

BRIEFLY

Israelis asked to don masks: Israel radio in Jerusalem announced the country was under missile attack and ordered residents to don gas masks early today and seek shelter in rooms sealed against a possible Iraqi chemical weapons attack, reports Reuter.

French planes to prepare way: When a ground assault is launched against Iraqi forces, French warplanes will prepare the way for French troops by striking the enemy ahead, the commander of the French air force in Saudi Arabia said in an interview published in Paris, reports AFP.

The French aircraft would be part of a general "air cover" to protect advancing troops, General Claude Solanet told the newspaper journal *Le Dimanche*.

French planes would "handle" targets about 30 kilometers (20 miles) ahead of France's Daguet division, Gen Solanet said.

Blast damages banks in Cyprus: A bomb damaged the offices of Britain's Barclays Bank and American Express in Larnaca on Saturday in what appeared to be the first incident of its kind in Cyprus linked to the Gulf war, reports Reuter.

There were no injuries. A police spokesman in Nicosia said a manhunt had been launched but declined to give further details.

Police said the bomb went off around 8 PM (1800 GMT) in the centre of Larnaca, a port town 32 KM (20 miles) from the Cypriot capital.

The device was placed in a flower bed in the pavement outside the adjacent offices, shattering windows.

The island hosts a large British garrison involved in supporting troops in the US-led coalition fighting Iraq.

Anti-war rally in Britain: Thousands of demonstrators, calling for an end to fighting in the Gulf, marched through London on Saturday in the biggest anti-war protest in Britain since hostilities broke out 11 days ago, reports Reuter.

A spokesman for Scotland Yard police said an estimated 18,000 people took part in the march but organisers put the figure at more than 20,000.

"We are accused of not supporting 'our boys' in the Gulf. The best possible support we can give to our members of the armed forces is to stop this war," Bruce Kent, a Vice President of the campaign for nuclear disarmament, told a rally in Hyde Park in London.

A retired German admiral said before the rally that the war was being fought to smash Iraq not free Kuwait.

Qayyum deplores Saddam: The President of Pakistan's state of Azad Kashmir denounced Iraqi President Saddam Hussein as "an enemy of Islam" on Tuesday and said he backed the liberation of Kuwait, reports AP.

Sardar Abdul-Qayyum, president of the Azad Kashmir state in Mecca said the largest political party in Pakistan the Muslim League as well as other political forces, support Saudi Arabia. His remarks were made in context of recent pro-Iraqi demonstrations in Pakistan which he said largely took place because "many people in Pakistan do not know the nature of the Baathist ruling party in Iraq."

Counter demonstrations will be organized soon in Pakistan "to tell the people the truth," he said.

He contended that in the latest elections, the Pakistani people voted in favor of the Islamic representatives rejecting the secular Pakistan People's Party.

4 Iraqi soldiers desert: Four Iraqi soldiers, three between 15 and 16 years old deserted and crossed Allied lines to give themselves up to the US army on Friday, senior division officers in Saudi Arabia said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The deserters, the youngest reported so far in the Gulf war, said their company was taking two or three casualties a night from allied bombing. A company usually has a little over 100 men.

They said, They were losing about 30 soldiers a week, said a senior officer in the 2nd armoured division.

Several other Iraqis in the company had deserted before them but had headed to Baghdad and other cities in the hope of hiding with their families the boy soldiers were quoted as saying.

3,500 flee to Iran: A total of 3,500 people from 20 nations have fled to Iran from neighbouring Iraq since the start of the Gulf war January 17 and 1,600 more refugees are expected soon, a UN official in Teheran said Saturday, reports AFP.

Omar Bakhet, a senior emergency manager in Iran to coordinate UN efforts to meet refugees and help them continue their journeys, also said that 400 Sudanese would be returning home this week.

UN and Iranian authorities have made preparations to accommodate 100,000 refugees fleeing Iraq, he said, the official IRNA news agency reported.

He said 200 camps and guest houses had been set up for those who might seek asylum, IRNA reported.

PLO's appeal to world body: An official from the PLO's Fatah movement yesterday called on the world community to intervene to put an end to the worsening health conditions in the occupied territories as a result of the curfew imposed by Israeli authorities, reports Xinhua from Cairo.

