

1 dead as Iranian human torches protest in Paris

Paris, June 18

ONE IRANIAN exile died and two others were badly burned after setting themselves ablaze on Wednesday during a day-long protest against France's mass round-up of dissidents opposed to Islamic rule in Tehran.

Marzieh Babakhani, 40, died in hospital after setting fire to her clothes near the Eiffel Tower early on Wednesday. Segigheh Mojaveri, 38, set herself ablaze at the same protest at midday and Mohammad Vakilifar, about 45, did the same late in the afternoon, witnesses said.

In Iran, hundreds of people demanding more freedom demonstrated for the eighth consecutive night early on Wednesday and scores of protesters were arrested and some injured in rallies in seven cities.

The United States backs the protests as a cry for freedom from a people whose government US officials accuse of being part of an "axis of evil".

Reuters

HD-15
2/16

Strikes affect life in France

PARIS, JUNE 3. French commuters limped into work on crowded buses and trains today and airports were deathly quiet as public sector employees launched further strike action over the Government's planned pension reforms.

The latest in a series of protests over plans to make people work longer for state pensions, the action halved train and bus services in Paris and an air traffic controllers strike grounded 80 per cent of flights in and out of France.

Less severe than the stoppages of May 13, dubbed "Black Tuesday", the action still caused 150 km of traffic jams around the capital. Numerous schools were also closed by the 10th walkout in as many months by teachers over decentralisation plans.

Postal workers, ambulance drivers, port workers and toll road staff were among others on strike. Few leading French newspapers were printed.

The strikes come at an embarrassing time for the President, Jacques Chirac, as he hosts the final day of the G-8 summit in Evian.

Mr. Chirac's ally Alain Juppe, Prime Minister in 1995 and the ill-fated planner of pension reforms back then, said today he could not understand the latest unrest.

"People should think twice before going out onto the streets," he said.

Meanwhile in Austria, schools remained closed and



Thousands of people protest against pension reform plans, in Marseille, France, on Tuesday. — Reuters

trams and buses were idled on Tuesday as hundreds of thousands of public sector employees took part in post-war Austria's biggest strike to protest planned pension cuts.

The strike was the second nationwide in less than a month and affected all public transport, major industries, schools, kindergartens, utilities and a wide range of services.

Police were conspicuously absent from the streets, with officers responding only to emergency calls.

Many Austrians, who normally drive to work, stayed at home. Others switched to bicycles, scooters and inline skates. — AP

REUTERS

4 JUN 2003

France Is France the next rogue state? USA 4.6

IS FRANCE on the verge of becoming the fourth member of America's 'axis of evil'? Or the third, now that Iraq has been delivered from evil? The unveiled threat voiced by US Secretary of State Colin Powell that France will face the consequences of having opposed the war in Iraq must be a unique event in the annals of international relations, for rarely has a country been directly threatened for simply not agreeing with another. True, the US always regarded the non-aligned group, which included India, as unfriendly during the Cold War because it refused to toe the American line on the Soviet Union. But it has never sought to intimidate in the manner that Mr Powell has done in respect of France.

Reports suggest that a meeting attended by Vice-President Dick Cheney, among others, even spoke of punishing France. It is possible that the proposed punishment will relate mainly to denying lucrative contracts in the context of 'rebuilding' Iraq. But there has also been suggestions that the US will try to keep France out of as many trans-Atlantic meetings as possible and shift NATO's decision-making

process from the North Atlantic Council to a committee of which France is not a member. This is vindictive stuff which is not warranted by France's actions in the Security Council, where it was merely voicing the belief, even if with excessive fervour, that the weapons inspectors be given more time to do their job of finding the weapons of mass destruction. Considering that even the US is now agreeing that it won't be easy to find these in a hurry, France, as well as Russia and China, weren't too far off the mark.

In any event, it wasn't a sin grave enough to create what is fast becoming a serious breach between Washington and Paris. What the Americans perhaps do not realise is that, in the long run, such shabby treatment of France will be resented by other European countries also. Even American allies like Britain and Spain will be embarrassed. Besides, like pre-emptive strikes, this new US attitude of regarding any country which merely disagrees with it virtually as an enemy will be seen as both mean-minded and a sign of unacceptable arrogance.

119-19
29/4

France rebukes U.S. sanctions threat

By Vaiju Naravane

PARIS, APRIL 23. Despite recent attempts to mend fences with the Bush administration, France reacted strongly today to the U.S. threat of sanctions saying it had acted throughout the Iraq crisis "in accordance with its convictions and principles to defend international law."

The French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, who is on a West Asia tour said in the Turkish capital Ankara that "France will continue to do this in all circumstances."

On Tuesday the U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, asked in a television interview whether Paris would be punished for its anti-war role in the Iraq crisis said bluntly 'Yes.' Reports here indicate that France's Ambassador to Washington, David Levite, intervened with the U.S. Government to have the meeting downgraded with the result that none of the Secretaries attended.

Stephen Hadly, number two to National Security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, chaired the

meeting. Punitive measures against France could take several forms. Firstly, France will probably have to say goodbye to significant investments in Iraq made by its petroleum giant Total-Fina. It has sunk billions of dollars in Iraq's petroleum industry.

There is of course no question of the Americans awarding reconstruction contracts in Iraq to French companies.

French firms implanted in the U.S. could see their contracts with the U.S. Government suspended or even terminated. Companies like Sodexo who have million dollar contracts to supply material to the U.S. army is under threat.

A suspension of its contract would mean several hundred U.S. workers would get the sack.

The most serious fallout, however, could be political.

The U.S. will attempt to cut the French out of as many trans-Atlantic meetings as possible. The U.S. might attempt to shift decision making within NATO from the

North Atlantic Council, NATO's governing body, to the Defence Planning Committee of which France is not a member. French withdrew from the committee in 1966.

