

# CIS is too weak to survive : Kravchuk

KIEV, Mar 20: Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk opened the fourth summit of leaders from the former Soviet republics here today, suggesting that the troubled Commonwealth of Independent States was too weak to survive, reports AFP.

"The Kiev meeting is taking place at a difficult time, with the situation not improving but getting worse and worse," he said, predicting that the one-day summit would be a "decisive turning point" for the former Soviet Union.

"The time has come to ask ourselves if we are truly capable of resolving the problems which exist," he told his fellow CIS leaders.

"If we are not capable of reversing the situation, our existence becomes questionable,"

he said. In his toughly worded and pessimistic speech, the Ukrainian leader deplored the Commonwealth's inability to make any progress towards resolving the escalating ethnic conflicts between Armenians and Azeris in Nagorny Karabakh and between Russian-speakers and ethnic Romanians in Moldova.

He also complained that no "political, social, military or economic issues have been resolved through the CIS or with its help."

"As far as the economy is concerned, we are no longer on the edge of the abyss but are sliding to the bottom," he said.

The Ukrainian leader had earlier described today's meeting as a "liquidation summit."



Palestinians seeking work in Israel are checked Israeli police. The city has, in response to ongoing terror attack by Palestinians, fenced and closed the area where every morning hundreds of Palestinian gather to seek work for the day. Most of called "slave markets" in the Tel Aviv area, are now closed. — AFP/UNB photo.

# Russia, Japan hold talks on Kuril Islands

TOKYO, Mar 20: Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev began today a series of talks with his Japanese counterpart Michio Watanabe, with the bilateral row over the Kuril Islands on the agenda. Japanese officials said, reports AFP.

Watanabe expressed regret at the start of the meetings that there had been no progress on the Kurils since Mikhail Gorbachev came to Tokyo last April as president of the then Soviet Union.

Japan lays claim to four of the Kuril islands which were occupied by the Soviet Union in 1945, and which are now part of Russian territory.

The issue stands in the way of a peace treaty formally ending World War II between Tokyo and Moscow which would pave the road to the development of bilateral relations.

# Ghali seeks Indo-Pak approval to resolve Kashmir crisis

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 20: Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali surprised a news conference on Thursday by saying Security Council Resolution 242, the basis of peace talks between Israel and its Arab neighbours, was not binding, reports Reuter.

He was responding to a questioner who asked whether he agreed with a view widely held among Arabs that if the Council insisted on Iraq's compliance with its resolutions, the same rule should also apply to Israel.

Asked a related question about the absence of the United Nations from efforts to resolve the dispute between Pakistan and India over Kashmir, the Secretary-General replied:

"We need the approval of the two states. The United Nations cannot play any role without the agreement of all the protagonists of dispute."

Although he did not say so, India rejects any U N involvement over Kashmir.

Boutros-Ghali, a former Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister and the UN's first Arab Secretary-General, replied: "If the Security Council wants to adopt a resolution on the basis of Chapter VII, then that resolution will be binding."

If there is a resolution which is not based on Chapter VII, then that resolution is non-binding. For your information, Resolution 242 is not based on Chapter VII of the charter, added Boutros-Ghali, who was referring to the mandatory provisions of the charter, which open the way to sanctions or the use of force.

The Secretary-General, who helped negotiate the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, was holding his first news conference since taking office in January, switching between English, French and Arabic.

The question about Resolution 242 was asked and answered in Arabic and translated by a U N interpreter.

Resolution 242, adopted after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war said just and lasting Middle East peace should be based on withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied in that conflict and acknowledgement of the right of every state in the area to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries, free from threats or acts of force.

Some Israel experts at the United Nations, asked about the Secretary-General's interpretation of the degree to which council resolutions are binding, said there was no question but that those under chapter VII were mandatory.

But they also said other council resolutions might be binding if they contained what one called words of obligation such as demands or "decides."

The chief legal adviser of the U S mission, Robert Rosenstock, said: "the famous 242 is a recommendation nation", adding this was clear from its legislative history and wording. Meanwhile Ghali said the United Nations would take part in the Middle East peace talks if invited as a full-fledged participant but would not agree to be merely an observer. Referring to Arab-Israeli peace talks held under the auspices of the United States and Russia, he said: "if we will be invited to participate as a full-fledged member of the different commissions", we will welcome this.

