

Thailand wants to open 6 more border passes to repatriate Cambodians

BANGKOK, Mar 12: Thailand has proposed that six additional border passes be opened for the repatriation of more than 300,000 displaced Cambodians by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), starting on March 30, Xinhua reports.

Under the memorandum of understanding agreed upon by Thailand, Cambodia's supreme national council and the UNHCR, only the border pass at Tambon Klong Luok of Prachin Buri's Aranyaprathet district was to have been used for UN organized repatriation.

According to the Major General, the proposed six additional passes — Chong Sa Nagam in Sisaket, Chong Chom in Surin province, Ta Pharayai and Klong Hat in Prachin Buri, Pong Nam Ron in Chanthaburi and Suk San in Trat — would cut short the transport routes to take the refugees back to their resettlement sites in Cambodia.

The UNHCR reports that some 310,000 of the 350,000 Cambodians currently in refugee camps in the country have made known their decision to go back to their homeland under the UNHCR arrangement.

US trying to blackmail Baghdad: Tareq Aziz

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 12: Iraq's deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz on Wednesday pleaded for understanding from Security Council members for his country's plight since the Gulf War and accused the United States of trying to blackmail Baghdad, reports Reuter.

As Aziz, addressing the council for the first time since Baghdad invaded Kuwait 18 months ago, said Iraq had destroyed all its weapons of mass destruction except for those now under UN supervision as the council required.

But he said long-term monitoring of Iraq's arms potential and the destruction of some equipment used to make Scud missiles must be accomplished on the basis of respect to Iraq's sovereignty and dignity and of non-infringement upon its national security.

Aziz proposed that the UN special commission in charge of scrapping its weapons and Iraqi officials as well as Security Council members go over all the outstanding issues and prepare a status report.

Democratic Senators criticise Pentagon's strategy US won't retreat from its role as world leader: Bush

WASHINGTON, Mar 12: President George Bush said Wednesday the United States would not retreat from its role as world leader despite Americans' preoccupation with domestic problems and the state of the US economy, reports AFP.

He said Washington would not compromise on UN security council resolutions against Iraq, and warned that if Iraq did not comply fully "we will contemplate all alternatives."



The President was asked about a memorandum by former President Richard Nixon that was reported to have criticized Bush for providing "pathetically inadequate" aid to the former Soviet Union and ignoring a historic opportunity to secure democracy there.

Xinhua adds, Democratic Senators Thursday continued their sharp criticism of the Pentagon's strategy to uphold the United States as the world's sole military superpower.

Where we might have a difference is that we're living in a time of constrained resources," said Bush.

"There isn't a lot of money around. We are spending too much as it already is. So to do the things I would really like to do, I really don't have the money for that."

Bush called "a plan to create a fund to help stabilize the Ruble good idea," but said he would not decide if the United States would participate until after he receives a recommendation from his top advisers.

Asked to comment on Wednesday's announcement that a British general election would be held in April, Bush praised British Prime Minister John Major as a "superb leader" but refused to comment on the election prospects, saying he did not wish to intervene.

end, a draft version of the Pentagon defense planning guidance asserts that the country's future military mission is to "prevent the re-emergence of a new rival" in western Europe, East Asia and The former Soviet Union.

Commenting on the plan, Senator Robert Byrd, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said it is the clearest expression yet of a new vision of Pax America, a new concept of world policeman, uncle Sam, the enforcer of a new world order.

Senator Alan Cranston said that under the Pentagon's strategy, "huge military spending would go on and on despite the deficit that is crippling our society and undermining our economy, and despite the crying need to restrain excessive military spending so we can begin to invest in what we so desperately need domestically," Cranston said.

Senator Joseph Biden, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on European Affairs, also said yesterday that the Pentagon's document wants to justify "a large defense budget."

China to keep reform policy unchanged for 100 years

BEIJING, Mar 12: Top officials of China's ruling Communist Party rallied behind senior leader Deng Xiaoping's call for bolder economic reform and warned against being too leftist, official news reports said Thursday, reports AP.

The party leaders vowed not to change the reformist policy "even for 100 years," said the state-run Xinhua News Service.

The decision came at a meeting Monday and Tuesday of the party Politburo, a powerful 20-member body. It would appear to make Deng the winner in a prolonged struggle with hardline ideologues over the path of Chinese socialism.

Deng, 87, who introduced market-style economic reforms in 1978 that have dramatically raised Chinese living standards, feared the hard-liners would undo his achievements in the name of protecting China from bourgeois contamination.

The hard-liners maintained the reforms were leading China toward capitalism and that the "open-door policy" of maintaining contact with the West was bringing in drug use, low-brow Western culture and crime.

Xinhua said the Politburo decided, "to judge whether a move is 'socialist' or 'capitalist' will depend mainly on whether it will benefit the development of the productive forces under socialism, the enhancement of the comprehensive national strength of our socialist country and the promotion of the living standard of the people."

