BDIFFI

Iraqi troops desert war:

"Large numbers" of traqt troops are deserting their posts in the Kuwait military theatre and heading home to Iraq, US Defence Secretary Dick Chency in Washington said Saturday, reports AP.

Interviewed on CNN television, Mr. Cheney said there were signs that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein faced growing dissent within his own military due to the beating the country has taken at the hands of Allted forces.

Given the enormous damage that has been done to the lragi military, one would think there's an incentive for some of the senior commanders there to want to replace Saddam Hussein," he said.

Probe into bombing underway: British military authorities said late Saturday an investigation was underway into the bombing of bridges in the western Iragi town of Fallujah, reports AFP.

Iraqi sources earlier said 130 civilians were killed Thursday when a Royal Air Force tornado fighter missed a bridge it had targeted, one of two spanning the Euphrates river at Fal-

The Ministry of Defence in London confirmed a British military spokesman's denial, earlier in Riyadh, of Iraqi claims that a British Tornado was shot down during the bridge at-

Kuwaiti traders being tortured: Trade Unionists in Iraqi-occupied Kuwait are being hunted down, tortured and killed by Iraqi "death squads," the

International Federation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) said in Brussels Sunday, reports AFP. Quoting a letter from the Kuwaiti Trade Union Federation. the ICFTU said in a statement that the Iraqis had launched

search and destroy "missions by death squads against the Kuwaiti labour movement." " I am appalled by the vicious attacks on Kuwaiti Trade

Unions," said ICTFU General Secretary John Vanderveken. 40 P.C. of Irag's armour lost: The lragi army may have lost up to 40 per cent of its armour and artillery, taking it close to a level where it may not be able to

light, military sources said Saturday reports Reuter. The Allies have continued preparations for a long-awaited ground assault by moving mine sweepers further into the northern Gulf and by launching a series of exploratory probes

against Iraqi lines, the sources in London said. They said, four weeks of Allied bombing had destroyed 30 per cent of Iraq's tanks and armoured troop-carriers and a slightly higher number of artillery pieces in Kuwait and

US bombing continues: Allied guns and warplanes unleashed a sustained five-minute barrage of bombs and shells along the Saudi-Kuwait border early Saturday.

reports AFP. Bombs and shells exploded every second in a deafening cacophony that lighted the night sky and shook the earth. US marines entrenched south of the border saw the bom-

sein's heavily conditioned offer Friday to pull out of Kuwait. The US-led multinational alliance rejected the Iraqi bid as a rehash of old offers, with still more unacceptable conditions tacked on.

bardment as an Allied answer to Iraqi President Saddam Hus-

Black rains fall over Iran: Black rains caused by blazing oil installations in Iraq fell over western Iran on Sunday, the Iranian News Agency reported, reports Reuter.

The agency in Nicosia said the rain, which polluted "environmental, water and agricultural resources" in Iranian border areas was caused by smoke from burning installations in eastern frag.

Iran has reported several falls of black rains since the US led Allied launched Operation Desert Storm to expel Iraqi troops from Kuwait a month ago. -

Allies set date for ground offensive

The French Foreign Minister Mr. Ronald Duma said, a date has been set for the ground offensive, according to BBC monitored in Dhaka.

southern Iraq.

Speaking in an interview on French Radio he said, the French government knew the date but he refused to be more specific.

AFP adds from Kenneburnkport, Maine: The United States and its coalition partners have no intention of altering their timetable for prosecution of the Gulf war despite the latest diplomatic efforts in the Soviet Union, US officials said Saturday.

President George Bush Saturday underscored Moscow's "constructive role" in its ongoing talks with Baghdad, and its "very solid support" of the coalition which, he said, was still united in its resolve to drive Iraq out of Kuwait.

Mr. Bush, who is spending the weekend at his sea-side residence here, said he had received 'very fresh' assurances from Moscow on this

"The United Nations' position is solid and there's no giving on that at all," Mr. Bush told reporters who strolled with him on the beach.

A US official said Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. who is to meet Monday in Moscow with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tareq Aziz, had sent a message Thursday to Mr. Bush and other coalition leaders.

In that message, according to the New York Times, the Soviet leader asked the coalition not to start a ground offensive in the Gulf until before he meets with Mr. Aziz.

The official, who requested anonymity, did not confirm the newspaper's account, but stressed instead that the United States has 'said all along that the ground war will start on our schedule,' indicating that the allies had no intention of engaging the Iraqis in a ground war before Mon-

Saddam was nearly killed in bombing 9 days ago government in LONDON, Feb 18: Saddam

was nearly killed nine days ago in an Allied bombing raid and the Americans have set up an elaborate system to track the Iraqi President, the Sunday Times reported, says AFP.