But we will not accept to participate in the conference in Washington or in Moscow as an observer. We believe that the United Nations deserves the place of a full-fledged member, Boutros-Ghali told a questioner at his first news conference since taking office in January.

# BRIEFLY

**Students defy govt ban :** Police battled with hundreds of students who defied a government ban and tried to march Thursday to protest the suspension of select civil liberties after last month's failed coup, AP reports from S Venezuela.

At least four injuries and dozens of arrests were witnessed by an Associated Press reporter during the clashes in a poor neighbourhood of the capital. Injuries and arrests were expected to go higher.

The violence was the second in nine days. Twenty-five people were injured March 10 when protests over the installation of a new coalition Cabinet by President Carlos Andres Perez turned violent.

Perez's government has been under growing criticism for economic problems that have cut the living standards of many Venezuelans.

**Genocide campaign against Kurds :** US Scientists and human rights groups on Thursday revealed gruesome details of what they called a genocide campaign against the Kurds and said the bloodbath of the late 1980s could erupt again unless the West intervened, reports Reuter from Washington.

Newly-discovered mass graves and secret police records of torture, execution and gang rape some on videotape show a "holocaust" swept Northern Iraq before the Gulf war, a decade in which up to 300,000 Kurds perished, the experts said.

The deprivation is continuing with famine and a massive refugee crisis the most immediate concerns, and the threat of a second wave of killings is hanging heavily over Northern Iraq, they told the senate foreign relations committee.

As many as 300,000 have disappeared and are feared dead. That's tantamount to genocide, said Andrew Whitely, Executive Director of the Middle East watch human rights group.

**Fresh assault on Croatia :** Hour upon hour of bombardment in eastern Croatia on Thursday shook an 11-week-old truce. But the United Nations approved funding for its peace-keeping troops who should now flood in to put a final end to fighting which has claimed more than 6,000 lives since June, reports Reuter from Belgrade.

Artillery, mortar and machine-gun fire echoed around the city of Osijek within earshot of advance UN officers taking up positions between warring Serbs and Croats.

In neighbouring Bosnia a day-old accord between rival ethnic leaders, which Serbs predicted would stop civil war spreading there, ran into furious opposition.

Croatian radio said 250 artillery shells rained down on Osijek, wounding seven people—clashes were reported in several other parts of the republic.

**14 killed in Kashmir mishap :** Fourteen people were killed when a bus carrying officials of a state-run hydro-electric project fell into a gorge in the Indian state of Kashmir, police said Thursday, reports AFP from New Delhi.

Eleven others were injured in the accident late Wednesday near Reasi town, a police spokesman said here.

Seven died instantly and the others in hospital. No further details were available.

**20,000 homeless in Yangon fire :** A fire that began as a kitchen blaze was swept through a northern suburb of the capital, destroying about 2,000 shanties and leaving 20,000 people homeless, official reports said Friday, reports AP from Yangon.

The fire broke out Thursday in the kitchen of a boiled-bean seller in the suburb of North Okkalapa, the official radio said. It said the fire was caused by negligence but did not elaborate.

The victims were given shelter in schools closed for vacation.

The suburb is a dense conglomeration of shanties, small industrial sites and family business operations. It is inhabited largely by lower income groups.

# Najib assures Ghali to step down

NEW YORK, United Nations, Mar 20: UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali yesterday hailed Afghan President Najibullah's assurance that he will step down if a neutral interim government is formed in Kabul, reports AFP.

Calling the offer very positive, the UN Chief said it would further plans for a UN-sponsored conference aimed at ending the 13-year Afghan civil war.

We hope to be able to hold this conference at the end of April in Geneva or in Vienna, Boutros-Ghali told a press conference, but added: "there are still many obstacles which we have not been able to overcome."

The informal peace conference would be attended by some 150 Afghans from different factions, and then a small working group would form to work out the modalities of an interim government which would be presented for ratification to a larger meeting within 60 days.

Najibullah said Wednesday that he and his Soviet-installed government would quit if all

sides in the Afghan war could agree on a neutral, interim government.

