

# BRIEFLY

**Iraq's civilian areas hit:** Allied air forces staged 58 air raids on Iraqi residential and civilian areas this afternoon and fired several missiles, according to a military communique carried by the Iraqi news agency in Nicosia, reports AP.

"Some of the raids originated from bases in Turkey and there were three violations of Iranian airspace by American aircraft trying to attack cities in eastern regions of Iraq," the agency said in a dispatch.

A military spokesman on Wednesday also said an Allied plane had mounted an attack from the east, suggesting that the aircraft had flown through Iranian airspace on the mission.

Iran has declared itself neutral in the war between Iraq and US-led coalition trying to force it out of Kuwait.

**Saddam's aide in Tehran:** A senior aide to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein arrived Thursday in Iran, saying he would brief Tehran rulers on the war "the United States imposed on Iraq," Iran's official media reported, reports AP from Nicosia.

Tehran Radio later announced that Francois Scher, secretary general at the French Foreign Ministry, also had arrived for talks on the Gulf.

In Paris, French Foreign Ministry sources said Scher would not take part in peace talks or meet with the Iraqi official.

Scher went to Tehran to "exchange views" and "maintain contacts," foreign ministry spokesman Daniel Bernard had said.

He does not have a "mandate to discuss new peace initiatives," a ministry source said later.

"A solution cannot be envisioned as long as Kuwait is occupied," French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas said.

**UN rejects debate on truce:** The Security Council has rejected an attempt by some Arab States to open a UN debate on a possible cease-fire in the Gulf War, reports AP from United Nations.

US Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering said council members do not foresee taking further action "until (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein indicates that he's ready to comply with the resolutions." UN resolutions demand that Iraq withdraw its troops from Kuwait and restore the Emirate's government.

At the request of Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia, and Sudan, council members Cuba and Yemen have tried for over a week to open a debate on the Gulf conflict.

The North African nations have been circulating a proposal to have the council declare a cease-fire so Saddam can withdraw his troops in peace, while Arab peacekeepers take their place. The 28-nations Allied coalition would also be required to withdraw its troops.

Saddam, however, has shown no inclination to move his army out of Kuwait.

Cuba and Yemen have voted against several council resolutions, including the one authorizing military force to drive Iraq out of Kuwait.

**Allied coalition flags burned:** Tens of thousands of Muslim fundamentalists burned the flags of the nations allied against Iraq on Thursday to cries of "God is great." In another protest, hundreds of white-coated doctors rallied to protest the "massacres" of Gulf war, reports AP.

The fundamentalists marched peacefully in the rain through Algiers, demonstrating for a "Jihad," or holy war side-by-side with Iraq. They also chastised Algerian President Chadli Bendjedid for refusing to allow pro-Iraqi volunteer training camps.

Meanwhile, doctors carrying signs reading "Yes to life, no to death" condemned alleged "massacres" of Iraqis from bombardments by the multinational coalition.

The doctors asked the United Nations to conduct itself "like a peace, not a war organization" and called on the World Health Organization to move to end what they called civilian.

The fundamentalists, a rising political force, denied charges they wanted to use training camps to take power by force.

Both marches were peaceful. Pro-Iraqi demonstrations have become a common occurrence in this North African nation.

**Cultural centre set afire:** A previously unknown Muslim fundamentalist group broke into the French Cultural Centre overnight and started a small fire, police reported Thursday, reports AP.

A senior police officer, who cannot be named understanding regulations in Amman said the blaze was reported shortly before midnight (2200 GMT) Wednesday.

"There were signs that the perpetrators broke into the center from the back door, soaked the place with gasoline and set the place on fire," he said.

Damage consisted of a "few desks, book shelves as well as the carpets in the library room," he added.

French Embassy Spokesman Senemaud said a previously unknown Muslim radical group, the Jihad Brigades, claimed responsibility in a telephone call.

The anonymous caller did not give any reason for the attack, Senemaud said.

