

## Protest rallies

*These must not turn violent*

We have witnessed over the past two weeks or so people across the country expressing solidarity with the people of Iraq with a sense of commitment to an essentially humanitarian cause. We are fully behind them and endorse the popular sentiments aroused by the unjust war.

Not that the war is being condemned in very clear terms here in Bangladesh only. We can hear the same appeal for peace from Ecuador to Australia, with the focus being on the sufferings of innocent people. It is a protest on the part of humanity against an illegal war on the beleaguered people of Iraq. The protests are at least giving them the moral support they need at their hour of tremendous trial and tribulation. The message that the protestors are trying to get across is that the vast majority of the world population is with the Iraqi people. Equally important is the word going to the coalition strategists: the global community has rejected the war.

Having said that, we would also like to mention here that protests against the war must be peaceful. Citizens of this country are solidly behind the people of Iraq and have no doubt in their minds about the outrageous character of the US-led military operations. The protests are meant for putting forward some questions to coalition leaders and also for making them realise that the war has been a disaster on the moral front.

The protest is against violence, and, as such, it cannot be violent itself. Unfortunately, some of the protestors in the city last Friday lost control over themselves and indulged in activities that ran counter to the very spirit of the peace rallies. Without question, uncalled for belligerence is the greatest enemy of peace.

The people who were on the receiving end of the violent demonstrations are as much opposed to the war as the demonstrators themselves. Again, it was pointless to turn the anger on private or public property.

True, excesses may occur when sentiments run high but the organisers must do everything in their power to ensure that the noble purpose behind such protests is not hijacked by ill meaning people. We must remember we are acting as part of the world community for establishing peace and order in the global society where violence in any form or shape has no place.

## Cleaning the Balu river

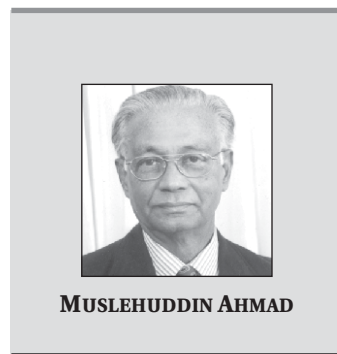
*The measures contemplated should be urgently implemented*

Welcome the government's plan to rejuvenate the Balu river with the vision of a circular waterway around the capital city making use of other rivers girdling it. In particular, the government seems serious in dealing with the pollution of the Balu river. Once again we would like to highlight the urgency of concrete measures to be taken to save the river.

As it is, Balu river has lost its navigability. And now the water pollution has come to such a level that it has become a danger to not only public health but also ecology. Like all the other rivers around the capital, Balu has not been spared the onslaught of industrial and human wastes. We have learnt that the bulk of drinking water for the residents of Dhaka comes from Balu. But there is a limit to the capacity of the treatment plants to chlorinate putrid water. It is good to know that Dhaka WASA and all industrial plants would be given ultimatum to set up their own lagoons or treatment plants. We hope the authorities would be swift in their action against anyone failing to comply with the directives on time.

We also expect that the decision of the Task Force set up by the government to evict encroachers of the Buriganga river would be implemented to the full. We welcomed that decision when taken but have noticed that not much has been done on it. We understand there are tangles legal and political, but evicting the encroachers from the riverside is both urgent and necessary. This has become imperative following the Task Force's decision to start a circular waterway by way of ensuring navigability through all the rivers girdling the city.

# Saddam a perceived threat, Bush a real one



MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

WHILE President Bush was playing with his dogs in the White House lawn, a missile from one of his war machines had blown off a part of the skull of a little boy -- about 4 years old. With a heavy bandage on the head, the boy was crying for his parents who were reportedly killed in the explosion along with other 15 Iraqi civilians. As one can see in the Newspapers such scenes of atrocities through use of missiles, bombs, cluster bombs, etc. by American and British forces are very common in Iraq.

Dozens of huge ground shaking large explosions have been taking place in Baghdad round the clock killing mostly Iraqi civilians men, women and children. The children in the city who are lucky to survive stand dangerously traumatized so much so that they would need serious and prolonged psychological treatment. The civilian deaths are indeed large in number. So far 2000 civilians have been killed and over 5000 injured as per details given out by Iraqi authorities. The most horrifying was the murder of 10 women and children by American forces while their vehicle was approaching the check post apparently to flee the area. A BBC correspondent said he saw distressing pictures of mutilated bodies of a family killed in a missile hit in Babylon. At least 11, most of them children, were killed when US bombs hit a residential district.... (Reuters). But those who visited the Baghdad morgue describe the scene

there as ghastly bodies without heads, hands and legs, burst out stomachs and abdomen. etc. Is it the way Bush-Blair want to liberate Iraqis from the clutches of Saddam? What he and his Generals are doing is finally liberating the Iraqis to "martyrdom". All these have created real grief and anger among people of the world and particularly of the Arab world.

