

International

A personal triumph for Annan

BAGHDAD, Feb 24: The agreement secured by UN Chief Kofi Annan with Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein is a personal triumph for the Ghanaian Secretary-General who put his credibility on the line by travelling to Baghdad, reports AFP.

of UN resolutions providing for full and unconditional access for UN weapons inspectors, while preserving Iraqi sovereignty.

all five had discussed the possible options for resolving the crisis in the same room.

suade Iraqi authorities to drop the imposed timeframe, which he did in his two-hour private meeting with Saddam on Sunday.

Annan's success here will also provide a much-needed shot in the arm for the United Nations, currently engaged in an internal debate over its relevance at a time when the United States is less than fully committed to the world body.

His personal low-key and pragmatic style was clearly a factor in the negotiations here. The Iraqi authorities apparently trusted the UN Secretary-General, who was offering Baghdad a ladder to climb down to end the crisis with dignity.

He said before leaving New York that Iraq should not be humiliated.

The signed agreement which was to be presented to the 15 member Security Council on Tuesday, will also offer the United States a face-saving way to avoid the military strikes.

Annan's talks here took place in a "civilised" manner despite their difficulty, according to sources close to the talks.

"There was no thumping of table or raising of voices," one source said.

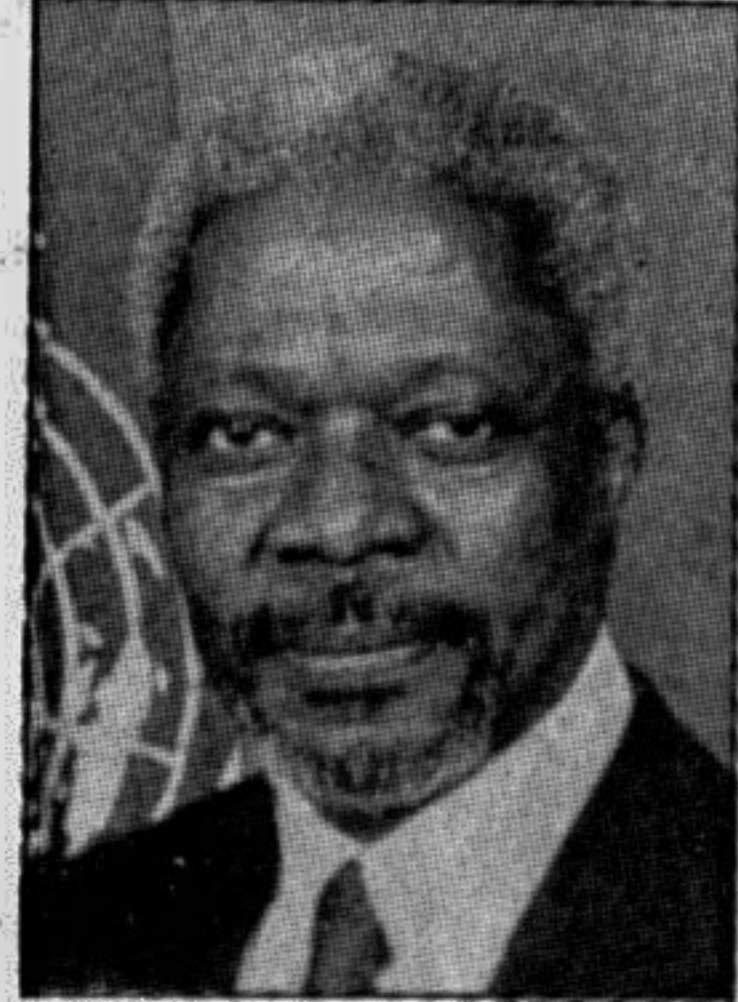
"Annan wanted to voice," a diplomat said here Sunday, implying that as of now, he does.

Saddam kept Perez waiting at a guest house for some 10 hours before receiving him. Annan, in contrast, was given full honours during his four-day trip, during which he was welcomed at Saddam International Airport by deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz.

