

# US troops seize Iraqi trophies for fun and profit

REUTERS, Baghdad

Staff Sergeant Nathan Braswell hopes a flag he found in a captured Iraqi base will earn him a tidy sum when he sells it on the Internet.

Like many fellow US Marines, Braswell grabbed the trophy as American forces advanced on Baghdad. Unlike the souvenir-hunting majority, he doesn't plan to keep it.

"I got the flag that was in the commanding general's building. It's very large. It's in great condition," said Braswell, 24, who picked up the Iraqi national colours on the eastern outskirts of the city.

"I'm going to put the flag on eBay," he said, referring to the Internet auction sight where memorabilia from the toppled regime of Saddam Hussein are already in hot demand.

"Some collector would probably like it."

Braswell said he would identify the grid reference of the installation where he found the flag to give an added touch of authenticity for war relic connoisseurs.

Other Marines lucky enough to stumble across caches of Iraqi bayonets are making a few bucks on the side selling them to troops who were not so quick off the mark.

One Marine was offering several combat knives to his comrades for \$20 each -- although he kept his favourite one wedged in the webbing loops on his flak jacket as a memento.

Some say they plan to mount their souvenirs on the walls -- making a kind of collage of items like knives or shoulder flashes found on military uniforms discarded by Iraqi troops.

"I'm going to make me a nice little plaque that's got the dates I was here," said Lance-Corporal Louis Blankenship, 21, taking a break in his armored vehicle in a car park in the suburbs.

"I'll put my dog tags on it," he said.

**Mortar Sights, Saddam Portraits**

Many of the items might look rather bizarre on mantelpieces back home in America. Trophies claimed included the sights to a Soviet-built 120 mm mortar -- that looks a bit like a piece of surveying equipment -- and Iraqi gas masks.

"When you come home you have to show that you were there. You take some

pictures," said Corporal Alex Fala, 25. "Throughout the wars in the past, everybody has brought back something."

Other homes may soon find themselves adorned with portraits of Saddam, combat helmets, military car license plates, canteen cups, uniform caps and pieces of webbing.

Tin cups taken from one air base have already found themselves in use by Marines boiling their morning coffee on camping stoves.

Anything bearing what Marines consider to resemble a Baath Party or Republican Guard insignia has added prestige.

Strictly speaking, Marines are banned from taking war trophies -- but as long as they restrict themselves to picking up bits of discarded military kit, officers tend to turn a blind eye.

Some Marines daydream of finding an Iraqi colonel's pistol, or even taking home an AK-47 rifle to hang above the fireplace, but the taking of firearms is controlled much more carefully.

## Prisoner dies of 'torture' in Satkhira jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

An on-trial prisoner died in Satkhira jail yesterday, sparking controversy over the causes of his death.

Bishu Moral, 50, son of Kalu Moral of village Momnipur in Jessore district, was standing trial in a robbery case filed with Satkhira police four years ago.

Sources and relatives of the victim alleged that he died from torture in the jail. But the jailer dismissed the allegation, claiming that he died from tuberculosis.

"We get searched real well," said Corporal Patrick Helmick, 23, a member of a military police unit in the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

"There's no way you could get one back," he said.

Many Marines eagerly joined in the free for all by trophy hunters at the odd military store captured along the way, but collecting the keepsakes of war is not everyone's idea of fun.

"I'm not really into that," said a Marine who rides an "Amtrack" armored amphibious vehicle. "My war trophy is getting home and sitting on my couch."

## Tigers

FROM PAGE 8 rattling up 112 in just 16 overs.

They were separated when the South African skipper was stumped by Khaled Mashud off Mohammad Rafique after hitting eight fours in his 45.

The right-handed Gibbs made 62 in 62 balls before being run out by a good piece of fielding by Javed Omar at mid-on.

Gibbs had hammered ten fours on way to his 17th one-day fifty.

Before Rafique also forced Jacques Rudolph to give a catch to Tareq Aziz Khan at gully,

the left-handed Rudolph, playing just his second game, chipped in with a useful 44 off 45 balls.

Today is a rest day. The return leg starts with India playing Bangladesh tomorrow.