While this sort of madness of the American and British forces has been going on, there have been American and British deaths too in the hands of Iraqis and some TV reported that the

American boys who have been sent out to fight an unjust and illegal war by having one meal a day? Is this acceptable to the Americans?

Rumsfeld accused Syria and Iran of giving military supplies to Iraq but Collin Powell who is generally seen some degrees lower in rhetoric used unusually strong languages. He said, "let there be no doubt we will drive Saddam Hussein from power". Probably he would but at what cost? He also called the defending Iraqi forces and militia as "terrorist groups". The world can only laugh at such comments and

weapons by Saddam's forces. But Hans Blix said the existence of these chemical suits etc. does not mean the existence of chemical weapons. The experts say those are necessary equipment that any forces should carry during war, because it is possible that the invading forces may use chemical weapons at the time of desperation. Coalition forces also carry such equipment; does this mean that they are going to use chemical weapons? If Iraqi forces see imminent fall of Baghdad and their certain death, they may do anything to defend their position. They

and children. The total picture in the Arab world is by now clear to the world American forces is Kuwait, Qatar, Yemen and Bahrain and now in Iraq. The turn of Syria and others may not be far off.

The greatest mistake that Bush-Blair made was to alienate the larger part of the world and particularly the Arab world against American and British people. This has now reached a point of no return. This is the most unfortunate development in terms of relation between people of the world. 9/11 brought the people of the world

death of the United Nations.

While the Iraqi desert is becoming a graveyard of Iraqi civilians and American and British fallen troops, bizarre horse-trading is going on among some powers to share the war booty. But the conscious and peace-loving people of the world will continue to protest the war and lament over the dead in Iraq - regardless of the nationalities. American forces are near Baghdad now. Fierce battle will commence soon and thousands will die. Saddam came out openly in Baghdad street and asked the people to fight. The people rushed to touch his hands and feet. They said, "With our blood and our soul, we shall redeem you". Bush, Bush, listen well we all love Saddam Hussein". Iraqi people have been subjected to dozens of 9/11 already and more to come. This may turn into another Vietnam for American forces. How long it will continue nobody knows. One side will certainly face defeat and this will change the face of this unfortunate globe.

This war has however, proved one thing very clearly - Saddam is a perceived threat but Bush is a real threat to world peace. Anyway, whatever may be the outcome of the war, the cry of that boy will continue to reverberate around the world. I went to bed but could not sleep. The picture of this crying little boy the most unfortunate victim, among many others, of this unjust and illegal war came floating in front of my eyes. Tears rolled down. Probably, within days there will be none even to change the heavy bandage in the fractured skull of this poor boy. He would then certainly join his martyred parents and be in eternal peace under the Great Care of Almighty Allah while killers probably on the other side queuing up with their bosses to explain in vain to the angles their war crimes in Iraq.

Muslehuddin Ahmad is a former Secretary and Ambassador and founder president of North South University

## SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

**The Iraqi desert is becoming a graveyard of Iraqi civilians and American and British fallen troops, bizarre horse-trading is going on among some powers to share the war booty. But the conscious and peace-loving people of the world will continue to protest the war and lament over the dead in Iraq - regardless of the nationalities. American forces are near Baghdad now... This may turn into another Vietnam for American forces. How long it will continue nobody knows.**

American soldiers did not have even the time to pick up their fallen colleagues. The deaths of American and British troops in over two weeks' war and particularly those due to downing of the army helicopters and F-15 Hornet by Iraqis were not negligible. These are nothing but ghastly acts but President Bush and Prime Minister Blair do not have even the time and indeed the frame of mind to assess impacts of these atrocities on both sides.

Earlier, the coalition forces were forced to go for nearly a week's pause. They termed it as a flexibility in operation, but the fact remains that coalition forces appeared not only tired, they remained hungry only one meal a day. Television channels reported a coalition soldier saying that he and his colleagues have been on one meal a day. Does Bush who live in the White House and go to Camp-David for weekend enjoyment, care about those

rhetoric. If the forces who are defending their own country are terrorists, then who are those who invade a sovereign country?

Practically all Iraqis except the Kurds clearly say they are ready to die to defend Iraq but this should not mean support to Saddam. Any citizen of any sovereign country is bound constitutionally to defend his country. The American and British forces are by definition, enemies to Iraqis. Kurds suffer as their loyalty to sovereign Iraq always remained under question. Even now they have joined hands with the American forces. Kurds are entitled to autonomy and even full statehood but they have to get it through peaceful means.

