

Women pickets

They have been subjected to unspeakable ignominy

WE are aghast at the atrocious handling of women pickets and processionists during Saturday's hartal in the city. It has set another example of politics being vitiated by excesses and disallowance of space to the opposition.

A 'human shield' ought to act as a safeguard against unsavoury incidents during street demonstrations, but that was obviously not the case on Saturday. There is reason to suspect that there was a pre-determined approach to handling the demonstrations in a particular way. The other conclusion that could be drawn from the treatment that the women pickets received is that the on-duty policemen acted in an arbitrary manner. Whichever might be the truth behind the police action, it deserves condemnation in unequivocal terms. Wasn't the idea behind having Mohila police deal with women protestors to bring sobriety in the former's handling of the situation? Such treatment of women is certainly not expected in any civilised society, let alone a democratic polity.

Those responsible for the excesses cannot be condoned. The police should not have been oblivious of the fact that the standard practice under such circumstances is to allow space to the protestors and try to avoid losing control over the situation. They were not expected to cross the limits of civility and decency.

Newspaper photographs bore ample testimony to the fact that there was very obnoxious tugging at the clothes of the women pickets, some of whom were seen struggling to protect themselves from the policemen.

It was all so crude and brazen that we had difficulty in choosing which photograph to publish, so as not to hurt the sensibilities of readers.

We want a thorough investigation into the incident leading to appropriate punitive action against those responsible. Adherence to rules of tolerance, decency and decorum is the stuff of which a true democratic polity is made.

The citizens will be well-served if what we saw last Saturday is not repeated in future.

Recruitment riddled with leaked questions

PSC won't be ruffled!

ANOTHER recruitment examination under Public Service Commission is shrouded in controversy. It relates to written test for sub-registrar recruitment. Leakage of question papers set for PSC examinations has become commonplace taking into account the earlier instances of it. We had expressed our shock and disbelief over the previous occurrences hoping that the authorities would take precautions against the malaise. But to our dismay we witness another controversy raging with the candidates alleging foul-play with question papers while the PSC denying it has happened at all. Three well-founded complaints about Xeroxed sets of question papers tallying, for the most part, with the original versions supplied at the test venues over a period of seven months is not to be trifled with. We want to know what or who is behind such a malady.

What seems most intriguing is the manner in which the question papers were leaked or the authority handled the matter after the expose. Every time someone tipped off the police they detained a few persons allegedly involved in photocopying and selling the leaked question papers. This was accompanied by a standard denial from the exam conducting authority. They hardly ever tried to get to the bottom of the scandals. Take for instance, the latest incident. The PSC has shrugged off the leak as just a 'rumour', adding that the photo-stated questions were mere 'suggestions'. As such, they are reluctant to cancel the exam. In the case of BCS question papers having seen the light of the day before time in August, the PSC had similarly refused to own up to it and cancel the examination.

The finger of suspicion nonetheless gets pointed to insiders either in the PSC or in the government press or most probably both -- in some kind of a nexus. But who is going to work on the leads when a hush-hush is the convenient deflector?

It is time the government delved deeper into the matter and carried out a scooping investigation into the system in order to plug the holes. Unless all this is done, we are afraid, such allegations of leaks would surface over and over again. Resultantly, the sanctity of public examinations as a credible medium for recruitment of people to the public's services, solely on the basis of merit, will be lost in the wilderness.

The nemesis at long last!



M ABDUL HAFIZ

MISLED by a cabal of neo-cons bent up on recasting the world in its own image the US President George W Bush raised false alarm and cried wolf early this year ostensibly to build up a case for his preplanned preemptive war in Iraq. He already conjured up a doomsday scenario from Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction, now he warned his nation of yet another danger saying that Iraq was a breeding ground of terror, an incubator for Al-Qaeda and thus a clear and present threat to "the civilised world." George Bush made this argument "the heart of the case" for waging what was essentially a nineteenth century colonial war in twenty first century battle dress.

Intoxicated with an anachronistic imperial dream he touched upon the raw emotion of his people while addressing his eve-of-the war press conference back in March. The President cast the coming war as the next step in a story that had begun on September 11, 2001. His obsession for Iraqi threat left no room for ambiguity when he said that Iraq was providing training and safe haven to the terrorists -- terrorists who would willingly use the weapon of mass destruction against America and other peace loving countries. The irony is that, at the time this was not true. But it is now.