It is incumbent upon the international organizations to move at once to stop the suffering sustained by Palestinians in the territories, said Zohdi Qedra, Cairo-based representative of the Fatah movement, the mainstream of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Reports said, the curfew, which has been in force since the Gulf war started on January 17, has disrupted the daily life of the Palestinians, bringing industrial production and other economic activities in the occupied lands to a standstill.

Rafsanjani dismayed: Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani expressed dismay Saturday at alleged allied bombing of civilian targets in Iraq, but reiterated that his nation intends to stay out of the Gulf war, reports AP.

Rafsanjani met with Iraqi envoy Saadoun Hammadi, a member of Baghdad's ruling Revolutionary Command Council and then summoned his Supreme National Security Council to a meeting, according to the Islamic Republic News Agency, monitored in Nicosia.

Iraq fails to get back planes from Iran

NICOSIA, Feb 3: A senior Iraqi official wound up a mission to Tehran on Saturday empty-handed, failing to secure the return of Iraqi combat aircraft which have flown to Iran since the outbreak of the Gulf war, reports Reuter.

As Deputy Prime Minister Saadoun Hammadi, headed home, President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani reiterated Iran's view that Iraq was ultimately responsible for the war he described as "the most saddening tragedy of today's humanity."

The Iranian news agency IRNA quoted Hammadi as saying his talks with Rafsanjani and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati were "good and fruitful."

But Velayati told Tehran radio that during lengthy talks, Hammadi was told that Iran's neutrality dictated that the Iraqi planes—said by US-led Allies to number up to 100 military aircraft including some of Baghdad's most advanced fighters and bombers—should remain in Iran until the end of the war.

A senior Iranian official said last week that by sending its combat planes to Iran, Iraq probably wanted to preserve them from destruction until a ground offensive started.

"Recent developments in the Persian Gulf and the massacre of innocent Muslims are the most saddening tragedy of today's humanity," Rafsanjani told.

Minimum casualties aimed at: Allied forces
Sea, air battles won: Land forces to be hammered now

RIYADH, Feb 3: US and Allied forces say they have won the battle against Iraq at sea and in the air and are now concentrating on ground forces, reports Reuter.

US Marines said B-52 bombing raids on occupied Kuwait near the Saudi border on Saturday night seemed to be the heaviest in the area since the war began.

"We're bombing the hell out of them tonight," one Marine told reporters, "wave after wave."

"The Iraqi naval forces are considered to be combat-ineffective," Major-General Robert Johnston told a military briefing earlier on Saturday.

"We have destroyed virtually all of the patrolcraft that are capable of delivering missiles."

Johnston said Iraq now had only one or two boats capable of firing Exocet or Sty missiles at Allied ships. Even those may have been destroyed in US air attacks in the past 24 hours.

He said Allied helicopters and planes had destroyed or sunk 35 Iraqi vessels and damaged 31.

General Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander of US Gulf forces, said earlier last week the Allies had won air supremacy by destroying Iraq's air defence and the effectiveness of its Air Force.

A senior US military officer told reporters on Saturday the air war was now focused on destroying ground forces or making them so ineffective that a land attack to drive Iraq

out of Kuwait would take a minimum of lives.

He said bombing concentrated on the elite Republican Guard because they're clearly the hyphen of Iraqi capability.

Johnston said one US Marine was killed and two injured by Cluster bombs dropped on their convoy near the Kuwait border early on Saturday, probably by American planes.

In another suspected "friendly fire" incident last Tuesday night up to 11 US Marines were killed in light armoured vehicles. The US military is investigating the possibility that an Allied aircraft fired a missile at them.

Iraqi gunners shot down two US planes and A-6 attack aircraft and an A-10 "tank

killer" on Saturday and rescuers were searching for the pilots.

It was the first time an A-10 plane specially built to be resistant to ground fire, had been shot down.

A Saudi briefer said five Qatari tanks blocked five Iraqi tanks trying to cross the Kuwaiti border into Saudi Arabia on Friday night destroying four of the Iraqi tanks.

Colonel Ahmed Al Robayan also said revised numbers showed that 30 Iraqi soldiers were killed in fighting for the Saudi border town of Khafji last week. He said 37 were wounded and 429 taken prisoner.

