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Two more US fighters downed

Massive air assault on Iraqi positions : Basra pounded

UNDATED, Feb 2 : Allied forces showed no pause on the six-month mark of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait Saturday, continuing an around-the-clock aerial assault with a special focus on Iraqi ground forces that have moved into the open, reports Agencies.

Allied air and missile attacks continued against southern Iraqi cities Friday night and Saturday morning, Iran's official news agency said.

The sound of numerous explosions in Basra, Abu Al-Khasib and surrounding areas could be heard in the nearby Iranian cities of Abadan and Khorramshar, both of which were jolted by the attacks, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

Reports from Khorramshar said there were two huge explosions in the Basra vicinity at 12.10 p.m. (0840 GMT), but no information was available on damages or casualties, said the agency, monitored in Nicosia.

Basra is Iraq's main port on the Gulf and is the military headquarters for the Iraq theater.

Two more US combat planes were shot down today in the Gulf war, a US military official said.

Major General Robert Johnston said in a press briefing that an A-10 ground support combat plane and a navy A-6 bomber "appear to have been shot down" by Iraqi anti aircraft artillery.

He did not say where the aircraft fell in order to avoid jeopardizing the search and rescue mission currently under way for the crew members.

Gen Johnston said the US air power had also destroyed another Iraqi Scud missile site and three military vehicles in action over Iraq.

Maj Gen Johnston also reported that one US Marine was killed and two wounded early today when a Marine convoy "apparently received some cluster bomb munitions." He said there was a "possibility of some friendly fire involved" in the incident.

Investigations were still underway into the deaths of 11 other Marines killed Wednesday when their armored personnel carriers were destroyed, he said. These deaths were also possibly due to fire from Allied forces.

The General also reported that Allied forces had attacked several Iraqi patrol boats in the northern Gulf in the past two days and that the Iraqi naval forces were now "considered to be combat inactive".

"Virtually all of the Iraqi patrol craft that are capable of delivering missiles" have been put out of action, he said.

Allied commanders said there was considerable movement among Iraqi ground units but that they did not appear to be massing for a major push into Saudi Arabia. Still, the movement gets some of Saddam Hussein's tanks and armored vehicles out of entrenched positions and makes them easier targets for bombers. "If there's movement, and we find it -- and we will -- we'll hit it fast and hard," a US Air Force officer in Saudi Arabia said Saturday. "He's shifting a bit, and we are going to make him pay for it."

With a combination of lightning-fast jet bombers and hulking B-52s, the allies are trying to bombard Iraqi ground forces in southern Iraq and Kuwait, the emirate Saddam seized Aug 2.

Allied ground units were on the move as well. Some were shifting in response to Iraqi troops movements and actions. Saudi Army units, for example, were reinforcing the frontier town of Khafji to head off another Iraqi raid there.

Other Allied movements were part of the cat-and-mouse game taking place in advance of the expected Allied ground offensive. Some US units are moving into their battle positions, while others are shifting to confuse Iraqi troops about where that push north will come from.

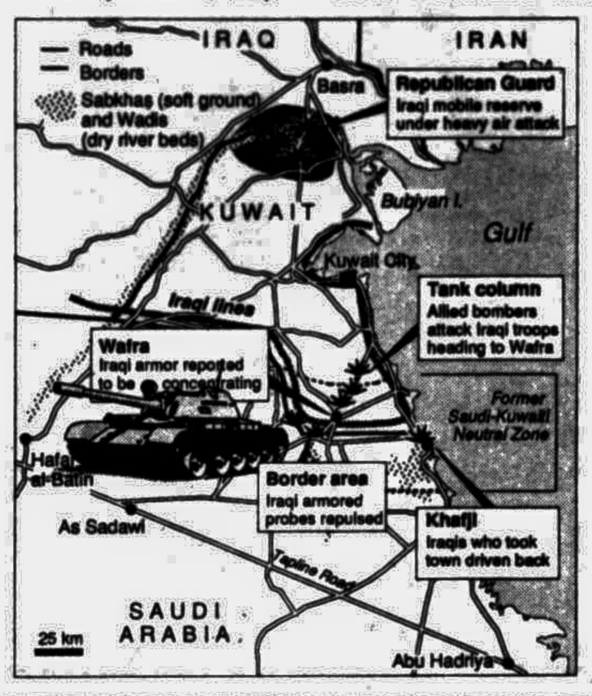
In Baghdad, AP correspondent Salah Nasrawi reported several houses were destroyed by what Iraqi officials said were two Tomahawks, low-flying cruise missiles that have been launched by US warships in the Gulf.