However, the fire was believed to be linked with calls by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and many Islamic fundamentalist leaders in the Arab world for attacks against the interests of the countries participating in the US-led coalition massed against Iraq.

**US bid to attack Iraq from Iran:** Iraq on Thursday said US combat aircraft overflew Iran to attack Iraqi cities, reports Reuters.

Baghdad radio, quoting the latest military communique, number 33, said: "Three violations to Iranian airspace occupied by the Atheist American planes in an attempt to attack our cities from the eastern part of the country."

It said, Iraqi ground and air defences shot down 13 Allied planes and missiles during 58 raids mounted by its enemies on Thursday.

**Jackson wants to meet Saddam:** US black civil rights leader Jesse Jackson said on Thursday that he is willing to meet with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to seek the release of Allied prisoners of war, reports Reuters.

"I will do whatever I can to seek the release of the POWs. up to and including going there if the opportunity presents itself," Jackson said during a visit to Chicago.

Jackson, who unsuccessfully sought the democratic nomination for the US presidency in 1988 and 1984, said he on Monday met the Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations, Abdul Amir AL-Anbari.

**Tremor strikes Afghanistan:** A moderate earthquake struck Afghanistan early Friday but wasn't expected to have caused much damage, a geophysicist said, reports AP from Golden Colorado.

The quake hit at 4:04 am (2304 GMT Thursday) and was centered near the border with Pakistan and the Soviet Union, said Russ Needham, a geophysicist with the National Earthquake Information Center.

Needham said, the tremor measured 6.6 on the Richter Scale.

"It was very deep, so it probably was felt throughout the area, but I wouldn't expect much damage," Needham said. "That's a fairly sparsely populated area."

Its epicenter was about 190 miles (305 kilometers) northwest of Kabul, Afghanistan, and an equal distance north of Peshawar, Pakistan.

No immediate report of damage or injuries were available.

The Richter scale is a measure of ground motion as recorded on seismographs. Every increase of one number means a tenfold increase in magnitude. An earthquake of 6 can cause severe damage.

400 troops captured, say Allies

## Iraqi attack only a mosquito bite: US commanders

WASHINGTON, February 1: US commanders on Thursday dismissed an Iraqi attack into Saudi Arabia as a mere mosquito bite but military reports suggested Iraq might be readying a much bigger offensive, reports Reuters.

General Norman Schwarzkopf, the blunt and burly commander of Operation Desert Storm, led what appeared to be a major public relations effort to reassure the public that the Western-Arab coalition would surely win the 15-day-old war and to muffle shockwaves stirred by Iraqi captured attacks that killed

11 U.S. marines and briefly held a Saudi border town. This has been in some corners touted as a great victory.

To me it's about as significant as a mosquito on an elephant," Schwarzkopf said in one of several appearances on U.S. morning television shows.

Saudi troops backed by U.S. marine air power recaptured Khafji on Thursday, destroying a number of tanks and taking about 160 Iraqi prisoners, Allied military briefers said.

U.S. Brigadier General Pat Stevens, a military briefier in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia said he

too wished to dispel any impression the Khafji battle amounted to "a major victory" for Iraq.

"Our view of that is that it's a reconnaissance in force, an attempt to seek us out and try to determine what our strengths and dispositions are," Stevens said.

Pentagon briefier Lieutenant-General Tom Kelly called the Khafji raid a "pretty shabby" achievement. "They got kicked right back across the border," Kelly said.

Despite disparaging remarks about Iraqi prowess and tactics, U.S. intelligence

reports said up to 1,000 more Iraqi military vehicles were moving through southern Kuwait towards the Saudi border.

"Roughly 800 to 1,000 vehicles are moving now... in columns, in small groups, in convoys," said Marine Lieutenant-Colonel Dick "snake" white, commander of a Tomcat Squadron of harrier jump jets at an allied base near the frontier.

