



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday administers a dose of polio vaccine to a child under five to inaugurate the first round of the National Immunisation Day.

If only there were less news from the front

War reporting is no longer feeding our need to know; it is pandering to our need to be entertained

SUE ARNOLD, INDEPENDENT, UK

At the risk of biting the hand that feeds me, it's at times like this that I long for a complete news blackout. At least newspapers fire off their salvos from the front just once a day. It's the rolling television news coverage of the war, the 24/7 wall-to-wall dispatches from the front line, back line, side line and every conceivable branch line to which I object.

War reporting is no longer feeding our need to know; it is pandering to our need to be entertained. A friend described the carefully selected montage of highlights from the coalition's Middle East military engagement diary that BBC World shows at the end of each day with suitable musical accompaniment as war pornography, and I agree with him. The new version of that old joke "What did you do in the war daddy?" "I fought, what did you

think?" goes like this "Anything worth watching on telly tonight? Let's see, there's Ground Force, Dead Ringers, the Man U match and the war of course. Tell you what, let's watch a bit of the war and then see what Scholes and Becks are up to."

What really depresses me about the whole depressing situation is the unashamedly personal spin that every correspondent seems to put on his reports nowadays. Shortly after six yesterday morning, I turned on the radio and heard one of the 700 journalists covering the war from Five Live, the Today programme, News Hour, The World Today, LBC, CBS or even God help us the English language service of China Radio International, make the following statement about a skirmish he'd just witnessed: "From where I sat it sounded as though the invasion was going badly awry. If it continues like this..."

I can just see my first news editor, a diminutive despot by the name of Dennis Ditchfield, scourge of the Lancashire Evening Telegraph, turn purple. "News," Mr Ditchfield used to tell us cub reporters, "is something that has happened. When you begin a sentence with 'If, it isn't news, it's speculation, and frankly I'm not interested in speculation."

Neither am I. Another good reason for a news blackout, or at any rate a speculation blackout, is and this surely goes without saying that Jeremiah observations of this nature do little for coalition morale and much to lift the spirits of the Republican Guard. I dread to think what might have happened had that speculative war correspondent been anywhere near the Supreme Allied HQ on 4 June 1945, two days before the D-Day landings.

General Eisenhower and the
SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



Activists of the Awami League shout anti-US slogans as they burn an effigy of US President George W Bush during a demonstration against the US-led war on Iraq in Dhaka yesterday.

War poses a great threat to economy, says Saifur

BSS, Dhaka

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday expressed deep concern on the Iraq war, saying this is not only killing innocent civilians but also posing a great threat to the world economy, particularly the Bangladesh economy.

Talking to newsmen at his secretariat office after a meeting with the Public Expenditure Review Commission, he said media reports increasingly point to the fact that the war may be prolonged.

"This war has no justification," the finance minister said adding, it

is really tragic to see the destruction and killing of men, women and children.

The Iraqi people are putting up a heroic resistance to a war that the US had initially underestimated, he said.

The finance minister said it is going to leave a serious impact. "We must get ready to face the situation with our limited resources by ensuring proper use."

He expressed his apprehension that Bangladesh's exports, imports and remittances will be affected by the war. The US government may have to divert additional resources such as fresh allocations made last

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Anti-US threats US wants its citizens to leave Yemen

AFP, Washington

The United States warned Friday that terrorists are planning attacks on US interests in Yemen and said it would allow some of its diplomats in the country to leave at government expense.

In a statement the State Department also said that US citizens in Yemen should consider leaving due to the threats as well as rising anti-American sentiment in the country due to the ongoing war in Iraq.

"Due to credible reports that terrorists have planned attacks against US interests in Yemen and heightened tensions and increased security concerns resulting from

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Bombing of phone system another little degradation

ROBERT FISK, THE INDEPENDENT, UK

It's difficult to weep about a telephone exchange. True, the destruction of the local phone system in Baghdad is a miserable experience for tens of thousands of Iraqi families who want to keep in contact with their relatives during the long dark hours of bombing. But the shattered exchanges and umbilical wires and broken concrete of the Mimoun International Communications Centre scarcely equals the exposed bones and intestines and torn flesh of the civilian wounded of Baghdad.

The point, of course, is that it

represents another of those little degradations which we (as in "we, the West") routinely undertake when things aren't going our way in a war. Obviously, "we" hoped it wouldn't come to this. The Anglo-American armies wanted to maintain the infrastructure of Baghdad for themselves -- after they had "liberated" the city under a hail of roses from its rejoicing people -- because they would need working phone lines on their arrival.

But after a night of massive explosions across the city, dawn yesterday brought the realisation that communications had been sacrificed. The huge Rashid telecommunications centre was struck

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Buddhists demonstrate against the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq and call for peace in Dhaka yesterday.

War dent on manpower export, remittance ruled out

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The war in Iraq has 'no negative impact' on manpower export from Bangladesh and remittance from the expatriates and 'things are quite normal' till now.

State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (EWOE) Mohammad Quamrul Islam said this while talking to reporters yesterday.