**SCOREBOARD**  
Scoreboard of the TVS Cup three-nation tournament day-night match between South Africa and Bangladesh at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday:

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Aziz	7	0	50	0
Tapas	10	0	54	0
K Mahmud	2	0	29	0
Rafique	10	0	43	2
Kapali	10	0	45	0
Hossain	4	0	23	0
Ashrafal	7	0	36	0

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Javed c Boucher b Ntini	9			
Ashrafal c Boucher b Adams	52			
Bashar b Dawson	18			
Sanwar lbw b Pollock	1			
Kapali lbw b Pollock	27			
Akram lbw b Pollock	15			
K Mashud c Smith b Dawson	11			
K Mahmud c McKenzie b Ntini	40			
Rafique b Dawson	15			
Tapas b Pollock	3			
Tareq not out	1			
Extras: (lb-1, w-14, nb-4)	19			
Total: (All out in 49.3 overs)	211			

Fall of wickets: 1-24, 2-82, 3-83, 4-112, 5-140, 6-141, 7-174, 8-204, 9-210.

**Bowler O M R W**  
Ntini 9 1 51 2  
Willoughby 8 1 32 0  
Pollock 9.3 0 36 4  
Dawson 10 1 26 3  
Adams 10 0 42 1  
Smith 3 0 23 0

**Result: South Africa won by 83 runs.**  
Man of the match: Shaun Pollock (South Africa).  
Toss: South Africa.  
Umpires: Aleem Dar (Pakistan) and Mahbubur Rahman (Bangladesh)  
Next match: India v Bangladesh on Wednesday.



Fried Hilsa fish, left, a traditional dish of Bangalees, is up for sale at a stall in the Ramna Park and city dwellers, cheeks painted in flower motifs, celebrate the Bangla New Year yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

# Hong Kong ravaged by SARS

REUTERS, Hong Kong

Hong Kong reported yesterday seven more deaths from a devastating respiratory virus that has killed over 140 people worldwide and infected more than 3,300 as the disease took a mounting toll on Asia's economy.

The number of deaths was the highest the densely populated city had reported on a single day since the outbreak began in early March. Forty-seven people have now died from the disease in the territory and 1,190 have been infected.

A Canadian laboratory offered a ray of hope that a vaccine could be developed for the virus, but health experts say it may be months, even years away.

Mainland China, the epicenter of the disease, reported four more deaths and 74 new cases of the flu-like virus, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Monday. Official numbers show the death toll there is now 64, with 1,418 infected cases.

Hong Kong leader Tung Chee-hwa told his boss, Chinese President Hu Jintao, in China's Shenzhen city that the virus had yet to be "brought under effective control" in the territory of seven million, although the nature of the disease and how to treat it was better understood, a government statement said.

Hu's low-profile visit to southern Guangdong province at the weekend was the strongest indication yet of how seriously the Chinese leadership views the worsening health crisis.

The virus causing Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which often deteriorates into pneumonia, has been carried by travelers to about 20 countries in the past six weeks after first showing up in Guangdong in

November.

In a weekend statement released one month after its first alert on the disease, the WHO warned that SARS could become a global epidemic.

"If the SARS maintains its present pathogenicity and transmissibility, SARS could become the first severe new disease of the 21st century with global epidemic potential," David Heymann, the agency's executive director of communicable diseases, wrote on the WHO Website.

The way SARS is emerging suggests great potential for rapid spread in a highly mobile, interconnected world, Heymann said.

**Quarantine measures**

Singapore reported three new deaths thought to be from SARS on Sunday, taking its toll to 12. It also announced the quarantining of 400 staff and patients at its biggest hospital.

The virus, which is new to science and has no known cure, has hit hospital staff the hardest, putting healthcare systems under strain. Health officials say they are not sure how the virus spreads, although close contact with an infected person appears to be the main method of transmission.

Its impact on business has been merciless. The WHO Web site notes the disease has already caused an estimated \$30 billion in losses, which could rapidly mount in a globalized economy.

The illness has crippled tourism in Asia and forced airlines to cut flights sharply. Economists say the longer the crisis lasts the deeper it will eat into the region's economies and it could push some, including Hong Kong, back into recession.