Deng stepped down from his last party and government posts in 1989 and 1990, and was not mentioned as attending the meeting. It is more likely that he conveyed his views through party General Secretary Jiang Zemin or other Politburo members.

US plans to sell \$ 2.5b arms to Kuwait

WASHINGTON, Mar 12: The US defence department plans to sell 2.5 billion dollars worth of Patriot Missiles and other arms to Kuwait to help boost its defense system, a Pentagon source said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Congress is expected to approve the sale, which includes six Patriot anti-missile systems, 450 Patriot missiles and six Hawk missile batteries, the source said.

The administration is reportedly considering other arms sales to Mideast countries in the wake of the Gulf War, including a five billion dollar sale of F-15 fighter planes to Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain, The United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Turkey have also asked to purchase Patriots, which were used during the Gulf conflict to defend against Iraqi Scud missiles.

US, India to hold N-talks

WASHINGTON, Mar 12: India and the United States will hold bilateral nuclear talks in eight weeks, reports PTI.

Foreign Secretary J N Dixit disclosed this today after meeting admiral Jonathan Howe, Deputy National Security Adviser, and Undersecretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz at the State Department.

The date and venue will be decided later. This dispenses the earlier US insistence on holding the five power nuclear conference to denuclearize South Asia in March or April.

After the first day's talks, Dixit had told Indian correspondents, that India would not attend the five power talks. But today he shifted his ground saying, no five power talks, now.

This indicates that there is no point discussing it when in the forthcoming bilateral talks.

the Americans have first to tell India what exactly they have in mind, what the parameters are and what Indian concerns in the region are and whether they have any suggestions on how to meet them.

The future of the five power talks, which cannot be held without India, will depend on how the bilateral Indo-American talks go.

Pakistan to represent Iran in US

ISLAMABAD, Mar 12: The government of Pakistan has agreed to diplomatically represent Iran and look after its interests in the United States, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Thursday, reports AP.

Iran and the United States severed diplomatic ties following the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Algeria had acted on Tehran's behalf in Washington

But the spokesman said relations between the two countries deteriorated with the Algerian crackdown on Islamic fundamentalists and Tehran asked Pakistan to act as its representative, he said.

Pakistan and Iran are both Islamic republics and share a common border.

Filipino troops kill 14 rebels

DIPLOLOG, Philippines, Mar 12: Government troops, backed by helicopter gunships, killed 14 Communist guerrillas in a 12-day assault on a rebel camp in the southern Philippines, the military said Thursday, reports AP.

Col. Emilio de Leon, chief of the army's 101st Brigade, said eight soldiers were wounded in fighting that ended Monday in the town of Katipunan in Zamboanga del Norte province, about 720 kilometers (450 miles) south of Manila.

De Leon said soldiers faced stiff resistance when they began the assault on the "Camp Uno" of the Communist New People's Army.

Imelda is a liar, says Ramos

MANILA, Mar 12: Former Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos on Wednesday branded fellow Philippine presidential candidate Imelda Marcos a liar after she called him a coward, as personal attacks began taunting the campaign, reports AFP.

Ramos, a leader of the 1986 uprising that toppled the government of Imelda Marcos' late husband, Ferdinand, denied the former first lady's charge that the ducked out of a trip to Libya in 1976 after a plane they were flying received a bomb threat.

"I think Imelda Marcos is a liar, or absent-minded," Ramos told journalists.



Files: Edward Shevardnadze, the former Soviet Foreign Minister, attends a reception shortly after his return to Tbilisi March 8. Shevardnadze was named president of the provisional Georgian parliament in Tbilisi.

Honour that comes too late to satisfy Netaji's family

NEW DELHI, Mar 12: India's government is faced with the embarrassment of having the nation's top civilian award turned down by the family of controversial independence hero Subhash Chandra Bose, AFP reports.

The honour bestowed posthumously has also reopened a painful riddle — is "Netaji" (leader) Bose alive or dead?

Bose's family said Wednesday the Bharat Ratna (Jewel of India) had come too late — 45 years after freedom from the British, whom he fought alongside Japanese troops in World War II.

Three members of the Nehru-Gandhi family, which the Bose's accuse of having tried to downgrade Netaji's achievements, were conferred Bharat Ratna earlier — first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, his daughter Indira

memory," said Pradip Bose, nephew of Netaji, whose supposed remains have been preserved at the 400-year-old Renkoji temple in Tokyo since he was believed to have died in a mysterious 1945 plane crash.

"It is quite unnecessary, he does not need it," he said of the award no one, including Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa, has turned down before.

proached by New Delhi to accept the award.

"While accepting that those who selected Netaji for the honour had good intentions, she has refused to be a party to an act which may well be interpreted as a slight to his stature.