With an astonishing speed the US and Britain are making their nightmares come true. Iraq is fast becoming the land they warned about: a throbbing hub of terror. Bush stubbornly insisted that Iraq was packed with the terrorists, ready to be deployed at moment's notice. Proofs were, however, theirs -- thinner than the evidence for the weapons of man destruction. Iraq might not have been terrorists' paradise at the start of year. But it is now when the Jihadists eager to

serious dilemma for Bush-Blair duo: how to solve the ongoing security concern in Iraq by co-opting international support without, of course, sharing decision making in Iraq with other nations. Hence is their nimble return to the United Nations apparently for a bail out.

But not only the United Nations has almost unanimously condemned the US war in Iraq, its members are lukewarm at the best to Bush's clarion call for a multinational force to share the coalition

scheme of things in Iraq they are likely to exact appropriate price for their new engagement.

The coalition forces with the US at the apex have just started to count the cost of occupation. Apart from \$6bn a month for occupation cost in Iraq President Bush has also asked for another \$87bn from the Congress to augment the war effort in Iraq. During one of the worst economic situations in US' history the Congress can clear it only at a pinch. When President Bush

Shia cleric in Najaf and US-picked member of the governing council, Mr Aqilla Hashemi, are pointers. The train of events under way make the script already drawn up for Iraq's political control end the corporate exploitation of its wealth unworkable. In the mean time no viable plan for transferring the administration to an indigenous dispensation is in sight. As regards Iraq's wealth the Iraqi patriots find it more gratifying to destroy them rather than their falling into the

his tenure. An opinion poll last week shows his approval rating with 61 per cent of voters now unhappy with his handling of Iraq crisis.

Saddam's Iraq had the miasma of tyranny but it was not a failed state as of now. With the polity thoroughly destroyed with no workable alternative shaping up Iraq is now obviously an albatross around the US neck. Although the most fervent anti-war voices in the US are calling for a complete and immediate withdrawal, such a step will be more irresponsible for the US than what it was when they embarked on Iraq adventure for it will only guarantee anarchy there at this stage. A realistic estimate of manpower required for putting Iraq in order before it is handed over to Iraqis through a credible election is 500,000 men whereas the US now have only 140,000 American troops. The crux of the problem is that the US does not afford this strength, neither is it prepared to cede authority to any country willing to shoulder the burden. It seems that the Americans will continue to stew in their own juices till their penance for innocent blood both in Iraq and Afghanistan is over.

None of the problems now facing the occupation forces is a surprise. An enterprise that was misconceived from the beginning is hardly going to reach a smooth end. No tragedy in history has ever gone unpunished for its catalysts. Now that the Iraqi crisis has been created by the Americans it has to be resolved differently -- with more money, more personnel, more allies and a firm timetable for free elections. To get all these things rolling may require one more thing which only the Americans can provide 14 months from now: new leadership.

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PERSPECTIVES

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strike at the US infidels are surging towards Baghdad. Islamists of diverse brand -- all but non-existent in Saddam's Iraq -- are now flocking to the country from Syria, Iraq and across the Arab world. In American assessment there are also Saddam loyalists resurfacing to have their share of rich pickings in Iraq's shooting gallery today.

Of course, in American view any one opposing its occupation of Iraq is terrorist irrespective of the shade of the dissent, although good five months after the war supposedly ended not a shred of reliable evidence has been found to validate the US charges either of Iraq's possession of WMD or its terrorist links. Yet, as the coalition's death toll increases, the cost of occupation doubles up and the beleaguered President Bush and Prime Minister Blair are confronted with more and more public scrutiny there is a

force's burden of Iraq's security and reconstruction. With what face the US government is appealing to the world for help, when only months before it ignored the international public opinion against the war, flouted the international law and disregarded the world body itself without whose approval it arrogantly launched its invasion -- only George W Bush can tell. Even when stuck in Iraq's morass the hawks in the US administration as well as Bush himself continues to rave and rant obviously in an attempt to conceal the consequences of their folly and the efforts go on to drag other countries of the world into Iraq's quagmire. Understandably few countries are interested to clean up the mess created by the occupation forces unless under obligation to the United States. Even if the US European allies capitulate to American

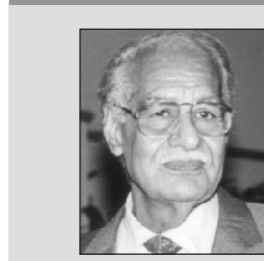
declared the end of combat operations on May 1, only 138 US servicemen were killed by then and a further 140 have died since then. According to former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski the phenomenon has dramatised the American vulnerability and punctured the illusion that the campaign in Iraq was a liberation. The rising toll of US casualties has also exposed the muddle and confusion in the Administration over how best to improve security in Iraq. The turn of the events in Iraq in recent months could not but sap the confidence of the American people who now face the grim prospect of long and arduous haul in Iraq.