"Saddam is now keeping very low profile. He has said he is not going to travel in a convoy again," an Iraqi opposition leader told the paper.

According to the weekly. two F-16 Allied warplanes bombed a convoy of 50 cars and trucks returning from a trip to the front line 100 miles (160 kilometres) north of

The pilots were not aware that Saddam Hussein was in the convoy, but later learned from Iraqi opposition groups that he was in one of the vehicles which escaped damage.

Some of his bodyguards were killed or injured in the attack, the paper said.

It quoted Pentagon sources as saying that American electronic- warfare aircraft were now flying round the clock over Baghdad in an effort of pinpoint the Iraqi leader.

The missions are intended to pick up conversations between Saddam Hussein and his military commanders, so he can be targetted in an operation dubbed "the Yamamoto option," after Admiral Yamamoto, a Japanese officer shot down in a transport plane over the Pacific in world war

AP adds from Nicosia: Saddam Hussein has proved willing to do almost anything to

NICOSIA, Feb 18: Iraq is

turning its fury on the man

who brought peace to

Baghdad after eight years of

the first Gulf war United

Nations Secretary- General

Javier Perez De Cuellar,

ident George Bush is a "War

criminal" Saudi Arabian

king Fahd and Egyptian

President Hosni Mubarak

are "US Zionist agents"

betraying Arabs and Muslim

tacks by various Iraqi

officials has shifted to the

72-year-old UN Secretary-

General, terming him a US

agent, and even stronger, a

The terms contrast dramat-

ically with statements of

praise and respect

showered on the Veteran

Peruvian diplomat when he

brokered an end to the

1980-88 Iraq war that

killed or wounded nearly a

million people from both

De Cuellar done nothing to

stop Washington and its Al-

Saadi Mehdi Saleh accused

Perez De Cuellar on Friday

of "lying, deceit and

hypocrisy," saying this made

it easier for the anti-Iraq

Latif Nassif Al-Jassem, a

close aide of President

Saddam Hussein, described

him as " dishonest.

attacks. Perez De Cuellar

said on Friday: "I don't pay

a dirty

Coalition to attack Iraq.

incompetent

criminal and plotter.

Shrugging of the personal

Iraqi Information Minister

This time Baghdad says, Perez

Iraq's Parliament Speaker

lies attacking Iraq.

dirty criminal and

for plotting to destroy Iraq.

But the focus of personal at-

In Iraq's parlance, US Pres-

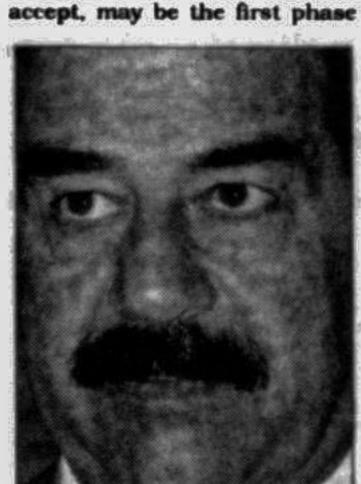
reports Reuter.

plotter.

sides.

power, from ordering poison gas used on his own people to granting huge concessions to a former enemy, Iran.

His offer to withdraw from Kuwait, linked though it is to conditions the affies will not



of his latest survival strategy.

"He now knows that continuing the war is meaningless. said Tasheen Beshir, and Egyptian political expert and former ambassador. "He needs to stop the war, but he will try to cover up any sense of defeat-he's a good poker player."

Not long ago, Saddam was vowing that Kuwait would remain part of Iraq for eternity. As of Friday, that vow was no longer operable.

Andrew Dunean, an analyst with the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London, said he had no doubt that Sad-

I don't pay attention to insults: Perez

Iraq grilling the first

Gulf peace-maker

attention at all to their

"I am so honoured (that)

during this terrible

situation they have time to

General," he replied

tronically when asked by a

reporter for comment.

Iraqi officials appear to be

outraged by an apparent

lack of diplomatic activity

by the UN Chief, who has

visited Baghdad once since

the Gulf crisis erupted with

Iraq's August invasion of

During his meeting with

Saddam on January 13 four

days before the Gulf war

broke out Perez De Cuellar

said he did not find any

flexibility on Iraq's part to

the " role of American

envoy, for getting that he is

But Saleh said he and assumed

leave Kuwait.

attack the Secretary-

insults."

dam could complete this about-face and withdraw from Kirwait without jeopardizing his hold on power in Iraq.