On Sunday, Asia's fourth-largest carrier, Cathay Pacific Airways, said it

would not rule out grounding its entire passenger fleet next month if passenger numbers continued to fall.

Hong Kong-based Cathay, which is carrying only a third of its usual traffic volume, said in an internal memo the company was losing US\$3 million a day.

"If demand falls still further, we will have to respond accordingly," said Tony Tyler, director of corporate development.

A Canadian laboratory said on Sunday it had broken the genetic sequence behind the SARS virus.

The Michael Smith Genome Sciences Centre in British Columbia said this could help speed development of a reliable diagnostic test and eventually an effective vaccine.

Canada, which has the third-largest number of SARS cases, said its death toll had risen to 13 with more than 270 probable or suspected cases of infection. Thousands have been quarantined.

**Schools reopen**

Singapore reopened secondary schools on Monday after shutting all classes three weeks ago to contain the virus and university classes resumed in Hong Kong.

But life in SARS-affected countries was far from normal.

"We are in this for the long haul," Singapore Health Minister Lim Hng Kiang said when asked if the virus was under control.

Singapore air force paramedics in camouflage fatigues, gloves and surgical face masks greet air passengers from SARS-afflicted Hong Kong and China's Guangdong province, taking temperatures, giving a chilling appearance to one of Asia's biggest air hubs.



Prime Minister Khaledia Zia presents books to President Iajuddin Ahmed at the Bangabhaban on the Bangla New Year's Day yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

# US troops capture

FROM PAGE 1

the New York Times correspondent.

Cobra helicopters also destroyed six fully loaded but unmanned anti-aircraft guns on the city outskirts before US troops in light armored vehicles began moving into Tikrit yesterday morning.

The attack was launched despite an offer from 22 tribal leaders to negotiate peace with US forces and hand over some Baath Party leaders in Tikrit, said the Arab TV network Al-Jazeera.

Many Tikrit streets were almost deserted. Unlike in other major Iraqi cities, many portraits, banners and statues of Saddam remained undamaged.

Businessman Khalef al-Ahbad said Tikrit had endured four days of bombing. "Tikrit is a developed city. It's full of culture," he said. "We don't have a taste for blood, we are not fighters. We are thirsty for peace. America is attacking us for its own purposes. We are a peaceful people."

According to the Pentagon, the toll of US military dead in Iraq rose to 117 on Sunday.

**Fighting Continues In Baghdad**  
Fighting is not over elsewhere in

Iraq. In Baghdad, where US troops are trying to win cooperation of Iraqis to help restore power and water supplies and end looting, a fierce firefight broke out in the city centre near the Palestine Hotel yesterday.

A firefight between Arab volunteers and Iraqi combatants in the northern Baghdad suburb of Saddam City left two dead yesterday morning, Iraqi participants said.

Renamed Al-Sadr City by residents of the impoverished community of two million, it has been the site of pitched battles nearly every day since Baghdad fell to US troops on April 9.

According to Iraqi fighters, the battle was against Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese volunteers who had come to Baghdad to serve the Iraqi army against the US-British invaders.

The fight pitted two rival groups who are struggling for control of the mainly Shiite community against each other, said witnesses.

US television showed footage of marines detaining and leading away three men, thought to be snipers.

**Ethnic Tension**  
The holy city of Najaf was reported to

be dangerously unstable amid signs of a power struggle between rival Shiite factions. The home of a leading Shiite cleric was besieged by an armed mob days after another senior religious figure was hacked to death in the city's main mosque. Ethnic tensions also flared in northern Iraq between Kurds and Arabs.

Basra Volunteers  
In Basra, British troops and Iraqi police officers were working side by side in an effort to restore order.

About 300 policemen have volunteered to come back to work, and have begun manning checkpoints.

Officers are being vetted over links to the Ba'ath party before being allowed to return to their old jobs, military officials said.

## Goods seized

FROM PAGE 8

The customs officials also seized eight laptops worth about Tk 3 lakh from another incoming passenger, GM Shawkat. Shawkat flew into ZIA by a Thai Airways flight.

Three separate departmental cases were lodged.

