

International

A solution must begin with pullout : Washington

# Saddam ready for peace if US stops bombing

## BRIEFLY

**Perez to welcome any peace move :** UN Secretary-General Javier Perez De Cuellar said on Tuesday he would welcome any peace initiative by Iraq, but reiterated it must involve a complete withdrawal from Kuwait. Reuter reports from Ottawa.

Perez De Cuellar spoke to reporters shortly after Baghdad radio announced Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was willing to cooperate with the Soviet Union in seeking an end to the Gulf war.

"Everything which is intended in good faith to find a peaceful solution to this problem is extremely welcome by the UN," Perez De Cuellar said after meeting Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

**Italy refuses to pay more :** Italy has refused a US request to pay towards its Gulf war effort, arguing that it had already contributed a military contingent and could not afford to increase government spending, an official said on Monday. Reuter reports from Rome.

The government would instead increase its commitment to the US-led coalition against Iraq by providing more logistical support, said the aide to Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti. He noted last Friday's announcement that the US air force would be allowed to use part of a Milan Civilian Airport to refuel its warplanes. In addition, Italy would send more medical teams to the Gulf, he said.

**Four-stage peace plan to end war :** Yugoslav Foreign Minister Budimir Loncar Tuesday outlined a four-stage peace plan in the Gulf war, warning that it was perhaps the "last chance" to avoid the "frightening consequences" of ground warfare, reports AFP.

Speaking to the opening session of a Non-aligned Movement meeting in Belgrade Mr. Loncar said Iraq "still showed no willingness to accept the Security Council Resolution (660) and to quit Kuwait," a precondition of any peace initiative, the Tanjug news agency reported.

**Arab FMs to meet in Cairo :**

Foreign Ministers of Arab states in the anti-Iraq coalition will meet in Cairo from Friday to discuss plans for a permanent Arab security force in the Gulf, Egyptian officials and Arab diplomats said in Cairo on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

They said the two-day meeting would discuss a force including troops from the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states — Saudi Arabia, The United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman — and three Arab states in the US-led Gulf multinational force Egypt, Syria and Morocco.

**Sharif fails to gain support :**

Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif failed to win support from Tunisia and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) for a meeting of Islamic states on the Gulf war, diplomatic sources said in Tunis said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Sharif is on a North African tour to drum up support for an Islamic Conference Organisation (OIC) meeting that would discuss ways to end the war.

In Tunis, he held talks with Tunisian President Hamed Karoui and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. He earlier visited Libya.

**Primakov due in Japan today :** An

envoy sent by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to Baghdad will visit Japan on Thursday and may meet Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, a Foreign Ministry official said in Tokyo, reports Reuter.

Soviet President's Adviser Yevgeny Primakov, in Baghdad to try to persuade Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to withdraw his troops from Kuwait, would spend three days in Japan, he said.

He will deliver a lecture on East-West relations and the world economy after the Gulf crisis at a symposium arranged by an insurance group that is linked with Japan's Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications.

"If he meets Kaifu or Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama, they will discuss the Gulf crisis and Japan-Soviet relations," the official said.

**Mujahideen join Allies :** Three hundred

Afghan Mujahideen guerrillas have joined the US-led alliance against Iraq, a senior Saudi officer said in Riyadh on Monday, reports Reuter.

Colonel Ahmed Al Robayan said the Mujahideen, who arrived in allied joint command.

"They have experience of fighting against Russian tactics and therefore will be very useful," Robayan said.

Until the invasion of Kuwait last August the Soviet Union was Iraq's main arms supplier and the Iraqis employ Soviet Battlefield tactics.

**Pakistan expels two Iraqis :** The

Pakistan authorities have expelled two Iraqis from the country, an official report said in Islamabad on Tuesday.

One Iraqi was serving for Iraqi Airways and the other was a non-diplomatic employee of Iraqi consulate in Karachi which has been closed.

Both of the expelled Iraqis were involved illegal activities, the report said.

The Iraqi embassy in Pakistan has been trying to instigate people for pro-Iraq agitation, but Iraqi diplomats denied the charge, according to the report.

**IPI probe on censorship begins :**

The International Press Institute (IPI) launched an investigation on Tuesday into censorship of media coverage of the Gulf war on both sides of the conflict, reports Reuter from London.

The IPI, a worldwide body which campaigns for press freedom, is seeking evidence from reporters in Saudi Arabia and Iraq which highlights cases of censorship.

