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The Daily Star

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VOL. 1 NO. 27 REGD. NO. DA 781

MAGH 26, 1397 BS,

DHAKA SATURDAY FEBRUARY 9, 1991

RAJAB 23, 1411 HIJRI

10 PAGES · PRICE TAKA. 3.00

Inside today

International

Rushdie's conversion cosmetic



Conversion to Islam of Salman Rushdie is becoming as controversial as his book, the 'Satanic Verses'. Page 5

Metropolitan

"I cannot resist the life on the river. The life fascinates me," says a simple boatman of Sadarghat. Page 3

Feature

Education



A Nobel laureate speaks the more we know, the more we know about what we don't know. Page 6

National

Sugar mills face closure

Faulty policy by the past autocratic regime has ruined the sugar industry and 16 mills are facing closure. Page 9

Article

Political Parties, A Few Too Many—The Third View by Mahfuz Anam. Page 4

NEWS BRIEFS

Mass funeral at Karbala

NEW DELHI, Feb 8: An Indian peace activist who just returned from Baghdad reported seeing a mass funeral for Iraqi children, killed in an Allied air attack and bomb damage in the holy Islamic town of Karbala, reports AFP.

Iraqi consulate in Karachi closed

KARACHI, Feb 8: Iraq closed its consulate today because of "financial" constraints, a consulate official said. "We have taken the decision due to some administrative and financial problems" the Iraqi Vice-Consul, Abdul Ghani Abdul Rehman, told a press conference, reports AFP.

Soviet General killed

MOSCOW, Feb 8: A Soviet Air Force General was killed when the plane he was piloting crashed Wednesday, in the woods near the far eastern city of Khabarovsk, the army newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda said, reports AFP.

Mandela's warning

JOHANNESBURG, Feb 8: Black leader Nelson Mandela today warned that there would be "turmoil" in South Africa if the European Community lifted sanctions against Pretoria. "The situation in the country will be so unstable that no wise businessman would want to invest in South Africa," he said, reports AFP.

Iraq mobilising tanks and artillery units to stop offensive

Allies prepare to invade Kuwait

NICOSIA, Feb 8: Gulf Allied forces Friday approached their most fateful decision since going to war against Iraq 23 days ago—when to invade occupied Kuwait, reports agencies.

The timing rests mainly with the United States which sought to play down suggestions that the long-awaited offensive could begin in a few days.

The US Military Commander in Saudi Arabia told American television viewers that it was too soon to say if a ground war would be necessary.

But both French President Francois Mitterrand in Paris and Britain's Gulf Forces Commander earlier said on Thursday that a ground offensive against Iraqi troops was inevitable.

American's top military officer told Congress the war was far from finished. Iraq was unlikely to give up overnight, General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said.

He and Defence Secretary Dick Cheney flew out to the Gulf, apparently to chart for President George Bush a possible timetable for the assault after relentless air attacks on both Iraq and targets in occupied Kuwait.

They were due to arrive in Saudi Arabia on Friday night for meeting with US Commander

- ★ Saudi authorities hold 1350 Iraqi prisoners.
- ★ Basra again bombed.
- ★ Iraqi gunboat destroyed.
- ★ Iraqi positions in Kuwait pounded.
- ★ Iraq downs one Allied plane.
- ★ Iraq forms 'execution battalions' to prevent desertions.
- ★ Cheney, Powell fly to Saudi Arabia.
- ★ Allied invasion imminent: Mitterrand.
- ★ US may target Saddam.
- ★ UK, France planning post-war strategy.

General Norman Schwarzkopf and top Saudi officials before returning to Washington on Sunday. Schwarzkopf, asked by a

television interviewer if air power could win the war and make a ground offensive in Kuwait unnecessary, replied, "I don't know. I think it's still too early to tell. I think you've got to wait and see."

Cheney and Powell report to Bush on Monday on their fourth visit since Iraqi troops blitzed southward into Kuwait on August 2.

Before leaving Washington, they too seemed eager to discount speculation of an imminent ground war after weeks of virtually unopposed Allied air raids on Baghdad's forces.

