

## No power should enforce its will on Iraq: Vajpayee

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee Tuesday issued his strongest statement yet against a US-led war on Iraq, saying no power should enforce its will on another country.

In a statement clearly aimed at the United States, Vajpayee said everyone should understand that "people of all nations have a right to rule themselves and choose their own leader".

"All issues should be sorted out through discussions under the auspices of the United Nations," the prime minister said in an address to a Sikh congregation here marking the 533rd anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion.

"A war seems to be looming over Iraq, and we believe there should be no more wars."

"The international community must realise people have the right to decide their own fate and should not be coerced into doing anything," he said. "No country should try to impose its will on any other country."

## 'Voice on tape certainly Laden's'

AFP, Washington

US intelligence has concluded that the voice on an audio tape aired by an Arabic television network was "almost certainly" that of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, US officials said Monday.

The finding confirms that the suspected mastermind of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States is alive and able to reach out to his followers, eluding a worldwide US-led manhunt.

"After an extensive analysis of the audio tape that aired on al-Jazeera on Tuesday November 12, US intelligence experts have reached the conclusion that it almost certainly is the voice of Osama bin Laden," said a US intelligence official, who asked not to be identified.

"Although it cannot be stated with 100 percent certainty, it is the intelligence community's conclusion that the tape is genuine," he said.

The official said it was clear that the tape had been recorded in the last several weeks and that at this point there was no indication that it was manufactured or altered.

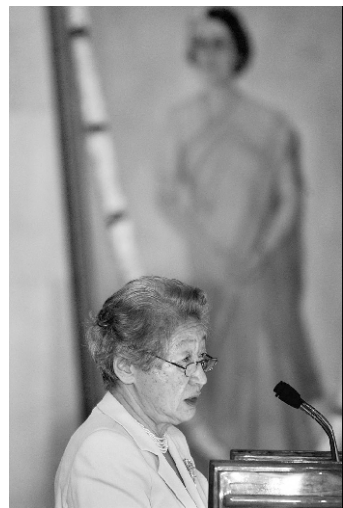


PHOTO: AFP

Sadako Ogata delivers her acceptance speech after receiving the Indira Gandhi Prize at Presidential Palace in New Delhi on Tuesday. India conferred the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development on Ogata, a former UN High Commissioner for Refugees.



PHOTO: AFP

Chief UN disarmament expert Hans Blix leaves al-Rashid hotel on Tuesday on his second day in Baghdad. Blix was due to meet Iraqi Foreign Minister Najji Sabri on Tuesday after reporting "progress" on the first day of his mission to launch new arms inspections.

# UN inspectors start arms monitoring in Iraq

## Blix sees progress but Baghdad warns US strike not yet averted

REUTERS, Baghdad

UN chief arms inspector Hans Blix and a team of about 30 experts began their first full day of work in Iraq Tuesday, paving the way for a mission to search for weapons of mass destruction.

President Bush said he was going to a NATO summit in Prague seeking support for his hard-line policy against Iraq, and for shifting the alliance's mission toward fighting against terrorism.

Bush indicated he would be making no request for NATO military help against Iraq at the Thursday and Friday summit.

If military action were needed, Bush said he would consult NATO members "and everybody will be able to make the decision that they're comfortable with."

"I hope it happens peacefully. But if it doesn't, people will know that our intent is to lead a coalition

of like-minded, freedom-loving countries to disarm Saddam Hussein," he said.

"One way or the other, he's going to be disarmed. And it's in everybody's interest that that be the case. So we'll talk about that."

Bush has repeatedly urged "regime change" in Iraq, meaning the overthrow of Saddam, Iraq's president, and has vowed to wage war if necessary if Baghdad fails to disarm. Iraq denies having weapons of mass destruction.

The advance team of UN inspectors arrived in Baghdad on Monday after a four-year absence.

Blix and the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, were due to meet General Amir al-Saadi, an adviser to Saddam, Tuesday for the second time.

They were due also to meet Foreign Minister Najji Sabri.

Under a UN Security Council

resolution adopted on Nov. 8, the first big test is a Dec. 8 deadline for Iraq to submit a full account of all banned weapons programs.

