

International

BRIEFLY

Saddam meets partymen:

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein Thursday chaired a joint meeting of the Revolutionary Command Council and the regional leadership of Iraq's ruling Baath Party. Baghdad radio said, reports AFP.

The radio report, monitored in Nicosia, gave no details of the meeting.

On Wednesday, Mr. Hussein was reported to have inspected his southern war front and told his commanders that 10,000 allied air sorties had killed only 90 Iraqis.

The official Iraqi news agency quoted Mr. Hussein as saying the enemy "is avoiding any land encounter" and "its 10,000 sorties have left only 90 martyrs" until Tuesday.

He said the U.S. allied forces would be defeated by Iraq.

Just as their ancestors were at the advent of Islam."

Fresh bombing at Basra:

Iran's official news agency, IRNA said in Nicosia said allied warplanes blasted targets in southern Iraq, including the port city of Basra, in two separate air raids Thursday morning, reports AP.

It marked the third consecutive day that the Islamic Republic News Agency, monitored in Nicosia, reported a heavy bombardment of the port city that also serves as Iraq's military headquarters for the Kuwait theater.

Iran said the sounds of explosions and anti aircraft fire could be heard in the Iranian city of Khorramshahr, 25 miles (40 kilometers) southeast of Basra.

The agency, without citing a source, said at least 29 allied fighter bombers took part in raids Thursday at 0330 GMT and at 0545 GMT.

Iraq uses satellite photo:

Iraq put its military facilities under better camouflage by using the satellite photo it bought from the United States, according to the German newspaper Augsburg Allgemeine, reports Xinhua.

The newspaper in Bonn said that Baghdad checked the camouflage of its military facilities with the help of the satellite photo and make it hard for the allied air force to tell the real from the decoys.

Iraq bought in the past decade hundreds and thousands of U.S. dollar worth photos of Iraqi territory from Eosat Co., a U.S. company, the newspaper said.

Iraq also managed last year to get satellite photos on Iraq from French company Spot-Image.

2 F-16 fighters crash:

Two F-16 fighters from McDonnell air force base collided and crashed Thursday east of Wichita, law enforcement spokesmen said, reports AP.

An eye witness said he saw one pilot parachute from one of the planes. Officials said they believe the other pilot also ejected but he has not yet been found.

Information was not immediately available on the hospitalized pilot, nor were there further details available about the crash.

Police were dispatched to deep onlookers away from the crash sites. Most of the F-16s at McDonnell base are used by the Kansas Air National Guard for training pilots.

Soviet advisers in Iraq:

Some Soviet military advisers have remained in Iraq to help the Iraqi armed forces operate sophisticated Soviet-supplied equipment, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) radio in London said Thursday, reports Reuters.

The radio said its exclusive report was based on information provided to academic analysts at Pentagon briefings.

It noted that Moscow had said all Soviet personnel had been withdrawn from Iraq.

The Soviet Union has pledged to apply United Nations sanctions against Iraq and has backed the Security Council resolution authorising the use of force to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

Soviet FM to meet Bush:

The new Soviet Foreign Minister will meet this weekend with President George Bush as the U.S. Government decides on whether to postpone next month's summit meeting in Moscow, U.S. officials in Washington said Thursday, reports AP.

Alexander Bessmertnykh also will meet with Secretary of State James A. Baker III. Discussions will include the Soviet crackdown in the Baltics and whether a treaty to curb long-range nuclear missiles can be concluded in time for Bush's scheduled meeting in Moscow with Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

Benazir branded a traitor:

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's Muslim countrymen are branding her a traitor to Islam because of her praise of U.S. President George Bush's "masterly" handling of the Gulf crisis, AP reports from Islamabad.

Most Pakistanis, including her party loyalists, see Iraqi President Saddam Hussein as the champion of Muslim unity and protector of the faith.

Members of Ms. Bhutto's left-leaning Pakistan People's Party have organized anti-U.S. demonstrations since war erupted in the Gulf. They have shouted "death to Americans," burned effigies of Bush and waved Iraqi flags and giant posters of Saddam kneeling in prayer.

They were stunned by news reports Wednesday and Thursday quoting their former leader, Ms. Bhutto, as praising Bush in an interview with a U.S. television network.