The Pentagon refused comment, but some analysts speculated Iraq might be trying to bait Allied forces into a ground war - and that U.S. commanders might relish a chance to pound exposed convoys with air power.

Allied attacks to date have been confined chiefly to bomb and rocket attacks on Iraq and Iraqi occupied Kuwait.

Briefers said on Thursday about 32,000 sorties has been flown.

A report of a missing female soldier was given at the Riyadh briefing and was devoid of detail on the circumstances or location of the incident.

Stevens said only that "two soldiers, one male and one female are missing following a transport mission today... they were not involved in the fighting around Khafji."

AFP reports from Khafji: The Iraqis suffered heavy casualties and lost scores of vehicles in their failed two-day battle for this border town, the commander of the Allied Arab and Muslim forces who recaptured Khafji said late Thursday.

Around 200 Iraqis were reportedly killed or injured.



RIYADH: French soldiers in position behind trenches observe the front, through binoculars, here in the Saudi desert. —AFP/UNB Photo

Iraqi civilian planes dispersed to 5 locations

## Velayati deplures landing of Iraqi warplanes

NICOSIA, Feb 1: Tehran is not happy that Iraqi planes have landed in Iran and will hold the planes and their crews until the Gulf War ends, Iran's state news agency has reported, reports AP.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati stressed Thursday during the talks in Tehran that his country intended to remain neutral in the Gulf War and urged Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, the Islamic Republic News Agency said.

Velayati was quoted as telling Iraq's deputy prime minister, Saadoun Hamadi, that Iran was unhappy that the Iraqi aircraft had made emergency landings in Iran without seeking advance permission.

Tehran says 16 Iraqi warplanes flew to Iran in recent days and that 11 landed safely. The allies say about 90 Iraqi aircraft have flown to Iran.

There has been no official explanation for the development, although Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, in an interview with CNN on Monday, indicated he had sent them to Iran for safety.

Hamadi, a member of Iraq's five-man ruling Revolutionary Command Council, brought a message from Saddam to Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani, the Iranian news

agency said. It did not elaborate.

Hamadi also reiterated claims that Allied air strikes were targeting residential areas, the agency reported.

Velayati briefed Hamadi on Iran's efforts to encourage international relief shipments to Iraq of food and medicine, to be distributed by the International Red Cross, the agency said. Iran says humanitarian aid is not covered by the U.N. embargo of Iraq.

France has contributed 10,000 troops to a 700,000-strong, US-dominated coalition

opposing Iraq. It is one of a dozen nations participating in the air campaign against Iraq that began Jan. 17.

Iran, which fought Iraq in the 1980-88 war, has deplored both the invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent foreign military intervention. Velayati told Hamadi that peace could come only if both sides withdrew their forces, the Iranian news agency said.

Reuters reports from London: Iraq has dispersed its civilian aircraft and some Kuwaiti airliners seized after its invasion of Kuwait to at least five locations in Africa and the Middle East, aviation sources said on Thursday.

The sources said five Kuwait Airways Airbus 310-200 aircraft were believed to be in the eastern Iranian city of Mashhad. One Iraqi Airways Boeing 737 had been sighted at Tehran airport.

Iraq seized 15 aircraft belonging to Kuwait Airways after it invaded Kuwait on August 2.

Two Kuwait planes, still in their blue and white livery, were sighted in December in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul site of a large Iraqi air base and target of heavy Allied bombardment.

The Kuwaiti aircraft in Iran are believed to be among 100 combat, transport and civilian aircraft which have been sent across the border by Iraq -- a move analysts say could be an attempt to safeguard the aircraft from Allied attack.

The aviation sources said at least two Iraqi Airways Boeing 707s were in Mauritania, the African country which has stood loyally by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War.

The US urges Iran to treat Iraqi pilots as POWs

WASHINGTON, Feb 1: The United States Thursday reminded Iran that under the Geneva Convention, it is required to treat the Iraqi pilots who have taken refuge on its soil as prisoners of war (POWs), reports AP.