Formal inspections are not due to start until Nov. 27. By Jan. 27 the inspectors must have given their first report to the Security Council.

AFP adds: Chief arms inspector Hans Blix was to hold a second day of talks with Iraqi officials Tuesday after reporting "progress", but official newspapers warned that a US strike had yet to be averted despite Baghdad's cooperation with the United Nations.

"The US administration of evil and its Zionist ally have chosen this time round to don a blue beret and dress in Security Council garb to wage war on Iraq by (pushing through) a resolution that flouts the international consensus," wrote Ath-Thawra, mouthpiece of the ruling Baath Party.

### Inspections: timetable



**November 27**  
Probable start of on-site inspections (deadline December 23)

**December 8 (deadline)**  
Baghdad to provide details of its arms programme

**February 21, 2003 (deadline)**  
First report from UN inspectors and proposed programme of work

**Then every 20 days**  
UN inspectors report

## Amir Hussain elected Pak Speaker

AFP, Islamabad

A candidate from Pakistan's chief pro-military party was elected Speaker of the new parliament on Tuesday, winning 167 votes in the 342-seat house.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid's Chaudhry Amir Hussain, a former law minister in the government of former premier Nawaz Sharif, was declared winner by the acting house speaker following a secret ballot and more than two hours of counting.

The Islamists' candidate Liaquat Baloch garnered 80 votes and Aitzaz Ahsan, from former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's party, won 71 votes.

Several votes were rejected as invalid.

## Aceh rebels, Jakarta to sign peace deal

AFP, Banda Aceh

The Indonesian government and separatist rebels in Aceh province are expected to sign an agreement early next month to end one of Southeast Asia's longest wars, it was announced Tuesday.

"We are confident that the government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement are very much committed to reach an agreement," said the Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC) in a statement.

"A few issues need to be resolved but we are planning for the signing of a peace agreement on December 9, 2002," said the Geneva-based centre, which has been mediating between the two sides since 2000.

## Oil tanker breaks into 2 off Spain

AP, Madrid

A damaged tanker carrying more than 70,000 tons of oil broke into two off the northwest coast of Spain on Tuesday, salvagers said.

The Bahamas Prestige, which began spilling oil on Wednesday, split in half about 150 miles off Spain's Atlantic coast, said Lars Walder, spokesman of the SMIT Salvage company.

It was not immediately clear how much oil had spilled.

# US jets strike Iraqi air defence sites

AFP, Washington

US warplanes retaliated against Iraqi missile and anti-aircraft fire that top US officials said was a "material breach" of the latest UN Security Council resolution, but not serious enough to warrant a war.

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on Monday told reporters in Santiago, Chile that the Iraq attacks were "unacceptable," but added: "Someone's characterisation of that as something that would trigger an action is incorrect."

"It's not for us to decide," said a Pentagon official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "But how would you justify going to war on something you have not vehemently protested before?"

The allied airstrikes for the second consecutive day Monday came as UN arms inspectors arrived in Baghdad to resume a hunt for weapons of mass destruction that was suspended in 1998 amid Iraq's refusal to cooperate.

F-16 fighter aircraft operating out of Turkey dropped precision bombs on two anti-aircraft artillery sites near the northern city of Mosul after they fired on coalition aircraft, a US defence official said.

"Triple-A was reported, and 15 minutes later they rolled in," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Just hours later, US and British fighters struck two communications centres and a radar installation in southern Iraq after coalition aircraft came under a barrage of surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft fire, the US military said.

The strikes were carried out by US F/A-18 Super Hornets, F-16 fighters, and British Tornados, which used precision guided weapons in attacks near the towns of Al Kut and Tallil, a US defence official said.

A White House spokesman said the Iraqi fire on US and British aircraft enforcing no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq were in violation of a 10-day-old UN Security Council resolution re-

establishing arms inspections.

"We do, as you noted, believe it is a violation that would constitute a material breach," said White House spokesman Scott McClellan.

"In the resolution it says that Iraq shall not take or threaten hostile acts directed at any representative or personnel of any member state taking action to uphold any council resolution," he said.

McClellan said the United States has the option of reporting the breach to the UN Security Council, but he refrained from saying whether it intended to take that step.

McClellan said, "Our planes will continue to respond in the manner that they have in the past."

