that the preeminent power, rather



LATE S. M. ALI DHAKA THURSDAY APRIL 17, 2003

# Government by Iraqis from the beginning

#### Demand for it grows louder by the day

MIDST anti-American demonstrations in Baghdad, Nassiriyah and Mosul, the US-sponsored first ever L meeting of 60 Iraqi representatives was held to discuss a post-invasion government at the 6000-year old Mesopotamian city of Ur, itself witnessing angry protests at what was going on. In Mosul when a US-force chosen governor rose to speak, people attempted to boo him and hurled stones which led to American troops opening fire. Twelve Iraqis died. This could be a foretaste of things to come.

Coming to the principal concern, the crucial Ur meet was not fully inclusive, rather it was exclusionary in terms of representational character. Some prominent representatives of the majority Shia community including the national revolutionary council in exile were not on the guest list. Several of them boycotted the gathering. Speculation of a US plan to have an interim administration headed by general Jay Garner and consisting of an American, either military or civilian, in each ministry together with hand-picked Iraqis has hurt indigenous sensibilities. Civil society members have voiced their rejection of what they called Americanisation of Iraq.

However, the meeting being the first one in post-Saddam Iraq, was significant. And a follow-up meet is to be held in ten days' time. Hopefully, it will be more representative, grounded in reality and reflective of Iraqi aspirations.

Ordinary Iraqis spoken to by foreign journalists, as broadcast by satellite channels, would like to see the US troops gone after the fall of Saddam. They cannot reconcile with the occupation status of their country. The representatives of major constituents of the Iraqi population -- Shia, Sunni, Kurds -- have their own agenda, but when it comes to anything approximating a holistic view in the changed circumstances, they want Iraq's present and future to be in their own hands. Of course, there is schism in the broader Iraqi society and that is all the more reason why it has to be bound together by establishing rule of law and a just system. The key to Iraq's future lies in a federal government where the system will override individuals and groups.

Return of Iraq's destiny to Iraqi hands is a regional demand as has been emphatically voiced by the Arab League; majority members of the UN Security Council want it; and at the popular level, there is a universal demand for it. All this can be met by involving the UN in setting up an interim government in Iraq and keeping peace and security in the wartorn country within a time-bound framework for elections culminating in the formation of a democratic government in Iraq.

## Directives to launch owners

*Enforcement of rules key to safety* 

T is good to learn that the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has issued instructions to L launch operators with a view to making river journeys a bit safer.

Many lives have been lost this year well before the season of nor'westers could set in. However, the government officials in charge of overseeing the matter seem to be convinced that inexperienced launch operators are responsible to a great extent for the disasters. The launch crew has also been blamed for ignoring weather forecasts and rules of naviga-The launch operators have been particularly directed to avoid overloading and making perilous journeys in extremely unfavourable weather conditions. Obviously, much will depend on whether the persons concerned follow the rules. There are areas where things may improve vastly if the law enforcers give a better account of themselves when it comes to punishing the violators of the rules. Overloading is certainly a crime that has never been treated with due seriousness. Rather, there are times when it is taken as an unavoidable menace. Nobody is there to shoulder the responsibility of the loss of lives that overloading can and does lead to. A fresh move to put an end to this practice must be accompanied by a vigorous attempt to stop the launch operators from taking any load beyond the capacity of a vessel. Similarly, the movement of vessels must be monitored to find out whether they are going by weather forecasts or not. All these activities have to be intensified during the months when river vessels remain extremely vulnerable to nor'westers and tornadoes. As for the weather forecast, the present system of issuing it for 24 hours should be changed because it becomes stale after sometime. It has to be constantly updated by introducing weather bulletins for a much shorter period of time, maybe a every one hour.