Chirac hopeful

In a televised interview a few weeks ago the French President, Jacques Chirac, airily dismissed the possibility of such action against France saying disagreements between allies was permissible and that France continued to be a friend of the United States.

He said France was a member of the European Union and the World Trade Organisation and that unilateral economic sanctions would not be easy to impose.

France has proposed an immediate lifting of U.N. sanctions against Iraq, but it has not suggested removing them as the U.S. had demanded.

That can be done only once the U.N. Security Council certifies that Iraq is free of weapons of mass destruction, said the French Ambassador to the U.N., Jean Marc de la Sabliere.

20 APR 2003

THE HINDU

6 APR 2003

THE STATESMAN

France calls for quick end

5/4

THE TIMES, LONDON

PARIS, April 5. — France joined Russia and Germany in a call for a rapid end to hostilities in Iraq and agreement on a leading role for the United Nations in administering the country after the war. Meeting in Paris, the foreign ministers of the three leading nations that opposed the conflict also said they were worried about the humanitarian crisis that had been created by the Iraq war.

"The priority now is the end of hostilities," Russian foreign minister Mr. Igor Ivanov said. "Today we insist on the swiftest

halt to hostilities. We are addressing these words to our (American) partners ... because the end of the war can only help everyone."

The three ministers said they had agreed that the UN must play a central role in postwar Iraq. "The priority now is on the humanitarian side," Mr Dominique de Villepin, the French foreign minister said yesterday. "We are all aware that there is an open crisis in Iraq, there is a humanitarian emergency."

Mr Villepin criticised reported US plans to allocate contracts to US corporations for the reconstruction

GRISLY FIND

KUWAIT CITY, April 5.

— British forces have found 200 coffins containing human remains stashed in bags at a former army barracks in Al Zubayr in southern Iraq today. "We found approximately 200 coffins, each containing bags, each labelled, and each bag contained human remains." The remains appeared to date back some years. — AFP

tion of Iraq. "Iraq is not a piece of cake or an Eldorado to be divvied up."

French diplomats acknowledged, however, that there was little chance that the USA would relinquish control over Iraq to the UN after the costly effort of waging war for its conquest. Mr Colin Powell made this clear to America's European allies at a meeting in Brussels on Thursday.

President Chirac is convinced that USA will eventually acquiesce to a UN role over the future administration of Iraq because that will be the price of gaining some legitimacy in international eyes for what much of the world deems to have been an illegal invasion.

UN must be at heart of Iraq recast: France

London
27 MARCH

FRENCH foreign minister Dominique de Villepin said on Thursday the United Nations must play the key role in rebuilding post-war Iraq following a crisis which has "shattered" the established world order.

"The UN must be at the heart of the reconstruction and administration of Iraq," said Mr de Villepin, speaking at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

"The legitimacy of our action depends on it. We must come together to build peace in a region rife with a sense of insecurity and deep faultlines." The foreign minister said diplomatic bridges needed to be rebuilt. "We must

now find once again the path to European unity and reassert transatlantic solidarity on the basis of those requirements. We must rebuild the world order shattered by the Iraqi crisis."

Mr de Villepin said he was confident that France and the United States would restore the close ties they enjoyed before the Iraqi crisis unfolded. "Because

they share common values, the United States and France will re-establish close cooperation in complete solidarity," he said.

"We owe it to the friendship between our peoples." Mr de Villepin said France's main priority in the reconstruction of Iraq would be for the United Nations to pass a humanitarian resolution on the oil-for-food programme. — Reuters



Eagle Eyes: An arresting gear officer watches as an F/A-18 Hornet makes a landing on the USS Theodore Roosevelt in the eastern Mediterranean on Thursday. — AP

28 MAR 2003

The Economic Times

France reiterates opposition to ultimatum

By Vaiju Naravane

10-19
PARIS, MARCH 17. France once again rejected the possibility of a second resolution on Iraq, dashing British and American hopes for a green light from the United Nations for an invasion of Iraq.

The French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, said, "France cannot accept this ultimatum. I cannot see how this resolution can be envisaged". France has decided not to respond angrily to the opprobrium being heaped upon it by the Blair Government in London, but to attempt to further explain its stance.

On Sunday night, in an interview with American television, the French President, Jacques Chirac, said he would be in a position to accept an ultimatum to Iraq that would give the inspectors between 30 to 60 days. He said France would be willing to give the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, one or two months in which to prove he was clean of weapons of mass destruction. But this suggestion was scornfully rejected by the U.S. Vice-President, Dick Cheney.

Mr. De Villepin said the U.S. was deter-

mined to go to war ¹⁸³ whatever happened: either with U.N. approval or unilaterally."

The French position has angered Britain and the U.S., which hold France single-handedly responsible for torpedoing a possible second U.N. resolution authorising the use of force. The British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and his Ministers tried to suggest on Sunday that the pro-war faction could have garnered 10 votes in the Security Council had France not stepped in to declare it would veto any such move. Last week, Mr. Chirac said the inspections were working and that under those circumstances, France would vote "no" to a precipitated use of force.

Mr. de Villepin said, "I would like to tell our American Spanish and British friends that the Iraqi crisis is not a problem between the United States and France but between those who want to move forward in the logic of war and between the international community."

Britain and the U.S. have stepped up pressure on Paris, calling Monday's discussions in the Security Council "a moment of truth".

The French appear to be determined not to budge. A recent poll showed that Mr Chirac has the support of 89 per cent of the French people. Mr. Chirac has become something of a hero in the Arab world. Part of France's calculations is the 5-million strong Muslim community that lives in the country. Islam is France's second most practised religion.