Indian experts missing:

Some 60 Indian railway experts working on projects in Iraq have been reported missing after leaving Baghdad for Jordan, Indian Railway Minister Janeshwar Misra has in New Delhi said, reports AP.

The Statesman daily Thursday quoted the Minister as saying in Madras city that New Delhi had no information on the 60 railwaymen in the Gulf country where an estimated 1,000 Indians are stranded.

"The last that was heard about was that they were on their way to Jordan," the Minister said, without giving dates or further details.

The experts belonged to two Indian state owned rail consultancy firms and were deputed to Iraq as part of a Delhi-Baghdad bilateral industrial development treaty.

Pak Wage Board enhances pay:

The pay and allowances for the newspapers employees in Pakistan were raised substantially in the fifth Pakistan Wage Board Award which has been given retrospective effect from April 15 last year, reports AP.

The Pakistan Minister for Labour and Manpower Ezazul Haq announcing the award at a press conference in Islamabad recently said the pay hike ranged from 33 per cent to 149 per cent. He said significant increase had also been made in house rent, general transport, charge, outfit, washing and many other allowance.

Presence of Saddam's family in Zambia denied

LUSAKA, Jan 25: The Zambian Government Thursday denied reports that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's wife and family were in Zambia under President Kenneth Kaunda's protection, reports AFP.

Mr. Kaunda's spokeswoman, Mable Milimo, told AFP that the report was a "fabricated story."

"It is just cheap and malicious propaganda aimed at discrediting the Zambian Government because we have not responded favourably towards the action taken by the allied forces," she said.

90 Iraqi soldiers killed: Baghdad
Allied troops afraid of ground war, Saddam told

NICOSIA, Jan 25: Iraq's official news agency said Thursday that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein visited the southern front on Wednesday and met with commanders who told him the allies were cowardly afraid of a ground war, reports AP.

The Iraqi News Agency also reported "only 90" Iraqi troops had been killed by allied bombing as of Tuesday. Previously Iraq had reported 39

troops killed by hostile fire. Baghdad Radio, also monitored in Nicosia, reported that Iraq had shot down planes and missiles during 15 air raids on Iraq and that it had fired missiles into Israel and Saudi Arabia.

"Despite all the concentrated enemy bombing, our armed forces losses... were only 90 martyrs from the air strikes after the enemy made over 10,000 sorties, the news

agency said, explaining the figure was complete up until Tuesday.

The agency said Saddam traveled to the southern front Wednesday to meet with commanders and members of the general staff.

"After giving him a report on the developments in the mother of battles, the commanders said that because of his (the allies) cowardice and fear of combat with the land

forces, the enemy tried to avoid establishing any serious contact and preoccupied itself for the benefit of public opinion, with bombing from high altitudes," INA said.

Will power to decide the battle.

The agency quoted Saddam as telling the troops the battle would be decided by Iraq's superior will power and patience.

"It is only a matter of time before the enemy becomes convinced it has done all it can and that the Iraqis are determined to confront it and triumph over it," the agency quoted him as saying.

"The material losses suffered by Iraq can only be compensated by a victory," Saddam said.

It is only a matter of time before the invaders leave and glorious and faithful Iraq achieves all this, God willing, and Palestine and the other Arab territories will be liberated," he added.

Reuters adds: Allied soldiers have begun digging in within sight of the Iraqi army, girding themselves for a ground war to end Iraq's occupation of Kuwait.

Colonel Ron Rokosz, Commander of the 82nd Airborne Division's second brigade, said his men could detect the glint of the windscreens of Iraqi vehicles. They were well within range of Iraqi artillery.

"We're going to dig in, get the forces in, and wait," he said.



SILOPI (Turkey)-- Two Turkish soldiers stand guard wearing protective gas masks at the border with Iraq here. The Turkish troops are still pouring in numbers with an estimated 2,00,000 now in position along the Turkish and Iraqi border, ready to launch a blitzkrieg on President Saddam's soldiers in Kuwait —AFP/UNB Phot

Bush tells Americans to be ready for ups and downs

WASHINGTON, Jan 25: The Gulf war will last "probably months," the White House said Thursday, stressing the United States could not predict precisely the war's duration and that U.S. public opinion should accept the idea the war will not end shortly or without U.S. losses, reports AP.

