing together more than 30 countries at NATO headquarters, is intended to welcome former Soviet republics into a new 'cooperation council' that was launched last year to build greater security in Europe.

The Foreign Ministers will also call for a landmark treaty cutting conventional forces in Europe, signed in 1990, to be put into effect as soon as possible. Former Soviet republics

have yet to agree on how to share out military hardware.

But the increasingly bloody fighting over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, which led to an attack by Armenians on a former Soviet anti-aircraft missile base on Monday, has worried NATO greatly and threatens to steal the shoe today.

One key ally, Turkey, shares a border with Armenia and — together with the United States in particular — is worried that the fighting could engulf the region in all out war and spark other conflicts in the former Soviet Union.

"This matter is of great concern to us all," said one alliance diplomat. Another source said today's meeting might help

avert a 'growing disaster' in the region.

In the past four years more than 1,500 people have been killed in fighting over the territory, populated mostly by Armenians but administered by Azerbaijan since 1923.

NATO Ambassadors discussed the issue last week and agreed the alliance should not attempt to mediate in the dispute. The United States has told its allies bluntly that it believes Azerbaijan is being pushed towards full-scale war.

The Foreign Ministers of the two feuding republics will be obliged to sit next to each other during Tuesday's meeting since all the countries are arranged in alphabetical order. The North Atlantic

Cooperation Council (NACC) was launched last year when the Soviet Union still existed, out will now comprise 35 members after the breakup of NATO's old arch enemy.

It brings together the 16 alliance nations, five eastern European countries, three Baltic republics and 11 members of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Not all of them are sending foreign ministers, and NATO sources said two former Soviet republics — Kazakhstan and Tajikistan — were unable to send any representatives.

The ministers will approve a workplan that includes military, scientific and political programmes. NATO has said it wants to

Atomic cities to remain sealed

STAVANGER, Norway: Atomic cities, where the Soviet Union cloistered thousands of nuclear scientists, will remain sealed to protect the world from their doomsday weapons, the mayor of the most secret city said Monday, AP reports.

"Our country Russia, is trying to protect you — the outside world — from that technology," said Velory Takayev, the mayor of Arzamas 16, a city of 80,000 that appears on no map but lies about 500 kilometers east of Moscow.

"It will be a closed city for the indefinite future," Takayev said.

Western experts fear that Soviet scientists, losing their privileges and jobs, might sell their skills to Third World countries aspiring to membership in the nuclear club. The cities where the scientists live also have stockpiles of atomic warheads and other nuclear material.

There is extensive organized terrorism in the world. If they got our technology it would be a catastrophe for the world," said Takayev.

Takayev, who came to western Norway to visit a group sending 40 tons of humanitarian aid to his city, said that no scientists assigned to any of the 10 sealed cities in Russia have left.

Najibullah seeks US aid

NEW YORK, Mar 10: President Najibullah of Afghanistan who can no longer count on assistance from Moscow, is seeking economic and humanitarian aid from the United States, which has long opposed his government. The New York Times said today, re-

ports Reuter.

The Times said that in an interview in Kabul on Monday, Najibullah made an impassioned appeal to the United States. To help his country become a bulwark against the spread of Islamic Fundamentalism in Central Asia.

able to join the alliance as full members in a few years.

"We must view NATO's relations with Poland and other countries of east and central Europe as a dynamic process which progresses with time," Secretary-General Manfred Wornner told Poland's Pap News Agency in an interview published on Monday.

"At the end of this process there will be a possibility of accession. We do not rule out membership, but at a different stage," he added.

But some NATO nations are worried that the cooperation council's role has not been clearly defined and that it could interfere with other bodies like the 48-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

NATO has so far refused them membership or security guarantees, but officials have indicated that Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia might be