Off the Record

Vanessa wants to close Miss America chapter

NEW YORK: Vanessa Williams says she looks forward to the day when a story about her doesn't contain the words "Miss America," AP reports.

Carlson's imagination was a mistake

DULUTH, Minn.: It was just his imagination running away with him, AP says.

Chernobyl gift

LONDON: Six-legged piglets and two-headed calves were among many deformed animals born after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, a Ukrainian scientist said Thursday, Reuter says.

Sutherland couldn't see sun for six months

KEARNEY, Neb.: Former hostage Thomas Sutherland says the sun was the last thing he saw before he was kidnapped, and it's a sight he now welcomes each day with new appreciation, AP reports.

Mulroney goes bananas over satire writer

OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney has said he wanted to shoot or strangle the author of an item in a satirical magazine about his daughter, Reuter reports.

Allies planned to capture Saddam during war

ROME Mar 12: The United States and Britain had a plan to capture Saddam Hussein and his top aides during the Gulf War, but postponed it due to weather and other factors, an Italian news magazine reported, reports AP.

"We put this decision in the hands of the political leaders," an unidentified source told Europeo. "We were ready to capture (Saddam) so that he could be tried as a criminal of war, or to eliminate him."

Quoting another unidentified officer reportedly involved in the operation, the magazine said that while the French, Italians and Saudis were aware of the plan, only American and British troops were to take part.

According to the magazine, the operation was postponed several times.

On February 26, two days after the land offensive began, the special commando force was ready to strike.

BRIEFLY

Nepalese PM to visit China:

Nepalese Prime Minister Girtija Prasad Koirala will pay a six-day goodwill visit to China from 16 March at the invitation of China's Premier Li Peng, the Foreign Ministry announced Wednesday, AFP reports.

During the visit, Prime Minister Koirala and Premier Li will hold talks on bilateral, regional and international matters, it said.

The Nepalese Prime Minister will meet President Yang Shangkun and General Secretary Jiang Zemin of the central committee of the Chinese Communist Party, it said.

In the course of the visit, Koirala and his entourage will visit development projects in China and places of historical and cultural interest in Beijing, Xian, Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

India stops exporting iron ore:

India has decided to stop exporting iron ore, Xinhua reports from New Delhi.

According to local press report Thursday, Indian Prime Minister Narashima Rao told the parliament on Tuesday that under the new economic policies, the industrial situation in the country had improved. Therefore, the Indian government would no longer export quality raw minerals.

Canada to send troops to Y'slavia:

Canada will send about 1,200 troops to Yugoslavia in early April as part of the United Nations peace-keeping force there, Canadian Defence Minister Marcel Masse confirmed Tuesday, Xinhua reports from Ottawa.

Brigadier-General Lewis Mackenzie of the Canadian Armed Forces has been appointed Chief of Staff for the UN force, Masse said.

Oscar winner Brooks dead:

Richard Brooks, who directed the classic Hollywood dramas 'The Blackboard Jungle' and 'In Cold Blood' and won a screening Oscar for 'Elmer Gantry,' died Wednesday, he was 79, AP reports from Beverly Hills, California.

Brooks, who died at home, had been seriously ill for a month, said publicist Warren Cowan. He suffered numerous ailments. The official cause of death was listed as congestive heart failure.

187 drug traffickers held in NZ:

New Zealand police made 187 arrests during three big operations to combat drug trafficking in three major cities of the country this week, Xinhua says from Wellington.

The dawn raids Wednesday by police resulted in 90 arrests in Rotorua, 45 arrests in Auckland and 52 in Dunedin, police sources confirmed Thursday.

Shortguns, pistols and ammunition were seized from the raids, local media reported. The drug seized also showed there was a growing trend in the use of hallucinogenic drug popular during the 1960s.

The Auckland operations provided evidence that quantities of A-class controlled drug, Bromo-DMA, which police had not seen in New Zealand before, might have been made in New Zealand. Equipment believed to have been used to make drug was also seized.

Iliescu appeals for restraint:

President Ion Iliescu said in a speech broadcast Wednesday that Romanians should not make territorial claims on Ukraine or become involved in ethnic fighting in neighboring Moldova, AP reports from Bucharest, Romania.

Iliescu was responding to opposition calls for Romania to side with Moldova's ethnic Romanian majority, which is fighting a secessionist attempt by ethnic Slavs in the Trans-Dniester region.

Some Romanians also want to take back regions of Ukraine that belonged to Romania before they were seized by the Soviet Union in 1940 as part of a Soviet-Nazi pact. The areas — Bukovina and parts of Bessarabia — no longer have an ethnic Romanian majority.

In the speech to a meeting of political leaders Tuesday night, Iliescu said, that if the Romanian government were to claim Ukraine territory "it would be supported by no one (and) become isolated... unable to count on even its closest friends." Excerpts of the speech were broadcast Wednesday.