



PHOTO: AFP, BBC

(From left) Iraqis carry an injured boy to hospital in Basra after US-led bombardment on civilian targets; Iraqis flee Nassiriyah amid an intense fight between coalition forces and Iraqi soldiers; invading troops take position in the southern town of al-Sammah; and traffic movement on al-Jomhuriya Street in Baghdad shows life goes on despite daily US-British strikes on the Iraqi capital.

1,800 expelled on first day of SSC exams

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 1,800 examinees were expelled for cheating in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Examinations that began yesterday under seven education boards.

Ten teachers were also expelled on charge of aiding and abetting the examinees in cheating at some centres in Magura, Cox's Bazar and Rajshahi.

The examination began amid tight security around the examination centres.

Official sources said the highest

number of examinees expelled -- 922 -- were under Rajshahi board. Six teachers were also expelled under the same board. Only six students were expelled under Sylhet board, which is the lowest.

Besides, 250 were expelled under Dhaka board, 183 under Jessore board, 174 under Chittagong board, 77 under Barisal and 114 under Comilla board.

Of the examinees expelled under Dhaka board, 62 were ejected from examination halls in Netrakona, 51 in Jamlapur, 16 in Gazipur, eight in

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FM flies to Japan Mar 30 for market access

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan leaves Dhaka for Japan on March 30 to discuss bilateral issues that include Dhaka's demand for greater market access to Japanese market.

During his five-day stay on invitation from the Japanese government, Khan will meet with his Japanese counterpart and other leaders related to trade and investment issues.

"All bilateral issues, including investment and trade, will come up during discussions with the Japanese leaders. We will table our demands for greater market access to Japan," Morshed Khan told newsmen yesterday.

However, Khan did not disclose

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50 JCD men hurt in Shibir attack at RU

STAR REPORT

About 50 activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student front of the ruling BNP, were injured in a series of armed attacks by cadres of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) at Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday.

At least 100 shots were fired during the attacks, our correspondents Anwar Ali and Abu Kalam reported from Rajshahi.

The ICS activists took control of all the ten dormitories for male students on the campus driving out

JCD activists, they reported quoting campus sources.

Police said they lobbed 25 tear gas shells and fired rubber bullets to quell angry JCD activists when they damaged several buses and ransacked some office rooms at the administrative building, Shahidullah Arts Building, Rabindra Bhaban, and were heading towards the Vice-chancellor's residence after clashes with ICS activists.

Our RU correspondent reported that five policemen were injured in

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UN HR Forum rejects session on Iraq

REUTERS, Geneva

The United Nations yesterday rejected a call by eight countries including Russia and Syria to examine the human rights and humanitarian situation in Iraq as a result of war.

An Iraqi delegate to the UN Commission on Human Rights immediately condemned the decision, saying it was a "dark day" for the organisation because Iraqis were "suffering psychological torture."

The 53-state commission is holding its annual six-week session in Geneva as U.S.-led forces push ahead in their week-old invasion to rid Iraq of alleged weapons of mass destruction.

The eight members, which also included Malaysia and Zimbabwe, had called for a special sitting of the

committee on "the human rights and humanitarian situation in Iraq as a consequence of the war."

But Western countries, including Australia, Canada and Ireland on behalf of the EU, opposed the call, saying the UN Security Council was already addressing the issue.

Neither the U.S. nor British envoys took the floor during the near three-hour debate.

Iraqi delegate Dari K. Mahmood said after the vote: "This commission has lived today a dark day when it refused to discuss the important issue of the humanitarian situation in Iraq under military aggression."

"The whole Iraqi people is subjected to genocide," he added. "Twenty-six million people are suffering psychological torture."

"THROWBACK TO

MIDDLEAGES"

The result was 18 countries, including all Arab and Muslim states, in favour, 25 against, with seven abstentions and three delegations absent during the public vote, officials said.

Introducing the resolution, Syria's envoy Salloom Toufiq denounced the U.S. and British invasion as a "throwback to the Middle Ages" depriving civilians of water and food.

"We were told that this would be a clean war, that it would not affect civilians. That is not true," he said.

"We were told it was intended to come to the aid of Iraqi people. All they have been offered is bombs. There are a number of dead and wounded among civilians in Iraq. How can we not react?"

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SHAZNEEN CASE

Cross-exams of 8th prosecution witness ends

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Cross-examination of Mohammad Anisuzzaman Khan, eighth prosecution witness in Shazneen rape case and a friend of the victim's father, by the lawyers of five of the six accused ended yesterday.

Earlier, lawyers of the principal accused Shahidul Islam alias Shahid cross-examined him.

The cross-examination took place at the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka.

After the cross-examination for about two hours, Judge Kazi Rahamat Ullah adjourned the hearing till April 1.

Replying to a question by the lawyers of the five accused,

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PHOTO: STAR

What lies beneath... State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Hoque looks at cheating notes SSC examinees tossed on the floor of an examination hall of the Taraganj High School in Nilfamari.

US army's elite airborne division grounded in first week of war

AFP, Southwest Iraq

Desert storms that have rained mud, reduced visibility to just a few centimetres (inches) and sent wind gusts of 50 knots through southern Iraq have rendered the US army's elite air assault division useless in the first week of war against Saddam Hussein's regime.

The 20-million-dollar Apache helicopters are supposed to be the stars of the 101st Airborne Division, with their Hellfire missile capabilities making them the first choice to take out the Republican Guard's tanks and other heavy armour.

But seven days into the war, the Apaches and other helicopters that make up the division's 270-strong fleet, the Black Hawks, Chinooks and Kiowa Warriors, have seen no combat action.