"He's quite capable of making major concessions, and there's no reason this shouldn't be the start of one." Duncan said in a telephone in-

"He will have enhanced his position with over half the Arab world, and he's not going to lose support because he saves the lives of thousand of his soldiers," Duncan added "It would be viewed as a realistic and magnanimous gesture." A Jordanian Political

Science Professor, Kamel Abu Jaber, already was prepared to credit Saddam with magna-Saddam "showed he cares

about the Iraqi people, by trying to alleviate their suffering." Abu Jaber said. "The lives of his people are worth more to him than to those bombing

In Washington, US President George Bush bluntly stated his preference for an outcome that ousted Saddam. He urged Iraq's military and its people "to take matters into their own hands, to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to

But influential US senator Sam Nunn suggested Saddam was hinting at further conces-

This could be the opening bid in Saddam's move toward diplomacy," Nunn said. "In the Arab world you always have to

UN Secretary-General ."

" He did not carry with him a

blue print for a solution to

the problem, nor did he

have a clear position or

well-defined stance one

Perez De Cuellar is " a world in

The US Security Council

sheep's clothing who mixes

honey with poison," he said

imposed economic

sanctions on Iraq to end its

occupation of Kuwait and

then authorised the use of

force to expel it from the

Iraqi Foreign Minister Tareq

Aziz sent two highly critical

letters to Perez De Cuellar

saying he and the countries

that voted for resolutions

against Iraq " bear re-

sponsibility to history and

to mankind for the hetnous

crimes being committed,"

against the Traqi people.

vents," he added.

Emirate.

be prepared for bargaining and this may be the opening gam-

Saddam has been Irag's effective ruler since 1968 and its President since 1979. In that period, he has survived at least a half-dozen assassination attempts, and kept his hold over the public with a mix of harsh repression and social re-

When Kurdish rebels posed a severe challenge to his regime in 1988, he ordered a counter offensive in which an estimated 4,000 villagers were killed by the army's chemical weapons. He launched a war with Iran that lasted from 1980 to 1988, yet last yearfollowing the invasion of Kuwait-granted to Iran many of the demands it had made for a final peace.

"Saddam is a lousy strategist," said Beshir, speaking by telephone from Cairo. "He miscalculated with Iran and he miscalculated with Kuwait. but I would leave it up to the Iraqi people to decide how to deal with a defeated Saddam Hus-

It Iraq did withdraw soon. it would still possess one of the world's largest military forces, even after the severe pounding inflicted by the allies' month-long air offensive. Thousands of tanks and hundreds of thousands of hardy troops would remain.

"His political position is pretty unassailable." Duncan said. "He's the only person in Iraq who makes decisions, and there don't appear to be any contenders for the succes-

Saddam's attempts to link Gulf war to the Palestinian cause might keep his newfound popularity alive among the Arab masses and make him a regional political power even with an economy in disarray.

"Unless we deal with the frustrations of the Arab people, we will be willing wining the war without saving the peace," Beshir said.

UN emergency medical aid for Baghdad

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 18 Trucks carrying 50 tonnes of emergency medical supplies for the treatment of children and mothers arrived safely in Baghdad on Saturday, the United Nations announced. reports Reuter.

Iraqi Health and Red Crescent officials met the convoy at the Iranian border town of Khosravi following requests from the UN groups that Allied force avoid dropping any bombs on its route.

A statement from the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) which organised the convoy in conjunction with the World Health Organisation, said a seven-member team from both agencies would spend a week evaluating essential health needs of women, children, the elderly and displaced people.

Tareq Aziz meets Ali Akbar Velayati

TEHERAN, Feb 18 : Iraqi Foreign Minister Tareq Aziz met here Sunday with Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Velayati on his way to Moscow for talks on the Gulf war with Soviet authorities, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported, says

Mr. Aziz arrived in IRAN over land from Iraq earlier Sunday and was to fly to Moscow later in the day, accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Saadoun Hammadi.

Burmese heroin makes its way to troops in Gulf

MOREH, India, Peb 18-There is evidence that drug smugglers are seeking Burmese herotn to sell to American troops in the Gulf, a senior Indian customs official said, reports Reuter.

Ramesh Bhattacharti said in an interview with Reuters on Priday two smugglers arrested near this Indo-Burseme border twno recently confessed they planned to smuggle one kg[2.2 pounds) of heroin to Dubai.

He quoted the arrested men as saying the druge would have been sold to Arab contacts offering higher that usual

Bhattacharji said that one informer had told him another smuggler was in Moreh offering four times the usual price for heroin made in Burma and usually smuggled to the West through India and Bangladesh.

