

International

BRIEFLY

'Allies occupy 15 p.c. of Iraq':

Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said Wednesday that allied troops occupy about 15 per cent of Iraq and will continue to do so until a formal cease-fire is worked out, reports AP.

Bush criticises Arafat:

US President George Bush has criticised Yasser Arafat for supporting Saddam Hussein 'overly zealously' in the Gulf War, saying Arafat's actions have diminished his influence in the region, reports AP.

Baker's new idea on ME peace:

US Secretary of State James Baker brought his new thinking on Middle East peace moves to Syria, holding lengthy talks with President Hafez al-Assad, reports Reuter.

13 killed in Britain:

Forty-five cars and trucks slammed together in fog early Wednesday in a fiery pileup that killed 13 people and injured 25, police said. It was one of the worst road crashes in British history, reports AP.

Albania to free all politicians:

Albania will release all political prisoners still held in its prisons by March 17, the official ATA news agency reported on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

7 killed in Lanka fighting:

At least seven people were killed in Sri Lanka's northern and eastern districts, where the army is fighting rebels seeking Tamil independence, military officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

11 die in Filipino fire:

Eleven workers were killed when fire engulfed a Philippine garments factory in Manila before dawn Thursday police said, reports Reuter.

Rs 2m being paid for a vote in Pak Senate polls

ISLAMABAD, Mar 14: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his orthodox Islamic government are expected to win easily this week's senate elections and retain control of Parliament's upper house, reports AP.

Analysts predict Sharif and his Islamic Democratic Alliance will sweep most of the 46 seats at stake in Thursday's election. In Pakistan, the law-making power lies with the 217-member National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament, controlled by the Islamic Democratic Alliance since it routed former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in last Octo-

ber's election. But the 87-member senate is empowered to block legislation. Half its members face re-election every three years.

Sharif now controls 76 Senate seats. Ms. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party has two, and other smaller groups and independents have the rest. Sharif and his coalition command a solid majority in the National Assembly, with 152 seats. Ms. Bhutto's party has 44. An alliance victory would further strengthen Sharif's government, giving him solid majorities in both houses of Parliament and ensuring smooth passage of his economic, political and social programmes. But smaller parties and some independent candidates are still making their pitch, reportedly offering as much as 2 million rupees (100,000 dollars) for votes for their electoral colleges. "Anyone who offers a bribe or accepts it, will be disqualified," Sharif promised. Both the senator who is elected by purchasing votes and those who sell their votes will be disqualified. Unlike the National Assembly, the Senate is not chosen by popular vote.

Saddam's loyalists blow up two oil wells Unrest in Baghdad, situation inside Iraq fluid: US

WASHINGTON, Mar 14: The State Department said there was unrest in Baghdad and said the Iraqi government was using more troops in the Kurdish north to suppress uprisings there, as well as Republican Guards in and around Basra, reports Reuter.

Department spokesman Richard Boucher confirmed that the unrest occurred Tuesday "probably in the Shi'ite neighbourhoods in the eastern portion of the city" of Baghdad but did not give specific details. "The situation inside Iraq remains very fluid," Boucher said, but added, "It's difficult to give a clear picture of the overall situation there today."

He said the Iraqi government is using larger forces in the Kurdish north in order to suppress widespread unrest there, and there was also continued unrest in southern Iraq. "The government continues to employ particularly large Republican Guard and regular army forces in the Basra area, and in and around the Shi'ite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, suggesting that the situation in these areas remains unstable," he said. Boucher demurred when asked at a briefing whether this unrest would erode the government of Saddam Hussein. "I think it does reflect how widespread the dissatisfaction is with the government, but by saying that, it's still not possible to predict the ultimate outcome," Boucher told reporters. "Government control, when it's established, can often dis-



KUWAIT CITY: A low of smoke hangs over a mosque 13 Mar as oil wells set alight by Iraqi occupation forces continue to burn two weeks after the liberation of Kuwait. Specialists say the pollution may cause skin and lung cancer. —AFP/UNB photo

spate rather quickly into renewed violence," he said. In the absence of diplomatic relations between Baghdad and Washington — Iraq severed relations February 9 — Boucher said US officials were discussing Iraq's representation in the United States with an unnamed third country. Reuter from Nicosia adds: Street protests were said to have swept Baghdad Wednesday as Iraq admitted candidly for the first time that the country is in the grip of an uprising against Saddam Hussein. Tehran Radio said massive

demonstrations in several parts of Baghdad led to clashes in which a number of people from both sides were killed or wounded. The radio and Iran's news agency IRNA said battles raged between loyalist forces and rebels fighting to topple President Saddam Hussein in the southern port of Basra and the northern oil city of Kirkuk. An opposition Kurdish Front spokesman said in Damascus that Iraqi loyalist forces had blown up two oil wells in Kirkuk Wednesday. He gave no further details, but analysts said the government may want