# Invasion of Iraq: What next?

bound to recover from their wounds.

destructive as WMD close to the border

of Iraq. The Secretary General recalled

his two inspectors from Iraq and the

two big powers launched a totally

bypassed the Security Council effec-

tively destroying its role in the world. It

alienated its partner France, partner

within the NATO with whom it has a

long standing friendship. She alienated

Russia, whose armaments and techno-

logical achievements are easily compa-

rable with the US and with whom she is

The US took a very big risk. It totally

unprovoked war on Iraq.

taken over by the Security Council of the UN. By a unanimous vote the Council decided to send two venerable gentlemen Hans Blix of Sweden and El-Baradei of Egypt to look for such weapons in Iraq. They reported that they found nothing worthwhile. In the meantime the US and the UK assembled a formidable array of weapons as

**ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN** 

HE war in Iraq has passed like a

tornado leaving behind death

and destruction on a massive

scale. The question now on everyone's

It has been a strange war. On the

one hand there was the foremost

military power, the USA and to give it a

fig leaf of legitimacy, the UK. The two

together are capable of destroying the

world many times over. Faced with this

might there was Iraq, with weapons so

crude that the two big powers would

A campaign was launched through

the world media, which are dominated

by the American CNN and the British

BBC, that Iraq was hiding weapons of

mass destruction and the matter was

**PRAFUL BIDWAI** 

writes from New Delhi

drama. The government could no

longer ignore the widespread senti-

ment against the Anglo-American

coalition's unjust and illegal war. (Polls

show that 85 percent of people oppose

On April 8, after stalling the unani-

mous demand for a Parliament resolu-

tion on Iraq for two months, the gov-

ernment agreed to one. But it fudged

the issue of "condemning" or "deplor-

ing" the invasion, choosing instead the

Hindi "ninda", which falls between the

two. However, the Opposition pre-

vailed in demanding that the US-UK

troops withdraw and Iraq's recon-

struction be put under the United

Yet, government and sangh parivar

leaders have implicitly welcomed the

war on Iraq because it legitimises "pre-

N the Indian government's

Iraq policy, the public has

long witnessed a bizarre

mind is what next?

not touch them.

building daily new bridges. And the US totally ignored another big power China

The US came to near conflict with another NATO ally -- Turkey. She tried every kind of stratagem to entice Turkey into war against Iraq. The traditional Turkish policy of territorial integrity of Iraq is too deeply embed-

was voted down by the lawmakers.

This sudden turn of events led to a

total change in the US strategy. The

idea was that a pincer movement

would be launched, from the south

through Basra and from the north

through northern Iraq, ultimately joining up in Baghdad. When this plan was foiled the US and Britain started a massive campaign of bombing Bagh dad, effectively destroying that city of five million. From destroying weapons

of mass destruction the new plan became the destruction of President Saddam Hussein and his regime. The

President George W. Bush are very aware of this fact. The giant US oil corporations, who succeded in putting Bush in the presidency are ready for their pound of flesh

As US and British leaders gloat over their success, Ariel Sharon, the Prime Minister of Israel must be chuckling with quiet satisfaction. Since the

than creating stability, is fast becoming the cause of total disorder in the world Take the Middle East for example. The predecessor of President Bush President Bill Clinton presented a perfect example of evenhandedness in his dealing with the Palestinians and the Israelis and brought them within a whisker of settlement of their dispute For the US, who alone can have influence on Israel, there is no other policy Yet President Bush has taken a demon stratively pro-Israel stance. By his houghtless action he has caused severe strain within the Atlantic alliance. Mercifully at the last moment he has pulled back from going too far with his friendship for the Kurds, thus averting another crisis situation with

Turkey The blow administered upon Iraq has been felt throughout the Arab world and beyond. The Arabs are no longer the helpless sorts that they used to be. Even in the field of media they have come up with their Al-Jazeera The Arabs are bound to recover from their wounds.