"It would be consistent with the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war for Iran to treat Iraqi pilots as prisoners of war, said State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler.

Nearly 100 Iraqi civilian and military aircrafts have fled to Iran since the Gulf war began January 17, according to the Pentagon.

Widespread pro-Iraq demonstrations have been held in Pakistan since the start of war on January 17, with protesters demanding the return of Pakistani troops.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, talking to reporters yesterday at the north-western town of Peshawar, ruled out a policy change and said Beg was stating his personal view.

The military has held power in Pakistan for more than half of the 43 years since independence, and the Army Chief of Staff is one of the most powerful men in the country.

While Sharif was visiting Peshawar, followers of the right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami Party paraded streets there chanting anti-U.S. and pro-Iraq slogans.

## Ishaq decries Army stand on Gulf

KARACHI, Feb 1: Pakistani President Ghulam Ishaq Khan implicitly warned the Army yesterday against interference in politics after its chiefs' open questioning of the government's anti-Iraq policy in the Gulf war, reports Reuters.

The official APP news agency quoted the 76-year-old President as saying that the Army's interference in the past had been disastrous.

The remarks to a delegation of notables in Karachi seemed aimed at a speech by Army Chief of Staff General Mirza Aslam Beg on Monday branding the U.S.-led allied attack on Iraq as a Zionist-plot against Muslims.

Beg followed his speech to Army officers with a declaration the next day that Pakistan was neutral in the war, like Iran, despite sending some 11,000 troops to defend Saudi Arabia.

Ishaq Khan said a policy adopted by the government must be implemented faithfully



Nawaz Sharif: Buoyed by President Ishaq Khan's support on Gulf issue

He called the Pakistani Army highly disciplined and thoroughly professional and said it was "conscious of the fact that it is not expected to interfere in political matters."

"It also knows from past experience that its interference ends up in nothing but

## Off the Record

Jihad the other version

RIYADH (Saudi Arabia): Saudi Arabia's chief religious legislator on Thursday decried Iraqi President Saddam Hussein as an "enemy of God," and dubbed the U.S.-led onslaught against him a jihad, or holy war, reports AP.

"Jihad against Saddam, the enemy of God, is one of the greatest forms of holy war for the sake of God," said Sheikh Abdul-Aziz Bin Baz, the kingdom's leading interpreter of Islamic jurisprudence, in an interview with the religious magazine Al-Dawaa.

[His statement was broadcast by the Saudi state-run Riyadh Radio and distributed by the official Saudi Press Agency.

He said it was the duty of Islamic nations to help Kuwaitis fight the injustice of being dislodged by force.

He said that Islamic precepts allow any Muslim nations to seek help from non-Islamic powers "because they are forced to do so... to deter a heretic and unjust (Iraqi) leader."

The Muslim scholar was clearly defending the Saudi leadership against pro-Iraqi fundamentalists who judged an un-Islamic (the invitation to the United States and other non-Muslim powers to check the Iraqi invasion).

Jihad carried its significance from the days of prophet Mohammed 14 centuries ago when his men were spreading the faith, often with the force of the sword.

Saddam himself has repeatedly issued calls for jihad against the multinational force. He based his calls on the contention that the presence of non-Muslim troops in Saudi Arabia has desecrated the cradle of Islam.

Vampire's rampage

BRISBANE (Australia): A woman who allegedly claimed to be a vampire stabbed a man to death to drink his blood, a prosecutor said Thursday, reports AP.

Tracey Avril Wigginton, 25, has already pleaded guilty to murdering Edward Clyde Baldoek, 47, in October 1989. Three other women - Kim Aileen Jervis and Tracey Ann Waugh, both 24, and Lisa Marie Ptaschinski, 25 - are on trial after pleading not guilty to murder charges.

In his opening address to the Brisbane Supreme Court jury, Prosecutor Adrian Gundelach said the four women planned a random killing. After drinking champagne at a nightclub one night, they left in a car to stalk a victim, he said.