to deprive the rebellious north of oil revenue. Beker Fatfah, spokesman for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, told IRNA that pitched battles were raging in Kirkuk and that the army had launched a full-scale assault on Khanaqin, 120 km (75 miles) northeast of Baghdad. Kurdish rebels were reported to have stormed the main Badush Jail in Mosul, Iraq's third largest city, and set all prisoners free. A spokesman for the Democratic Party of Kurdistan said in Paris rebels had taken the town of Akra, north of Mosul,

and controlled 75 per cent of Iraq's northern Kurdistan region. IRNA said several big explosions rocked Basra, Iraq's second city. It quoted a Basra citizen who crossed into Iran as saying the rebels were trying to drive loyalist forces out of the city and that Saddam's Republican Guard units were using Napalm bombs. AP says: Saddam Hussein's crack army units killed anti-government protesters in Baghdad, battled Kurdish guerrillas in the north, shelled rebel holdouts in the south, the opposition said Wednesday. Baghdad protesters and government forces clashed until noon (0900 GMT) Wednesday in fighting that killed many people. Tehran radio reported without being more specific. In Basra, the boom of artillery and tanks blasting rebel positions could be heard Wednesday morning in the nearby Iranian city of Khorramshahr, Iran's official media reported. Tehran radio also said that 30 people burned in napalm attacks on the rebels had been granted asylum in Iran. Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani has asked Saddam and his ruling Baath Party to step down. In the north, Kurdish rebels claimed they shot down four Iraqi helicopters. Guerrillas surrounded by Saddam loyalists held on to parts of the vital oil center city of Kirkuk and fighting also raged near Khanaqin, 135 kilometers (85 miles) northeast of Baghdad, according to rebel claims that could not be independently verified.

29 mosques destroyed by Allies

NICOSIA, Mar 14: At least 29 mosques and two churches were destroyed or damaged in Iraq by US and allied bombs and missiles during the Gulf War, Iraq's religious Affairs Minister said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Abdullah Fadhil told the Iraqi news agency INA his government planned to carry out a detailed survey of war damage to places of worship in overwhelming Muslim Iraq, which has small Jewish and Christian communities.

Fadhil said initial surveys showed that 13 mosques and two churches were among those damaged in Baghdad.

Five big mosques in Basra, Iraq's second city, suffered "massive destruction" while a sixth was completely destroyed, he told INA.

The mosques in Abul-Khasib town near Basra were destroyed, according to the report, which was monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Top priority in restoring and rebuilding places of worship would be given to those in Baghdad. "Those in other Iraqi governorates would be dealt with later," Fadhil said.