**'They want to keep me away from Assembly**

## Benazir blasts govt for cases against Zardari

KARACHI, Feb 13 : Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto accused the Pakistan government Tuesday of trying to distract her from her role as Parliamentary Opposition leader by filing criminal cases against her husband, reports AFP.

Mrs. Bhutto attended proceedings here Tuesday against her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, on charges of kidnapping for extortion of money from a London-based Pakistani businessman, Murtaza Bhukhari, in 1989.

Mr. Zardari and principal defendant Ghulam Hussain, have denied the charges.

Police have also filed charges of conspiracy to murder against Mr. Zardari, former Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah, ex-Health Minister Amir Haidar Kazmi, Senator Masroor Ahsan and former

Provincial Transport Minister Manzoor Hassan.

All are members of Mrs. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The new charges related to an alleged plot to murder Altaf Hussain, the leader of a rival political group, the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), which represents Urdu-speaking settlers from India.

"They (The government) want to keep me away from the National Assembly and party politics," said Mrs. Bhutto, who returned Monday from a month-long tour abroad.

The new charges were baseless, she said, adding: "these cases are part of the government's campaign to malign my family and party."

The Chief Minister of Sindh, Jam Sadiq Ali, has alleged that a conspiracy to kill the MQM leader and his party

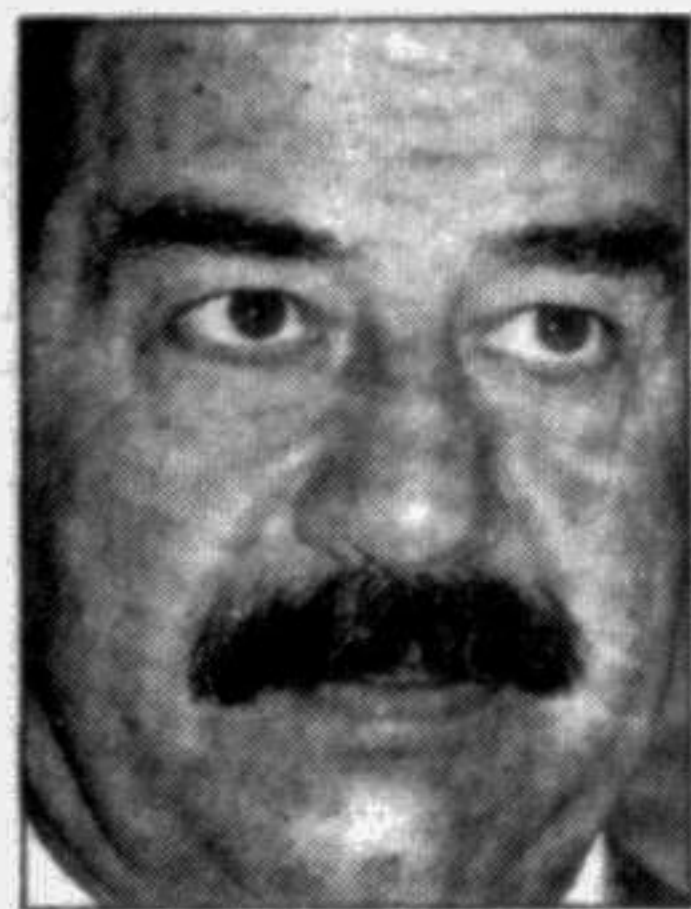
NICOSIA Feb 13: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein told a Soviet envoy on Tuesday he was ready to seek a peaceful end to the Gulf war but said the Allies must stop bombing his country, reports Reuter.

Iraq is prepared to extend cooperation to the Soviet Union and other nations and agencies in the interest of finding a peaceful, political, equitable and honourable solution to the region's central issues, including the situation in the Gulf, Iraqi radio quoted Saddam as telling Yevgeny Primakov.

"What is required now is for resolute action to stop these savage crimes and to keep the United States from using the United Nations as a vehicle for attaining its imperialist objectives," Saddam said, referring to four weeks of non-stop Allied bombing of Iraq and occupied Kuwait.

The radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, said Primakov gave Saddam a verbal message from President Mikhail Gorbachev on the Soviet view of the four-week old war.

Saddam emphasised that Iraq has "firmly resolved to tackle aggression with all that the national and Pan-Arab responsibility entails in the way of honour, pride and courage, regardless of the sacrifices needed, until aggression and the aggressors



●Civilian casualties appalling: Primakov

●UN serving US interests : Iraq

are beaten back," the radio said.

