

US-led troops face resistance

7 oil fields set ablaze: 12 coalition troops killed in chopper crash

AFP, Southern Iraq

US and British forces swept deep into Iraq yesterday on day two of their war to topple President Saddam Hussein, meeting pockets of resistance as they raced through the desert to seize oil fields on the way to the key city of Basra.

The US-led troops suffered their first casualties of the war when a Marine was killed in action in Southern Iraq and eight British and four US soldiers died in a

helicopter crash in Kuwait.

US President George W Bush said the war, unleashed at dawn on Thursday after the collapse of diplomatic efforts over the Iraq crisis, was "making progress."

Saddam, targeted in dawn air strikes on Baghdad on Thursday that marked the start of the war, vowed he would fight on and scoffed at US efforts to persuade ordinary Iraqi soldiers to surrender.

Speculation continued to swirl about Saddam's fate, with reports in the US media that he had been injured although Iraqi officials insisted he was safe and the White House said it had "no concrete" information about him.

There have been no indications of Iraqi casualties during the US advance through southern Iraq, which was accompanied late Thursday by a second round of cruise missile strikes on targets in Baghdad.

British Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon said troops who had secured a beachhead on the strategic Fao Peninsula in southeastern Iraq were working to prevent a massive oil slick in the Gulf after as many as seven wells had been deliberately set ablaze, creating a dark haze over the Kuwaiti capital.

In Kuwait, Patriot missiles intercepted in incoming Iraqi missile attack targeted at an air base in the north of the emirate, official media reported.

Iraq claimed it had shot down a US or British fighter plane, although this was not confirmed.

Explosions were also heard around the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, while Iraqi troops guarding access to Kirkuk fired off several mortar rounds.

Nearly 300,000 US and British troops, including 180,000 in Kuwait,

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Press reports refuted Dhaka's call to save Iraqi civilians

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the second day of the US-led attack on Iraq, Dhaka urged all to make efforts for minimising the sufferings of Iraqi people, particularly civilian casualties.

Dhaka also thinks that preservation of Iraq's territorial integrity is crucial.

"Preservation of Iraq's territorial integrity is very important," Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury told newsmen yesterday.

Asked whether Dhaka is apprehending any move to disintegrate Iraq after the war is over, Mobin Chowdhury avoided a direct reply and said, "Territorial integrity is sacrosanct to any country."

Mobin Chowdhury also took an evasive stance when asked whether Dhaka demands an immediate end to the hostilities. "As a matter of principle we are opposed to any war. We have consistently been supporting peaceful resolution of the Iraq issue."

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Cry justice

Thoughts of an imaginary Iraqi father

MAHFUZ ANAM

burst into the very room in which I was sitting with my family?

Last Thursday evening my fourteen year old daughter was a little late in returning home. I was so very anxious about the reason for her delayed return. She had gone to listen to a flute recital of a classmate from her earlier school. She soon returned and was bubbling with excitement over her friend's talent. As her excited recounting filled our room my mind, deeply saddened by the Iraqi war that started that morning, suddenly filled up with thoughts of what Iraqi parents living in Baghdad were doing at that very moment. They had families like mine and their own fourteen year olds whom they loved as much as I did if not more.

I tried to picture myself as a parent in Baghdad and asked myself what would I be doing at this moment when I knew bombs would soon rain upon my country, hundreds of tanks would enter my beloved thousand year old city and foreign soldiers could

I had gotten worried because she was late, but what would I do when she would face the bombing of the most ferocious intensity since Second World War and a thousand times more lethal? Would she come out alive from it all? Would I live to take care of her? Would her mother see her grow into that beautiful person that we pray to the Almighty everyday that she become? What if we both died from bombing and she became an orphan? Who would take care of her? Would she become a street child, begging from door to door for survival -- my own daughter who we love so dearly and for whom we are so eager to sacrifice everything? What if, not us, but she died in the bombing? How would we live without her? How would we ever forgive and console ourselves for failing to protect her? Wasn't it our duty as parents, mine as a

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PHOTO: AFP

Hundreds of expatriates, mainly Syrians, Lebanese and Egyptians, left, gather at the Saudi embassy yesterday to obtain visas to leave Kuwait by land through Saudi Arabia. A protestor holds a placard reading "Stop Adolf Bush" during a demonstration of several European unions in Brussels, as European leaders held a EU summit.