Annan, 59, always said that he would only travel to Baghdad if he was certain he could "make a difference" with a "workable solution" acceptable to both the UN Security Council and Iraq.

"It's a victory. He showed his worth with his cool, his tact and his finesse," said one western diplomat based in Baghdad.

Annan's smoothly orchestrated process began in New York, where the initial concept for his agreement with Iraq was drawn up by UN officials, to ensure the full implementations



Then, over a period of days, he focused the minds of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, to obtain the collective "bottom line" of Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

It was the first time since the crisis began on October that

18 killed, 25 hurt in Algiers train blast

PARIS, Feb 24: A bomb killed 18 people and wounded 25 on a train south of the Algerian capital Algiers on Monday, Algerian security forces said, reports Reuters.

One resident said by telephone that he believed the toll could be higher because the train was full of people going home from work.

"Eighteen people were killed and 25 were wounded," state-run radio said, quoting a statement by the security forces.

The security forces said the train was travelling between Algiers and the southern area of Aflou when the bomb exploded at 4:45 PM (15:45 GMT). It was in an area known for scores of attacks on civilians which officials have blamed on Muslim rebels.

The statement indicated that the bomb was planted on or near the track and went off as the train passed.

Netanyahu calls for face-to-face talks with Arafat

JERUSALEM, Feb 24: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday called for intense face-to-face talks with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to broker a definitive peace agreement.

"We should sit down together Arafat and myself in the presence of the Americans, for example at Camp David in the United States, to solve the problem and reach an historic accord," Netanyahu said.

In 1978 Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin hammered out an agreement at Camp David that led to the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process has collapsed since Netanyahu took office in May 1996, and the Palestinians walked out of peace talks in March last year after Netanyahu ordered the start of construction on a Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem.

Parliament takes step to try Erbakan

ANKARA, Feb 23: Turkey's parliament on Monday took the first step towards trying Islamist leader and former prime minister Necmettin Erbakan for alleged violation of public order laws, officials said, reports Reuters.

The speaker's office released files detailing charges against Erbakan and three other former members of parliament from the Islam-based Welfare Party, outlawed by the constitutional court last month for threatening Turkey's secularist system.

"We prepared the files yesterday and issued them today," a parliament official told Reuters. "They will eventually be sent on to the courts, which will begin trials."

A court also issued an arrest warrant for Islamist firebrand Sevki Yilmaz, who lost his parliamentary status along with Erbakan.

Anatolian News Agency quoted a prosecutor as saying Yilmaz, wanted on charges of sedition, could face the death penalty under an article which covers attempts to "disrupt the constitution and the fundamental principles of the state."

Paula Jones' lawyers subpoena Tripp

DALLAS, Feb 24: Shortly after signing on with Paula Jones, her new legal team issued a subpoena that would open a new window for her sexual harassment suit against President Bill Clinton — and rattle the administration with suspicions involving Clinton and his friend Vernon Jordan, reports AP.

The subpoena went to Linda Tripp, who told prosecutors about an alleged presidential affair with a White House intern and attempts to cover it up.

Over one-third US female doctors faces sexual harassment!

WASHINGTON, Feb 24: More than a third of female doctors in the United States say they have been sexually harassed on the job, a new study reported, reports AP.

Many women doctors said they were harassed either in medical school or in the first few years of work in an internship, residency or fellowship, according to findings from the latest issue of the American Medical Association's Archives of Internal Medicine.

In all, nearly half of all female doctors reported some form of gender-based harassment, according to scientists from Emory University's school of medicine, in Atlanta, Georgia, who authored the study.

More troubling, harassment in medical schools "may be getting worse, and we may be continuing to train physicians in an environment where harassment is common," the researchers said.



President Clinton meets reporters in the Oval Office of the White House Monday, to discuss the tentative United Nations agreement with Iraq. Also present were, from second left, Defence Secretary William Cohen, United Nations Ambassador Bill Richardson and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Henry Shelton.