It said Primakov, who toured sites of war damage in Baghdad earlier on Tuesday told Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz that he was appalled by civilian casualties.

"It is appalling and regrettable that residential districts have been targeted and civilians hurt," it quoted the Soviet envoy as saying.

Aziz was among senior aids called to a high-level meeting with Saddam, the second reported in less than 24 hours.

The radio said others at the meeting included Revolution Command Council Deputy Chairman Izzat Ibrahim, First Deputy Prime Minister Taha Yassin Ramadan, Vice-President Taha Mohieddin Ma'rouf, National Assembly Speaker Said Mahdi Saleh and Culture and Information Minister Latif Nassif Jasssem.

The radio did not say when the meeting was held or given any details of what was discussed.

Gorbachev, warning the Allies their air blitz of Iraq might overstep their UN

Fitzwater said. "We don't have any details of their discussions," he told reporters. "But finding a solution would have to start with Iraq getting out of Kuwait and complying with the UN resolutions."

He said some of the statements attributed to Saddam had been seen before and that "it's just too premature to make a judgment."

"The deciding factor is what he has to say about getting out of Kuwait," Fitzwater said.

AFP adds : Former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark Tuesday said he had asked UN Secretary General Javier Perez De Cuellar to immediately call for an end to Allied bombing of civilian areas in Iraq.

Mr. Clark, a peace activist who has just returned from a week-long fact-finding tour of Iraq, said that in a letter to the UN chief, he appealed for an immediate end to bombing except on military concentrations in southern Iraq and against known Scud missile sites.

The former Attorney General also recommended that funds be raised to supply Iraq with milk formula, medicine and other basic necessities.

"I believe in the UN," he said, "but the UN become a war instrument against Iraq."

## Schwarzkopf calling most of the shots

IN EASTERN SAUDI ARABIA, Feb 13 : The direction of the 28-nation Allied force that began battling Iraq early this morning falls under the direction of two overall commanders, but it is the American who is calling most of the shots, reports AFP.



US commander, Gen H. Norman Schwarzkopf, is orchestrating the war in cooperation with Saudi co-commander, Lt-Gen Khalid bin Sultan.

Their close coordination is intended to eliminate many of the command and control problems that bedevilled the multinational coalition over five months.

But questions remain about the differing objectives of the main players — the United States, Britain, France, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria — and how their armies will coordinate in the heat of battle.

The Americans and British have made clear that they prefer to devastate Saddam Hussein's military might and neutralise his drive for the first Arab nuclear weapon.

The Saudis and the other Arabs, even Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's Arab rivals, the Syrians, balk at weakening Iraq to the point that it undermines the Arab lineup against Israel, leaving the Jewish state and Iran strong power in the region.

Most have indicated they are prepared to push the Iraqis out of Kuwait, but will not hit Iraq itself.

Under an agreement reached in early November from Saudi King Fahd and US Secretary of State James Baker, the United States

commands offensive operations outside Saudi Arabia. But it must have Fahd's permission to launch an attack from Saudi soil.

Like an orchestra trying to make music without ever practising all together, armies with different types of equipment and speaking a half-dozen languages will have to fight side by side in a coordinate, cohesive way to win.

"Form a military point of view, the fewer nations involved the better. From a political point of view, the more nations the better. You have to have a happy compromise," Schwarzkopf said.

Schwarzkopf and Khalid, who commands all Arab-Islamic forces, have consulted daily.

"We are one command. We'll conduct the war together. We are co-commanders," Khalid insisted recently.

Gen. Schwarzkopf called US forces to be "thunder and lightning" of the US-led attack and urged them to "get this job done quickly."

# Iraqi planes in Iran to launch blitzkrieg?

CAIRO, Feb 13: By moving many of his best warplanes to neutral Iran, Saddam Hussein is saving them for the future and may hope Tehran will let Iraq use them if the Gulf War escalates, diplomats and military analysts say, reports Reuter.

The mass flight of up to 150 Iraqi aircraft, including modern MIG-29 fighters and Su-24 bombers, poses a dilemma for the Islamic Republic, which opposes both Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the presence of US and Western troops in the Gulf.

Analysts, who admit they can only guess at Saddam's motives, say the move illustrates the Iraqi leader's capacity to wrongfoot adversaries with nerve-jangling surprises.

"There has to be some deal with Iran. He wouldn't have risked having them shoot down, disable or confiscate his best planes," one Western diplomat said, reflecting a widespread view.