To the best of our knowledge every Iraqi soldier who entered Khafji left dead, wounded or as a prisoner, he said.

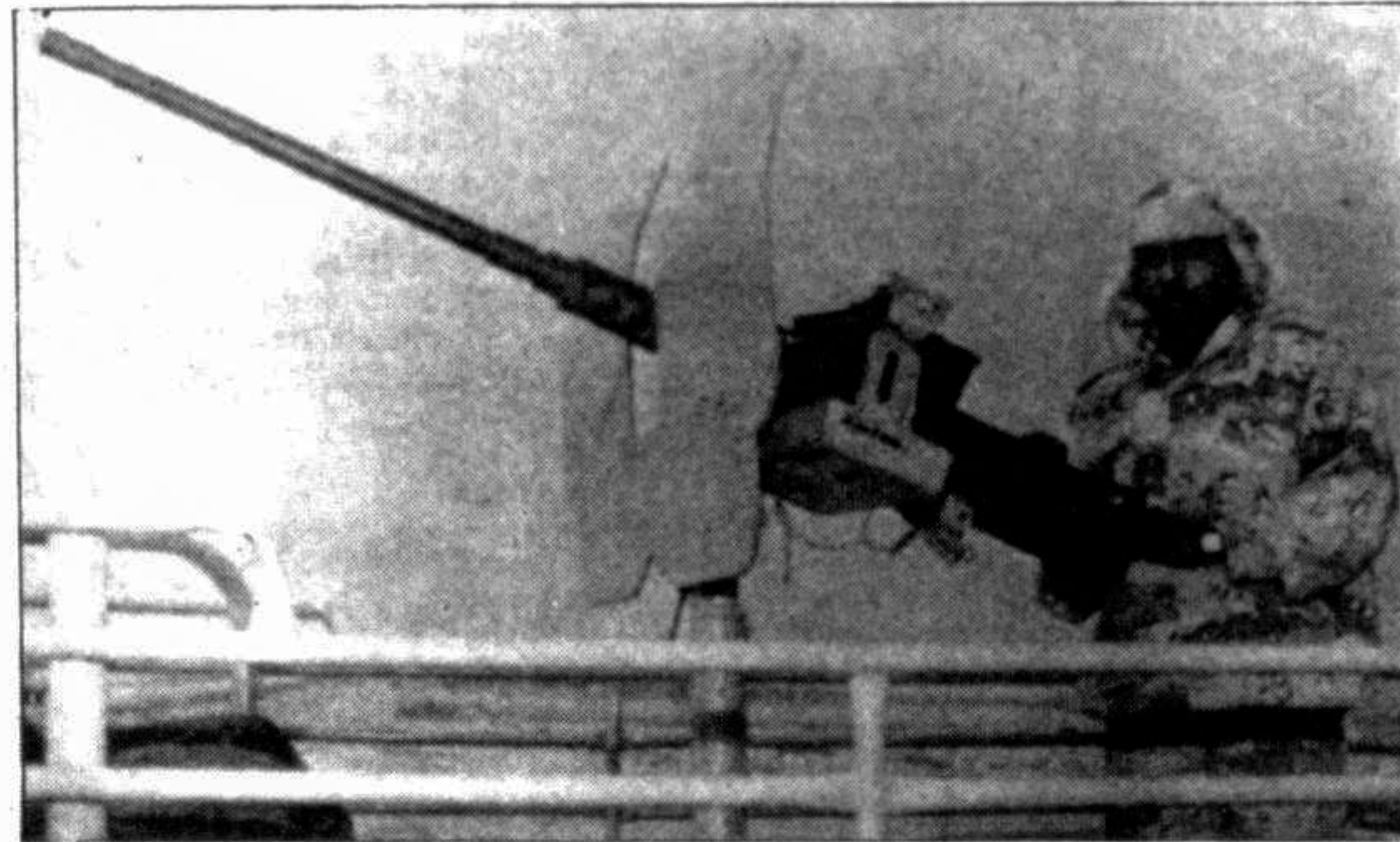
The Saudi death toll in the first ground battle of the war was 18, he said. The previously announced figure was 15 Allied spokesmen said Iraqi troops had fallen back into defensive positions after their five thrusts into Saudi Arabia last week.

"There's no offensive posturing going on there. It's all defensive as far as we can ascertain," said British spokesman Group Captain Niall Irving.