Polls violence death toll rises to 64 Candidate among 5 gunned down in Bihar

PATNA, India, Feb 24: A politician running in India's parliamentary race and four of his supporters were gunned down Tuesday in the northern state considered the country's most lawless, police said, reports AP.

Violence has been fiercest in Bihar state in a nationwide election that has focused attention on the pressures on India's democracy. The vote was called three years ahead of schedule after no party won a majority in the last balloting in 1996, and the rivalries that kept politicians from forming a stable government over the last two years are behind some of the current unrest.

In three days of balloting, voting has been completed for three-fourths of the 543 districts at stake. Voting was staggered over a total of six days to allow security forces time to move to different trouble spots. A fourth round will be held Saturday and vote counting will begin March 2.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack

shortly after midnight on Devedranath Dubey, a candidate of the socialist Samajwadi Party.

All five victims were found dead in a jeep at Sangrampur village, 185 kilometers (115 miles) north of Bihar's capital Patna, said police officer T P Sinha.

Elections in Dubey's Motihari constituency were held Sunday, amid allegations of vote rigging by other candidates. The Election Commission is likely to rule Tuesday on whether polling would have to be held again in Motihari.

Dubey, like dozens of other politicians in Bihar, is facing trial on murder charges. Four days ago, he got a court order restraining police from arresting him in another murder case.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered the state assembly in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh to meet Thursday for a vote on which political faction should govern.

Uttar Pradesh has been in turmoil since Saturday, when

two parties in the state's Hindu nationalist-led governing coalition walked out. The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party was dismissed and replaced by another faction, but several politicians who had been described as defectors later said they still supported the BJP.

A lower court on Monday restored the BJP to power. The Supreme Court ruling Tuesday made that conditional on Thursday's vote, when both the BJP and the faction that replaced it Saturday will be given a chance to demonstrate how much support they have.

AFP adds, the death toll in India's ongoing national elections crossed 60 today, when an election candidate and four others were killed in the country's most crime-prone state, the Press Trust of India said.

Today's deaths took the total to 64. India's Election Commission, responsible for fair elections, has argued the total has been inflated by killings with no connection to the polls.

Key points of UN-Iraq deal

UNDATED, Feb 24: Key points in the agreement between UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, reports AP.

The government of Iraq made a written commitment to provide "immediate, unrestricted and unconditional" access for UN inspectors to all potential weapons sites in Iraq, as called for by UN Security Council resolutions dating from the 1991 Gulf War.

If fully implemented, this would allow the United Nations Special Commission, or UNSCOM, to fulfill its mission to find and destroy all of Iraq's chemical, biological and nuclear weapons; find and destroy the missiles to deliver those weapons; and to institute a system for long-term monitoring to make sure Iraq does not build more.

The agreement applies to all sites in Iraq, including eight disputed presidential palaces, which were among areas which UN weapons inspectors have been denied access to.

Senior diplomats will be appointed by the UN secretary-general in consultation with UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency for inspecting the eight palace sites. No deadline or limits on the number of visits to the sites is

included in the agreement.

The "special group" appointed by Annan will operate under the established procedures of UNSCOM and IAEA as well as under "specific, detailed procedures which will be developed given the special nature of the presidential sites, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council."

There was no indication of what those procedures might entail, a potential trouble spot.

The United Nations reiterated the commitment of all members states to respect Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

While there were no timelines for lifting tough economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations more than seven years ago, the agreement says that lifting them "is obviously of paramount importance" to the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government.

The agreement notes the progress achieved by weapons inspectors in various disarmament areas, and the need to intensify efforts in order to complete their mandate. The Security Council has said that once completed, sanctions can be lifted. Toward the goal of finishing the task, the document says the United Nations and Iraq agree to improve their cooperation and efficiency.