Sitting in a tent thick with fine dust at the division's forward operating base in southwest Iraq on Wednesday, the division's aviation brigade commander, Colonel Greg Gass, told AFP the weather had played a major role in forcing the helicopters to remain grounded.

"We have got out here and we have got our stuff on the ground. We have got everything we need to exact the mission so I feel good about that. But the weather is absolutely horrid and it's certainly a factor," Gass said.

"In this weather you can't fly. You can't even drive in this."

However, Gass said the division had spent the week ensuring they were ready to join the conflict as soon as the wind dropped.

"We are pretty much where we want to be at this time. We are

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New butcher of Baghdad, say anti-war Arabs

REUTERS, Cairo

After only a week of war, Arabs are saying there's a new butcher of Baghdad.

Long an epithet for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in the West, Arab newspapers and citizens said pictures of burned bodies and pools of blood in a busy Baghdad neighbourhood proved the name was more suitable for the American government.

"Massacre in Baghdad" screamed a headline in Lebanon's daily as-Safir on Thursday after two explosions devastated a street in the Iraqi capital and killed as many as 15 people. Iraqis called it a U.S. attack, while the U.S. military suggested it might have been a stray Iraqi anti-aircraft missile or sabotage.

Egypt's al-Ahram condemned the "American slaughter of civilians," while Morocco's L'Opinion called the blasts a "murderous raid," and Palestinian newspaper al-Hayat al-Jadida mourned the "savage bombardment" of Baghdad.

"They call Saddam Hussein a butcher. Aren't the Americans butchers? They're worse. They're killing children who've done nothing wrong," said Iman, a 26-year-old woman working in a Cairo haberdashery shop.

Throughout the Arab world, from long-time U.S. allies to states Washington accuses of sponsoring "terrorism," citizens were outraged by graphic media images of bodies charred beyond recognition in a war many believe is a sinister plot to subjugate Arabs and dominate the region.

Innocent victims

Many said the Baghdad blasts just confirmed their long-held fears that innocent civilians would pay the highest price for a war they increasingly blame on Washington alone.

"It has to stop, that's all. There are women, men and children, innocents who have no connection with the war. It is the civilians who pay," said Moroccan receptionist Bouhra.

Atta, the 55-year-old owner of a

ball-bearing shop in Cairo, stabbed his finger at a page full of pictures of Iraqi children wounded in the attack and the body of a civilian.

"What would happen if the Arabs did this in London or Manchester or Birmingham?" he asked. Pointing at a picture of a weeping, injured child, he said: "(British Prime Minister Tony) Blair has four children, doesn't he? What would happen if this was one of his?"

Iraq said on Thursday that more than 350 Iraqi civilians had been killed since the invasion began a week ago, with women, children and elderly people making up most of the victims.

Ali, a 27-year-old Lebanese lawyer, said the rising civilian death toll "makes you wonder whether they are really after our blood, whether we are people who are

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Anti-Iraq coalition may face trial in criminal court, says Russia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Russian Federation yesterday expressed concern at the possibility of a human catastrophe, earthquake and epidemic in Iraq and said the developments could act as a basis for bringing the anti-Iraq coalition to justice in criminal courts.

In a statement, the federation embassy in Dhaka said Iraq was on

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 28	5-55 am	6-12 pm
Mar 29	5-55 am	

Prayer Timings		
Mar 28		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-00	5-30
Juma	12-15	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-15
Maghrib	6-18	6-23
Esha	7-35	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Mosquito war goes private

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is privatising its regular mosquito eradication programme in phases after failing to fight mosquito menace in the city, sources said.

The DCC, however, will continue its programme along with private managers till sell-out of the programme is complete.

After coming to office last year, the mayor had promised time and again to eradicate mosquito.

"It will be privatised fully in phases if we become successful," said a top decision-maker of the privatisation programme, preferring anonymity.

Sources at the DCC said corruption and mismanagement had become rife with the mosquito elimination mechanism for years,

prompting Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka to ponder privatisation.

The DCC has already floated a tender to appoint private sector managers in line with the decision for privatisation and bidding would open on April 2.

Private managers would run mosquito eradication programmes in 90 wards of the corporation. They would also have the option to use the spray-men and equipment of the DCC to execute the programme, the sources said.

Prospective bidders willing to use the DCC support have to submit a detailed proposal with the tender schedule, sources added.

Initially, the DCC will appoint private sector managers to work in the city's mosquito-prone areas to gauge their success.

The health department of the DCC, responsible for reigning in the mosquito menace, has 600 ground spray-men, 625 fogger, 1,200 hand sprays, 90 wheel sprays and eight car spray machines on hand.

There are allegations that the spray-men did not work properly after the decision of aerial spray in the city.

Besides, some corrupt officials are involved in adulterating insecticides -- both adulticide and larvicide -- procured for spraying in 10 zones of the DCC, some sources said. They alleged that in connivance with some top officials of the health and storage departments, some unscrupulous DCC men sell out insecticides to private aerosol companies.

The DCC has placed work

orders to buy 50,000 litres of adulticide recently to kill adult mosquito and invited tender to buy 8,000 litres of larvicide.

The DCC, however, has not yet chalked out any plan to fight the Aedes mosquitoes for the upcoming breeding season. Officials could not say for sure whether private sector operators would be engaged in the fight against the vector.

A top official said they had a plan to create awareness at ward level by distributing posters and leaflets like in the past.

Some DCC commissioners yesterday expressed dissatisfaction at the negligence of mosquito eradication programme and said they were facing 'people's wrath' for the failure of the authorities.