Mr. Chirac has the open and unconditional support of two other Security Council members Russia (a permanent member with veto powers) and Germany.

Speaking at the Spanish, American, British summit in the Azores on Sunday, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, said, "France showed their cards. They said they would veto anything that would hold Saddam Hussein to account. So, cards have been played and we have to make an assessment after tomorrow to determine what those cards have meant."

French officials have repeatedly stressed that France is not opposed to war as a last recourse if the inspectors say Iraq is no longer cooperating. That stage has not yet arrived, they say.

18 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

France, Algeria open new chapter in ties

By Valju Naravane

PARIS, MARCH 3. The French President, Jacques Chirac, on a State visit to Algeria was given a hero's welcome in the former French colony with an estimated one million people crowding the streets to greet him. The bitterness that has marred Franco-Algerian relations in the past was nowhere evident and it appears that the hatchet has been well and truly buried by the two countries.

Algeria won independence in 1962 after a bloody liberation struggle that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, both French and Algerian. This is the highest ranking French visit to Algeria since the country became independent.

President Chirac who loves contact with the public was overjoyed by the reception. The 15 km stretch from the airport to the city was jammed with an estimated one million people — along the streets, in balconies, even dangling from lampposts and trees. In a typical gesture Mr. Chirac broke through his security cordon to join the crowds, shaking hands and exchanging greetings. The crowd chanted slogans against a war on Iraq.

On his continuing opposition



The French President, Jacques Chirac, shakes hands with Algerians in Algiers on Monday. — AP

to war on, Mr. Chirac said West Asia did not need "a new conflict with incalculable consequences". While France wished the work of U.N. weapons inspectors to continue, the French leader remarked, the military pressure exerted by the U.S. and Britain had spurred Mr. Hussein to begin disarming. He underlined that the Iraqi leader had a long way to go and urged him to cooperate more actively with the U.N. "Iraq must do more, cooperate more,

and do so more actively. We must keep up the strong pressure in order to achieve, together and peacefully, the goal on which we are agreed: to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in Iraq," he said.

Mr. Chirac handed over the silver seal of the last ruler or Dey of Algiers, seized by France in 1830, to Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. "The return of this symbol of sovereignty of the Algerian state seals the relations between our two countries," he

said. The two leaders signed a joint declaration on improving relations. This is expected to be the first step towards signing a full treaty of friendship.

Mr. Chirac served in the French army during the Algerian war. In interviews he has often spoken of the visceral links of that time to the former French colony.

There are an estimated two million Algerians living in France. Young French nationals of Algerian descent have often rebelled against the ghettoising of their communities by the French.

The declaration signed in Algiers stresses that the Algerians living in France "have a rightful place in French society." Fatima Bakri, a young Frenchwoman of Algerian descent said: "This could be the start of a new relationship. France has tended to sweep under the carpet the ugly facts of the Algerian independence war."

The fact that the French army tortured and killed thousands of Algerian liberation fighters.

But slowly French society is coming to terms with its past misdeeds, just as the Algerians are admitting that they too killed and maimed many French in the struggle for freedom.

France scores a diplomatic coup

By Vajju Naravane

PARIS, FEB. 21. The diplomatic battle over Iraq has entered the straight and the fight over the votes of non-permanent U.N. Security Council (UNSC) members has well and truly begun.

What transpires in the Council if and when a second resolution on Iraq is put to the vote will have far reaching consequences, not just for Iraq and the entire West Asia, but for the future of NATO and the European Union as well. For the moment, the French, supported by Russia, Germany and to a less overt extent by China, have scored a diplomatic coup. The French position has been bolstered by massive anti-war demonstrations across the world, particularly in those E.U. countries that have supported the U.S., namely Britain, Spain and Italy. This has resulted in the Italian Premier, Silvio Berlusconi, significantly toning down his pro-war rhetoric while the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has begun a desperate scramble to give a moral spin to his arguments.

France and 52 African Heads of State and Government meeting in Paris on Thursday backed the French call for continued and intensified U.N. weapons inspections in Iraq and urged Baghdad to show active cooperation. "There is an alternative to war," the nations said in a joint declaration. "The use of force, which entails serious risks of destabilization for

the region, for Africa and the world, should only be a last resort."

Three African countries, all of them represented at the Paris summit, are currently non-permanent members of the Security Council — Angola, Cameroon and Guinea. France is a permanent Council member with veto-wielding power. France has insisted that stepping up inspections under the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441 is the best way to ensure Iraq's disarmament, but the U.S. and especially Britain, reeling under pressure from adverse pub-

NEWS ANALYSIS

lic opinion, are pushing for a second resolution that could then be interpreted as having authorised military action.

Britain and the U.S., both working on a short text to be tabled next week at the U.N. Security Council have become more cautious in their approach. Informed sources say the text will not attempt to impose a calendar and that the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, will be allowed a "little more time". The wording is expected to be as anodyne as possible, making it difficult for countries like France, Russia or China, all of whom have veto powers, to take exception to any particular clause. The U.S. President has insisted that there is no need for a second resolution, that

