

# Sanctions against Iraq won't be lifted: US

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 18: The United States made clear Tuesday that economic sanctions against Iraq will not be lifted at the end of a comprehensive review of Baghdad's compliance with UN resolutions, reports AP.

The UN Security Council has promised to launch a review when UN weapons inspectors confirm that Iraq has resumed cooperation unconditionally — and Baghdad wants the review to bring an end to the oil embargo imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

But Deputy US Ambassador Peter Burchfield told a news conference that the US government has always viewed the comprehensive review as just that — a review of Iraqi obligations and the many questions it hasn't answered.

"We don't see the sanctions lifting as the end result of the comprehensive review," he said. Burchfield's comments were bound to irritate and disappoint Iraqi leaders who, in their own words, have been looking for a light at the end of the tunnel.

Iraq's UN Ambassador Nizar Hamdoun said Sunday that Baghdad made a commitment to cooperate with the inspectors "provided the work will lead at some point to the end of the story."

For Iraq, the end of the story is lifting sanctions and Baghdad says it deserves to have the bans ended now. But the United States says Baghdad has a long way to go.

Baghdad curtailed weapons inspections August 5 and banned them entirely on October 31, demanding a comprehensive review that would set a clear timetable for the lifting of sanctions. The Iraqi government lifted the ban and agreed to unfettered inspection Saturday, as the US was about to launch massive airstrikes.

Burchfield stressed that while the council has focused on Iraq's compliance with resolutions demanding the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction, the United States is also demanding its compliance with resolutions calling for an accounting of missing Kuwaitis, looted Kuwait property and government archives.

To show that the United States considers the fate of Kuwaiti prisoners "an extremely important issue" for Iraq to resolve, Burchfield called a sudden news conference and brought along Ibrahim Al-Shahine, vice-chairman of the Kuwait National Committee for Missing Persons and Prisoners of War Affairs.

Burchfield stressed that Iraq must comply with all UN requirements before sanctions can end, and he dismissed Baghdad's suggestion that sanctions should be lifted incrementally in proportion to Baghdad's compliance.

There's no issue about incremental lifting of sanctions. It's not allowed under the resolutions. And as far as I know, there's no member of the council arguing for incremental lifting of sanctions," Burchfield said.

The Iraqis have charged the United States with misinterpreting UN resolutions to prolong the process of lifting sanctions. The comprehensive review envisioned by the Security Council will be divided in two parts, the first focusing on disarmament and the second on other issues, including Kuwaiti prisoners.

The Iraqis want an oil embargo — which they consider the most punishing — lifted after weapons inspectors verify that they have eliminated their nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the long-range missiles to deliver them.

But even though some Security Council members might support this alternative, Burchfield ruled it out and demanded Iraqi compliance with all UN resolutions.

## Benazir presents agenda for nat'l survival

ISLAMABAD, Nov 18: Pakistan's opposition leader and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto has vowed to frustrate all efforts to convert the country into a theocratic, authoritarian and bankrupt state and present her own agenda for national survival, reports PTI.

The chief of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) also demanded dismissal of the Nawaz Sharif government and holding of fresh elections to fulfill the demands that are genuine, democratic, patriotic and progressive.

Accusing Sharif of pursuing a policy which would lead to an authoritarian rule in the country and convert Pakistan into a theocratic state, Benazir presented a nine-point alternative agenda for the survival of the country faced with unprecedented crises of existence.

"We resolve to frustrate all efforts aimed at turning Pakistan into a theocratic, authoritarian, adventurist, unitary, jingoist and bankrupt state, she said in the agenda, the second major alternative proposed by her since her party was routed in the February 1997 polls and PML assumed power.

Benazir's government had been dismissed midway through its five-year term by the then President, Farooq Leghari, in November 1996 amidst charges of corruption and deteriorating law and order situation.

Benazir, who is facing a number of corruption charges, also termed the Sharif government as a coterie of corrupt gangsters who have usurped the rights of the oppressed people and all the federating units.

## UNSC condemns continuation of violence in Burundi

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 18: The UN Security Council condemned the escalating cycle of violence in Burundi and called for a cease-fire and swift punishment for those guilty of recent massacres, reports AP.

"The council condemns all attacks against civilians and reiterates the need for all parties to respect human rights and humanitarian law, and reminds the government of its responsibility to protect all its citizens," the council said Tuesday in a press statement.

After a briefing on the recent violence committed by both rebel forces and government troops, the council said it endorsed UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's condemnation and call for an immediate end to all attacks.

Deputy US Ambassador Peter Burchfield, the current council president, said members welcomed the government's announcement that it will investigate the massacre of innocent civilians by government troops in early November.



Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, left, Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, and US Vice President Al Gore walk a path in a tropical garden toward a luncheon during the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit at Cyberview Lodge, Kuala Lumpur's southern retreat, Wednesday. — AP/UNB photo

## Impeachment hearings start today House Judiciary yet to finalise procedures

WASHINGTON, Nov 18: Just a day away from impeachment hearings into president Bill Clinton's conduct, House Judiciary Committee Republicans are still sparring with Democrats over what the format should be, reports AP.