American forces found large amount of chemical protection suits and syringes in the areas abundant by the Iraqi forces and militias. This is interpreted by the coalition forces as preparation for the use of chemical

may use even chemical weapons as Weapons Inspectors did not have enough time to clear up all chemical sites. They were withdrawn UN Secretary General Kafi Annan and he clearly violated the UN Resolution 1441 as UNSC did not authorize him to withdraw the Weapons Inspectors from Iraq.

American forces destroy infrastructure including water supply and food stocks and then bring in relief to the Iraqis. Some Iraqis standing in front of the British and American forces said - we received water, food and electricity under Saddam but now there is none. Some even went to the extent of telling these invading forces that they should immediately leave Iraq. What the Iraqis are now seeing is the total repitition on their soil by American and British forces of the brutal behavior of the Israelis on the Palestinians bombs, missiles on people, road blocks, body search, insults, killing of men, women

together against international terrorism, but this war has destroyed the common resolve of the international community. This is too bad for the peace of the world.

The idea of clash of civilization and religions could not and indeed should not take root as major western powers France, Germany and several other European countries and also Russia, China, etc. seriously opposed the war. The best success that Bush-Blair achieved was to permanently divide the Arab world and make the positions of several of the Arab rulers and governments very unstable.

The change of a regime, howsoever dictatorial it is, by another dictatorial means is terrible for the world. Now any big power can adopt this method against a small country by unilaterally branding it as dictatorial. Nobody can stop it not even the United Nations. The worst outcome of Bush-Blair's unilateral action in Iraq is the virtual

## A new international order?

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

THE Theory of Hegemonic Stability pioneered by Kindelberger (1973) assumed the importance of a hegemon for maintenance of a liberal economic order where the hegemon exercising its power on consensual basis would not suffer from legitimacy deficit and its leadership of a world governance would be backed by a set of universally accepted rules. In the post-cold war period the USA would have been an ideal candidate for this role mainly because of its unmatched military and economic power; its overwhelming technological advantage over the rest of the world; its tectonic cultural influence particularly over the younger generation; and superiority of its moral values over the societal enslavement ordained for over seven decades by the now discredited ideology.

Unfortunately the global expectation of a utopia expanding, in the words of Isaiah Berlin, "the imaginative horizon of human potentialities" has been irrevocably broken. Bush-Blair Iraq misadventure has come as a rude shock and the complacency, which had lulled the people of the world into a state of enigmatic delusion of an amnesiac, has been shattered into many pieces like a broken mirror. Belief in the invariability of the post war global structure, and trust in the inherent moral strength of the democratic practices have become wildly promiscuous due to the protean character of the imperium to the utter confusion and latent anger of the humanity at large. Colin Powell may be congratulated by his audience (Remarks at the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee's Annual Policy Conference March 30, 2003) for informing them of President Bush's request to Congress for one billion dollars to strengthen Israel's civil and military defences in the wake of Iraq war and another nine billion dollars in loan guarantee in his supplemental budget; but he worries the rest of the international audience by "demanding more responsible behaviour from (errant) states and by insisting" that Iran end its support for terrorists, including groups violently opposed to Israel and to the Middle East peace process. Tehran must stop pursuing weapons of mass destruction

and the means to deliver them. Syria also now faces a critical choice. Syria can continue direct support for terrorist groups and the dying regime of Saddam Hussein or it can embark on a different and more hopeful course. Either way, Syria bears the responsibility for its choice and the consequences".

Totally disregarding the continuing Israeli genocide in Palestine, Colin Powell insisted that the Palestinian State must be based on transformed leadership and institutions that end terror. He warned that the US would be "watching very carefully to see how the new Palestinian Prime Minister exercises his authority", a basic precondition for presentation of the Quartet prepared road map for a two-state -- Israel and Palestine -- solution of the Middle East imbroglio. Colin Powell had been portrayed as a dove embed-

ded with the hawks surrounding President Bush. If his warning to Iran and Syria is a presage of the next round in the battle with the "axis of evil" then the Bush National Security Strategy's commitment of American firmness for "the non-negotiable demands of human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the absolute power of the State, religious and ethnic tolerance" becomes laughable.

Who would take Ambassador Richard Haas (Towards greater democracy in the Muslim world, December 4, 2002) seriously when he discourses on the virtues of democracy though the points he makes are incontrovertible? Indeed, democracy at its most fundamental level is based on a diffusion of power; democratic leaders lease their authority from the people and must relinquish power peacefully because they do not own it. One could agree with Richard Haas that there is democ-

could bring Islamic parties to power". But the USA, he said, was not opposed to Christian, Jewish and Hindu parties in democracies with broad functions.