1441 authorises him to impose "serious consequences" (meaning war) if Mr. Hussein fails to comply with it. And although that stand has been reiterated both by Mr. Bush and his top advisers, the Anglo-American combine would feel happier if the U.N. Security Council were to give them its blessing through a new resolution. In all this there is a curious reversal of roles. In theacrimonious debate in the U.N. Security Council that led to the adoption of resolution 1441 last November, the French fought hard to remove what they described as "automaticity", insisting upon the need for a second resolution if Mr. Hussein failing to cooperate with U.N. inspectors was deemed to be "in breach" of the resolution. Resolution 1441 should not be used as an automatic trigger for war, they had warned. Now it is the French who are suggesting there is no need for a second resolution, while Washington is actively seeking one. There are several reasons for this. The demonstrations have placed Mr. Tony Blair in an extremely delicate position at home with support from within his party falling sharply. Observers say his intransigence could cost him his job and are no longer excluding the possibility of a hostile coup within the party. France on the other hand, has managed to garner enough support to seriously blight the future of a second resolution. The French are fighting hard to avert a situation where the extent of their opposition

to the war will be put to the test. France would not like to be placed in the uncomfortable position of having to use its veto. In all likelihood France will abstain. Paris is however hoping that the U.S. will fail to receive the qualified majority of nine without the concurring vote of the permanent members. This will let the French off the hook. The U.S. needs a qualifying majority of nine in the U.N. Security Council, composed of 10 non-permanent members and five permanent ones with full veto powers. Of the ten, Britain and the U.S. are sure of Spain, Bulgaria Chile and perhaps Pakistan. Germany and Syria have both expressed their opposition to war, while Angola, Guinea and Cameroon have expressed solidarity with French position. Against any immediate invasion of Iraq. It is clear the U.S. and Britain will introduce a second resolution only if they are relatively sure of getting it through. The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, on Thursday denied that America was either threatening or blackmailing any country to vote for the Anglo-U.S. combine. The French are now in a genuine quandary. Whether the French President, Chirac, will stick his neck out or not remains to be seen. Having opposed the use of force this far they cannot allow themselves to tamely give in. But the exercise of a veto would inflict further damage on a Franco-US relationship that is at rock bottom and seriously compromise the future of the Atlantic Alliance.

DO NOT

22 FEB 2003

Paris move signals growing rift with U.S.

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, FEB. 18. In yet another indication of the growing rift between France and the United States, Paris has decided to bring home its aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle from the Mediterranean Sea, setting back the possibility of its participation in a war against Iraq.

The French move comes at a time when the U.S. is engaged in positioning its aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea for possible attacks against Iraq. Britain has also pitched in, in this effort, by deploying its carrier Ark Royal in the battle zone.

Differing French and the U.S. perceptions over Iraq, also appear to have found a reflection in the Arab world. Kuwait, a close ally of the U. S., has officially complained about Lebanon's handling of the weekend meeting of the Arab League Foreign Ministers in Cairo.

Distancing itself from the communiqué that advocated that members should deny the use of their facilities or assistance for any attack on Iraq, Kuwait has said the meeting "resulted in the declaration of a statement on Iraq that does not meet the viewpoints of countries who have a different perspective on the issue".

According to analysts, Kuwait is uncomfortable with the Arab resolution, proposed

by Syria, as it hosts around 120,000 U.S. troops on its territory and is expected to be the key launch pad for a southern offensive against Iraq.

Bahrain, another Persian Gulf State is home to the U.S. fifth fleet while Qatar is expected to serve as the advanced command post for the U.S. Central Command in case hostilities break out. In a memorandum submitted to the Arab League, Kuwait has faulted Lebanon for bypassing established procedure for conducting the meeting. According to a Kuwait official, "this is the first meeting in which the final communiqué was not referred to the "Drafting committee."

Reinforcing the Kuwaiti objection, a number of Kuwaiti lawmakers have reportedly called on their Government to freeze aid to Lebanon and withdraw the country's Ambassador to Beirut.

Lebanon, which currently chairs the Arab League and Syria have been in regular dialogue with France recently.

France and Russia have reportedly approached Lebanon for seeking an Arab League endorsement for a tripartite statement authored by Paris, Berlin and Moscow, advocating that the U.N. weapons inspections in Iraq should be allowed to run their course.

Both Syria and Lebanon strongly oppose a possible war as they fear that the U.S.

military presence in Iraq, after the conflict is over, will subject them to intense joint U.S. and Israel military pressure.

Dispute

According to reports, the Arab Foreign Ministers, at their Sharm-el-Sheikh meet, differed strongly on whether to pin the main responsibility for defusing the Iraqi crisis on Washington or Baghdad. It was this dispute over whether Washington or Baghdad should be doing more to avert war that resulted in the failure of the Ministers, agreeing on a date proposed by Egypt, for holding an emergency Arab League summit on Iraq.

In a temporary setback for the U.S. preparations to open a northern front against Iraq, Turkey, the springboard for such an action, has said that it was delaying considering a resolution in its Parliament that would allow the U.S. to station some, and transit a large number of its troops into northern Iraq.

The Turkish hold-up is attributed to the difficulties being encountered in fixing the compensation package for Ankara to offset the negative economic impact of the possible war. In a development that is likely to encourage the "peace-camp", U-2 spyplanes resumed their flights on Monday for some time in support of the U.N. inspection team.

FEB 20 2003

19 FEB 2003

THE HINDU

France snubbed as Nato strikes Turkish deal

HT 11
192 ✓

Brussels, February 17

NATO ON Sunday night side-stepped French opposition to approve plans to defend Turkey in case of war with Iraq, but Europe's bitter divisions face cruel public exposure at Monday's emergency EU summit.

Alliance officials said a deal had finally been done after a day of gruelling negotiations in Nato's defence planning committee — of which France is not a member.

Germany and Belgium, the other members of Nato's "gang of three", dropped their objections in return for guarantees that sending surveillance planes and missile batteries to Turkey did not mean war, and an explicit reference to UN efforts to resolve the crisis peacefully.

"Alliance solidarity has prevailed," said Lord Robertson, Nato's secretary-general. "We have been able collectively to overcome the impasse."

But breaking Nato's deadlock after a highly divisive month will not necessarily mean an easier EU summit in Brussels on Monday, as most member states, stunned by the weekend demonstrations against war, seek more time for UN weapons inspections.

