

Fear, anger, relief

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Baaghdad "constitutes the high-water mark for a new American determination to use the nation's military might to project its power around the world."

Prince Hassan of Jordan told the BBC: "There are jitters throughout the region about the possibility of (US) threats to Syria and possibly Iran resulting in the domino effect."

That view was echoed even in Britain, the United States' staunchest European ally and its partner in the Iraq war.

"This unprecedented show of US offensive power sends a daunting message. Who knows which way the Abrams tank barrels will swivel next?" the left-leaning *Guardian* newspaper asked.

US motives in doubt

France, a vociferous opponent of the conflict, said "bravo" to the end of the war and fall of Saddam Hussein.

A statement issued in the name of President Jacques Chirac said: "France, like every democracy, welcomes the fall of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, and hopes there will be a rapid and effective end to the fighting."

But presidential aide Alain Juppe struck at the heart of Washington's justification for its actions, adding: "We were right to say that there were other ways to disarm Iraq. Iraq did not use weapons of mass destruction."

"It's a day of shame," said Ali Jaddad, an engineer in the Palestinian city of Ramallah. "On this day, Arabs have become slaves. The only man who dared to say 'no' to the Americans' face has vanished today. What is left is a bunch of bowing and scraping Arab leaders."

World Cup runners-up India will be without their premier batsman Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid. Besides, Ganguly will be banking on a relatively inexperienced attack in the absence of Javagal Srinath, left-arm paceman Ashish Nehra and leg-spinner Anil Kumble.

But despite the absence of some key players the inspirational Indian captain said that the present side has plenty of 'potential winners' to go all the way in the meet.

Ganguly also ruled out the possibility of taking the championship 'as a vacation' for him.

"I will definitely play every game and of course will bat at number three," said Ganguly after the teams trained at the venue yesterday morning.

While the Indians are taking the tournament as opportunity to expose some young talents at the highest level, Bangladesh will try to lift their battered image on home soil.

The tournament will also divert attention of the millions of sports lovers in the country from the happenings in Iraq to a battle of a different kind.

The match is expected to draw a big holiday crowd after the West Indies toured in December last year.

US embassy

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overseas, it said.

The statement said Executive Order 11246 having the full force of US law explicitly states that contractors for the US government cannot "discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin".

The statement also said the law states categorically that any contractor engaging in discrimination is liable to have his contract "cancelled, terminated, or suspended in whole or in part and the contractor may be declared ineligible for further government contracts".

It added religion would not be the basis for hiring or denying employment in the case of the Kuwaiti company.

Arab volunteers fight on

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But a senior diplomat at the Turkish foreign ministry told AFP that any attempt by Iraqi Kurdish forces to take permanent control of the northern Iraqi oil city of Kirkuk would be unacceptable.

There was shooting on the northwest edge of the city, but the oil wells appeared to be undamaged.

The fall of Kirkuk brought a swift response from Turkey, which fears that the city could be used by the Kurds as a base from which to build a Kurdish state. Abdullah Gul, Turkey's foreign minister, was reported to have said that the peshmerga fighters could not stay in Kirkuk and added that "whatever is necessary will be done."

A US military official said that Special Forces were attempting to get an American presence into the city "in the interest of regional stability".

More than 100 vehicles, from pickup trucks to a garbage truck laden with Kurdish fighters, drove thought the streets.

The cars and trucks flew the flags of the two major political parties who rule the two sectors of the autonomous region; yellow for the Kurdistan Democratic Party and green for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Kurds take Kirkuk Kurdish peshmerga fighters took control of the northern oilrich city of Kirkuk yesterday. Hundreds of fighters from the Kurdish autonomous area, who have been supported by US Special Forces, drove through an industrial neighbour hood into a city that they have long dreamed of regaining.

Commuters

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President Dick Cheney.

"We're happy that the war is almost over. We are happy that, you know, the misery of the people of Iraq has been terminated," said Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

"It seems this is a moment that Iraqis and the rest of the world have awaited for too long," said Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende. "I hope this marks the end of suffering for the victims even if one can not exclude further incidents."

The Iraqi people's suffering must come to an end ... and the international community is called upon to listen to the Iraqi people so that they can succeed in installing their political system...and maintaining their sovereignty and unity," said Bahrain's King Hamad.

"The images from Baaghdad awaken hope," Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski. "We have lived through past events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the events in Bucharest (when dictator Nicolae Ceausescu fell) and we know there is no regime capable of restraining the human will to freedom."