The informer quoted the smuggler as saying the would get high prices in teh Gulf from Arabs intending to sell it

Major refuses to meet Dalai Lama

LONDON, Feb 18 : Prime Minister John Major has refused to meet the Dalai Lama, Tibet's extled spiritual leader, scheduled to visit Britain next month, reports AP.

A multi-party committee of lawmakers which invited the Dalai Lama to visit Britain from March 17 to 22 had requested a meeting with Major.

But in a letter February 13 to Lord Ennals, the committee's chairman, Major said such a meeting 'would not be to American soldiers. Bhat tachari said.

Although much of the heroin manufactured in Burma was smuggled out through Thailand, India and Banladesh were becoming increasingly

popular routes, he said. Bhattacharji said he esti mated seem 25kg (55 pounds) entered india through Moreh each day. Little of it was intercepted, he said.

Pork, prostitutes being allowed in S Arabia: Pak Minister

ISLAMABAD, Feb 18: Pakistani Cabinet Minister has criticised Saudi Arabia for allowing "alcohol, pork and prostitutes' in the holy land for the coalition Troops fight ing Iraq, reports Kyodo.

Abdus Sattar Khan Niazi. Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, said at a function Saturday. 'there was a time when the house of Saudis was selective even in respect of import of certain religious books but now alcohol, pork and prostitutes are coming to the same land and with funds provided by Saudt Arabta."

The remarks prompted a statement from the Saudi Embassy denying the allegations and saying that Christians were allowed to eat pork and allied were importing it for their own house

Niazi said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's offer to withdraw Iraqi troops from Kuwait must be taken seriously and allied forces must accounce an immediate cease-

Off the Record

They suffer when elephants do it

UNITED NATIONS: Tense and serious discussion among diplomats on Friday during informal Security Council consutlations on the Gulf situation had a lighter moment too, reports PII.

While some of them were discussing changes in the preand post-cold war scenario and its effect on the world, Indian Ambassador C.R. Gharekhan told them about an old Indian saying -- lower forms of life suffer for no fault of theirs when elephants fight. They also suffer when elephants make love.

"Well, it seems they suffer more when elephants make love," a diplomat remarked amidst laughter.

Secrets of Deng's long life

BEIJING: Playing pool, a happy family and sense of optimism are some of the secrets behind senior leader Deng Xiaoping's long life, say official Chinese publications, reports

"Comrade Deng Xiaoping is 86 years old but his health is extremely good. What are the secrets of his longevity", the regional Xinjiang Daily asked of China's most famous recluse in an edition reaching Beijing on Sunday.

Optimism and a love of sport, it replied, listing, swimming, bridge, walking, and watching football and basketball. "He also likes to play pool and in fact he's a very good shot

and always scores high points", the daily said, quoting an undated edition of Shanghai's old People's News. Deng, who is officially in retirement, made a rare public

appearance last week to attend a lunar New Year party in Shanghai. Pictures of a hale-looking Deng were published in national newspapers and a spate of articles on his health and achieve-

ments appear aimed at reminding China's 1.1 billion people of his behind-the-scenes role. Deng's extended family had four generation living under

one contented roof, Xinjiang Daily said, describing the patriarch's manner as "democratic" and his attitude "gentle". Sources close to his family say, however, that Deng's deci-

sion to use the Army to crush pro-democracy demonstrations in Betting's Tiananmen Square in 1989 led to a rift in the Deng clan.

We're queer, we're

LONDON: Saturday Thousands of homosexual men and women marched through London Saturday to protest at government plans to impose toughter penalties for some sex offences, reports Reuter. Police said between 5,000 and 6,000 people paraded past

the gates leading to Prime Minister John Major's official Downing Street residence. There were no arrests. Tourists photographed men dressed as nuns kissing each

other. "We 're queer, we're here and we're not shopping", marchers chanted as they approached Oxford Street, one of the city's main shopping streets.

Legislation before Britain's Parliament would allow harsher sentencing for public indecency between men, soliciting and procuring others to commit homosexual acts.

Government Minister John Patten said earlier this month that amendments would make clear the controversial clause in the Criminal Justice Bill was not intended to raise penalties for "victimless" homosexual offences.

Funny suits

ABILENE (Texas) - Charlton Heston picked up an honorary doctor of fine arts degree and amused the crowd by

Abilene Christian University president William J. Teague presented the honor during a private dinner Saturday at the Abilene Civic Center, during which Heston, known for roles in films on biblical themes, read selections from the old Tes-

When he put on the hood -- a fold of cloth worn over the chairman H. Lynn Packer quipped, "That's OK. You can wear it

Heston responded, "One thing I should know how to do is

The actor began developing a relationship with ACU in 1983 when he was asked to speak at the university. In 1985 his wife, photographer Lydia Clarke, exhibited works in ACU's

mandments"; "Ben Hur," for which he won the best-actor Oscar for 1959; and "The Agony and the Eestasy."