Arab leaders who could pose a chal-President George W. Bush has lenge to him. He is thus on his way to unleashed forces whose consequences becoming the lone policeman in the are going to be far reaching. Middle East on behalf of his master, the

Arshad-uz-Zaman is a former Ambassador. The great tragedy of the world is

particular group as the new leaders of

Iraq. That absolutely contradicts the

whole notion of democracy." Mr

The "Free Iragi Forces'" creation is

new plan looks amazingly similar to the ded for her to change her stance now. present US President assumed power plan executed in Afghanistan last year. Then a bargain was struck that the US Sharon has built excellent relations would station 62,000 troops, who In Afghanistan a search lasting for with him to the point where he has sent would cross into northern Iraq in months has failed to give any clue his adversary Yasser Arafat of Palestine exchange for a hefty packet of money to regarding the whereabouts of Bin to exile from the White House. Now Laden. Since Afghanistan is mainly with the ouster of Saddam Hussain compensate for the losses to be susbarren rocks the US appears to have tained by Turkey. This proposal prefrom Baghdad, he has achieved his target of ridding the Middle East of sented to the Grand National Assembly tired of that country

THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

The blow administered upon Iraq has been felt throughout the Arab world and beyond. The Arabs are no longer the

helpless sorts that they used to be. Even in the field of media they have come up with their Al-Jazeera. The Arabs are

But the situation is dramatically different in Iraq. Iraq is the cradle of one of the oldest civilizations and is an archeologists' paradise. Iraq has the second largest oil reserve in the world and the oil 'Sheikhs' surrounding

Grave perils of 'pre-emption': Dark lessons from Iraq

emptive" or "preventive" attacks These leaders are driven by a parochial Pakistan-centred agenda

The first to take this stand was Mr Praveen Togadia, perhaps India's most pathologically communal politician. Next came Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee himself, who admitted that India couldn't take a truly principled stand on Iraq because of the "Kashmir issue" And now Foreign Minister

Yashwant Sinha has intemperately declared that "India has a much better

case" for "pre-emptive" action against

Pakistan than the US in Iraq. He says

Pakistan is fit for a "pre-emptive" strike

notion is incompatible with interna-

tional law and the UN Charter. Attack-

ing a state on suspicion that it might

ofterrorism

principles.

States possesses unprecedented

that favours freedom.

precedent". If it wanted to please the vorld's sole superpower, it was promptly rebuked. Washington reacted: "Any attempts to draw parallels between the Iraq and Kashmir situations are wrong... the US attack

on Iraq should not be considered a 'precedent'. Since then, Pakistan's Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed has spewed venom to counter Mr Sinha's vitriol. He has declared India "a fit case

despite the US' overwhelming superiunwise in citing Iraq as a "useful ority, and the popular hatred of Mr Hussein

> The war could formally end in three Wolfowitz says Iraq won't be another ways. First, top Iraqi leaders are cap-Kosovo or East Timor, with "a sort of permanent international administratured, or they surrender. Second, the Anglo-Americans completely break what's left of the morale of the Iraqi forces, leading to the regime's rapid the Pentagon's bid to enhance Mr Chalabi's standing. The "Forces" are nation-wide unravelling. Third, the guided by US Col Ted Steel, a Vietnam coalition troops leave the safety of their tanks and occupy Baghdad. veteran

State Department officials oppose

USA.

building in Baghdad on March 20 causing the "decapitating" strike.

The US' blunder in sponsoring a client like Mr Chalabi would be immeasurably graver than in appointing Mr Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan. Mr Karzai was probably chosen because he had close links with US oil company Unocal: he was also a CIA 'asset". The Iragi people will be even more allergic to a puppet regime than the Afghans.

Citizens everywhere must demand that their governments don't recognise a puppet government in Iraq. In India, after the Parliament resolution, the government cannot recognise an illegal entity installed by the invading forces

The peace movement must take the fight on to that plane. Its moralpolitical pressure alone can dissuade this government from acting in a petty way, by yoking Iraq to hawkish subcontinental agendas, and recklessly raising the danger level in our highly insecure region

place sponsored his dictatorship. The

real battle is only just beginning.