The United States, meanwhile, which for years armed the Mujahideen guerrillas fighting to overthrow Najibullah, was low-key in its response to the president's offer, saying only that it contributed to UN peace efforts in the country.

State department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler reaffirmed US support for a UN plan calling for a transitional government in Afghanistan.

Department officials said the US response was intentionally low-key in order to avoid the appearance of interfering in Afghan affairs.

Washington has been pressing for Najibullah's departure since the red army pulled out of Afghanistan in 1989.

But in September of last year Washington and Moscow agreed to halt arms deliveries to the warring sides in an effort to facilitate UN peace efforts, and since then have sought to avoid any meddling in Afghan domestic affairs.

# Move to stop fighting in Cambodia fails

PHNOM PENH, Mar 20: A committee of Cambodian Generals meeting today for the first time under UN peace-keeping supervision failed to agree to stop the fighting in central Cambodia, reports AFP.

Lieutenant General John Saderson, who heads the military contingent of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), said he could not deploy peacekeeping troops to the area of Kompong Thom until they stopped the "minor military contacts (that are still enough to be a concern."

Khmer Rouge and Phnom Penh forces have been fighting since January, and the violations of the ceasefire agreed during last year's peace process to end the civil war have been serious, the United Nations has said.

# Canada reviewing role of secret service

OTTAWA, Mar 20: Canada said on Thursday it was reviewing the role of its secret service in the post-cold war era and pointed to terrorism and the break-up of the Soviet Union as potential new threats to world security, reports Reuter.

Solicitor General Douglas Lewis said he had asked the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) to determine how the new world order would change Canada's intelligence needs.

The geography is the same, but the lines have been redrawn and I think it makes sense for us to re-examine our priorities, Lewis said.

# LTTE plans to kill Jayalalitha?

NEW DELHI, Mar 20: The Chief Minister of an Indian state alleged Thursday that Sri Lankan Tamil guerrillas accused of killing Rajiv Gandhi had sent a hit squad to assassinate her, reports AFP.

Jayalalitha Jayaram told the Tamil Nadu legislature that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were also seeking to blow up the Madras office of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing Ghandi's assassination.

Jayalalitha said the LTTE, which is fighting for a Tamil homeland in northern Sri Lanka, had sent a "suicide squad" to Tamil Nadu, which her party administers, "to kill her", the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported.

She said it had been confirmed by the Indian army and the Tamil Nadu police, but added that "the exact composition" of the LTTE killer squad

was not known. The squad has also been instructed to rescue or liquidate those who have been arrested in connection with Ghandi's assassination, PTI quipped Jayalalitha as saying.

The Chief Minister repeated her demand that New Delhi ban the LTTE, which once used the coastal state of Tamil Nadu as a sanctuary for its separatist campaign. The Indian government has said it was considering the request.

Jayalalitha, a former film actress, launched a crackdown against the LTTE and its Indian supporters after her party took power in June for allegedly assassinating Ghandi at an election rally in Tamil Nadu on May 21.

Gandhi died when a Sri Lankan woman believed to be an LTTE member detonated powerful plastic explosives strapped to her body while pretending to touch his feet in a gesture of respect. The LTTE has denied killing Ghandi.

Tamil Nadu is separated from Sri Lanka by a narrow strip of sea, and the LTTE is known to have smuggled large quantities of weapons, medicines, fuel and other commodities from India to its bastions in the island nation.

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# Off the Record

## No punishment less than death

ATMORE, Ala, Mar 20: A man who admitted hiring two men to kill his pregnant wife so he could marry another woman was executed early Friday in Alabama's electric chair, reports AP.

Larry Gene Heath, 40 made no final attempt to appeal his death sentence for the 1981 slaying of Rebecca Heath. Instead, he spent his final hours at Holman Prison handing out his supply of soft drinks to fellow inmates and turning over his belongings to his second wife.

Prosecutors said Heath, secretly engaged to another woman, got his 21-year-old wife, who was nine months pregnant, to co-sign a \$2,000 home improvement loan. He used the loan to pay for her murder.

She was abducted from their home in Phenix City, shot in the head and left in her car in Troup County, Ga./The unborn boy also died. The two hired men were convicted and sentenced to life in prison.