## Police vice

FROM PAGE 8

Jamiruddin Sircar to inform him of the police atrocity.

Only nine days after the incident, an army sergeant, Mohammad Azimul Awal, was picked up by a police team when he was talking to a woman.

It is alleged that he was taken to the Sangsad Bhaban police camp, confined and tortured there which sent him into a coma.

They armyman was admitted to Dhaka Combined Military Hospital (CMH) where his condition is still unstable.

Police claimed that the sergeant jumped out of their van by which he was being taken into custody and fell unconscious.

The officer in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station Saud Ansan was closed following the incident. The OC was arrested and sent to the Dhaka Central jail on Sunday.

# Saddam airbrushed

FROM PAGE 8

mosque and keeper of what must be half of the loot stolen from chemists' shops across Baghdad. Indeed, most of his mosque is piled high with medicines and dentists' chairs and stretchers and bandages.

"It is all to be given to the people, to be proportionately given back to hospitals who need it," Sheikh Aref informs me, watching me carefully over the top of his thin spectacles. "We are for stopping all this looting. We are making inventories and lists so that these things will be given back to the people of Baghdad."

There are black-turbaned divines in the yard of the mosque, fussing over sacks of Vietnamese baby milk and cartons labelled "Imported by the Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Trade, State Company for Foodstuffs". I knew where that came from. I watched the scavengers entering the Ministry of Trade four days ago.

Across Sadr City as it must now be called there are checkpoints and barrages and armed young men with thin beards. It's not exactly a Shia revolution, although some of the gunmen admit they are looking for "Wahabis", Sunni Muslims who they say have shot at them and who are in some cases "Arab volunteers" who came to Iraq to fight the Americans.

Sheikh Aref and his fellow imams are prepared to share the US desire to see the Arab "volunteers" expelled from Iraq. "America says it wants to fight terrorism so do we. But do they really want to liberate us and free us? Well, the future will tell."

The slums of Sadr City are oral libraries of pain and torture. Just ask any man where Saddam's main underground torture centre was and he will tell you it was the complex at Baladiat or the Istiqbal centre beside Aqadmia.

## BDR-BSF flag meeting on tribal intrusion ends without decision

BSS, Panchagarh

A company-level flag meeting between the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the Border Security Force (BSF) of India ended here yesterday without a decision.

The meeting was held in the backdrop of mounting tension at the Majhipara border belt of Tetulia in the district following successive attacks launched by the Indian tribesmen on Bangladeshi farmers and their illegal entry into Bangladesh territory for the last successive three days.

The flag meeting held on the Indian territory, however, helped reduce tension in the area.

Local people alleged that for the last three days Indian tribesmen with bows and arrows tried to destroy sugarcane paddy fields inside Bangladesh with the help of the BSF.

On receipt of complaints from the crop field owners, the Majhipara BDR camp took up the matter with the Nayabari BSF camp and proposed a flag meeting to defuse the tension.

The four-member BDR team was led by Tetulia BDR Camp Commander Sekander Ali while the BSF team was led by Nayabari BSF Company Commander RS Rosh.

## Pakistan to boycott Asia Cup

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan dashed hopes of a revival in cricketing ties with arch-rivals India after announcing their withdrawal from the Asia Cup in Bangladesh, officials said Monday.

"We have informed the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) of our inability to participate in the Asia Cup and will issue further details next week," Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) director Chishty Mujahid told the news agency.

The PCB took the decision after India refused to tour Pakistan for a Test and one-day series scheduled for April-May this year. Pakistan, in a tit-for-tat response, had said they will not tour India in 2004.

The latest decision ends any hopes of a restoration of cricketing ties between the Asian giants, which have been severed by New Delhi over Islamabad's alleged support to militants in the disputed region of Kashmir.

The ACC, now managed by Bangladesh Cricket Board officials, had planned to hold the event in August after Pakistan withdrew as hosts.

Apart from Pakistan and India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and two associate members of the ACC - Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates - were due to participate in the event.

# PMO staff

FROM PAGE 1

proposal to make a documentary to counter opposition Awami League's convention on human rights and reported repression on the Hindu minorities immediately after the general election. The information ministry approved the proposal at an estimated cost of around Tk 8 lakh.