It is not only the Americans and the Britons who constitute targets for their phantom enemy, any one or any entity associated with the occupiers are also coming under its wrath. The killings of the prominent

hands of foreign grabbers. Hence is a spate of sabotage blowing up of the oil pipeline and other infrastructure in spite of the sufferings of the Iraqis themselves.

Only a year later President Bush would seek re-election. In this critical juncture his approval rating is slipping down. It is now 56 per cent, down from 75 per cent in April. An ABC poll published recently shows that public attitudes to US involvement in Iraq have stabilised at a level lower than where they were at the start of the war. If American soldiers continue to die in Iraq, Bush's popularity is likely to dip down further. His staunchest ally Tony Blair also is not faring any better. With the suicide of Dr David Kelly and Hutton enquiry commission accusing his government of 'hypocrisy and duplicity' Blair's popularity has plummeted to a new low and he faces the worst crisis of

Demolition of Gandhi



KULDEEP NAYAR
writes from New Delhi

RITUALS are woven deep into the warp and woof of our society. But I could never imagine that Mahatma Gandhi's birthday too would become a mere formality within 55 years of his death. Like in the past, October 2 -- his birthday -- is a public holiday. The Prime Minister would place a wreath at the Rajghat where Gandhi was cremated and prayer meetings would be held in different parts of the country to commemorate his memory. Somewhere essay competitions might be held to recall his philosophy of non-violence. Probably, that is all.

Over the years I have witnessed the enthusiasm for his teachings waning and popular participation in his name lessening. For the youth -- I held a small survey -- Gandhi is a wispy figure, way out in the past as someone who led the independence movement for the country. The whole spirit of reverence and dedication is missing. It looks as if the celebrations of Gandhi Jayanti have lost their élan and become a simple ritual to be gone over year after year. Even otherwise, Gandhi has receded into the background. Seeing India of today, talking in

terms of military power and glittering plazas, his words seem to be out of place. A person who gave us freedom and dignity is followed by a few whose number is decreasing day by day. Wardha, from where he fought the independence movement, is an abandoned place today. Not even curious visitors drop in to see the cottage from where he waged his war against the British.

Probably, this is the kind of phenomenon that takes over the libera-

not visible even at a sequestered place. Hindu Mahasabha leader Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, not Gandhi, beams at the visitors to the rooms of the BJP ministers.

If at all, the BJP pays lip sympathy to Gandhi who was never enshrined in the same way that Rana Pratap Singh and Shivaji, the two Hindu heroes, figure in the Sangh Parivar's pantheon. The RSS headquarters at Nagpur does

foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your religion or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern."

Pakistan's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, too redefined his two-nation theory after partition. It was no more on the basis of religion -- Islam and Hinduism. Instead, he said: "You may belong to any religion, caste or creed -- that has nothing to do with the fundamental

the happenings in Gujarat, there is a strong subterranean feeling among the people for diversity. The Sangh parivar has been trying hard to change this thinking: to turn a secular India into a Hindu India. But it has failed in its efforts. Whatever its onslaughts, we are still fighting to keep our society pluralistic. Fanatics in both the communities are making the task difficult. Yet whatever is left of the Gandhian values, they are standing us in good stead.

yappy culture of consumerism which is taking over the urban areas. Simplicity is no more a virtue. The weak are looked down upon. It is the survival of the fittest. Gandhi's concept of the rich being the trustees of the wealth they earned has not worked. The rich are getting richer and the poor, poorer. Villages, where Gandhi said the God lived, are more or less the same even after 55 years of independence. Development has not benefited them much. Cities have all the comforts.

Gandhi would have also been disappointed if he were living today to see how his basic belief that "wrong means will not lead to right result" had been flouted in every way possible. He would say that if the methods were vitiated, the ends would be vitiated. Not many Indians believe in this dictum any more. What matters to them is success, not how they achieve it. There is increasing contempt for what might be called the moral and spiritual side of life.