Postscript : As this Column has always argued, Mr Saddam Hussein is a dictator who has brutalised Iraq's people, and destroyed its social olitical and religious institutions. The raqis are glad to be rid of him, but would be even happier to be rid of the Anglo-Americans, who in the first

relied while planning Iraq's invasion which, he promised, would precipitate a popular uprising. INC sources too gave that tip-off about Iraq's topmost leaders being present in a particular

act against you could create mayhem worldwide In the India-Pakistan context, it spells a nuclear holocaust, massacring akhs of innocents. India couldn't have been more

because of its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and sponsorship However deplorable Pakistan's ously wrong support to Kashmir's militants, it is

simply unforgivable for Indian leaders to endorse "pre-emptive" war. That the Iraqi state's authority has colthe fighting will end.

The Pentagon had hoped that the Saddam Hussein regime would "collapse at the first whiff of gunpowder" The amazing thing is that the Iraqi resistance held out for three weeks

risks inviting resistance, prolonged urban warfare and high casualties for the invading troops (and Iraqi citizens, about whom the American and British governments hardly care).

The war coalition is investing heavily into the second course. Unfortunately, it's mainly promoting the Iraqi National Congress's Ahmed Chalabi. US forces on April 7 airlifted him to a location near Nassiriyah, along with 500 Iraqi exiles, grandiloquently named "Free Iraqi Forces".

This violates the promise of US deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz that Washington wouldn't impose a government on Iraq. "The goal is not to install some

the "promote-Chalabi" move. Mr Chalabi was born in a wealthy banking family, and left Iraq in 1958 when he was 13. He has not returned except for a period in the mid-1990s, when he organised an unsuccessful "popular uprising"

> The INC leadership lacks a popular base. It largely consists of millionaires. Mr Chalabi is notorious for financial embezzlement. A Jordanian court sentenced him to 22 years' hard labour for bank fraud.

It's on his advice that the Pentagon

Praful Bidwai is an eminent Indian columnist

mold.



# **The dangers of 'Bush Doctrine'**

for pre-emptive strikes ... because

As for the first course, there have

been too many misses. The last course

The US' blunder in sponsoring a client like Mr Chalabi would be immeasurably graver than in appointing Mr Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan. The Iraqi people will be even more allergic to a puppet regime than the Afghans.

...India possesses biological, chemical and other weapons of mass-

destruction' Both states are back at trading serious charges. The trouble is, they are both partly right -- and danger

Both misread the Iraq situation, assuming that the war is over because lapsed in Baghdad. The truth may be more complex. There is mayhem and anarchy in Baghdad. It's not clear how

Nations' charge.

HE United States and the United Kingdom continued their aggression against Iraq with of international law and world opinion decidedly against it. This war of aggression implements what is called a Bush Doctrine, representing the policy of the US President George Bush. However, given the genesis of this policy, it should be more appropriately called the Conservative Doctrine, articulated by a group of rightwing American intellectuals, designed to 'Americanise" the world

In the spring of 1997, a group of 25 distinguished Americans, all conservative males, created a Project for the New American Century (PNAC) to promote America's global leadership." The US Vice President Dick Cheney, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, President Bush's brother and the Governor of Florida Jeb Bush, and former Vice President Dan Quayle are all members of this initiative.

On June 3, 1997, PNAC issued a 'Statement of Principles" (SoP) to provide a strategic vision of America's role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many claim that George Bush was handpicked by them for the Republican nomination for President to implement this strategic vision. His election was also greatly facilitated by the conservatives.

In its Statement of Principles, PNAC argued: "As the 20th century draws to a close, the United States

earlier decades, in order to impose its ower. Having led the West to victory in the Cold War, America faces an hegemony and protect its business opportunity and challenge: Does the interests around the world, America United States have the vision to build propped up autocratic regimes includupon the achievements of past ing military dictators in many coundecades? Does the United States have tries. However, creating such henchthe resolve to shape a new century men is no longer acceptable to Amerifavourable to American principles and can conservatives. They now want to interests? ... Of course, the United Americalise the world by imposing States must be prudent in how it their values and principles on other exercises its power. But we cannot countries. Regime change is an acceptsafely avoid the responsibilities of  $able\,strategy\,for\,achieving\,such\,a\,goal.$ global leadership or the costs that are