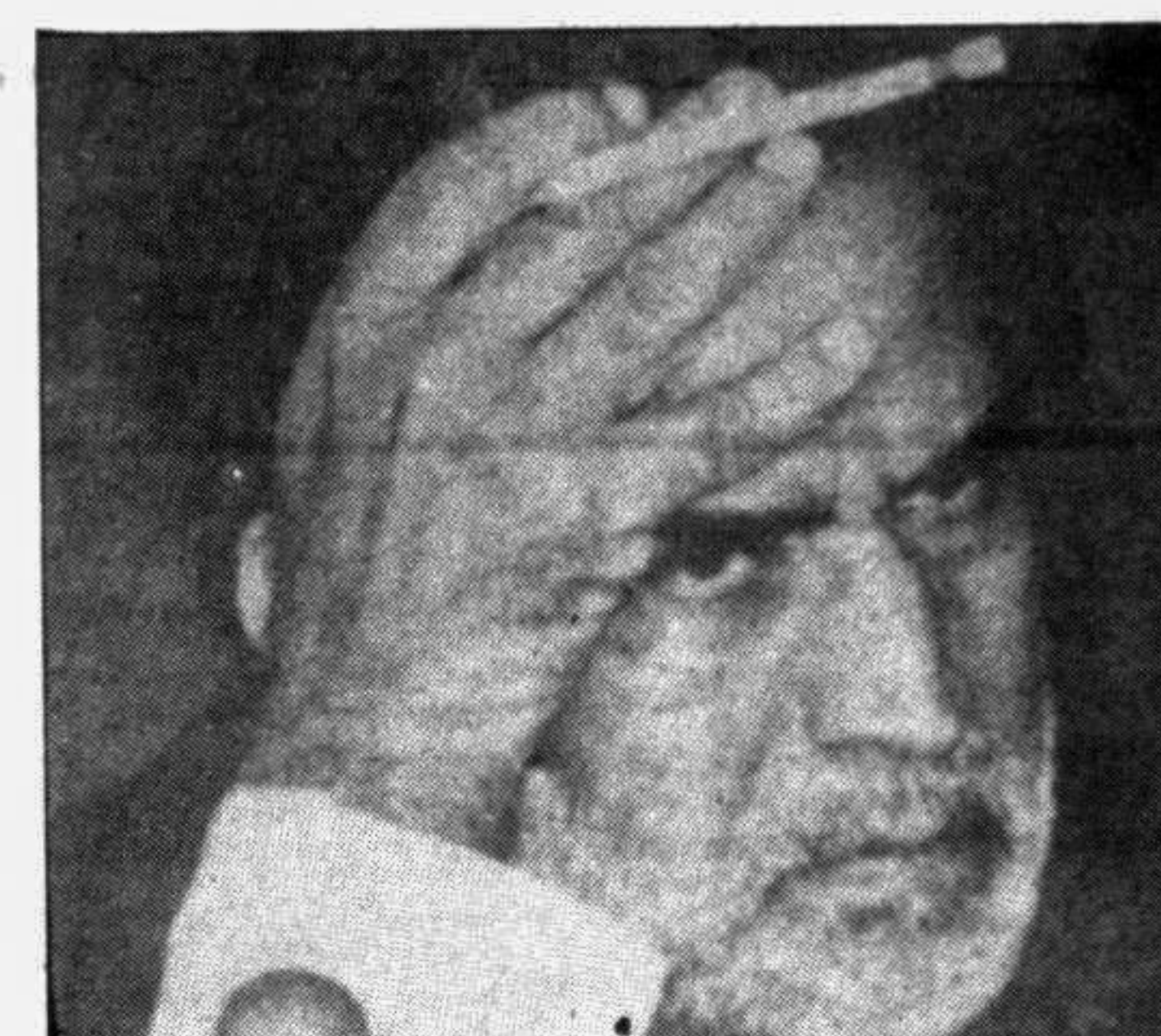
Iraq repeatedly accused the Allies during the six-week Gulf war of bombing civilian and residential areas, citing a wide range of targets that included 'bedouin' tents and apartment blocks.

The allies, led by the United States, say they never deliberately targeted residential areas during the war, which drove Iraqi forces out of Kuwait at the end of last month.

Parties not ready for national govt: Shekhar

PATNA, Mar 14: The Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, Wednesday said that the formation of a national government at the centre was a wishful thinking as all political parties were not ready for it, reports PTI. "For a national government, a national consensus is required," he told the Patna Doordarshan in an interview. Mr Shekhar said that the situation was not congenial for elections with so much of social tension all over the country. "We should have waited for another four or five months for the situation to stabilise further, but the stand adopted by the Congress-I made the midterm poll a necessity," he said.

The most important issue before the country at the moment was restoration of will power and confidence in the minds of the people. "A nation is built on will power, but that is what is lacking in our people. They have lost mutual faith and confidence." He said that a new atmosphere had to be built so that the aspirations of the people, particularly those of the down trodden sections of the society, were fulfilled. Asked about the apprehensions of another hung Parliament in the event of any political party failing to achieve an absolute majority, the Prime Minister said, we must not go by speculation.



Chandra Shekhar

Dissolution hailed Earlier on Wednesday political parties in union hailed President Venkataraman's decision to order midterm polls but Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal described it as 'harmful' to the nation.

Major political parties plunged into making preparations for the May elections to be held for the second time in 15 months. Though involved in some last minute efforts for a patch-up, the Congress (I) and the Janata Dal (S) joined the BJP, CPI, CPM and the National Front in wholeheartedly welcoming the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. The former Prime Minister, Mr. VP Singh, said the National Front and left parties would go to the polls together but commented that the elections were forced by "the irresponsible behaviour of the Congress (I)."

The BJP leader, Mr L K Advani, said his party proposed to contest at least 450 seats. Devi Lal's son, Mr. Om Prakash Chautala, felt that there was no alternative for the President but to order midterm polls. The Janata Dal (S) decided to field all the 62 members of the dissolved Lok Sabha, including the eight disqualified under anti-defection laws, in the May elections. Jyoti Basu In Calcutta, the Chief Minister Jyoti Basu Thursday said that it was yet to be decided if his party would enter into any electoral alliance with Janata Dal or National Front in the ensuing Lok Sabha poll but made it clear that the CPI (M) would fight the election on a separate manifesto. Addressing a press conference Mr. Basu, however, said that his party would share a common platform and launch a joint election campaign with those parties on some common issues including land reform, centre state relation, decentralisation of power and right to employment to all.