NATO expansion expected to cost \$1.5b

WASHINGTON, Feb 24: The Pentagon sharply reduced its estimate of the cost of bringing three former Warsaw Pact members into NATO, reporting Monday that the price tag will be \$1.5 billion over 10 years, reports AP.

This reflects more recent and more complete information than the Department's February 1997 cost figures of \$4.9 billion to \$6.2 billion, the department said in a statement.

The US share of the cost is expected to be about \$375 million, according to the new estimates.

The analysis parallels one issued in November by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which said it would cost \$1.5 billion over 10 years to let Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic join. The three were invited to participate after a summit in July.

The latest Pentagon estimate is more in line with NATO's because it was revised to include several factors — it covers only three countries, instead of the earlier estimates for four; it now agrees with "more recent and detailed data" that found

that potential members' military infrastructures, such as its air bases and rail networks, were not as bad as once feared; and the Pentagon included costs in its past study that will now be born by the new members themselves, the report said.

The \$1.5 billion represents the total "common costs" to NATO members and would cover such things as improving new members' communications and air defense systems to bring them in line with those of current NATO members.

The US cost will be "the standard US share of about 25 per cent," of that amount, said the statement, released at the Pentagon.

The latest figures came as the administration planned to send Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and defense Secretary William Cohen to Capitol Hill to argue Tuesday for the NATO expansion before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Lawmakers have cited the various cost estimates as part of their concern over whether to approve the alliance's enlargement.

The Senate is expected to vote on the expansion next month.

BRIEFLY

US opposes Russian-Iran cooperation: The State Department reaffirmed on Monday its opposition to Russian participation in the construction of a nuclear reactor in Iran. AP reports from Washington.

Dengue fever kills 3 in East Timor: An outbreak of dengue fever has killed three people and infected 29 people in Dili, the main town of East Timor, since last week, a report said yesterday, AFP report from Jakarta.

4 killed in blast in Colombia: At least four people including a six-month-old baby were killed and dozens injured on Monday when a powerful bomb, thought to have been planted by leftist rebels, tore through a town in southern Colombia, Reuters reports from Bogota.

Singer Sara dead: Multi-lingual singer of Yetyears, Sara Gul Mohammed, 83, died in Kochi on Monday, PTI reports from Kochi.

43 killed by tornadoes in Florida: MIAMI, Florida, Feb 24: Rescue helicopters carried out frantic search and rescue operations in central Florida Monday after at least 43 people were killed by tornadoes overnight, officials said, reports AFP.

28 Pak extremists arrested: KARACHI, Feb 24: Police have detained eight men, seven of them Sunni Muslim extremists, in the wake of two violent attacks on Shiite Muslims in Karachi, police said Tuesday, reports AP.

Benazir challenges Pak anti-corruption law in Supreme Court: ISLAMABAD, Feb 24: Dogged by accusations of graft, former prime minister Benazir Bhutto has challenged Pakistan's anti-corruption law in the Supreme Court, her spokesman said Tuesday, reports AP.

8 Pak extremists arrested: Karachi mosques raided and offices and mosques of extremist Sunni Muslim groups. It wasn't immediately clear whether the men who were arrested were being held for questioning or were going to be charged in connection with the attacks.

43 killed by tornadoes in Florida: In Pakistan the law allows police to hold people for up to three months for questioning.

43 killed by tornadoes in Florida: In the past one year violence between Sunnis and Shites in Pakistan killed more than 300 people, prompting the government to pass a strict anti-terrorism law that gives police sweeping powers to arrest suspected militants.

43 killed by tornadoes in Florida: The interim government that ruled for three months following her dismissal passed an anti-corruption law and established a team to investigate corruption cases. A separate commission also was established to decide whether there is enough evidence for the cases to stand up in court.

43 killed by tornadoes in Florida: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was elected three

8 Pak extremists arrested

KARACHI, Feb 24: Police have detained eight men, seven of them Sunni Muslim extremists, in the wake of two violent attacks on Shiite Muslims in Karachi, police said Tuesday, reports AP.