"I don't think anybody in the Administration has ever given a time other than we've said probably months," said White House spokesman Martin Fitzwater.

President George Bush, emphasizing the war would not be drawn out as in Vietnam, repeatedly has said war would not be "cheap or easy."

Mr. Fitzwater said Mr. Bush on Thursday had made plain in a meeting with republican members of Congress that Americans "should not expect this to be over in a matter of days" and that including some enemy victories and surprises, and allied losses on some days.

The spokesman added Mr. Bush told the congressmen "We need to get in a frame of mind that allows us to accept those reverse—but still keep track of the main thrust and our conviction that we will win."

Japan

Message from Tokyo adds: President Bush thanked Japan's Prime Minister

Toshiki Kaifu for decision to give nine billion dollars, Japanese officials said today.

In a 13-minute, late-night telephone conversations Thursday with Mr. Bush, Mr. Kaifu said Japan voluntarily decided to give additional support to the anti-Iraq coalition, including the financial aid and commercial planes to the Middle East for airlifting war evacuees, they said.

The officials quoted Mr. Bush as saying, "The decision will be highly appreciated not only by the United States but by other U.S. allies."

Mr. Kaifu also offered condolences to Mr. Bush on American soldiers killed in the fighting with Iraq.

Japan to send fighters to the Gulf

TOKYO, Jan 25: The Japanese government gave the green light today to send military aircraft abroad for the first time since World War II, reports AP.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Misoji Sakamoto told a news conference that the cabinet approved a special ordinance enabling the government to dispatch self-defence forces aircraft to the Middle East to evacuate refugees from the Gulf war.

The opposition led by the Japan Socialist Party, has argued that such a move would violate Japan's post-war constitution which renounces the use of force in settling international disputes.

UNDRO expects mass exodus

80,000 refugees from Iraq flee to Iran

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 25: The United Nations' Disaster Relief Agency, known as UNDRO, disclosed on Thursday that as many as 80,000 refugees from Iraq may be converging on Iran to escape allied bombing raids, reports Reuters.

According to a report from UNDRO and talks with relief officials, the refugees could arrive within the next few days at the border crossing-point of Shalameh.

Iran, which frequently mentions a potentials deluge of refugees in its pleas for a halt in the fighting, has the capacity to deal with about 100,000 people, they said.

An Iranian official in Teheran said on Wednesday 1,000 refugees had crossed the border since the bombing began but predicted the number could swell to 200,000. He said, the refugees were expatriates and did not include Iraqi or Kuwaiti nationals.

U.N. Relief officials told reporters they also were concerned that continued bombing by United States and its allies could seriously increase the number of people fleeing to other countries, such as Jordan, Syria and Turkey.

In the past week, at least 10,000 people have arrived in Jordan from Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Those from Iraq were

suffering from malnutrition, the officials said.

The Baghdad Health Ministry asked the World Health Organisation and the U.N. Children's Fund to send a fact-finding mission but a U.N. spokesman said staff would not travel to Iraq until the bombing stopped.

Under the Security Council's trade embargo adopted on August 6, medicine is permitted but all food shipments were halted except in humanitarian circumstances and under the supervision of International Relief Organisations.

AP adds: About 700 people have fled into Iran from Iraq since the start of the Gulf war.

No radiation from strikes on Iraqi N-plants

WASHINGTON, Jan 25: Strikes on Iraqi nuclear facilities have resulted in no detectable releases of radiation senior U.S. military officials said Thursday, reports AP.

"We have detected no perceptible radiation," Marine Corps Major General Martin Brandtner told reporters at a Pentagon briefing.

General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Wednesday two Iraqi nuclear reactors had been destroyed by the Allied Forces and a third reactor built by the French and bombed by the Israelis in 1981 was out of commission.

Iraq's nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons capability have been at the top of the allies list of targets since the war began with massive air strikes on Iraq and Kuwait January 17.