US asks world to sever ties, shut Iraq embassies

France, Germany say 'no'

AFP, Washington

The United States has asked governments worldwide to sever ties with Saddam Hussein's regime, shut down Iraq's embassies and freeze its assets until new authorities are in power in Baghdad.

France, meanwhile said, it will not expel Iraqi diplomats as requested by the United States. Foreign Ministry spokesman Francois Rivasseau yesterday said Paris had been asked to send Iraqi envoys home but would not do so as this was a question of French sovereignty.

The German government also said it would not close the Iraqi embassy in Berlin.

"We have taken notice of the request," said a spokeswoman for the Foreign Ministry. "I am not aware of any corresponding steps or measures being taken."

The State Department on Thursday said it had instructed US embassies in the 62 nations where Iraq has a diplomatic presence to ask their host governments to suspend the accreditation of Saddam's ambassadors and expel his senior diplomats.

"Through our diplomatic missions overseas the United States has made a formal request to those countries... to suspend Iraqi diplomatic presence in the country on a temporary basis," said spokesman Richard Boucher.

"We've asked them to take steps to ensure the prompt departure of the leading representatives of Saddam Hussein's regime," he said, as the war entered its second day.

"Our expectation is once an interim Iraqi authority is in place it

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Road accident in Tangail kills 22

AGENCIES, Dhaka

Twenty-two people were killed and 15 others injured in a deadly road accident on the Tangail Bypass crossing at Nagarjalpai near Tangail town when the truck they were travelling in overturned early yesterday morning, police and witnesses said.

Eyewitnesses said 18 people died on the spot, three on way to hospital and one in hospital after the Dinajpur-bound truck overturned hitting the road-island on the bypass crossing on the outskirts of the town at about 4:30am.

The victims were mostly poor

people hailing from Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Rangpur and nearby areas of the northern districts, said police.

The poor people were placed on the heap of corrugated iron sheets that the truck from Chittagong was carrying.

"All were asleep when the accident occurred with a big bang," said an eyewitness account of the accident.

Police patrols and local people rushed to the spot, rescued the wounded passengers and took them and the dead to the hospital.

Two children and a woman are

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Contractors cut down 20 New Colony trees despite protests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Contractors of a housing project axed at least 20 trees in the city's New Colony area at Asad gate Thursday night, despite protests from the residents of the locality.

Yesterday, people from all walks of life gathered at the new colony playground to lodge a sit-in protest to save the new colony playground

and open spaces which, they said, have fallen into the hands of 'land pirates'.

Men, women and children protested the project initiated by the department of housing, which envisages building five hundred apartment blocks on the playground and open spaces.

Environmentalists, town plan-

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Dhaka didn't receive any US request

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has not received any request from the US embassy to shut down the Iraqi mission in Dhaka and expel its senior diplomats, said Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury.

The US state department on Thursday instructed US embassies in the 62 countries where Iraq has a diplomatic presence to ask their host governments to shut down

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Steps to check SSC question leakage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry has taken some precautionary measures to check leakage of question papers in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations, scheduled to begin on March 27.

Education Secretary Shahidul Islam has sent letters to the deputy commissioners in this regard and asked them to look after the process of distribution of question papers from their offices to exam

centres, ministry sources said.

The precautionary measures come following leakage of question papers of the preliminary test of the 24th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) conducted by the Public Service Commission (PSC).

The PSC cancelled the February 28 test following reports of leakage of question papers. The questions were allegedly leaked out from the Bangladesh Government Press, known as BG press.

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