One contentious point has been settled: Clinton's attorneys will get no more than 30 minutes to question the leadoff witness, Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr.

Rep Henry Hyde, the committee's chairman, also rejected a White House request for more than one lawyer to cross-examine Starr, and warned the administration that questions into Starr's tactics would not be permitted when hearings begin Thursday.

"The fact that the committee approved rules allowing your participation demonstrates the extent to which it wants to be fair to the president," Hyde wrote White House Counsel Charles F. Ruff in a sternly worded letter late Tuesday night.

White House lawyers had insisted they needed 90 minutes to cross-examine Starr. Democrats claim Starr's conservatism has coloured his four-year, multifaceted investigation of Clinton and his referral to Congress detailing 11 possibly impeachable offences, including perjury and obstruction of justice, involving the president's affair with Monica Lewinsky.

"It is the guiding principle of our adversarial system that truth emerges most clearly from the interplay of direct and cross-examination," Ruff had written.

Meanwhile, Judiciary Committee Republicans expect to receive Clinton's answers to their 81 questions about the president's conduct to land on Capitol Hill as soon as Wednesday, sources close to the panel said.

Clinton has not yet made a final decision on how to answer 81 questions about his conduct submitted by Hyde, according to a source close to the president. But a consensus appears to be building around the notion of providing answers that refer to the president's previous statements or testimony.

It would be a strategy similar to that used by Clinton during his August 17 grand jury testimony.

## In an article from behind prison walls Anwar Ibrahim urges political freedom in Asia

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 18: Ousted former Malaysian Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim spoke out from behind his prison walls in an article published today, attacking Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and urging political freedom in Asia, reports Reuters.

"For decades, some Asian leaders have tried to convince their people that soft authoritarianism is necessary for prosperity, but a new generation has emerged for whom such arguments have lost their persuasion," Anwar wrote in an article published in the Asian Wall Street Journal.

"To the new generation of Asians, political stability is just as important, but it must be based on freedom and justice, not coercion and denial of fundamental rights," Anwar wrote.

Now on trial on charges of corruption and sodomy, Anwar emerged at the core of a bitter row between the United States and Malaysia after US Vice President Al Gore endorsed Anwar's supporters and urged political reform in crisis-stricken nations in a speech here ahead of an Asian-Pacific leaders summit.

Gore's remarks sparked sharp rejoinders from the Malaysian government and dismayed many Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders and delegates, who feared the feud would distract from APEC's efforts to cope with the region's economic crisis.

"It is not normal to conduct economic discourse from behind prison walls," Anwar wrote. "But these are not normal times in Malaysia, nor indeed, in much of Asia."

Anwar also criticised Mahathir's argument that foreign currency speculators were to blame for the crisis which last year brought the regions' economic miracle "to an abrupt end."

"Yes, there were dark forces lurking in the shadows, waiting for any opportunity to make a fast buck," Anwar wrote.

"But what of the affected countries themselves? Do we not take the individual and collective responsibility for our problems, just as we have taken credit for our successes in the last decade?"

"Instead of pointing fingers at speculators and blaming unrealistic demands set by international agencies of last resort, Asian nations would do well to put their own houses in order," he wrote. "We in Malaysia are as guilty as anyone else in the region," he said. "In the case of Malaysia, it is unfortunate that Dr. Mahathir Mohamad has descended from his pedestal to promote the worst kind of subsidy mentality among his cronies and the super rich."



An old South Korean Confucian demonstrates with other protesters to oppose a government bill allowing "same-name marriages" beside the National Assembly in Seoul Wednesday, 1998. For centuries, the country has banned marriage among people with same surnames. A banner says opposing same-name marriages. — AP/UNB photo

## Iraq renews pledge to cooperate with UN arms inspectors

BAGHDAD, Nov 18: Iraq on Tuesday renewed a promise to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors to pave the way for a full review of its relations with the United Nations, reports Reuters.

"We will do our best to cooperate. We will be patient. We will even try to contain provocations if there are any," Amer al-Saadi, an adviser to President Saddam Hussein, said.

"But naturally there are limits," he told Cable News Network (CNN) in an interview, without spelling them out.

Iraq hopes the comprehensive review promised by the UN Security Council will lead to an end to crippling sanctions imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Saadi said Iraq would accept inspections of so-called presidential sites in line with a memorandum of understanding signed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz to defuse a crisis in February.

"Everything is laid down, how the Iraqis should behave and respond, and what UNSCOM's mandate is and how it is performed."

So there should be no problem and no repetition of previous problems because those were still unresolved at that time."

Iraq averted threatened US-led military strikes in its latest standoff with the United Nations by promising on Saturday to resume cooperation with the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) seeking to scrap Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Russian defence minister postpones visit to India

MOSCOW, Nov 18: Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeev has postponed his official visit to India scheduled from November 24 and was expected to accompany President Boris Yeltsin during his visit to New Delhi next month, reports PTI.

Though Kremlin gave no official reason for postponing the visit, the diplomatic sources said the delay was believed to be due to the forthcoming meet of prime ministers of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) scheduled for November 25 where several defence related matters are to be discussed.