He however said 1,617 Bangladeshi workers have returned home from Kuwait since the war began 10 days back. The number is very small because there are about 1.62 lakh Bangladeshi workers in that country.

"We have exported 18,442 people in less than three months (till March 27) to different Middle East countries including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Abu Dhabi. The process continues," the state minister said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



An Iraqi woman carries a child to safety walking past British tanks at a checkpoint on the outskirts of the southern Iraqi city of Basra yesterday, as fighting inside the city between coalition troops and Iraqi forces continues.

Two student leaders, shrimp farm owner murdered in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two student leaders and a shrimp farm owner were murdered on Friday night in Dumuria and Digholia upazila.

According to police, Noor-e-Alam Siddiqui alias Bappi (28), a leader of ruling BNP's student front Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), was gunned down by some armed men at 9:30 PM at Shahpur Bazar in Dumuria.

Police quoting witnesses said four masked men chased him and fired several shots on his forehead, killing him on the spot. Police arrested 14 persons as suspects.

In 1991, some activists of Jubo

League, Awami League's student front, had abducted him from his house at Andulia village. But he escaped just before being slaughtered on a paddy field.

Police said the same group might have killed Bappi who played a vital role in favour of the four-party alliance candidate in Shahpur Union Parishad election.

He was given several death threats by opponents of the alliance candidate during the election, party sources said.

Masum Shaikh (25), president of Gazirhat unit of Bangladesh C h a a t r a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

2,000 SSC examinees expelled for cheating

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 2,000 examinees were expelled for cheating in English second paper on the second day of the ongoing Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Examinations under seven education boards yesterday.

Twenty-one teachers were also expelled on charge of abetting the examinees in copying at some centers in Chittagong, Bandarban, Lalmonirhat, Pabna, Bogra, Dinajpur, Panchagarh, Chapainawabganj and Netrokona districts.

Besides, two hall superintendents and all invigilators of two centres in Daulatpur in Kushtia were withdrawn by Deputy Minister for Education Abdus Salam Pintu during a surprise visit to the centres.

Official sources said the highest number of 963 examinees and 16 teachers were expelled in Rajshahi board and the lowest nine examinees in Sylhet board.

Of the expelled examinees in Rajshahi board, 48 were in Rajshahi, seven in Chapainawabganj, 17 in Joypurhat, 86 in Nagaon, 26 in Natore, 51 in Pabna, 125 in Sirajganj, 76 in Bogra, 103 in Rangpur, 78 in Kurigram, 68 in Gaibandha, 48 in Nilphamari, 11 in Lalmonirhat, 143 in Dinajpur, 56 in Thakurgaon and 20 in Panchagarh.

Of the expelled teachers in the board, seven were in Lalmonirhat, four in Pabna, two in Bogra and one each in Dinajpur, Panchagarh and Chapainawabganj.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Border talks begin in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A 3-day conference of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) began here yesterday.

Problems like killing of Bangladeshis by BSF and Indians and trespass were discussed at the Deputy Inspector General-level conference.

The Bangladesh side refuted Indian allegations regarding presence of Indian insurgents in Bangladesh territory. Both sides agreed to take effective steps to check insurgency and cross-border crimes.

The Indian delegation left for Dhaka yesterday afternoon. They will be back in Sylhet today and are scheduled to visit the shrine of Hajrat Shahjalal (RA), Osmani Museum in the city and the temple of Sri Chaitanya at Golapganj.

Other issues like construction of spurs by India in common rivers and smuggling of drug and arms will be discussed on the concluding day (March 31).

The Bangladesh side was led by Brigadier General Md Ibrahim Khalil, Deputy Director-General of BDR. Other members were Col.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Knives out in Washington over Iraq war

INTERNET, Undated

It's not exactly bloodletting yet, but the knives are out in Washington. Setbacks to the United States' war on Iraq has resulted in insidious finger pointing and the blame game could get worse unless the Bush administration can set right the campaign.

First and immediate in the line of fire is Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who is getting the rap for short-changing the military on force levels and relying too much on the technological advances made by his old stomping ground, the American defence industry. Rumsfeld is being blamed for putting too few troops on the ground (250,000) compared to the more than half-million who were landed during the 1991 Gulf War.

Before the start of the war, Rumsfeld and his aides were credited with the argument that the size of ground forces is no more a key to victory in war. Relatively small

formations could be equally if not more effective because of technology force-multipliers -- advanced command-and-control systems, improved reconnaissance, improved ground systems and new 'smart bombs'. Small, mobile but potent forces, they maintained, are the wave of the future.

Critics are now panning the thinking saying stealth planes and smart bombs cannot hold territory, and that it requires men on the ground to do that. With US supply lines stretched, stalled, and harassed on the road from Kuwait to Baghdad, Washington is rushing more than 100,000 troops to the region to keep it moving.

Also under scrutiny is Secretary of State Colin Powell, whose department is charged with mis-handling the diplomatic tact with Turkey that denied US forces the foothold to attack Iraq from the north.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 30		6-13 pm
Mar 31	5-52 am	

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

Source: Islamic Foundation