Local residents were furious. "Is this Western civilisation?" an Iraqi woman screamed to reporters outside her collapsed home.

Meanwhile, the US military confirmed that a new oil slick was continuing to spread off the coast of Iraq, dealing another blow to governments already overwhelmed in their fight against the world's largest spill of crude oil.

A Saudi government official said if the slick grows, the kingdom will order an air strike on the source of the spill, similar to the bombing run by US Air Force F-111s a week ago on a Kuwaiti oil terminal.

US, Air Force Maj Linda Leong, a spokeswoman for the Central Command, said the new spill covered an area 4.5 miles by 1.5 miles



Hot spell has no link to Gulf war

By Staff Correspondent

The humid heat wave is likely to end after a couple of days bringing in mild cold again, a senior weatherman told The Daily Star on Saturday. He said the war and oil slick in the Gulf had nothing to do with the present warm weather.

The sultry weather of the last four days has been caused by a westerly disturbance that has moved from Pakistan via India towards Bangladesh. It has carried clouds towards Bangladesh at lower altitudes.

The presence of clouds in the sky prevented release of heat from the ground back to the atmosphere and the heat continued to build up. The clouds also increased the moisture content of the air thus causing a sudden change in the weather.

Iraqi intrusion into S Arabia

NORTHERN SAUDI ARABIA, Feb 2: US troops exchanged anti-tank, grenade and machinegun fire with an Iraqi patrol that had slipped into Saudia Arabia and tried to ambush them officers said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The intense 15 minute firefight on Friday night was not believed to have caused casualties on either side but troops in the 82nd Airborne division went on full combat alert to prepare for a possible Iraqi ground assault.

Allied refuelling in India deplored

Iraq threatens to use arms of mass destruction

BAGHDAD, Feb 2: Iraq will continue fighting the US-led multinational forces, using everything from kitchen knives to weapons of mass destruction, until it achieves victory, the army newspaper said Saturday, reports AP.

Officials said there had been 18 bombing raids on residential areas, and it took India to task for allowing US military transport planes to refuel in Bombay.

There were no air raids over Baghdad Saturday morning, although early in the predawn hours there was a large explosion, probably caused by a cruise missile.

It could not be determined exactly where the explosion occurred or the extent of damages.

"The Iraq leadership and people will not give up their country and we will use whatever power and weapons are at our disposal, starting from kitchen knives to weapons of mass destruction," said a front-page editorial in Al-Qaddisiya, the army newspaper.

"Nothing short of victory is acceptable to us," the paper said.

On the official radio, a military spokesman said the US-led multinational forces had resorted to attacks on residential areas.

"The usurpers of the Arab land, the desecrators of its sanctities, and the looters of its wealth find no means to confront Iraq's courageous challenge and its valiant armed forces," the radio said.

"There have been 18 of these cowardly raids on these areas," it said, without providing details.

Ground-hugging Tomahawk cruise missiles fired from US Navy warships in the Gulf struck Baghdad on Friday. Two of them crashed into residential neighbourhoods.

Government officials said several people were killed or wounded in an hour-long barrage in which at least six of the missiles struck the city.

Israel under Iraqi missile attack again

JERUSALEM, Feb 2: Israel said it was under missile attack on Saturday night and ordered residents to don gas masks and seek shelter in rooms sealed against a possible Iraqi chemical weapons attack, reports Reuter.

Bush proposes $ 295b budget for defence

WASHINGTON, Feb 2: President George Bush is proposing a defense budget of 295 billion dollars for fiscal 1992 that includes 4.6 billion dollars for the Strategic Defense Initiative and money for four B-2 stealth bombers, congressional sources said Friday, reports AP.