40 underground shelters in Baghdad

Iraqi Army's monstrous size makes for easy targetting

IN CENTRAL SAUDI ARABIA, Jan 25: US pilots said Thursday they are inflicting heavy damage on tactical Iraqi targets, including Republican Guard ground forces, in part because the sheer size of the Iraqi military makes targetting easier, reports AP.

"It's a monstrously big army. Basically, when you hit the ground, you're going to get the army somewhere," said Capt. Jeff Gurney, 32, who flies an F-16A fighter bombers.

Lt. Col. John Marshall, the squadron's commander, said allied fighters had inflicted "a lot of damage" on the Republican Guards and that craters pocked the landscape.

Another pilot, however said, he was not convinced the

bombardment of Iraqi forces from the skies would erode their fighting power.

Returning pilots said more Iraqi aircraft were in the skies Thursday than at any time since the war began a week ago, but that Iraqi anti-aircraft fire is less frequent.

With mostly clear skies, many sorties began just before dawn to get jets over their targets at daybreak.

Gurney was flying his ninth combat mission when he led several F-16As in a series of attacks on an airfield and two fuel depots Thursday morning. "I rolled in on one fuel dump and saw large fire and pillars of smoke going up to 20,000 feet (7,000 meters)," he said.

Maj. Bobby Jernigan, 37, also led one of five strikes by F-16As into Kuwait on Thursday.

The take-offs were staggered to maintain nearly continuous pressure on the Iraqis, and pilots reported hitting Republican Guard artillery concentrations, tanks and division headquarters.

Jernigan described a panorama of devastation along the Kuwaiti border where the Republican Guard are positioned.

"There's a lot of blow-up stuff on the ground up there right now," he said. "We saw a bunch of bad guys on the ground. We saw tanks and artillery, troops and encampments."

The pilots said they could see signs of the bombings that preceded their sorties.

"You can see the spots where B-52s came through, because B-52s carry a lot of bombs and there is a big long swath of craters," Jernigan said. "There are areas of the warth that are just blackened circles—that's probably where some cluster bombs went off and covered an area."

Xinhua adds: A British Engineer said Thursday that has up to 40 underground shelters to protect its aircraft and armed forces from bombardment.

Despite continued allied bombardment, only a small number of Iraqi aircraft were destroyed.

Off the Record

Dozens of baby Saddams in Jordan

Dozens of babies in Jordan have been named after Saddam Hussein since the Gulf war started because, as one mother said, the Iraqi President has proved by hitting Israel that he "keeps his promises," reports AP.

Nineteen new-born Saddams (meaning "he who confronts" in Arabic) have been registered at Al-Amal Maternity Clinic alone, said a spokesman for the clinic in Amman. The choice was even more popular at government hospitals.

Many families in Jordan, where the population has voiced support for Iraq in its confrontation with the West, are also opting for the name Oday, after the eldest son of the Iraqi leader.

"I called by baby Saddam so he keeps his promises," said mother Zikayat Khamiss, referring to the Iraqi Missile attacks on Israel.

Mr. Hussein had vowed that Tel Aviv would be his first target if Iraq came under attack from the U.S.-led multinational force in the Gulf.

Judas kiss

RIO DE JANEIRO (Brazil): A jealous woman punished her lover in Brazil after she found out he was married by biting off a chunk of his tongue while pretending to kiss him, police said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

The woman swallowed the piece of tongue to prevent him from having it sewn back on," said a police spokesman in the northeastern city of Salvador.

The attack occurred on Monday night after the woman found out her lover was married, police said.

Djalma Jose Dos Santos, 47, is recovering in hospital. That was a real Judas kiss, "the man, unable to speak, wrote on a piece of paper, police said. He was referring to disciple Judas kissing Jesus Christ after betraying him to the Romans.

The woman has disappeared, police said.

Sihanouk ordered to pay \$ 20,000 damages

PARIS: Exiled Cambodian leader Prince Norodom Sihanouk was ordered by a French court on Wednesday to pay 20,000 dollars damages to a Minister in the Phnom Penh government, reports Reuters.

The ruling followed a libel case brought by Phnom Penh Foreign Minister Hor Nam Hong against Sihanouk, Titular head of the three-sided guerrilla coalition fighting to overthrow the Vietnam-backed Cambodian government.