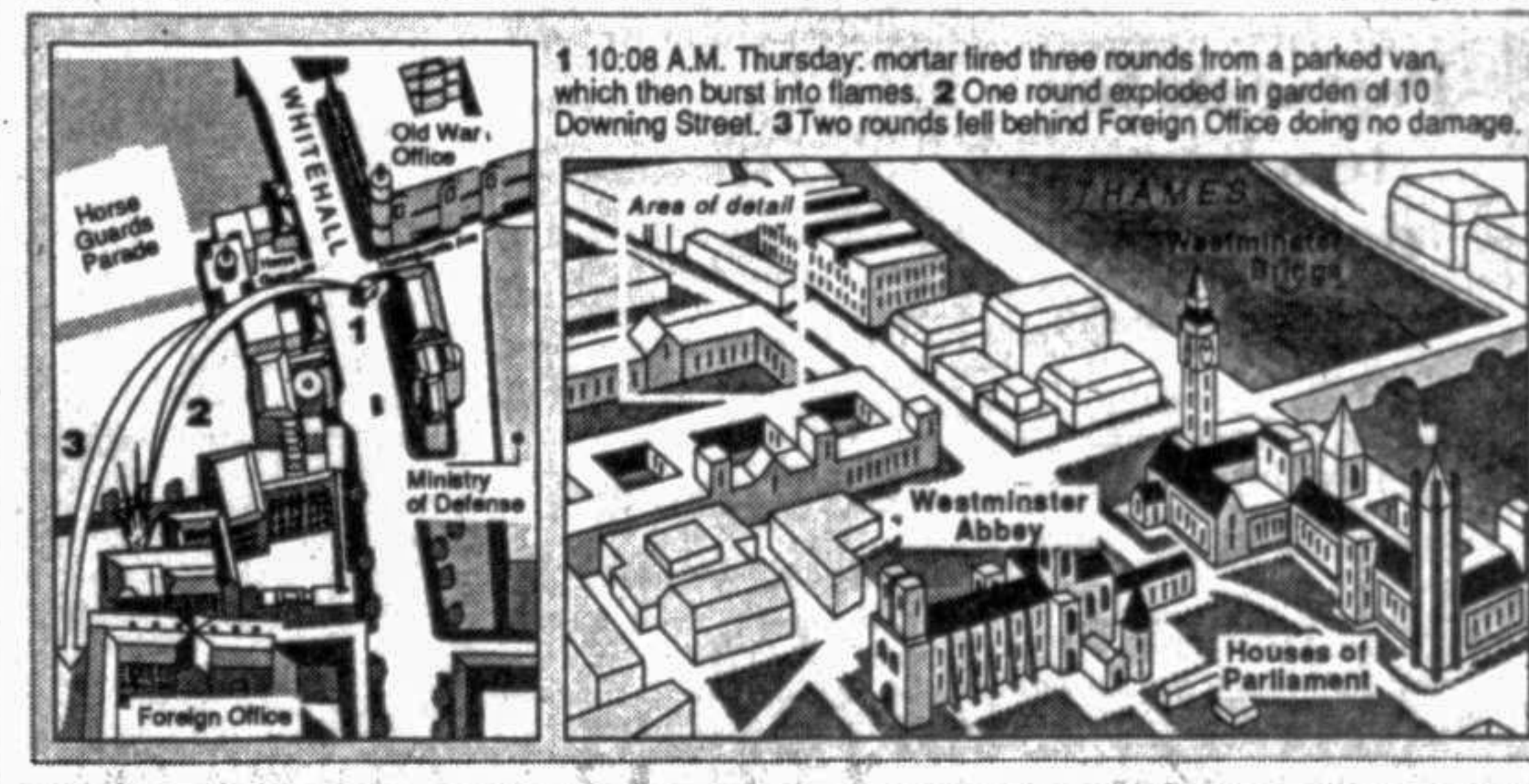
In Paris, Mitterrand told a news conference the Allies would launch a ground attack against Iraq this month but ruled out using chemical or nuclear arms.

A land battle was "inevitable", Mitterrand said. British Lieutenant-General Sir Peter de La Billiere told a news conference a ground war was inevitable because of the mentality of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Baghdad Radio said Iraq was eager to start such a conflict and estimated that tens of thousands of American soldiers would die. "Iraq is wait-



The van used in the attack on British Prime Minister John Major's residence burning Thursday after three mortar rounds were fired from it. Courtesy: IHT



1 10:08 A.M. Thursday: mortar fired three rounds from a parked van, which then burst into flames. 2 One round exploded in garden of 10 Downing Street. 3 Two rounds fell behind Foreign Office doing no damage.

Conflicting stands delay Ershad's transfer to jail

By Khalilur Rahman

Renovation of a portion of Dhaka Central Jail at a cost of Taka 50 lakh is nearing completion. The work was undertaken three months ago but could not proceed due to prison unrest since December 29.

The ousted president Ershad could not be moved to Dhaka Central Jail from his present detention at a Gulshan villa following the persisting jail riots.

The jail riots spread quickly to other prisons at Jessore, Mymensingh, Chittagong and

Perth. Former president Ershad, his wife Roushan and their only son Shaad are detained in the Gulshan villa since December 12 after the fall of his government on December 6 in the wake of mass upsurge. Security measures in the villa have been further tightened in the face of ultimatum by the All-party Students Unity (APSU) to the caretaker government to move Ershad to Dhaka Central Jail.