Tony Blair will spend just a few hours in talks over dinner with his 14 fellow EU leaders, including Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder, leading opposition to military action against Iraq. Kofi Annan, the UN secre-



A Turkish tank patrols Silopi, 10 km from Iraq, on Monday.

AFP

tary-general, will be there too.

Blair's weekend shift to explicit talk of "regime change" in Baghdad will make his position more isolated, as will the rapidly receding chances of securing a second UN security council resolution, European diplomats said.

Rarely has an EU summit been preceded by such gloom and foreboding. Greece, holder of the union's rotating presidency, has warned that failure to speak with one voice could mean a "deep crisis".

Blair has the support of

Spain, Italy, Portugal and Denmark, but governments there also face angry public opposition. And all other member states have been reinforced in their conviction that the case for military action has not yet been made.

"In cities across Europe, people were clearly showing that they did not want war," said Guy Verhofstadt, the Belgian Prime Minister. "I hope this... will help the EU to find a common position."

The Guardian

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 FEB 2003

France proposes tripling of inspectors for Iraq

United Nations: In an effort to counter possible US resolution finding Iraq in further material breach of UN security council decisions, France has proposed doubling or tripling the number of arms inspectors, strengthening aerial surveillance and creating a new intelligence unit to coordinate information on Baghdad.

The new American resolution would in effect spell military action against Iraq which France, together with Russia and China, opposes. An informal paper circulated by France also suggests that weapons inspectors draw up a complete list of unresolved disarmament tasks and prioritise them.

It proposes UN security units to ensure that suspect sites remain frozen and also suggests the setting up of mobile custom teams.

The French proposal came as the diplomatic activity intensified at the UN and US President George W Bush's national security adviser Condoleezza Rice flew in to New York for a quick meeting with chief weapons inspector Hans Blix who is to present the report on Iraqi compliance on Friday.

Apparently, Ms Rice wanted to get a sense of what Mr Blix proposes to say in the report to enable the US to draw up a quick response, and might also have given him some more information.

The French proposal is not yet in the form a resolution and it is not clear

whether it would move a counter resolution based on these elements should the United States move one after Mr Blix presents the report.

Reports from Washington suggest that the United States might seek immediate council meeting if Mr Blix says that Iraq is not fully cooperating with the inspectors.

Diplomats at the United Nations say French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin and his Russian counterpart Igor Ivanov are considering coming to New York to hear Mr Blix and director-general of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Mohamed ElBaradei on Iraqi compliance and press their case against the possible US-led war on Baghdad.

Council diplomats say if the United States decides to move a resolution finding Iraq not cooperating with the inspectors, it should be able to garner the requisite nine votes to get the draft through, provided Russia, France and China do not veto it.

Such a resolution would be taken by Washington to mean international backing for any military action it takes against Iraq.

US secretary of state Colin Powell said that a plan from France, Germany and Russia to increase the number of weapons inspectors in Iraq would only put off indefinitely a solution to the current crisis. Agencies

13 FEB 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

War a threat to world: France

PARIS, FEB. 11. The French Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, on Tuesday praised what he called "exemplary cooperation" between France and Russia, saying the two countries must work together to prevent war against Iraq.

"It is up to us to pursue (the cooperation) and to do everything possible to prevent a conflict that could seriously threaten regional and international stability," Mr. Raffarin said in a toast to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, before the two had lunch at the Prime Minister's official residence.

France and Russia, along with Germany, are among the strongest proponents of a peaceful solution to the Iraq crisis, a position that runs counter to the United States warning that it will launch military action to force Baghdad to disarm. Both countries hold veto power on the U.N. Security Council and could block a second Security Council resolution authorising the use of force against

Iraq. France and Russia, Mr. Raffarin said, have "every interest in working hand-in-hand" on the Iraq crisis.

Mr. Putin met on Monday with his French counterpart, Jacques Chirac, as part of a three-day visit intended to consolidate the two countries' opposition to a war. The two leaders issued a joint declaration in which France, Russia and Germany proposed strengthened U.N. weapons inspections in Iraq, part of a diplomatic initiative aimed at disarming Saddam Hussein without war.

The Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, on Tuesday expressed support for the declaration in a telephone conversation with Mr. Chirac, the Government's Xinhua news agency reported.

"We are against the war," Mr. Putin said on Monday. "Both of our countries insist on the need to solve the problem and the crisis diplomatically, and we consider that ... careless action could lead to unknown results."

The declaration said Iraq

must be certified free of banned weapons as quickly as possible but that waging war to reach that goal should be considered only as a last resort.

Mr. Chirac said that all three nations favoured a substantial strengthening of the "human and technical capacity" of inspections within the limits of U.N. Security Council resolution 1441.

Mr. Putin said Russia was ready to contribute "equipment and aviation" to any efforts to enhance inspections. France has said it was ready to send Mirage-IV surveillance aircraft.

On Wednesday, the Russian President heads to the southwestern region of Bordeaux, where he is scheduled to tour an avionics factory and the area's famed vineyards.

Meanwhile, China has said that it supports the declaration by Russia, France and Germany that calls for strengthened U.N. weapons inspections in Iraq and underscores the need to solve the crisis diplomatically.

The Chinese President, Jiang

Zemin, told Mr. Chirac in a telephone conversation on Tuesday that his country maintains its long-time stance — that everything possible should be done to avert a military conflict.

"The inspection in Iraq is effective and should be continued and strengthened," the Xinhua news agency paraphrased Mr. Jiang as saying. "Warfare is good for no one, and it is our responsibility to take various measures to avoid war."

Chinese leaders have long advocated the supervision of the Security Council in dealing with any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. As a permanent Security Council member, China holds veto power over any U.N. actions.