In an interview with a French weekly in 1989, Sihanouk accused Hor Nam Hong of being responsible for the deaths of Cambodians during the 1970s, when he headed a Khmer Rouge work camp for alleged renegade politicians.

The court said Sihanouk's statement lacked good faith and appeared to be politically motivated and not substantiated by fact. It called on him to pay 100,000 Francs (20,000 Dollars) damages and 20,000 Francs (4,000 dollars) in legal fees.

Volcanic bulges on Venus

WASHINGTON: Dozens pictures taken by the Magellan spacecraft show spider-shaped volcanic bulges on Venus, U.S. NASA said yesterday, reports Xinhua.

The Venus's spider-shaped volcanic bulges provide more evidence, that rising underground blobs of molten rock help shape the planet, said scientist of Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

The features are called "arachnoids" because of their resemblance to spiders, which fall under the biological class known as arachnids. They were discovered by Soviet spacecraft in 1983 and 1984, but the pictures taken by Magellan allow scientists to theorize about how they were formed.

The part of each arachnoid that looks like spider's body is a bulge that is 30 miles to 140 miles wide and rises a few hundred yards above the surrounding plains. The upward bulging of the landscapes created cracks in the ground that look like nested sets of circles or ovals. A volcanic dome is in the center of each set of circles.

Gulf war scare

RIO DE JANEIRO: Captain of a Brazilian tanker was discharged after he refused to obey an order to enter the Gulf, it was learnt here, reports Xinhua.

The tanker 'Hernaez Dies' Wednesday received the order to load 2.1 million barrels of crude in the Saudi port of Ras Tanura in the Gulf, but Captain Gorge da Silva refused to comply.

Nautical Officers Union sources revealed that after a poll, was held on board the ship, 29 out of the 31 crew members voted against sailing into the Gulf.

The Transports Director of the state-owned Brazilian Petroleum Company (Pertubas), Admiral Maximiano da Fonseca, told the Press that Captain Da Silva had been replaced as ship commander.

However, the President of the merchant marine Nautical Officers Union, Helicel Montz, said Da Silva had not violated any rules since the captain of a ship has the right to avoid sailing in areas at war.

Asthma gene found

LONDON: Japanese scientists said yesterday they had artificially reproduced a gene that plays an important part in causing asthma, the most widespread chronic disease in the developed world, reports Reuters.

UN rebuffs plea for truce debate

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 25: The Security Council on Thursday rebuffed an Arab attempt to open a public debate on a ceasefire in the Gulf war. Instead, the Council President urged Iraq to withdraw its troops from Kuwait, reports AP.

"Iraq's Aug. 2, 1990, aggression and war against Kuwait must be ended," said Council President Bagbeni Adeto Nzengeya, the Zairian Ambassador. "The majority of the members will be associated with my statement."

He was asked if the Council would refuse to adopt any resolution or statement on the war unless Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is willing to have his troops retreat.

"I think this is the majority stance," he replied.

British Ambassador Sir David Hannay said: "there were a couple of assertions that the (military) actions went beyond what was, strictly speaking, required."

He did not specify who made the assertions, but they were known to be Cuba and Yemen.

The Council heard reports from the United States, Britain and France on the progress of the war.

Those countries and the Soviets have been fighting to keep the council from convening publicly unless Saddam agrees to withdraw his troops and restore Kuwait's Government, as demanded by Security Council resolutions.

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and United Arab Emirates opposed a debate.

Soviet Ambassador Valentin Lozinski said: "We stand waiting for a positive response from Saddam Hussein to our suggestions, and we haven't received any so far."

The request for a public Council meeting by Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, Mauritania, Algeria, Sudan and Yemen failed to win enough support within the Council for a public meeting. It would need nine out of 15 votes.

Those countries want the Security Council to declare a cease-fire so Saddam can withdraw his troops in safety from Kuwait. Arab nations would send in a peacekeeping force to replace the Iraqis.

U.N. officials and diplomats say proposals for a ceasefire or "pause" in the war seem doomed because they depend on Iraq's readiness to withdraw from Kuwait, which Iraq invaded on Aug. 2.