Richard Haas' utopian ideas may not eventuate into a talismanic panacea for ills of the world as pointed out by Arnaud de Borchgrave of UPI (Clash of Civilizations or New World Disorder) which, inter alia discussed the election results to the Pakistani Parliament. The results produced, he wrote, pro-AlQaida, pro-Taliban and anti-American majorities in two out of Pakistan's four provinces along the entire length of the Afghan border thus strategically located to infiltrate Taliban back into Afghanistan. He pointed out that the nuclear armed Pakistan has some generals who are Islamic fundamentalists and an inter services intelligence agency known as ISI whose culture is anti-American. Arnaud de Borchgrave who has

extensive experience of the Muslim world (from 57 years of journalistic odyssey) has no illusions that a) nations that can no longer be challenged in their conventional military strength are now faced with asymmetric warfare; b) non-state actors today can wield the kind of destructive capabilities once controlled exclusively by nation states; c) radical Islam is very much at war with the US because of hatred over Washington's policy of benign neglect in the Middle East; d) Al-Qaida has an estimated several hundred sleepers in the US waiting to be activated; e) eighty percent of male adults in Pakistan, about 15 million, believe Osama bin Laden is a freedom fighter and not a terrorist; f) in Turkey, a NATO ally and EU candidate, more than eighty percent of the people are against allowing US troops to traverse their country on the way to attack Iraq, and only six percent Egyptians hold

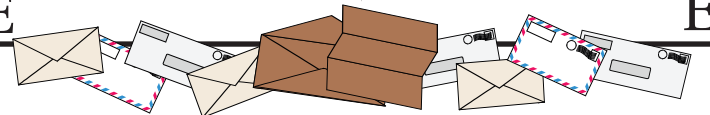
positive view of the US; and g) the new nexus is an emerging link between fanaticism, religion and science. CIA Director George Tenet and Admiral Jacoby of Defence Intelligence Agency in testimonies to Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (in February 2003) gave pessimistic assessment concerning the proliferation of WMD adding that the "domino theory" of this century could well be nuclear. Tenet noted that it was becoming increasingly difficult to control the spread of WMD technology and equipment both to and from non-state actors; the desire for nuclear weapons was on the upsurge fueled by the ability of new nuclear states to deter threats from more powerful states (example: North Korea); and, increasingly number of States that have been importing WMD technology could become potential exporters of these technology or in Jacoby's words "secondary prolifera-

surrounding policy options relating to the North Korean issues which by any standard is far more serious than Saddam Hussein's suicidal obduracy. For South Korean political leaders US refusal to deal directly with Pyongyang is a barrier to a deal that could resolve the current nuclear crisis peacefully -- view shared by Russia, China and Japan. Washington is, however, skeptical that a negotiated deal will permanently eliminate North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities. Phillip Saunderson's analysis (Confronting ambiguity: How to handle North Korea's nuclear programme, Arms Control Today March 2003) lucidly explains US administration's dilemma in attacking this problem. US approach towards North Korea would depend on whether (a) North Korea has decided that nuclear weapons are essential for her security, (b) she is willing to negotiate her WMD programme for a deal

that guarantees her security and sovereignty, (c) she wants both nuclear weapons (as an ultimate guarantee for security) and better relations with the US, (d) intra-North Korean dissention whether nuclear weapons or a negotiated settlement with the US would provide better security, and (e) North Korea wants WMD for offensive purposes towards South Korea. Given these scenarios Saunders sees US options as follows: using military force to destroy North Korean nuclear sites; mobilizing international opinion against North Korea; waiting North Korea out; and, negotiating a settlement. Military option appears to be strongly opposed by China, South Korea and Japan and also because of North Korea's capability to cause immense harm to South Korea. Current US policy appears to be to wait out North Korea. Implicit in all these scenarios are total distrust of the North's intentions and actions and her track record of cheating on Agreed Framework with the US, violation of agreements with IAEA, withdrawal from NPT etc. Besides, North Korea's extreme poverty may induce her to sell WMD technology to non-state actors eventuating terrorist activities.

Despite Tony Blair's statement to the British parliament that post-Saddam Iraq would be ruled by the Iraqis representing broad spectrum of Iraq's different ethnic and tribal groups, an Iraq conquered against world public opinion, without UNSC approval, violating international laws, raping the sacred concept of sovereignty and territorial integrity, in the name of "liberating" Iraqi people and imposing western style democracy on a basically tribal society which does not fulfil most of the conditions for the success of a democratic system, cannot but leave one frightened of a cataclysmic world order which may emerge.

# TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

### War and international public health

War is the ultimate violence; prevention of war is thus a global imperative. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is the sole international agency that has the institutional mandate, legal authority, and public health expertise to lend force to international obligations of states and parties to international public health.

Only recently, during the Gulf War of 1991, we witnessed deliberate and wanton destruction of public health - specifically Iraq's modern water supply and sanitation system - by coalition forces. Deliberate destruction of health infrastructure as a preferred strategy of modern warfare is nothing short of a form of offensive

biological warfare. Waterborne diseases and degradation of environment constitute a more indiscriminate and criminal act on entire population. What is happening right now in this war on Iraq second time around is yet undisclosed. The very thought and memory of what was done in 1991 is chilling and outrageous enough.

It is time for WHO with its own Constitutional obligation and mandate to enact global treaties and conventions that are binding, to add a clause on "indiscriminate and deliberate" degradation of public health infrastructure as a weapon in war.

If international legal instruments will not succeed in the present state of "law of the lawless", that might be all the more reason to wage an uncompromising and articulate "war against

war" if not able to prevent all wars then at least prevent the real weapons of mass destruction namely destruction of basic structures of human health. Right to health is a fundamental human right. Unfortunately, for far too long, the core issue of the humanitarian crisis for example in Iraq, and elsewhere too, continued to be camouflaged with concerns for only humanitarian relief, an effort with which the UN itself and its agencies collaborated often without much success due to constraints they did not invent but were willing to live with.

Let them conclude with some optimism and hope for without those it is hard to live with sanity. **Dr. Zakir Husain, Dhaka**  
**The power of writing**

A couple of weeks ago, I came across a letter "Why do I write?". I like to thank the writer Munasir Kamal for her unique letter, which is indeed an unconventional topic.

How many of us really give a thought 'why do we write' before we take up the pen? Naturally, some writes to share his/her views and thoughts on certain issues. Again some people writes because he/she has the skill to write and have the capability to translate his/her mind into alphabets. Some may even murmur the silent dream that the readers will buy the words and change their behaviour and thus change the society.

But change is definitely not so easy. However intelligent one is, even brilliant and knowledgeable, even may consider to be the most rational person

in the universe, deep down inside there lies inside the "resistance to change". People resist to change simply because it is congenial. If otherwise the world would have been a better place to live in. To bring behavioural change is equally difficult for the literate people as the non-literate people. Working in the communication field I have come to learn 'To change others you may have to change yourself first'... a fact of life but very difficult to apply.

Communication is a power and writing is one of the tools. Societal change may not be easy to attain by using this tool but nevertheless it is worth trying.  
**Irene Z Zaman, Uttara, Dhaka.**  
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This is in reference to the letter "Why do I write?". The letter was indeed

interesting. Mankind's most important invention was the alphabets. A medium to express and convey our inner feelings to another fellow human being. To me writing is a necessity to share my views with others. When this mysterious universe fills me up with questions, when this natural world makes me emotional, when I feel somewhere in the world a child is going to bed hungry or when I see that our lofty ideals are being crushed by the mechanised civilisation, I pick up my pen.

To any one who has a heart to feel, an eye to see or have tears to shed, writing is a necessity to him. Every good writer is a philosopher, a poet and a prophet of God to speak on behalf of Him. Writing helps to formulate ideas, keeps the flow of ideas

flowing and also enrich our intellectual capabilities. This noble habit of writing is essential as eventually in life everything merges into one and a river runs through it.  
**Akbar Hussain, Toronto, Canada**

### Rules of engagement!

As the Iraqis continue to resist, the hospitals and residential quarters are bombed as punishment for such defiance. The Anglo-US forces are blowing up women and children into pieces whilst feigning "self-defence" and "liberation". Now the controversial cluster bombs have been put to use in the civilian areas. Following these intense indiscriminate mass bombings of defenceless towns, the media demonstrates the "courage" of the US

Marines as they move into position. In contrast the action of a suicide bomber targeting belligerent soldiers, as opposed to killing civilians is classified as an act of "war crime" and violation of the rules of engagement!

If the Anglo-US forces desire that Iraq should engage by the rules of war in full uniform then the indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas should be ceased and then suspend the usage of Cruise Missiles and their Air Power, as Iraq has no capability in that arena. I am sure under those circumstances the Iraqi army or civilian would be more than willing to fight in the deserts in "uniform", despite being out-gunned by the superior technology and immense firepower of the Anglo-US forces.  
**Yamin Zakaria UK, London.**