News of the arrests followed Saturday's daylight attack on two Iranian construction workers. A few hours later in a separate attack, a bomb exploded outside a Shiite mosque, killing one person and injuring two others.

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It wasn't immediately clear whether the men who were arrested were being held for questioning or were going to be charged in connection with the attacks.

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43 killed by tornadoes in Florida

MIAMI, Florida, Feb 24: Rescue helicopters carried out frantic search and rescue operations in central Florida Monday after at least 43 people were killed by tornadoes overnight, officials said, reports AFP.

The victims are from towns and cities surrounding the Disney World Amusement park complex, in Orlando, said Miguel Pagan, spokesman for the Osceola County Sheriff's Department in central Florida.

At least 12 twisters packing wind gusts of up to 400 km an hour downed electrical wires and overturned vehicles while accompanying rains caused flooding in several counties.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the people in central Florida," President Bill Clinton said in Washington at a meeting with state governors.

Meteorologist Bart Hagemeyer at the US Weather Service Station in Melbourne said the state of twisters was "the most devastating ... in the history of the state of Florida."

The Tornadoes "are definitely linked to El Nino," said Hagemeyer, who added that unusually warm waters in the Pacific Ocean had wreaked havoc with weather patterns throughout the Americas.

New ROK president offers summit with DPRK

SEOUL, Feb 24: For decades, he was seen as a dangerous dissident, surviving 15 years in prison and exile, house arrest and assassination attempts by former military dictators, reports AP.

Often called "Asia's Mandela," Kim Dae-jung, takes office Wednesday as South Korea's first president to be elected from an opposition party since the country was founded in 1948.

Kim, 74, begins his single five-year term with almost the same moral authority as President Nelson Mandela of South Africa and with overwhelming public support.

Kim already has proposed a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il and indicated that his government would push to expand economic and other exchanges with the North's communist regime.

In an apparent response to Kim's offer, North Korea said last week that it was willing to talk with South Korea's incoming government — something it has refused to do for years.

Eschewing so-called "Asian values" that put a premium on personal ties and fostered collusion between governments and business, Kim contends that a lack of democracy brought about the financial crisis afflicting much of Asia.

Benazir challenges Pak anti-corruption law in Supreme Court

ISLAMABAD, Feb 24: Dogged by accusations of graft, former prime minister Benazir Bhutto has challenged Pakistan's anti-corruption law in the Supreme Court, her spokesman said Tuesday, reports AP.

"She filed a petition yesterday to challenge the constitutionality of the Accountability Law," said Farhatullah Babar, her spokesman.

Benazir was dismissed as prime minister in November 1996 amidst charges of run-away corruption, misuse and economic mismanagement.

The interim government that ruled for three months following her dismissal passed an anti-corruption law and established a team to investigate corruption cases. A separate commission also was established to decide whether there is enough evidence for the cases to stand up in court.

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Off the Record



US pop star Michael Jackson poses for camera with Everland mascots during his visit to the Yongin Everland Amusement Park, east of Seoul, South Korea, Monday. Jackson is here to attend Kim Dae-jung's presidential inauguration ceremony Feb 25. — AP/UNB photo

Now it's Mr Jefferson — the cloned calf

LONDON: The team who gave the world Dolly, the cloned sheep, have produced Mr Jefferson, the cloned calf. It was announced Monday, reports AP.

Scientists at PPL Therapeutics near Edinburgh, Scotland, said the healthy Holstein cow, weighing 44 kilos, was produced by its US subsidiary PPL Therapeutics of Blacksburg, Virginia.

Mr. Jefferson was so named due to his birth on Feb 16, which in the United States was President's Day. Thomas Jefferson was the third US president, from 1801 to 1809.

What an emergency! CHICAGO: Medical workers had to borrow heavy lifting gear from a zoo to hoist a 363-kg (800-pound) man, who complained of chest pains, from the basement of his home and get him to hospital, reports AP.