"Prime Minister Khaleda Zia asked the principal secretary to take up the matter immediately and restore the road link --- I hope the army will withdraw the restriction very soon," he said.

An official close to the Prime Minister's Office, however, expressed the optimism that the problem would be resolved soon.

"The jam from Kakoli to Mohakhali was awful. My car approached at snail's pace," he added.

Thousands of motorists used the cantonment road every day to shuttle between southern and northern parts of the city to avoid traffic jams at Mohakhali.

Traffic clog at Mohakhali due to work on a one-kilometre long flyover there.

With the launch of the flyover project last year, the cantonment authorities lifted the ban on all civilian vehicles and opened the relief road for small vehicles from 7:00am to 8:30pm.

The opening of the cantonment brought relief to people who live in Gulshan, Khilkhet, Uttara, Tongi and Gazipur areas.

"The new restriction ---- has failed to address sufferings of the common man," said Sujit, a resident of Khilkhet.

The restriction has also affected private bus and human hauler operators.

"The large queues of vehicles reduce our number of trips," said Aziz, driver of a human hauler.

Iraqi embassy

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Embassy Adnan M Hatab Sultan also skipped a scheduled press briefing at the National Press Club. The Diplomatic Correspondents Association of Bangladesh (DCAB) that arranged the briefing on the Iraq situation was told that due to the unclear situation in Iraq, he could not attend the programme.

The DCAB later postponed the press briefing.

On Wednesday, foreign ministry officials said the government would maintain a usual diplomatic relations with Iraqi Embassy in Dhaka.

"The embassy would be there as long as the Iraqi authorities wish and our relations would be normal," said acting Foreign Secretary Anwar-ul-Alam.

Asked what would be the future ties between Baghdad and Dhaka once Baghdad falls, he said it was too early to comment.

"Until now, we don't know what changes would take place in Iraq. But the changes might not affect diplomatic relations," he added.

He noted that Dhaka was still observing the situation and it would act as per the United Nation's decision once the crisis was over. The decision would depend on how the situation developed.

When the US-led forces invaded Iraq, the US government asked Bangladesh alongside other countries to trim officials in the Iraqi embassy and lessen diplomatic amenities for them.

However, Bangladesh did not entertain the US request.

Hasina

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parliament was addressing a series of gatherings at various places including Kulaura and Majigaon on her way to Sylhet by train yesterday on a three-day visit.

Hasina visited the shrines of Hazrat Shah Jalal (RA) and Hazrat Shah Poran (RA) and offered fateha on her arrival here by Parabat Express yesterday.

The AL chief is scheduled to address a Shukrana gathering and reception meeting today (Friday) afternoon organised in connection with the victory of AL-backed Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran in the mayoral run of Sylhet City Corporation. They city and district AL organised the gathering at Government Alia Madrasah Maidan at 3 pm today.

The cars and trucks flew the flags of the two major political parties who rule the two sectors of the autonomous region; yellow for the Kurdistan Democratic Party and green for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Advance on Tikrit and Mosul Kurdish political officials yesterday said another northern town, Khaqan, had fallen to its forces and peshmerga fighters were now moving towards Mosul, Iraq's third city.



Students, left, of the Spectrum International School form an anti-war human chain and members of the Sylhet Division Development Action Council stage a hunger strike to protest the US-led invasion of Iraq in Dhaka yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Looters rule Baaghdad

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who set about seizing everything they could find entered the embassy in Karada Street in central Baaghdad.

Many of the looters moved into the city centre from the poor outlying districts with wheelbarrows and pushcarts, intent on getting their share of the booty.

The looters drove tractors, pick-up trucks and trailers and even a large bus up to a large villa belonging to Tareq Aziz, Saddam Hussein's deputy prime minister.

They stole everything from furniture and paintings to chandeliers and curtains, and stripped the electrical wires from the villa's main switchboard. Aziz's library was also ransacked.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said it was concerned about the looting of hospitals.

"The hospitals themselves have come under attack for the purpose of looting.

There are lots of people carrying weapons around and they make it very difficult for civilians in need of medical care to actually reach the hospitals," ICRC spokesman Roland Huguenin-Benjamin in Baghdad was told CNN.