APSU will lead a lathi procession to Gulshan on Sunday

demanding immediate shifting of Ershad to the Central Jail. BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina have taken separate stands on the question of Ershad's transfer to the Central Jail. Begum Zia has strongly demanded that Ershad be moved to the jail while Sheikh Hasina has said it is not important where he stays, but he should be put on trial. Dr. Kamal Hossain, a central leader of Awami League, has demanded that

Jail food for Ershad

Star Report

Former president Ershad and his wife Roushan are now having their food supplied from Dhaka Central Jail. The arrangement of food supply to his Gulshan villa, which is now a sub-jail, was made four days ago at the instruction of the higher authorities. Before this new arrangement, food had been supplied to Ershad by Mustafizur Rahman, a brother-in-law of the former president, since his internment.

A jail source told The Daily Star Friday night that the former president Ershad, Roushan Ershad and their son are being provided with food three times a day entitled to a prisoner having division.

Settlers fleeing Hill Tracts

By Moinuddin Naser

The economic life of the Bangladeshi settlers in Chittagong Hill Tracts has gone away owing to Shantibahini in Chittagong Hill Tracts has gone away owing to Shantibahini insurgency. Insecurity and scanty source of income have driven

many of them to plain land. Out of about two lakh settlers, there are only 75 thousands, who are now languishing at the cluster villages. The total number of Bangladeshi including the settlers would be over three lakh. See Page 10 Col 3

Work on Mahakhali satellite station suspended

By Shahiduzzaman Khan

Work on the proposed satellite station at Mahakhali remains suspended since the fall of Ershad regime. The project, to be implemented at a cost of nearly Tk 300 crore, was awarded to a private sector company based in the United Kingdom by the T & T See Page 10 Col 2

Hasina at Sirajganj Zia looted Jamuna funds Mujib raised

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 8: Awami League president Sheikh Hasina has said if voted to power her party will start constructing Jamuna bridge on priority basis.

She was addressing a big public meeting at Sirajganj Government College ground today.

Sheikh Hasina said it was Bangabandhu who first took the initiative of building the bridge and collected six crore

US Dollars for the project. But "Zia abandoned the project and looted the money", Hasina alleged.

If voted to power, Hasina said, Awami League would reintroduce parliamentary democracy.

Hasina said democracy had a brief span of life only during three and a half years of Awami League administration. With the killing of Bangabandhu in See Page 10 Col 8

Secularists defiled temples: Khaleda

DEHIDWAR (Comilla), Feb 8: BNP leader Begum Khaleda Zia today said if voted to power, her party will rehabilitate the families of martyrs who laid their lives during nine years of movement against autocracy, reports UNB.

"We will support the families of those who sacrificed their lives during the anti-autocracy movement," she declared while addressing a huge public meeting at Reazuddin Pilot High School premises here.

She said, "the country will remain grateful to those sons of the soil who dared their

lives against the repressive rule of Ershad and were brutally killed by the autocracy". The BNP Chairperson today concluded her five-day election campaign in the south-eastern part of the country.

People are the sources of her party's power and popularity, Begum Zia said. "BNP can never be eliminated from the country's politics as it is composed of patriotic people."

She said that afraid of increasing popularity of BNP, armed hooligans were out to foil the election.

Hundreds of people clapped See Page 10 Col 4

Moscow calls it deliberate destruction of Iraqi residential areas

NICOSIA, Feb 8: Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Belonogov criticised today what he said was the deliberate destruction of Iraqi residential areas by Allied air raids, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported, states Reuter.

"Iraq's civilian population should not be brought to misery. Unfortunately, civilians have suffered great harm." The agency quoted Belonogov as saying before ending a three-day visit to Tehran.

"Deliberate destruction of Iraqi residential areas can not fulfill the tasks set by the United Nations security resolution," Belonogov added. Iran, top, has said intensive

allied air raids on Iraq overstep the authority given by Security Council resolution 678 for the use of all necessary means to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait.

Belonogov, who held talks with Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and other Iranian officials, said Tehran and Moscow had identical views on the need for a quick halt to the Gulf war.

Belonogov was due to fly to Ankara for Gulf war talks.

Iran can't be indifferent

Meanwhile, Iranian President Rafsanjani said Iran can not be indifferent to the "massacre of innocent Iraqi

Muslims" and the destruction being wrought in Iraq, despite Tehran's neutrality in the Gulf conflict.

Mr. Rafsanjani, quoted by the official Iran news agency, made his remarks at a meeting with the visiting leader of Algeria's opposition fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front, Sheikh Abassi Madani on Thursday.