In Baghdad, the Iraqi foreign ministry charged that McClellan's comments were another indication that Washington intended to use UN Security Council resolutions as "a cover to justify its aggressive actions against Iraq."

## US scientists link brain damage to snoring

AFP, Los Angeles

Brain damage -- not a blocked airway -- may be the cause of a sleeping disorder that causes explosively loud snoring and fitful nights, US researchers said Monday.

Scientists at the University of California at Los Angeles say patients who suffer from the disorder, known as sleep apnea, also show a dramatic early loss of grey matter.

"Our findings show that sleep apnea patients also suffer disordered wiring in brain regions that control muscles of the airway," said UCLA neurobiology professor Ronald Harper, who led research into the problem.

"These glitches may lead to the syndrome, which is exacerbated by a small airway," he added of the research, details of which appear in the latest edition of the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine.



PHOTO: AFP

A man carries his child who has been evacuated by the police from the private school Casal dels Angels in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat on the outskirts of Barcelona on Monday. Police later seized a knife-wielding masked man who took a group of 25 or 26 young children hostage at the school on Monday. They said all the children emerged unharmed from the ordeal.

# Israeli tanks shell Gaza

## Palestinian polls unlikely in Jan

AFP, Gaza City

Three Palestinians were wounded late Monday when Israeli tanks fired shells in the eastern part of Gaza City, Palestinian security sources and witnesses said, as the cycle of Middle East violence claimed another victim in the West Bank.

An unidentified Jewish settler woman was killed when Palestinian gunmen ambushed her car at a junction near the West Bank settlement of Rimonim, just east of Ramallah, Israeli medical sources said.

In the Gaza operation, the sources said that two of the three people wounded were members of the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an armed offshoot of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, while the third was a passerby.

Early Monday, four Palestinians were wounded when Israeli troops clashed with gunmen as they surrounded and then partially destroyed a base of the Palestinian preventive security forces in Gaza City.

The latest violence came as Israel mullied extending the area under its direct control in the divided West Bank city of Hebron where an earlier ambush attack killed nine Israeli soldiers or border police and three armed Jewish settlers.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has said he wants to join the Jewish settlement on the edge of the flashpoint city to tiny Jewish enclaves in the centre, where 600 hardcore settlers live. Settlers have already moved into the area to establish an outpost.

"The Israeli authorities exercised

the usual, systematic distortion and deception with regard to their reporting of the military confrontation that occurred in Hebron on 15 November between armed Palestinian and Israeli soldiers," the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations said.

Meanwhile, Palestinian legislative and presidential elections will not be held as scheduled in January 2003, experts predict, since necessary preparations have been stalled by the Israeli army's continued reoccupation of the West Bank.

"The central electoral committee will not be able to prepare election lists, guarantee electoral campaigns and organise a free vote, if the reoccupation, the blockade and the restrictions on the Palestinians' movements continues," said committee head Ali Jarbawi.

## Kansi's funeral stirs anti-US feeling

REUTERS, Quetta

Thousands of people gathered in southwestern Pakistan Tuesday for the funeral of a Pakistani executed in the United States for killing two CIA employees, and hailed Mir Amil Kansi as an Islamic hero.

The country's new national assembly, meeting for the first time this week after three years of military rule, also interrupted its proceedings Tuesday to offer a brief prayer for Kansi.

Kansi, 38, was executed by lethal injection last week in a case that sparked protests in Pakistan and fears of retaliation against U.S. interests.

A Islamabad political leader led the prayer in parliament in the capital Islamabad condemning those who helped in the arrest of Kansi in Pakistan in 1997 and allowed him to be taken back to the United States for trial.

# Eritrean port may become US base for Iraq attack

AP, Assab

One of the largest ports on the Red Sea stands eerily idle, its huge cranes motionless in the oppressive heat. Yet this sleepy town on the southern tip of Eritrea could become a base for US troops in the war on terrorism and Saddam Hussein.

Western diplomatic sources say US military officials have already visited the remote, strategically located town to assess its value as a staging point for U.S. marines, Navy ships and troops.

