

Fresh wave of bombings

US forces claim to be within 100km of Baghdad, conflicting reports on Umm Qasr, Basra capture



PHOTOS: AFP/CNN

Smoke billows during a US strike on a presidential palace in Baghdad Saturday. Right, an Iraqi child who was burned during the overnight bombing raid on Baghdad cries as he is picked up by his mother outside the emergency room of a Baghdad hospital.

AGENCIES, Baghdad

US forces yesterday claimed that they have advanced to about 100 kilometers of Baghdad following a fresh wave of bombings of the capital.

But on the fourth day yesterday they met some stiff resistance.

There were also conflicting reports whether the US-led troops took control of Umm Qasr and Basra.

Iraq said 77 civilians had been killed in fighting at its second city of Basra in the far south, and reported deadly air raids on the Iraqi president's home town, Tikrit.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri said yesterday that no Iraqi city had fallen to US-led forces.

"No city has fallen into their hands. Umm Qasr, which is a small, isolated community, is still resisting," Sabri, the first Iraqi official to travel abroad since the start of the war, told reporters at Cairo's airport.

He said Iraq is "sure that the Zionists are participating in the aggression, after having found an Israeli missile," adding that Baghdad was "fighting".

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Diplomats told to be 'extra careful'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign diplomats have been asked to be 'extra careful and cautious' while going out of their missions and residences, and to keep the foreign ministry constantly informed of their movement.

The government advice came following the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq that apparently created insecurity across the world.

Highly placed official sources said the government has asked the diplomats, especially US Ambassador Mary Ann Peters and British High Commissioner David Carter, not to go outside their missions or residences without prior permission of the government.

This is not restriction, but to ensure their security. The home ministry will provide security personnel and escort if they want to go outside their offices or residences.

The officials said the government is determined to give all-out security to foreign diplomats and has taken

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Curb on luxury items likely if war drags on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government may go for some austerity measures and restrictions on import of luxury items if the Iraq war prolongs.

The likely measures and restrictions will be temporary, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said yesterday without detailing those.

"Everything will depend on the war. We will observe the situation for another week before taking any austerity measures or imposing restriction on import of luxury items to ease the pressure on foreign currency reserve," he told newsmen.

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The steps might be taken to save foreign currency for importing food grain or essential items, he said.

"It will help the government even if 20 to 25 million dollars can be saved".

He urged the business community not to import unnecessary items.

The finance minister however said the economic situation is normal despite the war.

"The economy is yet to face any adverse impact and all the indicators are still showing normal trends, but it will face hardship if the war continues for a long time."

Foreign exchange reserve is good, flow of remittances and export

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Moudud protests attack on Iraq

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A senior minister yesterday protested the military aggression of US-led coalition against Iraq and said attackers have to bear the responsibilities of loss of lives and properties.

"The war on Iraq has sparked serious reaction among all citizens of Bangladesh," said Law Minister Moudud Ahmed.

The consequences will be dreadful if the British-American

war go against Islam, the minister warned in a press release.

"Bangladesh has always opposed terrorism but will not support any war without approval of the United Nations," he said.

"The attackers have to bear the responsibilities of the innocent children and women, being disabled and homeless," he said.

At a meeting with French Ambassador Michel Lummaux at

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AL against invasion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League has taken a firm stand against war in Iraq, but fell short of condemning the US-led coalition's attack on the oil-rich state.

Asked to clarify the party's position on the situation in the Gulf, AL general secretary Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star yesterday that the AL always opposed war and the party was a strong believer in peaceful resolution of international disputes.

"We still believe that the Iraq

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Awesome Australia

AFP, Johannesburg

Australia captain Ricky Ponting's 140 not out ensured the defending champions became the first team to win three World Cups when they beat India by 125 runs in a one-sided final at the Wanderers here on Sunday.

Ponting's magnificent exhibition of clean hitting was the cornerstone of Australia's massive 359 for two - their best total in one-day cricket and the highest-ever in a World Cup final.

It surpassed the 291 for eight inaugural winners West Indies posted against Australia in 1975 at Lord's when innings were sixty overs maximum as opposed to fifty.

And Ponting's score bettered West Indies' legend Viv Richards' 138 not out against England in 1979 as the largest individual innings in a World Cup final.

It was a fitting way to mark Australia's third successive final - they lost to Sri Lanka in 1996 and beat Pakistan in 1999, having previously beating England in 1987.

Together with Damien Martyn

(88 not out), only passed fit to play earlier Sunday following a finger injury. Ponting shared an Australian record unbroken third-wicket stand of 234 in 188 balls.

In reply India, were who elected to field after winning the toss, were shot out for 234. Virender Sehwag's 82 the only meaningful resistance.

When Zaheer Khan was last man out, caught by Darren Lehmann off Glenn McGrath, there were still 10.4 overs left.

India, playing in their second final since winning the trophy in their only previous appearance in 1983, desperately needed a big score from Sachin Tendulkar.

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Announcement

Due to shortage of space caused by the extra coverage of the Iraqi invasion, our usual Culture page is being discontinued for the time being. The TV guide is being published regularly on page 2. We regret the inconvenience caused to our readers.