China announced on Monday it was withdrawing some staff from its embassy in Iraq — personnel who "are not in urgent need," the Government said.

It said the decision was made because of growing tensions in Iraq but gave no more details. — AP

Paris, Berlin block Nato war support

HT-11
France

Brussels, February 10

FRANCE, GERMANY and Belgium blocked Nato efforts to begin planning for possible Iraqi attacks against Turkey, deepening the rift between those countries and the US over the Iraq crisis.

The alliance would have automatically begun planning for the defence of Turkey, which fears retaliation from neighbouring Iraq in case of an invasion, if no country protested the move.

France — piqued by what it saw as US attempts to railroad them into a decision — beat the deadline by an hour with its veto, and Belgium backed the move. Germany, which has staunchly opposed military action against Iraq, expressed its support as well. They argued that supporting Nato's efforts would force the crisis into a "logic of war."

Later on Monday, Turkey requested emergency consultations under Nato's mutual defence treaty, believed to be the first time in the 53-year history of the alliance any nation has done so.

By requesting the consultations, Turkey is now expected to ask for the planning to begin. Diplomats say they expect France, Germany and Belgium to drop their protests with the request.

"What is important is that we arrive at a consensus and I'm confident we will," said Nato secretary-general Lord Robertson.

Turkey is the only Nato member to border Iraq and is a likely launch pad for US strikes on its southern neighbour.

While the planning is a procedural move that would only take a few days, it revealed the deep fissures within Nato over dealing with Iraq. France believes UN inspectors should be given more time to search Iraq, while the US says Saddam has run out of time. The US had lobbied hard

for more than three weeks for the alliance to start the military planning, which was backed by Nato allies except for France, Belgium and Germany. All Nato decisions require unanimous support.

Even if France relents, the 19 Nato members will have to agree again to approve the actual deployment of defence forces, which would include AWACS early warning planes, Patriot anti-missile batteries and units specialised in handling germ warfare or poison gas attacks.

The veto is the latest development in an increasingly bitter rift between France and Germany, on one side, and the US, on the other, over the correct approach to seeking Iraqi disarmament.

If no country had objected, Nato members would have started to help equip Turkey with surveillance planes, missiles and anti-chemical and biological warfare teams. Turkey is anxious about possible counterattacks on its southern areas.

The US administration is furious at proposals by France and Germany to extend weapons inspections. The plans emerged in reports over the weekend, and were described as "a disgrace" by the US defence secretary, Donald Rumsfeld. US secretary of state Colin Powell warned that if the next UN inspectors' report, which is due on Friday, shows Iraq is still not cooperating with inspections, the White House will seek a UN resolution authorising a US-led invasion of Iraq.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin was headed to Paris on Monday to discuss Iraq with President Jacques Chirac, another leading opponent of war against Saddam. They were expected to urge that the crisis be resolved peacefully.

Agencies

French PM: Iraq is not a game

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, Feb. 7. — Taking a strong note of US President Mr George Bush's belligerence, India and France today said Iraq "is not a game and it is not over" and solutions other than a war should be explored.

They also asked Baghdad to fully comply with UN Security Council resolutions to disarm.

"I don't think that the game is over. Evidence produced by the USA has to be carefully examined. The weapons inspectors should be encouraged to continue with their work and make efforts to find out whether any weapons are shielded or not noticed," the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, said at a joint press meet with the French Prime Minister, Mr Jean-Pierre Raffarin here.

Echoing similar views, Mr Raffarin said "It is not a game. It is not over."

The comments came when a French journalist asked about Mr Bush's comment in Washington that "the game is over" in Iraq and the UN should not permit itself to be defied by a "dictator".

Opposing any unilateral military action against Iraq, the French leader said: "There are other solutions and alternatives" to resolve the crisis.

Mr Vajpayee said "I sincerely hope that Iraq will fully comply with United Nations Security Council resolution 1441.

"The Council needs to use all the wisdom of its members to resolve this matter".

On defence cooperation, Mr Raffarin said discussions were underway to conclude "major contracts" in this field. He also referred to cooperation civilian use of nuclear energy and building of a hydro-electric power station in India.

8 FEB 2003

THE STATESMAN

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France has not shifted its stance

PARIS, FEB. 7. The French President, Jacques Chirac, sought on Thursday night to quash widespread speculation that France was toning down its opposition to war with Iraq.

He said the report to the United Nations by Colin Powell, U.S. Secretary of State, and the evidence of Iraqi non-compliance "has not changed France's position" over a possible military confrontation with the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein.

Javier Solana, European Union's Foreign Pol-

icy chief, described Gen. Powell's report as "very solid". Mr. Solana's statement, clearly siding with those E.U. countries that have declared their support for America and Britain, appeared intended to nudge the Union towards accepting military action. Following Gen. Powell's address, the French media had sought to identify a shift in the Government's position, suggesting that France had showed signs of softening its opposition to war. — *Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2003*

8 FEB 2003

France offers nuke carrot

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Feb. 7: France, keen that Airbus win the contract for a fleet of new aircraft, today showed its willingness to share with India its expertise in nuclear energy and its application in non-military areas.

The significant gesture was made by visiting French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin soon after a meeting this evening with Indian counterpart Atal Bihari Vajpayee where the two sides spoke about the need to avoid a war in Iraq and discussed ways to strengthen their co-operation in the economic field.

However, Vajpayee refrained from making any commitment on finalising the deal on the purchase of aircraft to supplement the ageing fleet of Air-India and Indian Airlines. "Negotiations are going on in the right direction and we will soon take a decision on the issue," was the closest that he came on the proposed deal. Raffarin tried to interpret Vajpayee's "soon" as "early", but could not elicit a clearer commitment.