Heath was arrested four days after the killing and admitted his involvements. He pleaded guilty to murder in LaGrange, Ga, in February 1982 and was sentenced to life in prison in Georgia.

In January 1983, a jury in Phenix City convicted him of capital murder in Alabama and a judge sentenced him to die. In a prison interview this month, Heath said he was reprieved for death.

Heath remarried about a year ago. His current wife is not the woman to whom he was engaged at the time of his first wife's death.

"I married Larry because I loved him and I believe in him. Mrs Heath has said, 'I know he is a different person than the one who killed Becky.'"

## Carrots tastes like medicine

WASHINGTON: President Bush added a new vegetable — carrots — to his enemies list Thursday, reports AP.

Bush, in remarks to the Radio and Television Correspondents' Association annual dinner, said he wanted to stay to eat, "but then I saw the menu — carrots. You guessed it, known as orange broccoli."

The president, known for his distaste for broccoli, noted that recent studies about broccoli's ability to prevent disease gave proof to his insistence the vegetable "tastes like medicine."

Bush's political rivals were also the target of his jokes before several thousand radio and TV people.

For example, he said of Republican presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan: "I couldn't believe the nerve of my Republican opponent. First he loses several primaries and demands that I withdraw. Then he loses several more and demands that I fire the chairman of the Republican Party."

And of David Duke, Bush said Duke stole the "America First" them from Buchanan. "He swore that all his facial features were made in the USA."

## Live lingerie-clad model

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands: Never one for subtlety, this city's sex industry now has a live billboard ad to promote itself, reports AP.

This week the classified ads magazine Via Via is using a billboard mock-up of the city's famed shop-window bordellos, complete with live lingerie-clad model.

Publisher Eddie ten has decided the best way to promote his magazine's "Erotic Contacts" pages was to show passersby exactly what the section offers.

The mock brothel is occupied for three or four hours a day by a model selected from a local agency.

Above her, the billboard reads, "With a free ad, you'll sell in an instant."

Although mostly devoted to ads for second hand goods and personal services, Via Via is also used by the city's prostitutes to advertise themselves.

# Big Two agree to solve Nagorny-Karabakh crisis

WASHINGTON, Mar 20: President George Bush and his Russian counterpart, Boris Yeltsin, agreed Thursday to work toward a peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict in Nagorny-Karabakh, reports AFP.

Bush called last week for an immediate cease-fire in Nagorny-Karabakh, while Yeltsin has offered to mediate talks between the warring sides.

Yeltsin's telephone call to Bush came on the eve of a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit in Kiev, where leaders were expected to address the issue of sharing out the armed forces of the former Soviet Union.

Bush and Yeltsin met at the Camp David Presidential retreat in Maryland on February 1 and are scheduled to hold another summit June 16-17 in Washington.

A US official said no joint US-Russian initiative had been drawn up, but noted that Bush and Yeltsin had discussed UN peace efforts, including the decision to send UN envoy Cyrus Vance to the region.

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# PLO set to begin debate future relation with Jordan

NICOSIA, Mar 20: Palestinians are set to begin a debate on a future association with Jordan that could change the course of the Middle East peace talks and the status of the Israeli-occupied territories, reports AFP.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) will debate whether to start working immediately toward a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation or postpone the issue to a later date at a meeting in April.

Decisions taken could even lead to PLO chairman Yasser Arafat's being involved in the Middle East peace talks, where Israel has blocked his

presence because it says he represents a terrorist group.

A proposal for confederation has been debated for years, but the Palestinians put it back on the agenda as a result of the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations.

Some Palestinian leaders call for a confederation immediately, while others recommend waiting until after a five-year interim period for the occupied territories outlined by the peace process.

The choice of the moment will nonetheless have various political implications.

Two of the PLO's three components the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

(PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) announced Tuesday in Damascus they support a confederation, but only after a Palestinian state is created.

Such a position reflects decisions taken earlier.

At the February 1983 Palestine National Council, the parliament in exile, the PLO adopted the principle of a confederation with Jordan based on a union between "two independent states."

The various Palestinian movements have yet to move beyond the agreement in principle.