"At the least, he gets to keep a substantial air force after the war, with which he can once again scare the Gulf

states, Jordan, Israel or Syria," the diplomat said.

"But he may get more. Maybe he hopes he can press Iran to let him use them for one big air strike once the land war begins, or if Israel intervenes and the war widens," he said.

Some analysts speculated that Iraq might be trying to tempt the US led allied air forces into violating Iranian airspace in the hope of drawing Iran into the war on his side.

But Tehran is still recovering from the devastating 1980-88 war with Iraq, which Saddam launched by invading southern Iran. A senior pro-Iranian source in Lebanon said Iran "will never join Iraq in the war" and still has scores to settle with Baghdad.

The pro-government Tehran Times newspaper said the violation of Iranian airspace by Iraqi fighters was "another unsuccessful attempt to pull the Islamic Republic of Iran into the conflict."

Saddam said in an interview with CNN correspondent Peter Arnett that both Iraq and Iran saw the war as a battle "between faith and infidel."

Asked if the planes would still be used in the war, he replied that he would respect whatever decision Iran took.

Iran's Supreme National Defence Council ordered the aircraft impounded until the war ended. Its UN envoy,

Kamal Kharrazi, said Iran had protested to Baghdad over the intrusion.

US commanders played down the move, citing it as evidence of the success of allied bombing of Iraq's hardened aircraft shelters, and Secretary of State James Baker said Washington accepted Iran's assurance the planes would be seized.

"If those aircraft came up from Iran to attack the US force, we would deal with them," Lieutenant-General Tom Kelly told a Pentagon briefing.

Military analysts said Iraq had parked a substantial part of its air force in friendly Jordan in the early years of the war with Iran for safe-keeping. The difference was that Saddam knew Jordan would let him use them when he needed them, they said.

## Winnie's trial to continue

JOHANNESBURG, Feb 13 : The trial of Winnie Mandela on charges of kidnapping and assault will go ahead after a key witness decided to testify in open court, state prosecutor Jan Swanepoel said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

He told the Supreme Court in Johannesburg that Kenneth Kgase had been persuaded to take the stand on Wednesday after consultations with his lawyers and the trial could therefore continue.

## Pre-poll rally in Nepal stormed: 8 injured

KATHMANDU, Feb 13 : An unruly crowd of more than 5,000 people disrupted a pre-election rally of the National Democratic Party (NDP) in Dhangadhi in south-western Nepal, the party said yesterday, reports AFP.

At least eight members of former Premier Surya Bahadur Thapa's party were injured in the clash Monday with supporters of the Nepal Congress, Nepal Communist Party and Nepal Communist Party, the NDP said in a statement.

The crowd, carrying anti-Thapa slogans, stormed the meeting, burned the NDP flag, hoisted a black flag and began "mercilessly manhandling" party members, the statement said.

Police escorted Mr. Thapa to a nearby house, which the crowd surrounded for more than three hours as they chanted slogans, the NDP said.

The party said the local administration and police made no effort to restrain the

crowd, but a Home Ministry official said local police gave "full protection to Mr. Thapa and his party activists."

Nepal's second general elections in 32 years is set for May 12, when more than 10.7 million voters will elect 205 members of the (Lower) House of Representatives.

In the first elections in May 1959, the Nepali Congress won 76 of a total 107 seats. But the parliamentary system of government lasted only 18 months before being dissolved by King Mahendra, father of Nepal's current monarch, King Birendra.

King Mahendra banned political parties and introduced the partyless Panchayat policy, which King Birendra, 47, ended last April when the multiparty system of government was reinstated.

Nepal's new constitution reduces its King to a constitutional monarch, acting on the advice of a Council of Ministers.

## Allies to target Iraqi radio stations

RIYADH, Feb 13: U.S. commanders in the Gulf have decided to stop Iraqi President Saddam Hussein broadcasting to his own people, military sources said Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Iraqi radio and television stations have been on and off the air since war broke out on January 17 because of bomb damage both to broadcasting equipment and to the electricity grid supplying the transmitters.

US and Allied military sources said Tuesday Allied commanders had decided to target all radio stations which Saddam uses to communicate with the Iraqi people.

"If it's part of the national command and control system, if for example a known antenna system is broadcasting from the leadership to the military commanders or the populace at large, yes, then it's a target," one US military source said.

The bombing campaign against such targets has been "pretty successful," he added.