The deal, which is worth billions of dollars, has been up for

1.5 8/2
grabs for several years now. But as the US-based Boeing has also shown an interest in bagging the deal to outbid Airbus, the Indian government has not been able to take a decision.

The French Prime Minister, while speaking on areas of likely co-operation to enhance economic ties, offered to help Delhi in the field of nuclear energy. Although Raffarin stressed that this was in the area of civilian use, his articulation on the issue is significant as this is the first time that any French leader has openly commented on the subject. One reason could be that France feels the offer to help in the field of nuclear energy might force India to take a decision soon in favour of the Airbus industry.

Another could be the arrangement that India and the US have put in place recently for enhancing dual-purpose and high-technology trade. French companies not only have the expertise, but are also keen to tap the huge potential of the Indian market in nuclear energy. Raffarin's comments may be to remind India that it should also consider French companies

while looking for help in this field.

Water management, joint defence co-operation and infrastructure development are other areas where India and France are likely to work in future.

However, if the aircraft deal is finalised soon and in favour of Airbus, it will help boost the confidence of the French government, as well as its business community, to invest in India.

On Iraq, Vajpayee clarified that the evidence produced by the US was not enough to prepare for military action. Though he stressed that Baghdad should comply with the Security Council resolution, he felt the inspectors should be encouraged to continue their work to find out whether any weapons of mass destruction had been hidden or overlooked.

The Prime Minister made it clear that he was not in favour of war in Iraq and felt the Security Council will be able to use "all its wisdom" to resolve the crisis in Iraq. The views of the French Prime Minister were almost identical.

This is Raffarin's first visit outside Europe since he became

Prime Minister. That India is an important country with which France wants strong bilateral ties, also prompted the French Prime Minister not to include any other country in his tour of South Asia. This was publicly appreciated by Vajpayee.

However, the main thrust of Raffarin's visit was to strengthen economic co-operation between the two sides, which has not lived up to its potential despite the excellent political relations that India and France enjoys. Both sides stressed on this and this was the area of emphasis during today's discussions between the two leaders.

Raffarin has come with a large business delegation, including top executives of big French companies and many representatives of France's small- and medium-scale industry. The intention is to make them interested in India as an attractive and lucrative investment destination.

Till recently the focus of the French business community has been on China. The visit is an attempt to lay the groundwork for deeper economic cooperation.

Chir

Matthew Tempes
Le Touquet, Februa

BRITAIN AND France disagree on Iraq war as countries' leaders summit on Tuesday.

French President Jacques Chirac called for UN inspectors to be given more time, though both leaders stressed that they are in need to disarm Saddam Hussein, and that this "undertaken within the UN Security Council". But President Chirac conceded that a military approach is not the solution.

As Tony Blair told a news conference, "The most important thing is to allow the weapons inspectors to continue their work and to resume the political process."

"The inspection process is something that has proved very effective. A previous round of inspections destroyed more arms than have been destroyed during the war. I feel that war is the worst possible solution."

"We need to work with the inspectors. We need to have confidence in the inspection process that everybody does."

Chirac said: "First and foremost, we have two main objectives which are fundamental."



REUTERS

SHEER MAGIC: Pop star Kylie Minogue at the launch of her lingerie range, *LoveKylie*, in London on Tuesday.

Toothbrush key invention, say Americans

New York, February 4

AMERICANS CONSIDER the toothbrush the most important invention, according to a survey that places the motorcar in second place, followed by the personal computer, the microwave oven and the cellphone.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology poll shows that 42 per cent of adults and 34 per cent of teenagers consider the toothbrush, which dates from the 15th century, the most important invention.

Some 37 per cent of adults and 31 per cent of teenagers viewed the car as the second most important, with six per cent of adults voting each for the personal computer, microwave and cellphone. Among adolescents, 16 per cent said the personal computer was the third most important, 10 per cent said the cellphone, followed by the microwave. The poll was taken as part of an annual inquiry on the way Americans see invention and innovation.

AFP

France favours Saddam's exile to avert war

By Bisheshwar Mishra
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Paris: French security experts are believed to have told the United States that "forced exile and amnesty" of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein or at worst, even his "assassination," is not as bad an option as a "costly and disastrous war on Iraq".

Even some US-dependent countries in the region like Qatar and Turkey do not appear averse to the idea, Indian officials accompanying Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani here said after deliberations with their French counterparts.

In fact, Turkey is playing a key role in finding an alternative solution to the Iraq imbroglio. It was learnt that a Turkish and Russian representative may together meet Mr Hussein and suggest to him a safe passage either in Japan or Russia but not in the region around Iraq.

"Behind the ostensibly 'no war against Iraq without fresh UN approval' suggestion by France and Germany to the US last Friday, is the hard-boiled diplomatic head of the Old Europe," a senior Indian official said on conditions of anonymity to *The Times of India*, on Saturday.

US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld had ridiculed France and Germany as the "Old Europe" for opposing the early US attack on Iraq. Mr Rumsfeld had said, "Europe is not just France and Germany, there are many others with us".

However, the French President Jacques Chirac, whose meeting with Mr Advani could not take place as he

was away in Germany, had suggested pursuit of "calm diplomacy".

Interestingly, Mr Advani, too, had concurred with the stand taken by the French political authorities on the Iraq issue. In all his meetings in Paris, be it with French Prime Minister, Jean Pierre Raffarin, defence minister Michale Alliot-Marie, interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy or minister of justice Dominique Perben, he (Advani) had reiterated the common position of the two countries.

Interacting with French and Indian reporters in Paris, Mr Advani has said that India and France shared a common view on Iraq. "Though there is a need to destroy the weapons of mass destruction, in doing so it is necessary to ensure that the country (Iraq) is not destroyed." He had also stressed on UN approval for any action.