Israeli parliament supports Wye deal

US-brokered peace deal appears to be back on track

JERUSALEM, Nov 18: The US-brokered Israeli-Palestinian peace deal appeared to be back on track on Tuesday after Palestinian President Yasser Arafat met Israel's demand to retract warnings over possible renewed armed struggle, reports Reuters.

Israel's 120-member parliament gave the land-for security accord overwhelming support ratifying the deal by a 75-19 vote with nine abstentions hours after the two sides halted a war of words that had flared in recent days.

"I... reiterate that any problems concerning final-status negotiations will be resolved through amicable and peaceful ways and through negotiations, but not through any other means," Arafat told a news conference.

## South Africa won't allow Tamil Tigers to open its office

COLOMBO, Nov 18: South African President Nelson Mandela has assured Colombo that he will not allow Tamil Tiger separatists to open offices in his country, the Sri Lankan government said Wednesday, reports AP.

The assurance was given to Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar when he met with South African leaders in Johannesburg earlier this week, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement in Colombo.

The Sri Lankan government took up the issue after intelligence reports said that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were planning to shift operations from London to South Africa.

The reported LTTE move came after Britain enacted new anti-terrorism laws that would make its operations illegal. Earlier laws had no scope to prosecute a group for its actions outside Great Britain. The new law was enacted primarily to deal with Northern Ireland issue.

Africa has a large number of Tamil immigrants, a section of whom supports the LTTE's 15-year-old campaign for a separate homeland for the minority Tamils of Sri Lanka.

## Asians look to sky for spectacular meteor storm

KADENA AIR BASE, Okinawa, Nov 18: Star-gazers across Asia huddled outside in the predawn chill Wednesday to admire luminous flares of red and white streaking through the skies during the greatest meteor shower in decades, reports AP.

NASA sent up research planes from this US Air Force base in southern Japan in an attempt to glean hints about the origins of life on Earth and the planet's relationship to the cosmos.

Thailand's highest peak to the neon-drenched streets of Tokyo, people in Asia — where the meteors burned brightest — lifted their eyes to a magnificent spectacle of nature as the storm reached its climax in the direction of the constellation Leo.

"It's wonderful," said Toshiaki Kogai, one of hundreds of Japanese who watched the storm from a park just south of Tokyo. "I never imagined it would be like this."

In Tokyo and many other Japanese cities, public offices and private businesses heeded a government plea to dim their lights to enhance viewing of the storm, which peaks every 33 years.

In Kanagawa prefecture (state) near Tokyo, a 19-year-old trade school student died when she fell off the handrail of a bridge to see the cascading stars with her friends, police said.

Minor Suzuki fell 15 metres to her death when she tried to grab her shawl as wind blew it away, they said.

Though the night remained bright in the capital area, meteors could be seen every two or three minutes at the height of the shower.

Some appeared to fizzle as they fell. Others looked like moving dots. Each brought many a wish. "I only wish I could think up wishes faster," said Ikue Oe, a housewife out watching the storm with her husband in the Tokyo suburb of Yokohama.

In the United States, the best seats were wherever the sky was darkest and clearest. The crowds that gathered at sites in the Mojave Desert in California early Tuesday were enthusiastic.

## Hun Sen assures political freedom to exiled leaders if they return

PHNOM PENH, Nov 18: Cambodian leader Hun Sen has guaranteed the safety and political freedom of all politicians, trying to ease the fears of his rivals that they can return to the country and not be arrested or killed, reports AP.

The assurances were aimed especially at Sam Rainsy, leader of a vocally anti-Hun Sen opposition party, who was forced to take refuge in the UN offices in September to evade arrest after Hun Sen accused him of being behind a plot against his life.

Sam Rainsy and the 14 members of parliament from his party have been holed up overseas for two months. But a deal reached between Hun Sen and his chief rival, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, on forming a new government last week has opened the door for their return.

In a letter to King Norodom Sihanouk, the prince's father and Cambodia's head of state, dated Monday, Hun Sen said that guarantees of safety extended to Ranariddh applied to all politicians.

"I would like to reaffirm the duties and responsibilities of the royal government in guaranteeing security for all politicians as well as their liberty in the conduct of political activities in accordance with the laws in force," said the letter, broadcast on television Tuesday.

## Troops guard Indonesian parliament as it promises to enact reforms

JAKARTA, Nov 18: Thousands of troops guarded Indonesia's Parliament Wednesday as its Speaker promised it would enact political reforms opposed by students in deadly clashes with the military last week, reports AP.

Later about 300 students marched through downtown Jakarta. They protested the reforms and denounced the shooting of demonstrators by troops and police.

In a speech that opened a new session of the legislature, Speaker Harmoko warned that any delay to the reform process could "trigger new problems" in the sprawling Southeast Asian nation, now beset by political and economic turmoil.

He said parliamentary elections in May or early June 1999 would be "based on honesty and justice, and would be direct, open to all, free and secret."

Sixteen people, including eight students, were killed last week. Security forces fired plastic bullets at protesters. Other people, including some police, died when rioting broke out in parts of Jakarta. Hundreds were injured. City authorities said 123 buildings and 97 cars were damaged or set afire, The Jakarta Post newspaper reported.

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