There is no indication of any substantial gathering of units that would reflect any kind of offensive initiatives on the part of Iraqi forces, Johnston said.

In a fierce 15 minute fire-fight on Friday night, US soldiers fought off an Iraqi patrol that slipped into Saudi Arabia and tried to ambush them an officer told reporters.

The 82nd airborne troops exchanged anti-tank grenade and machinegun fire with a patrol of about 25 Iraqis in two vehicles.



SAUDI ARABIA: A Saudi soldier with a truck-mounted machine gun February 2 stands guard at a roadblock near the Saudi bordertown of Khafji. All traffic other than military is stopped from going north into Khafji, the scene of the first Allied and Iraqi ground battle earlier in the week.

Germans debate role in Gulf war

BONN, Feb 3: If Juergen Rausch were Helmut Kohl's adviser on the Gulf crisis, this would be his recommendation: "keep sending money, but stay out of the fight," reports AP.

Rausch, like many Germans, supports the American and other soldiers fighting to drive Iraq from Kuwait, but insists that Germany stay out of the shooting.

"World War II and everything else, that's all too fresh in our memories for the Germans to get actively mixed up in the Gulf," said Rausch, who runs a sausage stand in Bonn. He is 35, born a decade after the war.

Some others feel their country should help in fighting tyrants, particularly since one of their own, Adolf Hitler, caused the world enormous pain.

"We can't shirk our duties when others are carrying our burden, like the Americans have done for us all these years," said Waltraud Droge, 48, who stood outside the US embassy holding a large "Thank You America" placard.

Nearly four months after reunification, Germany debates whether it should be a pacifist bystander or participant in such international crises as the Gulf.

Most recent polls indicate that up to 75 per cent of Germans think US President George Bush had no choice but to go to war with Iraq, which seized Kuwait on August 2.

However, the surveys also show opposition to the idea of 18 German warplanes being deployed in Turkey to protect its NATO ally. US warplanes are using an air base in Turkey to launch strikes against Iraq.

Nearly every night on national television, politicians, anti-war activists and news commentators debate the morality of the war and what role Germany should play in it.

"Things were going well for the Germans, for all of Europe," said Julius Vogel, a retired doctor who served in World War II. "We had our unity, and it came without blood. And then the Gulf war started."

Some Germans contend that American news reports treat allied air raids on Iraq like computer "war games" and tend to overlook the fact that people are being killed. On a less serious topic, others Germans say German television networks lag far behind their American counterparts in war coverage.

"German television was the first casualty of the Gulf War," said Peter Boentsch, who writes commentaries for the newspaper *Welt am Sonntag*.

Kohl was sworn in as the first elected Chancellor of united Germany in 59 years on Jan. 18, but the occasion was less joyous because the war had begun the day before.

While the Chancellor told Parliament the allies were "entitled to our solidarity,"

hundreds of thousands of protesters were expressing the opposite view.

Sheets painted, with the word "Nein" (No) were draped from the windows of apartment buildings. Teachers cancelled classes so their students could march in anti-war demonstrations. Automobile workers put down their tools for five minutes in symbolic protest.

Protesters disagree among themselves.

Some borrow slogans from the radical early 1970s and blame the war on "American imperialism."

Jens Mueller, 19, one of a dozen protesters in a sort of peace camp outside the US Embassy, said: "It's clear that economic interests are really at play in this conflict."

Fellow camper Claudia Danquellier, 25, retorted: "You can't simplify the war's causes like that."

Several newspapers have described Kohl's government as "paralyzed" by the outbreak of war and say Germany's world standing has suffered as a result.

Kohl vowed solidarity with the US-organised coalition at the beginning, but for several days did nothing substantial to express it.

Two powerful forces prompted Kohl to act: Germany's guilty conscience toward Israel because of the Nazi Holocaust, and its debt to the United States and NATO for decades of defense.

Sharif urged to change policy on Gulf

LAHORE, Feb 3: A meeting of Opposition and Pro-Government political parties urged Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Saturday to change his anti-Iraq policy in the Gulf war, reports Reuter.

The call was made at a conference attended by representatives of 22 groups, including the main opposition Pakistan Democratic Alliance (PDA) of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and some of Sharif's allies in the ruling Islamic Democratic Alliance.