Later the official had said, "It is no more a question of weapons of mass destruction allegedly in Iraq's possession but of US prestige in the world as the sole superpower".

Hence, it is difficult for the US to extricate itself from this situation. He said the European powers, particularly France, are weighing upon the US-UK combine to explore other options for getting rid of Mr Hussein.

Their feedback is that "there exists a better groundswell than the last US-Iraq war, for ousting Mr Hussein." Names of several countries, from Mauritania to Belarus to Japan, are being mooted as possible havens for Mr Hussein's exile.

Rider in French treaty

No death penalty in extradition cases, assures Advani

Chandan Nandy
Paris, January 24

MINUTES AFTER signing the Extradition Treaty with India, French Justice Minister Dominique Perben said here on Friday morning that his country's constitution did not allow for the extradition of French nationals to any other country.

Perben, who inked the treaty with Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani — here on a two-day official visit to France — also emphasised that French and European Union laws required an undertaking from the country seeking extradition that capital punishment would not be awarded to persons wanted by it.

Addressing reporters after the brief signing ceremony at the Justice Ministry, Advani said that India was prepared to give a written undertaking to French authorities to waive the death penalty against persons wanted by it to stand trial in India.

"India has the power and the authority to take this approach and it would remain in the case of France as well," Advani said while referring to the written assurance that his Government had given to Portugal while seeking the extradition of mafia don Abu Salem, arrested in Lisbon a few months back.

But the French Justice Minister said that his country had "reservations" on the "risk" death penalty persons being sought for extra-



French Justice Minister Dominique Perben and Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani sign an extradition treaty in Paris on Friday.

dition faced in the country seeking to prosecute them.

However, Perben said that France had signed similar extradition agreements with the United States and other countries in Europe.

"Unless a formal undertaking of waiver of death penalty is given, it will become difficult for us to extradite wanted persons. Extradition is, however, possible after the due course of law is followed in France and the (accused) persons serve their term here," he clarified.

On his part, Advani said that extradition treaty was a "logical adjunct" to some other legal steps, namely the

mutual legal assistance treaty in criminal matters and exchange of foreign prisoners, that were in the process of being finalised.

From India's point of view the undertaking to do away with the death penalty was a major loophole in the treaty. This is not just in theory as the case of a prime accused in the Indian Bank scam case has shown.

One of the accused, Varadarajulu, alias MVR, a major defaulter to the tune of around Rs 5 billion, had been evading arrest for the last four years and the CBI had secured a "red corner" notice against him in 1998, besides cancelling his pass-

port. Varadarajulu allegedly fled the country immediately after the scam was exposed. The CBI has registered a total of 13 cases against him that involved his 15 Indian companies and three companies based in Singapore.

MVR fled to Singapore. The Indian Government first requested the Singapore Government to extradite him. He, however, escaped from there and travelled to various destinations, finally settling in France where he married a French woman and obtained a French passport in March 2001, under the name of Louis Jalu, thus ending all prospects of being sent back to India.

25 JAN 2003

TOUGH MESSAGE TO WASHINGTON

France, Germany say they are against war on Iraq

By Vaiju Naravane

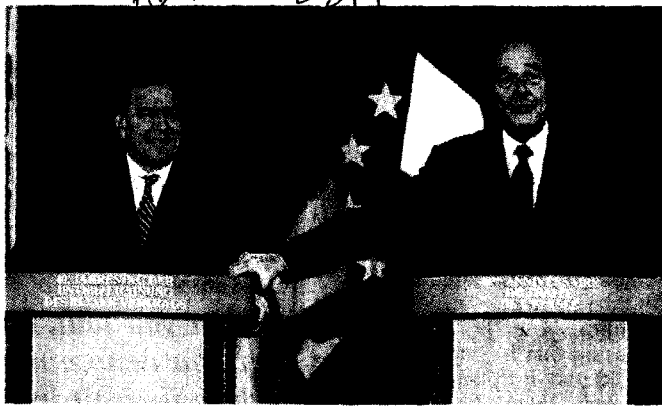
PARIS, JAN. 22. In a tough message to Washington, the French President, Jacques Chirac, and the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, have said they were both opposed to a conflict in Iraq.

"Germany and France share the same opinion on the Iraq crisis. Everything must be done to avoid war," Mr. Chirac said at a joint press conference at the palace of Versailles near Paris on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Elysee Treaty cementing Franco-German friendship.

The comments come a day after the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, issued a barely veiled warning that France would be prepared to use its veto in the United Nations Security Council if the United States insisted on going to war at this juncture.

Mr. Chirac said the common position of France and Germany, two most powerful nations within the European Union, was based on two key issues: Going to war was an admission that diplomacy had failed. "Everything must be done to avoid war," the two leaders said.

Secondly, any decision to



The German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder (left), and the French President, Jacques Chirac, addressing a press conference in Paris on Wednesday. —AFP

wage a war on Iraq must emanate from the Security Council and it alone. "The Security Council must express its decision after hearing the report of the U.N. inspectors."

The U.S. said on Tuesday that it was running out of patience and that Iraq was running out of time. European leaders have said the U.N. inspectors, who have repeatedly asked for more time to complete their inspections, should be given an extended mandate after January 27, when the weapons inspectors are to submit their report.

France is aware that several other countries in the Security Council are averse to war against Iraq. For the moment, France can count only on four other countries to counter the U.S. attempts to hustle the Council members towards hostilities against Iraq. These include Russia, Syria, China and Germany. France would like to prevent the U.S. from obtaining a qualified majority of nine in the Council. The U.S. is sure of support from Britain, Bulgaria, Spain, Cameroon and Guinea.

U.S. ready for war: Page 14

CHE HINDI