Commander killed Meanwhile, Indian Security Forces have shot dead a top Sikh militant wanted for more than 200 killings linked to a separatist campaign in the troubled northern state of Punjab, police said in Amritsar Wednesday. Satnam Singh Satta, who carried a price of two million rupees (111,000 US dollars) on his head, died last Thursday in a gunbattle with police in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. Two of his associates and two police constables also died in the gunbattle in Pilibhit district.

The 26-year-old militant headed a powerful faction of the Bhindran Wale Tigers Force of Khalistan, one of a half dozen groups fighting for a Sikh homeland called Khalistan (land of the pure).

Pakistan fails to trace 5 Deputies

ISLAMABAD, Mar 14: Pakistani authorities said Wednesday they had failed to trace five missing opposition provincial Deputies who must vote in partial elections to the Parliament's Upper House today, reports Reuter. Commerce Minister Mohammad Naem Khan told the National Assembly (Lower House) the government was doing its utmost to locate the Deputies. The opposition claims they have been abducted by Sind province authorities to prevent them from voting.

But the PDA will take part in Thursday's voting for 42 seats of the 87-seat Senate, the sources said. The four Provincial Assemblies form the electoral college for 40 seats while the 217-seat National Assembly will elect two Senators for the Islamabad capital area.

'USSR shifts tanks to escape arms treaty' LONDON, Mar 14: The Soviet Union has shifted tens of thousands of weapons and vehicles to storage depots to escape destruction under a conventional arms treaty, Jane's Defence Weekly reported Wednesday, reports AP. Harry Soyster, Director of the US Defence Intelligence Agency, said the Soviets have placed more than 10,000 tanks, 4,000 other armoured vehicles and 20,000 artillery pieces tanks in depots and are preparing them for long-term storage east of the Ural Mountains, the magazine said.

Off the Record

Women mad at male stripper

ADELAIDE (Australia): Officials were asked to intervene after 25 women ripped the clothes off a male stripper at a party, then refused to pay for his frustratingly short act, reports AP. Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC) spokesman Norman Prentice said Friday that the CAC had received a complaint from a group of women after a stripper ended his 170 dollar (US\$132) act in 10 minutes instead of the agreed half hour. The CAC decided that 100 dollars (US\$78) would be a fair price because the stripper had performed and audience participation had accelerated his act.

"During his disrobing they ripped off his G-string and his shirt. They both got torn," Prentice said. "They offered to pay for the G-string and shirt but not his fee. 'It's part of the performance for the girl of honour, who is usually highly embarrassed by all of this, to take the gear off,' he said.

Former suspect in Palme killing case arrested

STOCKHOLM (Sweden), Mar 14: The former main suspect in the 1986 killing of Prime Minister Olof Palme was arrested after threatening to kill the manager of a liquor store, police said Wednesday, reports AP. Store manager Ingvar Sundling told two Stockholm newspapers that Christer Pettersson, 43, flew into a rage after being asked for money by a man in the liquor store on Tuesday. He decided to intervene after Pettersson took out a knife.

They then refused to pay him a fee. "He was wet and naked. He was not in a position to do much bargaining." A week after slinking off unpaid the stripper had approached the women to get paid. They refused but referred the case to us, he said. "Our advice was that as he had performed we suggested they pay 100 dollars." The CAC was unaware if the women had complied, Prentice said.

Bangladeshi community in UK burgeoning

LONDON (LPS): Bangladeshis make up the most recently established and the most rapidly growing ethnic group in Britain, according to "New Community", a quarterly journal of research and policy on ethnic relations sponsored by Britain's Commission for Racial Equality. In an article, "The Growth of the Bangladeshi Population," Oxford University geography lecturer Ceri Peach says that large-scale Bangladeshi migration to Britain did not occur until the 1970s, when Britain's ethnic minority communities were facing acute economic difficulty. Men and the very young — those under the age of 16 — account for more than half the current estimated Bangladeshi population of

111 000, which therefore has considerable potential for natural increase in Britain. More Bangladeshis tend to live in local authority housing in urban conurbations outside London and in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets than other South Asian groups. While the Bangladeshis settled in the poorer eastern inner city area of Tower Hamlets, the Indian and Pakistani communities preferred the western end of the city towards Heathrow Airport.

Mr Peach adds that only 35% of Bangladeshi heads of household — near to the West Indian figure of 37% — owned their accommodation in 1985, compared with 77% of their Indian and 74% of their Pakistani counterparts. Another article, by John Eade, senior lecturer in Social Anthropology and Sociology at London's Roehampton Institute, examines nationalism among Bangladeshis. It says that during the early 1980s political development in Tower Hamlets encouraged the community to articulate its ethnic identity and link its situation to political struggles in Britain and Bangladesh. He adds that because the Islamic group among the Bangladeshis also drew support from sources other than public funding, it was able to take hold initiatives on issues affecting their lives between 1986 and 1990. These included the provision of halal food and prayers

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