The Project for the New American associated with its exercise .... The Century also appears to have advohistory of this century should have cated preemptive strike and acting taught us to embrace the cause of alone as an acceptable course of American leadership ... We need to action. Its SoP issued in 1997 states: strengthen our ties to democratic allies "The history of the 20th century should and to challenge regimes hostile to our have taught us that it is important to interests and values ... We need to shape circumstances before crises emerge, and to meet threats before accept responsibility for American's unique role in preserving and extendthey become dire. The history of the ing an international order friendly to century should have taught us to our security, our prosperity, and our embrace the cause of American leadership." Thus, it appears that the tragedy It may be noted that President of September 11, 2001 was merely used Bush's "The National Security Strategy as an excuse for American aggression both in Afghanistan and in Iraq. of the United States of America,

announced last September echoed It appears that following the road these very principles: "The United map provided by the conservatives to shape the world, the decision to invade and unequalled -- strength and Iraq was made long before the actual influence in the world. Sustained by attack and the meaningless maneuver faith in the principles of liberty, and ing at the UN during the last few the value of a free society, this position months. William Kristol, the chairman comes with unparalleled responsibiliof PNAC, in a Washington Post article ties, obligations, and opportunity. The last October, for example, disclosed great strength of this nation must be America's decision and advised Presiused to promote the balance of power dent Bush: "... to mislead rather than to

clarify, to deceive rather than to

Hussein) as to the timing of the war and the manner of attack is crucial to success... The President's duty is no longer to make the case for war or to prepare the nation for a necessary war. It is to win it as quickly, as decisively and with as few casualties as possible.'

It is also clear from the recent statements from the PNAC that America's flexing of the military muscle would not end with Iraq. A statement issued by them on March 23, 2003, four days after the start of the invasion, is especially noteworthy. The statement says, "The removal of the present Iraqi regime from power will lay the foundation for achieving three vital goals disarming Iraq of all its weapons of mass destruction, stocks and production capabilities; establishing a peaceful, stable, democratic government in Iraq; and contributing to the democratic development of the wider Middle East." Given this goal of democratic development of the wider Middle East the questions that beg the mind is: Who is next? Where will be the end to this naked display of America's military muscle? The Executive Director of Project for the New American Century, Gary Schmitt, in an article published in the Los Angeles Times on March 23, 2003 appears to have given some clue. In his article, he rhetorically asked: "Who is going to confront regimes like those of Iran. Svria and Libva as they rush to get their own weapons of mass

Whatever is the name used for it --Bush Doctrine or Conservative Doc-

destruction?"

is right." Such a policy puts small and relatively weaker countries particularly at risk. They could easily become the victims of the "Americanisation" policy. Following America's lead, stronger nations could unleash their military might against weaker neighbours on flimsiest of grounds. If Americans can do it, why not others?

We in Bangladesh may face greater risk if decide not to export gas. Because of the extreme selfishness and corruption of some of our political leaders and administrative bureaucrats, over the years we entered into unfair contracts with international oil companies. These companies, with the support of their governments, are now putting undue pressure on our author ities to export gas.

rs and administrative bureaucrats. over the years we entered into unfair contracts with international oil companies. These companies, with the support of their governments, are now putting undue pressure on our authorities to export gas. With the occupation of Iraq nearing

completion, many are now advocating the lead role for the UN for the postwar reconstruction and reconciliation. Prime Minister Tony Blair is said to be a strong proponent of such a role. But the Bush Administration has been resisting. This resistance is understandable, for the Project for the New American Century had no role laid out for the UN in its SoP. Rather the docu-

ment is intended to promote America's leadership in lieu of that of the

"The fact is, the UN can only operate by majority consensus, and this means that its decisions will be governed by the particular interests of the individual member states of the Security Council ... As failure to back up its own resolutions on Iraq and to act decisively in the cases of Rwanda and Kosovo in the 1990s shows, the UN cannot be trusted to be the sole arbiter of these matters.... The unavoidable reality is that the exercise of American power is key to maintaining what peace and order there is in the world today." Furthermore, giving the lead role to the UN would be contrary to the