Property of 4 absconding Ministers attached

Police yesterday raided the city residences of four absconding ministers of the ousted Ershad regime and confiscated their property, police sources said, reports UNB.

Those whose houses were raided and property attached are- Anwar Hossain Manju, Nazlur Rahman Manju, Ziauddin Ahmed and Abul Hasnat.

The sources said simultaneous raids were also made into residences in the city and hometowns of other former ministers who have been in the wanted list and in hiding since the fall of the Ershad regime. Details about the raids were not immediately available.

Former Prime Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed and 10 other former ministers were directed on January 24 to surrender within seven days, failing which their property may be confiscated and they may be sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment, the directive said.

According to police, the city residence of Kazi Zafar was raided but nothing could be attached as the house under construction in Gulshan, Road 68, was in the name of his wife.

The articles confiscated at House No. 251/M, Road No 13/A, Dhanmondi-- the residence of Anwar Hossain Manju include beds, almirahs, carpets, sofa-sets and clothings worth about Tk 3 lakh.

The articles were kept in a sealed room in the same house under police guard. Police also attached a vacant plot of 8 katha of Anwar Hossain on Gulshan Road No 67.

At Nazlur Rahman's residence at House No. 7, Road No 11, Dhanmondi, beds, almirahs, carpets, sofa-sets and clothings worth about Tk 2.5 lakh were seized. The articles were kept in a sealed room in the same house under police guard.

Police also attached a two-storied building at Plot-3, Road-8, Baridhara, belonging to Nazlur Rahman. A foreigner has been residing there as tenant.

From the residence of former minister Abul Hasnat at House-10, Road-128, Gulshan, some household articles were confiscated.

Besides, a plot of land at Road No. 124, Gulshan, belonging to Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu was confiscated.

Adopted daughter meets Ershad

By Asiuzzaman

The adopted daughter of ousted president Hussain Muhammad Ershad has joined him at his Gulshan villa where he is detained, a source told the Daily Star on Saturday.

The name of the girl is Jebin who is now 13 years of age returned from England in the later half of January. She was studying there, the source said without further details.

Zia was loyal to Yahya: Hasina

NATORE, Feb 2: Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina said here today that if voted to power Awami League would protect the rights of the peasants and ensure fair prices to the growers, reports BSS.

Addressing a big public meeting at Trimohini Girls High School maidan at Lalpur Upazila this morning, she said, for the sugarcane growers, her party would supply High Yielding Variety of seeds and fertilizers.

She said over the years the farmers became the worst victim of the price hike, while they were not getting fair prices of their products and had to buy inputs at much higher prices.

Sheikh Hasina said her party would adopt a policy so that Bangladesh became self-reliant in sugar and also had surplus for exports.

Explaining various programmes that her party would implement if voted to power, she said "we will take up a plan, simple and effective to eradicate illiteracy from the country."

The Awami League Chief who came at Natore from Rajshahi on Friday to campaign for her party nominees in the coming elections said her party would build a productive working force through popula-

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Mizan urges partymen to avoid clashes

Acting Chairman of Jatiya Party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury advised the party candidates for the parliamentary polls to avoid clashes with rivals, reports UNB.

Addressing a meeting of the party central election conducting coordination committee at its Gulshan office, Chowdhury said a section of the people are trying to drag Jatiya Party into conflicts and shift the responsibility of marring the polls.

Jatiya Party leader said the parties in the election fray should strictly abide by the code of conducts while the administration should enforce the law to maintain peace.

APSU wants Bangladeshi troops out of S. Arabia

By DU Correspondent

The All Party Students Unity (APSU) has demanded immediate withdrawal of the Bangladeshi soldiers from Saudi Arabia.

APSU vented their demand a rally held Saturday in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The rally was addressed by Faizul Hakim, president of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation.