RIO DE JANEIRO : Two samba dancers stop in downtown Rio de Janeiro to dance February 12 on the last day of carnival. — AFP/UNB photo

## Off the Record

### 25 blasts greet Primakov

BAGHDAD : Soviet envoy Yevgeny Primakov, visiting Baghdad to seek an end to the Gulf war, left his hotel with the Soviet Ambassador for three hours but said on his return: "I have nothing to tell. I saw nobody," reports Reuter.

Primakov, a personal envoy of President Mikhail Gorbachev, arrived at the Rashid Hotel in the Iraqi capital on Monday night.

He later held talks with President Saddam Hussein.

Two hours after Primakov arrived in Baghdad, more than 25 explosions from allied strikes rocked the city centre.

Air and missile strikes extensively damaged the building housing the Ministry for Municipal Affairs at Hafsa Street and damaged the nearby Justice Ministry.

The attack was one of the heaviest on central Baghdad since US-led forces seeking to drive Iraq out of Kuwait started air missions on January 17.

The Baghdad correspondent for the American network CNN Peter Arnett, later reported that Primakov had toured the Iraqi capital to inspect the damage done by almost four weeks of devastating allied air attacks.

### Scramble for a pillow

WELLINGTON : A liquid-filled pillow is to become the latest defence against terrorist bombs, Wellington's Dominion newspaper reported here Tuesday, says AFP.

A local firm has devised a rubber pillow, filled with a secret liquid chemical, which is placed over explosive devices and can absorb a fireball, blast and shrapnel.

Minerva Ltd's Managing Director Mike Graham, who devised the "Barrett Bag" as he calls it, said there was wide interest in the pillow, including from US airlines which believe it would eliminate the fire hazard and blast effects of an aircraft bomb.

Mr. Graham, a former New Zealand Special Air Services bomb expert, said the idea for the bag came from the civil war in Zimbabwe when the blast effect of landmines was lessened by putting truck tyres full of water on them.

He said the bomb's energy converts the bag's liquid first into vapour, then into steam, eliminating the fireball and about 90 per cent of the blast.

"If you were sitting two metres (yards) from a one-kilo (2.2 pound) pipe bomb — a big one — you could walk away," he said.

### Daggers in stomach!

OSLO : A screeching parrot accused of making the neighbours ill went on trial in Norway this week in an unprecedented court case which could bring it a long spell of solitary confinement, reports Reuter.

Jokko, a blue and red parrot aged about 50, kept virtually silent as a magistrate, lawyers and witnesses turned up at the bird's Oslo home for the start of the trial on Monday. The court moved to the house as it was too cold for Jokko to travel.

"My wife was taken to hospital after a heart attack. I reckon one of the reasons for her illness was the parrot's noise and the neighbours' provocations," Norwegian newspapers quoted neighbour Frank Andresen as testifying.

Andresen said Jokko's squawking was like "daggers in the stomach." He wanted the parrot to leave or be locked in a back room.

Jokko's owner, Jan Erik Skog, denied the Andresen family's charges that he spied on them and deliberately put the parrot outside to annoy them in summer. The case was due to continue on Tuesday with testimony from up to 20 witnesses.

### 'Emperor has no clothes'

MANILA : Philippine President Corazon Aquino damaged the prestige of her office by testifying at the trial of a journalist she has accused of defaming her honour, Manila newspaper Commentators said, reports Reuter.

"We saw that the Emperor had no clothes," wrote Manila Chronicle Chief Editor Amando Doronila in a front page article.

"By appearing as a witness, Mrs Aquino was partly responsible for the degradation of her exalted office in the bustling arena of the trial court."

Aquino became the first Philippine President to testify in court on Monday when she appeared as a witness in a libel case she filed against Luis Beltran, who in 1987 wrote in his popular newspaper column that she hid under her bed during a coup attempt.

Aquino called the statement a blatant lie that damaged her credibility as the nation's Commander-in-Chief.

Live television coverage showed Aquino annoyed and sullen during cross-examination. The judge twice told her to address the court lawyers as "Sir".

Doronila wrote that Aquino had proved her point that no one could insult the Presidency without inviting retribution, but that she had paid a high price for it.

"As a witness Mrs. Aquino gave an opportunity for her to be humiliated and be seen as a bumbling witness, and thanks to full TV coverage her humiliation was assured as a public spectacle," Doronila said.

Columnist Nelson Navarro wrote in the Malaya (free) newspaper that Aquino dragged the presidency down "into the seething threshold of ordinary and petty life."