It is clear that the American invasion of Iraq is not because of a conspiracy hatched behind closed doors, but an open policy articulated by a group of conservative Americans. This is a deliberate action based on a policy of neocolonialism designed to create a unipolar world. But the action reflects at best extreme naivete, at worst utter irresponsibility of American leaders. It could inflame the whole world and thereby rob everyone, especially the Americans, of the much coveted peace, prosperity and freedom.

goal of shaping Iraq in the American

Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar is Country Director e Hunger Project-Bangladesh

#### 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.

#### "Cantonment restriccomfort. Iamil tion'

This is in response to Mr Joyonto's letter of 9 April where he opposed the restrictions on the times that civilian traffic can enter the Cantonment

Just to inform him that it's all about security. Cantonment is always a restricted place. Checking at the entrance of Cantonment is not a new matter. It is done all over the world. We should realise this and honour the rules. Unlike most of the people of our country, our army is doing what they are supposed to do. So please help them in doing so even at the cost of our

### avar. Dhaka "ZIA neon sign flashes

in Arabic" This is in reference to The Daily Star report "ZIA neon sign flashes in Arabic" (April 12). I would like to state that it was no matter of any surprise at all to put the neon sign in Arabic on the facade of Zia International Airport, because it was way actually there for nearly 25 years and what happened recently that it was replaced in a new shape after the latest renovation in the

airport along with Bangla and English version Arabic neon sign may "shock and awe" some people but from the commercial viewpoint it is worth encouraging. Because ZIA is most frequently

used by the Arabian airlines like Emirates airlines with 14 flights, Gulf Air with 7 flights, Saudi Arabian Airlines with 11 flights, Kuwait Airlines with 3 flights and Qatar Airways with 5 lights making total 40 flights weekly. Arabic was one of the most ancient

languages in the pre Islamic era, but it was honored with the advent of Islam since the Ouran was revealed in Arabic language. Therefore, the use of Arabic

language in Bangladesh is undoubtedly considered as an appreciation in the country, but the claim that some travelers may think after seeing Arabic neon sign that they are in one of the airports in the Middle East, is not true, because any body can easily differentiate between the Arabian desert and the greenery of Dhaka. The neon sign is not confined in Arabic only but there is also Bangla neon sign along with national flag fixed on the airport building as a symbol of sovereign Bangladesh.

It is also not understood how does Arabic neon sign encourage fundamentalism in Bangladesh as appre-Dhaka

hended by some people when a certain language either Arabic or else does not represent any religion. Arabic is one of the languages recognized and used by the United Nations Organization. Would we claim that UN has become fundamentalist?

And finally, it may be clarified that Bangladesh is not a secular state as believed unknowingly by many, it is constitutionally a republic with Islam as its state religion which means unconditional belief in Allah. (Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh--part 1/2A) AElanipier

This is to the writers who are spewing venom over the Arabic sign at ZIA. While these people are at it, why don't they take an initiative to remove all the Arabic words that have become a part of our vocabulary, better vet, why not ask for the removal of all the signs at the Masjids and Madrassahs around the country?

\* \* \*

It is really very disheartening to see that efforts that come even remotely close to expressing a feeling of respect to a language that has been a part of our lives and culture for hundreds and hundreds of years are met with such

vengeance. Whether we admit it or not, Arabic is a part of our identity and am glad that the Government decided to put a sign that reflects that identity at the doorsteps to our country, albeit a little sloppy in expressing the reasons behind putting it up, nonetheless bravo to the government. Anwar Babar Dallas, TX, USA

\* \* \*

create confusion among the people?

ZIA neon sign used to flash in English and Bengali. Now the authority has introduced "Arabic" too. So, what's CAAB wrong with it? Why are you trying to

M.A. Bashar Dhaka

The majority people in our country are Muslim. Al-Quran, the book of Almighty Allah is in "Arabic" and we, the Muslims read the holy Quran in

As English is an international language, Arabic is also a common language for all the Muslims throughout the world.

So, I don't find anything wrong with the ZIA neon sign written in Arabic. Rather we should appreciate this commendable step taken by the