Sharif to meet Saddam

In Islamabad, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, under domestic pressure to change his anti-Iraq policy in the Gulf war, on Thursday offered to visit Baghdad in search of peace.

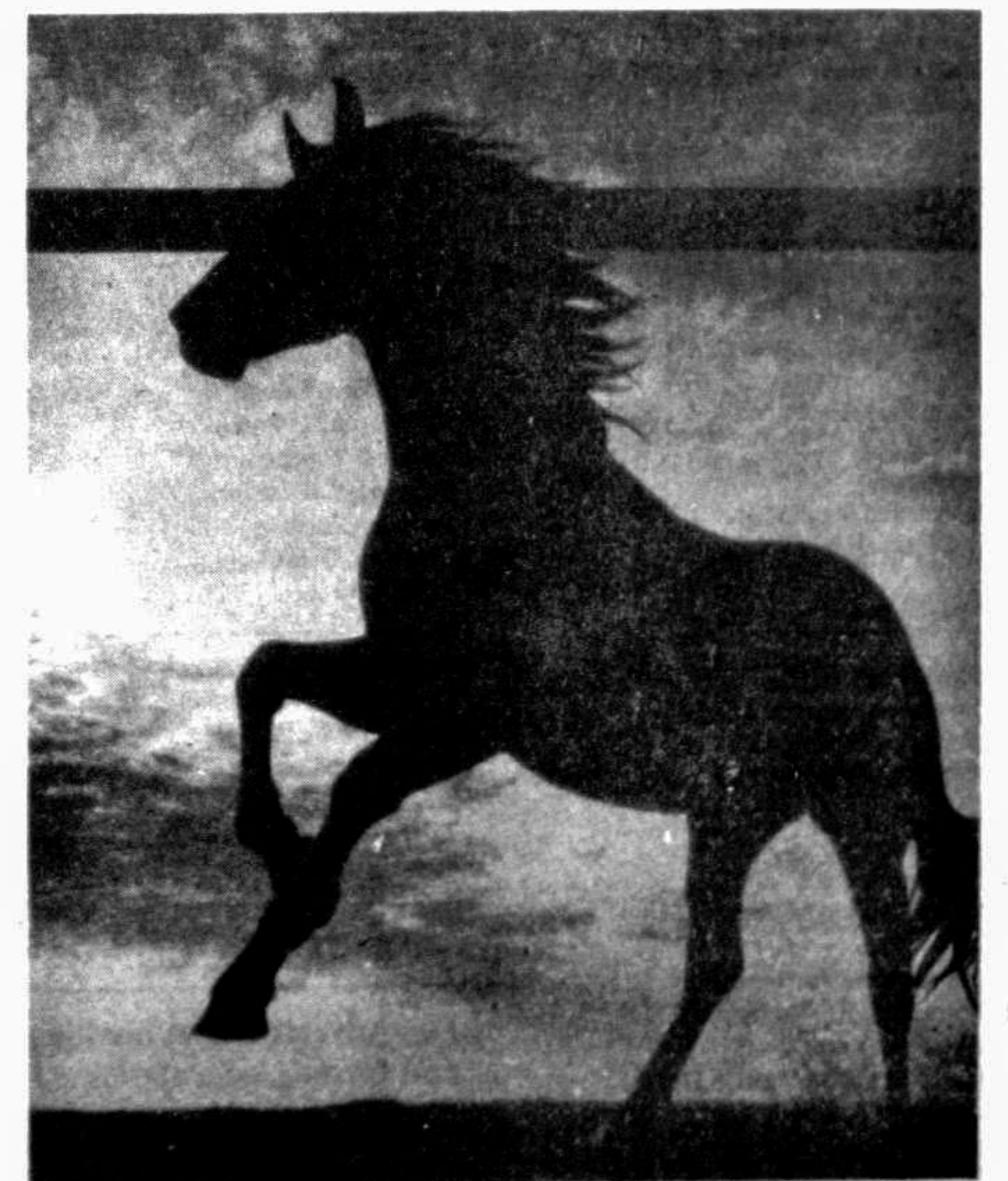
The offer, reported by the official APP news agency, was made in Sharif's second meeting with the Iraqi ambassador to Pakistan in nine days, while a Cabinet Minister joined the opposition in denouncing the U.S.-led attacks on Iraq.

France

Xinhua reports from Rabat: French National Assembly Foreign Affairs Commission President Michel Vauzelec said on Thursday the Maghreb nations can play a decisive role in seeking an appropriate solution to the Gulf war.

Vauzelec arrived in Rabat on Wednesday after paying an official visit to Algeria and Tunisia.

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