Uprising of Nepali militants on

Survival of Bhutan faces greatest threat: Wangchuk

THIMPHU (Bhutan), Feb 18 : The small Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan faces the greatest threat to its survival since the seventh century, says its ruler, King Jigme Singye

Wangchuk. Bhutan, hidden deep in the mountains between India and China, no longer qualifies for its travel book description of "The Last Shangri-la".

Peace was shattered last September by an uprising of militants from the kingdom's ethnic Nepali minority. Sporadic violence has continued since. In a recent interview with

said he believed the problem would continue for at least another year but could be solved though "honest, and genuine dialogue." He makes frequent visits to the troubled southern dis-

Reuter, the 35-year-old King

tricts, where most of the immigrants live, in an effort to redress grievances. He has ordered the release of hundreds of Nepalt "anti-nationals" arrested in the past four

Migrants' influx King Wangchuk said his greatest concern was the influx of migrants.

"Right now the factor that is eat stake for us is basically the survival of the Bhutanese people," he said.

"After all these years since the seventh century we have never ever been dominated by any foreign power. We have always somehow miraculously been able to defend our sovereignty and our security,"

"The threat is that if we are not careful and if this large influx of Nepalis keeps coming into Bhutan, and if the Nepalis own separate state and have their own separate identity. then we feel that it is only a matter of time-in the next 10. 15 or 20 years-before Bhutan will no longer be a Bhutanese nation.

"It will be a Nepali state ...just like Sikkim...unless this problem is amicably and effectively solved."

Neighbouring Sikkim, annexed by India in 1975, was once an independent monarchy. Its last ruler was King Wangchuk's uncle.

Like the Bhutanese, the ethnic Sikkimese are of mainly Mongol stock, related to the Tibetans who share their Buddhist religion . Nepali migrants, many of them ethnically Indo-Aryans and mainly Hindu, made the Sikkimese a minority in their own land.

Bhutan has a population officially put at 600,000, living in an area the size of Switzerland. King Wangchuk said a recent census had shown that 28 per cent of Bhutanese citizens were of Nepali origin.

The census also unconcerned large numbers of illegal Nepali immigrants, many of Nepalis in India to whom they whom were expelled but promised Bhutanese citizenjoined the uprising and acship and free land, and by cused the government of

racism, apartheid and despo-Today an estimated five

million Nepalts live in cramped settlements on the Indian side of Bhutan's border. Southern Bhutan was ideal for Nepali migration, the King said, because of its free educa tion, free health services,

higher wages and good land

available for cash crops and ce-

reals. On the long-forested border with the Indian states of Assam and West Bengal it had been impossible for Bhutan's weak administrative system to check the influx, he said

Bhutan People's Party The King said the revolt was led by a group ealled the Bhutan People's Party (BPP). whose militants number about 1.000. They were helped by

groups in India and Nepal who

Dialogue had been difficult with the BPP, however, because they had no clear leader, the King said.

want a pan-Himalayan Nepali

"The BPP has become extremely unpopular in southern Bhutan because they have raided a lot of villages and killed a lot of innocent people.

"When they could not export money, they started stealing, and robbing people. When that didn't work, they started kidnapping for ransom. The whole organisation has now become not only a terrorist organisation, but they are actively involved in murdering people.

30 killed in cross-border At least 30 people have

been killed so far in cross-border raids, kidnapings, vehicle hijackings, ambushes, dynamite bombings and clashes with security forces.

Schools are closed and many destroyed., Post offices,

been wrecked. Thimpu officials do not dare to venture out in national dress in the troubled south. The first stirrings of protest were a backlash against gov-

police, health, forest, customs

and agricultural posts have

ernment edicts dating from 1988, implemented by overzealous officials and aimed at preserving Bhutan's unique cultural identity as part of its "one nation, one people " policy of integration. One edict required

Bhutanese to wear national dress on public occasions, another enjoined a code of conduct based on Buddhist precepts, and another the teaching of Dzongkha, the national language, in schools. Teaching in the Nepali language was stooped in 1989.

The King said measures to deter the Nepali influx would include regular censuses, improved checking systems and strengthening the administration in the southern foothills.

wearing the academic hood backward, repots AP.

tament book of Exodus. back of a scholarly robe to indicate the earning of a degree -backward, the audience began to snicker and ACU board

Shore Art Gallery. She was honored Saturday with a certificate of appreciation from the University.

He is known for roles in films such as "The Ten Com-

as a bib or a hood."

wear funny suits."