APSU stressed the need for a comprehensive solution to the Middle East, particularly the Palestine crisis. It also called for the withdrawal of both US-led forces and Iraqi troops

Khaleda says

Boycott architects of dark age

BARISAL, Feb 2: BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia today urged the people to boycott the "architects of 1972-75 dark age who are now engaged in false propaganda to mislead the people", reports UNB.

She was addressing a huge public meeting at Bell's Park maidan here this afternoon at the fag end of her 5-day election tour of the southern districts.

In an oblique reference to Awami League, Begum Zia alleged this party had helped Ershad grab power with a motive to destroy BNP. Branding it as an associate of Ershad regime, Khaleda said this party had given legitimacy to the autocratic regime through its participation in the 1986 parliamentary polls.

"The Ershad government could not have stayed in power so long had this party not taken part in election under it", she said, adding this party would also have to share the responsibility of all misdeeds during the ousted regime.

She also told the meeting that this party was reluctant to demand the trial of Ershad and his cronies due to its "entent" with him. "Trial of Ershad and his associates must be held on this soil," she said.

Begum Zia demanded deposed President Ershad be sent to prison immediately and he should face trial.

She said the Feb 27 parliamentary election would determine whether country's sovereignty and democracy existed and weather peace would be restored.

Mohiuddin may be suspended

A H G Mohiuddin, former Permanent Representative to the United Nations is likely to be placed under suspension, reports UNB.

A decision to this effect taken by authorities concerned will be implemented soon, informed sources said Saturday.

Disciplinary action would be taken against Mohiuddin under government service rules on charges of defying the office order, unauthorised absence and other irregularities, the sources added.

Mohiuddin did not comply with the order recalling him to the headquarters issued mid December last year.

NEWS BRIEFS

China supports India's efforts

BEIJING, Feb 2: China's Premier Li Peng said today Beijing was increasingly concerned about an expansion of the Gulf war and supported efforts by India and other non-aligned countries to end the conflict. "We feel even more worried and anxious about the continuation and expansion of the war," Li told India's Foreign Minister Vidya Charan Shukla, reports Reuter.

Smuggled goods recovered

CHITTAGONG, Feb 2: Police captured a fishing boat and recovered smuggled items worth about Taka one crore ten lakh on Friday, a police press release said today, reports BSS.

4 killed in road mishap near ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Four persons were killed and at least 12 others injured, five of them seriously, when three minibuses collided on Saturday at Dhaka-Mymensingh highway near Zia International Airport.

Seven injured persons were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Of them, five were in critical condition. They are : Osman (30), Unknown (28), Alauddin (40), Kejmat Ali (40), Fazlu (30).

Three other injured persons admitted to DMCH are : Akhteruzzaman (Reporter of weekly Natun Katha Chitra) 25, Asaduzzaman (30), Wahid uzzaman (28).

All Party Students Unity (APSU) brought out an anti-war rally in front of the Foreign Ministry in city. The rally demanded return of Bangladeshi troops deployed in Saudi Kingdom — Star Photo

$ 450m aid uncertain as WB unhappy over power sector

By Moazzem Hossain

A major disruption in external aid receipts in the coming months is likely following World Bank's suspension of lending operations in the power sector. Aid amounting to over 450 million US Dollars are uncertain.

Highly-placed sources in the Ministry of Energy said the bank has already made it clear that it would not fund the programmes in power sector if the "agreed actions" were not taken.

There are four specific areas where the bank is "displeased" with performances. They are: formation of a separate authority for distribution and sales of electricity in Dhaka city, reduction of system loss, handing over of distribution lines to Rural Electrification Board (REB) and improvements in collections of electricity bills in arrears.

The employees union of Power Development Board (PDB) are resisting moves to hand over distribution responsibilities to Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) and distribution lines to Rural Electrification Board.

The PDB's system loss is presently at 40 per cent, one of the highest in the world. It was 45 per cent sometimes earlier.

A 105 million Dollars programme assistance for rural electrification was approved by the bank. Another 136 million assistance for Power Development Board was negotiated with it.

The bank had earlier disbursed the entire quantum of 180 million energy sector credit in two instalments. Another 47 million Dollar programme in gas sector is operational now. But it is being

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