Gen. Tommy Franks, head of US Central Command, or CentCom, visited Eritrea in March, and the then defence minister, Sehat Ephrem, said his government would happily host a US base. And on Oct. 29 Franks said the United States has "security relationships or engagement opportunities" in many

Horn of Africa countries, including Eritrea.

The amphibious command ship USS Mount Whitney is expected to arrive in about a month to serve as the Red Sea floating headquarters for a joint command US task force for the Horn of Africa, said Maj. Pete Mitchell, a CentCom spokesman.

US officials have said the headquarters, part of the war on terrorism, could later move ashore.

"US forces in the region are making liaisons with a number of nations in the Horn of Africa. That liaison covers a variety of issues," Mitchell said when asked specifically about Assab.

The Eritrean government is said to be eager to have a US presence to bolster its stature and inject cash into its struggling economy.

Eritrean officials would not say where things stand now, and U.S.

authorities are still weighing Eritrea's military usefulness against lending credibility to an increasingly authoritarian government, said the diplomatic sources, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Once admired in the West, the government of President Isaias Afwerki has come under fire for human rights abuses following Eritrea's 2 1/2-year border war with Ethiopia.

Assab before the war a busy port that served Ethiopia would doubtless be useful to the United States as it increases its military presence in an unstable region cited as a possible terrorist haven.

"A base within the area is something that they must be considering," said Phillip Mitchell, ground forces analyst at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies.

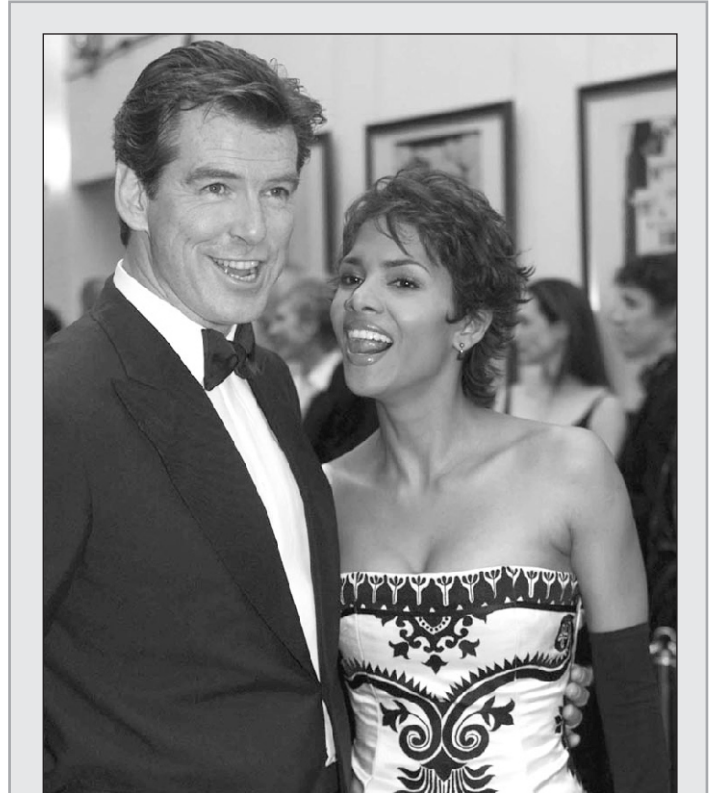


PHOTO: AFP

Irish actor Pierce Brosnan and US academy-winner Halle Berry arrive for World Premiere of the new James Bond film 'Die Another Day' attended by Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, at the Royal Albert Hall in central London on Monday.

## Bush takes Iraq, terrorism campaign to NATO summit

REUTERS, Washington

President Bush heads on Tuesday to a NATO summit in Prague to line up European support for a looming confrontation with Iraq and to ready the alliance for a new mission combating terrorism.

Seven Eastern European countries will be invited to join the 19-member security alliance at the summit in the Czech capital. Bush said the inclusion of countries that threw off the yoke of totalitarianism should invigorate NATO.

Alliance leaders are also expected to give the green light to a strike force for high-intensity warfare and agree to revamp NATO's increasingly obsolete military command structure.

Before leaving for the summit, Bush declared that NATO's new mission would be the war against terrorism, launched by the United States after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Despite a successful military campaign in Afghanistan and terrorism-related arrests around the world, US officials say the war is far from over.