A conference declaration demanded an immediate ceasefire in the Gulf and the withdrawal of US-led forces, whom it accused of "naked aggression" against Iraq.

It also called for the restoration of the "sovereign status" of Iraqi-occupied Kuwait.

The declaration said, Pakistan should be neutral in the conflict, but side-stepped a popular demand, voiced at daily pro-Iraq rallies, for the recall of some 11,000 Pakistani troops who form part of the multinational force in Saudi Arabia.

US claims false, says DPRK

TOKYO, Feb 3: North Korea has denied what it calls false US claims that Pyongyang is sending Scud missiles and other arms to Iraq in breach of US sanctions, reports Reuter.

Most of my friends think it's crazy to get married," said a woman in her late 20s who is seeking a divorce.

"If marriages go down and divorce goes up, there'll be nobody left in China who's married," she joked.

State statistics indicate there were 750,000 divorces in China in 1989, up from 440,000 divorces in 1984. The number of marriages, however, increased to 9.34 million from 7.78 million during the same period.

Attitudes toward sex can vary by region.

In the cosmopolitan port city of Shanghai, attitudes can be far more open than in Beijing.

One woman from Sichuan Province in southwestern

China said she "had never even had a casual conversation with someone of the opposite sex before starting college."

But many young Chinese consider marriage as an institution to be old-fashioned and irrelevant.

figures. The newspaper said 446 people in China have so far been found to carry the HIV AIDS virus, with five actual AIDS cases.

Off the Record

'Saddam being treated with tranquilizers'

WASHINGTON: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is "a very distraught man" and is being treated with tranquilizers, U.S. News and World Report reported in its latest issue, reports AFP.

General Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander-in-Chief of U.S. forces in the Gulf, told the weekly that Mr. Hussein is also fatalistic.

"I think he considers himself a man of destiny, that his destiny is already set out, predetermined in some way," Gen. Schwarzkopf was quoted as saying.

But the Iraqi leader's fatalistic views and the Gulf war may be getting the better of him, according to the General's account.

"I would also tell you that we have several reports that Saddam is a very distraught man, that he was three doctors treating him with tranquilizers, which may say something about his mental state," he said.

Gen. Schwarzkopf also said Mr. Hussein had "totally misread" the American public by thinking it does not have the steadiness to carry through to a victory in a lengthy conflict.

"The American public has been known to be slow to anger, but I think Saddam, in some of the acts he has committed, has done nothing more than solidify the support that the President has for what he is doing here," he said.

Animal fat at long last

BEIJING: Shanghai scientists have found that eating animal fat helps to prolong life, going against a decade of evidence linking cholesterol and saturated fat to heart disease, the China Daily reported Sunday, reports AFP.

"Ignoring animal fat will lead to the imbalance of fatty acids with in the body, which can make people decrepit too early," Chen Songhe, Associate Professor at Zhongshan Hospital, was quoted as saying.

The results of a four-year study funded by China's State Education Commission "corrected the long-held bias against the use of fat in the human diet," the newspaper said.

It added that over the last 10 years, vegetable oils had become part of the Chinese staple diet at the expense of animal fat.

"I haven't seen the study, but would venture to say I'm skeptical in view of the vast body of evidence on cholesterol and coronary disease," an Asian health expert here said.

Largest fake in world

STOCKHOLM: Swedish police cooperating with its Danish counterpart has successfully detected a case of fake art in which about 4,000 imitations of art were brought to light, reports Xinhua.

This is the largest fake art case known to the world.

A Swedish newspaper reported that with the help of Danes, Swedish police confiscated about 4,000 fake art works in Sweden and Denmark after an investigation of three months.

It is reported that the case also involved a number of suspects in the United States, Britain, France and Finland.

Bhumibol asked for return of Buddha

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa has asked Thailand's monarch Bhumibol Aduladej to return a Buddha statue that was given to a Bangkok temple in 1906 press reports here said, reports AFP.

The island and the state controlled Daily News, both English language dailies said Mr Premadasa had asked the Thai monarch to consider giving back the Vallipuram Buddha statue.

Buddhism is the main religion of both countries. The newspapers said the ancient stone Buddha was given to Bangkok marble temple in 1906 by then Governor of Sri Lanka Sir Henry Blake.