The CD of the documentary was to be distributed among foreign diplomatic missions in Dhaka and Bangladesh missions abroad.

Before approving, the information ministry argued that such documentary is usually prepared by the Department of Films and Publications (DFP) as it has all the logistics and can be made with minimum cost. Moreover, such document cannot be made privately considering legal complexity.

But the APS got the job at the instruction of the government high-ups and the CD he made was substantial as it was riddled with spelling and grammatical errors, sources added.

DFP sources said the APS prepared the documentary with the footage of the DFP, BTW and now defunct ETV free of charge and did not take any new

footage. They estimated that the APS spent no more than Tk 2 lakh for the documentary and made 1,000 CD copies.

Sources at the PMO said there are three APS at the PMO and all of them are entitled to use a single vehicle for their official duty. But the said APS has been using a huge and expensive Isuzu Trooper jeep of the Bangladesh Gas Field, which was brought on requisition.

The vehicle was allotted for the managing director of the Bangladesh Gas Field and he could use it for a short time. The driver of the ex-chairman of Petrobangla has been appointed as the driver of the APS.

## Petrobangla

FROM PAGE 1

make those efficient and profitable. The cabinet observed that there was no legal bar to give the companies autonomy and financial freedom as they already enjoyed the rights under the Company Act, 1994.

The meetings asked the energy ministry and Petrobangla to ensure the new status of the companies.

## DHAKA TODAY

---

**Film show**  
Zahir Raihan Film Society screens nine Academy Award 2003 winning films this month. On the second day it will screen 'Spirited Away' by Hayao Miyazaki (Japan), 'Road to Perdition' by Sam Mendes (USA) and 'Talk to Her' by Pedro Almodovar (Spain). Venue: Goethe Institut, Dhanmondi. Time: 3.00pm, 5.15pm and 7.25pm.

**Anti-war film show**  
Asian Arts and Cultural Committee, Bangladesh Short Film Forum and Dhaka University Film Society will jointly screen an anti-war film. Venue: Mohammadpur. Time: 6.30pm.

**Movie show**  
Academy Film Society will screen a movie titled 'Das Boot'. Venue: 21/C, Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

**Drama festival**  
The inaugural ceremony of a drama festival, organised by Child Brigade, an organisation for working children, will be held. It will be followed by seven short dramas to be staged by the members of the brigade. Venue: Central Shaheed Minar. Time: 4.00pm.

**Memorial meeting**  
Joy Bangla Sangskritik Oikyojote organises a meeting in memory of Dr Mahbubur Rahman. Venue: Bangladesh Photo Journalists' Association auditorium. Time: 4.00pm.

**Book Club**  
A meeting of the Bangladesh Book Club will be held. Venue: Aziz Super Market, Shahbagh. Time: 5.00pm.

**Dev Centre seminar**  
Dev Centre for Philosophical Studies, Dhaka University, organises a seminar on 'Life and philosophy of Dr GC Dev' to mark his 32nd death anniversary. Venue: DU Arts faculty. Time: 4.30pm.

**FBCCI discussion**  
The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry will hold a discussion on 'Macro-economic management and imperatives for national budget

---

## DHAKA TOMORROW

---

**Film show**  
Zahir Raihan Film Society screens nine Academy Award 2003 winning films this month. On the third and last day it will screen 'Frida' by Julie Taymor (USA), 'The Pianist' by Roman Polanski (Poland) and 'Chicago' by Rob Marshall (USA). Venue: Goethe Institut, Dhanmondi. Time: 3.00pm, 5.15pm and 7.45pm.

**Anti-war film show**  
Asian Arts and Cultural Committee, Bangladesh Short Film Forum and Dhaka University Film Society will jointly screen an anti-war film. Venue: Tejgaon. Time: 6.30pm.

**Movie show**  
Academy Film Society will screen a movie titled 'All Quiet on the Western Front'. Venue: 21/C, Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

**Painting competition**  
The inaugural ceremony of a painting competition, organised by Child Brigade, an organisation for working children, will be held. It will be followed by six short dramas to be staged by the members of the brigade. Venue: Central Shaheed Minar. Time: 11.00am.