Meanwhile, smoke billowed from buildings across the city. US Marines said Iraqi holdouts were setting fire to their own quarters and blaming the Americans. In at least one case, however, looters were seen setting fire to some buildings in the Interior Ministry complex.

US troops occupied the Oil Ministry. But the nine-storey Ministry of Transport building was gutted by fire, as was the Iraqi Olympic headquarters, while the Ministry of Education was partially burned. Near the Interior Ministry, the office building of Saddam's son Oadai stood damaged, its upper floors blackened.

A building on fire near the Interior

Ministry was rocked by deafening explosions apparently caused by ammunition and rockets stashed inside. The blasts went on for more than 15 minutes.

In and around the capital, skirmishes flared between US forces and Iraqi holdouts, and bursts of gunfire and explosions continued to echo through the city nearly a day after the people of Baaghdad danced in the streets over the fall of Saddam.

Around the city, looters hit stores and government installations, including the Irrigation Ministry, the Transport Ministry, the Air Forces officers club, the government computer centre, the Olympic hospital and state laboratories.

In the city centre, donkey-drawn and horse-drawn carts were seen loaded with office furniture, TV sets, appliances and carpets.

A house in southern Baaghdad belonging to Saddam's notorious cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid -- known as "Chemical Ali" -- was also robbed.

The dishonest firms persuade these newspapers to publish the advertisement in only 20 to 25 copies so that it never reaches their rivals' hands.

The departments and directorates of ministries send tender notices to DFP through the Information Ministry for publication.

Even there are instances of getting such advertisements in major national dailies in collaboration with a section of press staff.

Source said after printing of origi-

DFP's black hole of plunder

FROM PAGE 1

According to an inquiry committee, the public works department of Bholia sent a tender notice last year through the Information Ministry asking to publish it in leading newspapers.

But the DFP officials published the tender in Ajker Bholia, New Nation, Janbonabi, Nawroz and Samabesh.

In a similar case, the Roads and Highways Department of Gopalganj asked DFP to publish a lease quotation in two leading English and Bangla dailies, but the DFP published it in Bhoror Bani, Deshjanata, Janbonabi and Ajker Janodesh.

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nal newspapers, press staff print some extra copies in exchange of money by removing original matters from the plate. The DFP officials then submit the fake copies to the departments concerned.

The corrupt DFP officials also earn a huge amount of money through giving special supplement to unknown newspapers that in turn offer half of the total amount to the officials concerned.

There are instances that DFP's film section gobble up the whole amount allocated to produce new documentaries. They show old films in the name of new ones.

Corruption is also rife in purchases of films and chemicals.

Several inquiry committees, including one by the Bureau of Anti-Corruption, were probing allegations of corruption, forgery and purchase of documents by DFP.

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption recently seized different DFP files to investigate some specific allegations, but hectic effort are on even from the Prime Minister's Office to block the process.

for personal gains.

There are allegations that two officials at the Prime Minister's Press Wing and some officials at the Ministry of Information maintain close links with the DFP-men.

The Ministry of Information found a number of allegations true in investigation, but no action has been taken against the guilty.

Besides, some officials say a number of probe bodies were virtually purchased by the corrupt DFP clique.

Previously a section of junior officials were engaged in corruption, but the clique is snowballing with the passage of time, some information ministry officials said.

A probe committee headed by Deputy Secretary (Press) Alamgir Bhuiyan is under tremendous pressure for not submitting its report, they said.

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Shazneen case

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the witness told the court.

He went on, "After a few minutes, I went out and saw 10 to 12 people including carpenter Shaniram in a tin-shed on the compound of the house. Despite so much of noise around, they were pretending to be asleep. Later, police came and called them. And I came to know that domestic help Shahid was missing and a kitchen knife was also missing.

"Then I went near the stairs and saw some guests -- Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, Mrs. Yeasmin Morshed, Anisuzzaman Khan and Iqbal Hossain -- interrogating housemaids Minu and Parvin. Parvin first said she saw a man sitting on Shazneen's body and then said she saw a man standing in Shazneen's room. She also said she saw Shahid fleeing Shazneen's room with a knife. Finally, she said she saw nothing."

Shafi Chowdhury further said, "At about 2:30 am on April 24, a police team including some women police came and

went to Latifur Rahman's (Shazneen's father) Gulshan residence to join a party.

He said, "I saw two persons -- drivers Sadeq and Asgar -- at the main gate of the house. But no guard was there. They opened the gate and I entered the house.