Mr Premadasa told King Bhumibol that the Vallipuram Buddha statue was of "great historical and religious significance to Sri Lankan Buddhists," the reports said.

The President himself a Buddhist, proposed to replace the statue with an identical consecrated replica without disturbing the sanctity of the marble temple the island said.

Sri Lankan archaeologists had been trying for some time to trace the Vallipuram statue, which was originally located in northern Sri Lanka before confirming the statue at the marble temple was the one they sought, the newspapers said.

'Iraq won't surrender before ground blows'

LONDON, Feb 3: The Commander of the British forces in the Gulf said Saturday that he does not believe Iraq will surrender before a ground war, according to British television reports, reports Xinhua.

Lieutenant General Sir Peter De La Billiere said that a land battle against Iraq now "looks inevitable" as President Saddam Hussein's forces will "probably not surrender."

His warning came as Iraq threatened to use everything from kitchen knives to weapons of mass destruction to achieve victory.

General Billiere added that the massive air war would continue until it had prepared the battlefield for the Allied ground forces to move.

But he stressed that Iraqi troops had not been fully

tested although the air force appeared to have given up.

According to reports from Washington, US President George Bush has hinted that it may still be possible to avoid a land war in the Gulf conflict.

"It will only begin if necessary and when we decide that the time is right," he told military families in Georgia.

Bush said that Iraq's ability to wage war was being systematically destroyed and that the Iraqi air force was no longer a factor in the Gulf war.

General Billiere also praised the role of the British Air Force which he said had been "exceedingly effective" in its attacks.

He stressed that it was bombing only military targets and would not destroy Iraq's infrastructure beyond repair.

"The ground operation isn't going to start until we are satisfied. The air operations have prepared the battlefield into the state we want it to be in to send in the ground troops," the British Commander said during a visit to the base.

General Sir Peter De La Billiere said Iraq was unlikely to surrender despite massive allied bombings.

"Therefore we expect a land battle to take place in due course," he said.

"Nobody wants to fight in a chemical environment, but I would expect, knowing the man Saddam Hussein, that he will use it when he feels he can cause most destruction."

He said a ground attack would be launched only after air strikes had weakened Saddam's forces.

Chinese sweet sixteens on rampage!

BEIJING, Feb 3: Sweet sixteen and never been kissed—that used to be a reality in China, but the past decade has witnessed sweeping changes in sexual behaviour, reports Reuter.

More and more young people are engaging in premarital sexual activities, and high-school students are even dating—unheard of in the puritanical era of the late Chairman Mao Tse-tung.

A sexual survey taken last year by Liu Dalin of the Shanghai Sexological Research Centre found large majorities of Chinese condoning premarital and extramarital sex and listing pleasure as the prime reason for sex.

The 23,000 participants in the survey, one of the largest ever taken in China, came from 15 provinces and all walks of life, including peasants and city dwellers.

Asked whether the goal of sex was pleasure, to have children or to fulfil a marital obligation, more than 70 per cent chose pleasure.

Eighty-six per cent of the respondents condoned premarital sex and 69 per cent did not object to extramarital affairs.

Men were more sexually satisfied than women, the survey found. It attributed much of women's dissatisfaction to a lack of foreplay before intercourse.

The widespread change in sexual relations among unmarried Chinese would have been unheard of a few years ago. But despite government efforts to block what are seen as harmful, foreign influences, the influx of western ideas and social mores have changed the sexual attitudes of young Chinese.

The more liberated attitude has triggered a rise in sexually transmitted diseases. The People's Public Security daily recently reported that the number of venereal disease cases in China tripled between 1982 and 1987, but gave no

figures. The newspaper said 446 people in China have so far been found to carry the HIV AIDS virus, with five actual AIDS cases.

Pregnancies among unmarried women have become more common. One unmarried woman said she had no difficulty having a baby, despite official disapproval.

Friends assisted in the birth, which took place at home. The authorities were less concerned about her unmarried motherhood than that she observe the country's one-child per couple restriction, she said.

Many Chinese parents still put pressure on their children to remain celibate until marriage and to marry an approved partner. Several women college students said their parents forbid them from forming relationships with men while at university.

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China said she "had never even had a casual conversation with someone of the opposite sex before starting college."

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