He said Baldoek was offered a ride, then was stabbed to death by Ms. Wigginton. He was stabbed about 15 times with two knives, Gundelach said.

According to Gundelach, when Ms. Ptaschinski asked Ms. Wigginton later if she had been fed, she said yes, indicating she drank Baldoek's blood.

Gundelach said the three women told police Ms. Wigginton claimed to be a vampire and that she craved blood, could not eat solid food and lived on blood. The prosecutor said Ms. Wigginton allegedly told at least one of the women that she was involved in Satan worship, witchcraft and blood drinking.

10,000-yuan beggars

BEIJING: The China Youth News yesterday denounced beggars, claiming just eight per cent of those begging for money in the southern city of Guangzhou were really needy, reports AP.

Begging has become a means of becoming wealthy for an increasing number of unscrupulous Chinese particularly around the Chinese New Year festival and the two trade fairs held in Guangzhou each year, the paper said.

A large number of Chinese in the poorer provinces, have migrated to the areas of faster development seeking employment but have been left without any resources.

The youth daily said, "10,000-yuan beggars" have now appeared--a reference to the "10,000-yuan peasants" who have grown rich since China relaxed its economic policies in the early 1980s.

The newspaper claimed many of the beggars are involved in the currency black market, adding most make so much they are able to send large sums of money back to their villages to help finance the construction of houses or weddings, a particularly expensive affair in China.

He stole 20,000 books

DES MOINES (Iowa): An American was convicted on Thursday of stealing 20 million dollars worth of rare books manuscripts and antiques from libraries across the United States, reports Reuters.

Stephen Blumberg, 42, was found guilty by a jury of theft and transportation of stolen goods and could face up to 35 years in prison and a one million dollar fine.

He stole books in quantities that no one can imagine, said Linda Reade, an assistant prosecutor.

Jurors convicted Blumberg of hoarding at least 20,000 books that he stole for more than 300 libraries and museums across the country, including a 1493 book described as the last world history that does not mention Christopher Columbus.

Another book Blumberg stole was the Nuremberg Chronicle, by Hartmann Schedel, which experts valued at between 35,000 and 75,000 dollars.

Blumberg's lawyers conceded he stole the books but used a defence of insanity, claiming Blumberg had battled mental illness for 25 years.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents seized the books in Blumberg's home in Ottumwa, Iowa in March 1990, a witness said Blumberg had made plans to move the loot to Mexico because he knew the FBI was after him.

Action on Tamil Nadu govt slated

## Nine parties ask Shekhar to quit

NEW DELHI, Feb 1: India's main opposition parties Thursday called on Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's government to resign for sacking an opposition administration in Tamil Nadu as street protests flared in the southern state, reports AP.

Leaders of nine political parties in a joint statement here described the Tamil Nadu government's dismissal overnight Wednesday as shocking, and called for nationwide protests on February 6.

We wish to say that this (sacking) is totally unacceptable and appeal to the democratic forces to see through this diabolical conspiracy and defeat it by all means, the statement said.

It added: "We therefore demand the resignation of the Chandra Shekhar government forthwith."

Former Premier Vishwanath Pratap Singh, who heads the Janata Dal (People's Party), told a press conference we shall not be silent spectators. We will go to the people and fight for their democratic rights.

The nine parties also urged Indians to observe peaceful protests on February 6 by organising general strikes, rallies and demonstrations.



Thursday's statement was jointly issued by the Janata Dal, the two communist parties, and six other national and regional parties.

New Delhi dismissed the 25-month-old government of the regional Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) Party for allegedly failing to maintain law and order and letting Sri Lankan Tamil guerrillas operate from Tamil Nadu.

A presidential announcement here said the 234-strong Tamil Nadu legislature, where the cadre-based DMK had 141 seats, had also been dissolved.

The action was also criticised by the DMK, which charged Mr. Shekhar with murdering democracy.