Against this background, Gandhi's method to evolve a non-violent way to resolve conflicts has been rejected not only by the world but also in India. We cannot expect others to follow Gandhi when we have shunned him. That may be the reason why the Kashmiri students at Srinagar resented my observation the other day that if their movement had been non-violent, it would have made an impact on the civil society in India and elsewhere.

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BETWEEN THE LINES

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tion movement the world over when it becomes old. The negligence is on the part of the government which turns its back on heroes because they do not belong to the ruling party. It is a slur on the country if the founder, the father of the nation, is allowed to disappear in the shadows. He represents the country's ethos. Yet, I have seen the best of traditions -- and sacred memories -- getting politicised.

Ideologically opposed to the Gandhian thoughts, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) after coming to power at Delhi saw to it that the photo of Gandhi would gradually disappear from public buildings, government offices and airports. It is

not display the photo of Gandhi. Nor does it observe a holiday on his birthday. Even the fact of his assassination by a fanatic Hindu was first deleted from the textbooks which the parivar's Human Resource Development Minister Murli Manohar Joshi got rewritten on the pretext of "dropping bias" from the Indian history.

If it is not politics, then what is it? The HinduRashtra (state) is the BJP's plank which, it believes, earns it votes. Gandhi was, however, opposed to astate religion. He wrote in The Harijan, a weekly he edited, on September 22, 1946: "The state would look after your secular welfare, health, communications,

principle that we are all citizens of one state. Now I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time, Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is a personal faith of each individual, but in political sense as citizens of the state."

Gandhi always held that religion did not make the basis for nationhood. He once told Jinnah that if a person were to embrace another religion, he would not become a member of a different nation. A little bit of that thinking still resides in the hearts of most Indians. In spite of the demolition of the Babri masjid or

In fact, Gandhi's assassination gave us 40 years of communal harmony. People would snub those who talked about the Hindu Rashtra. The Sangh parivar was then careful not to open its mouth. The climate was such that BJP or its earlier brand, the Jana Sangh, never crossed a double-digit figure in the Lok Sabha elections those days. It is another matter that the forces, which should have consolidated the pluralistic society, failed us.

Where India has failed Gandhi the most is the style in which the 200 million people -- one fifth of the country's population -- are living. His asceticism does not fit into the

Appointment of an Arab and Islam-basher to influential post

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED writes from Princeton

BYPASSING Senate confirmation, dismissing the opposition of Muslim and Arab American groups, civil rights advocates and moderate Jewish organisations, President Bush recently installed Dr. Daniel Pipes, the virulently anti-Muslim Zionist, on the board of the government-financed U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP). It is hard to figure out what prompted the Bush administration, short of utter disdain for Muslim Americans, to nominate the notoriously uncouth Islam-basher Pipes to serve on the USIP, a think tank created by an act of Congress in 1984 to "promote the prevention, management and peaceful resolution of international conflicts." The members of the USIP board are supposed to share and promote its objectives, and over the years distinguished American and foreign scholars have done just that with studies on promoting reconciliation and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Pipes on the other hand, has pursued a career devoted largely to defaming Arabs and Muslims, pushing the Israeli agenda, and promoting hatred between the West and the Muslim world. "His extensive body of writing displays a

near perverse obsession with all things Arab and Muslim."

In a piece entitled, "The Muslims are coming! The Muslims are coming!" (National Review, November 19, 1990), Pipes warns about the danger of an influx of Muslim immigrants to the West: "All immigrants bring exotic customs and attitudes, but Muslim customs are more troublesome than most. Fears of a Muslim influx have more substance than the worry about jihad. West European societies are unprepared for the massive immigration of brown-skinned peoples cooking strange foods and not exactly maintaining Germanic standards of hygiene. Muslim immigrants bring with them a chauvinism that augurs badly for their integration into the mainstream of the European societies." Pipes also said: "The increased stature and affluence and enfranchisement of American Muslims will present true danger to American Jews" (American Jewish Convention, October 21, 2001). Pipes is insinuating that Muslim Americans' democratic right to vote poses a danger to the Jews!

Recently Pipes co-authored an article on Muslim immigrants in Denmark, whom he characterised as "being parasites on the society, being disproportionately being engaged in criminal behaviour,

"having unacceptable customs," seeking to take over the country and being rapists." Pipes further warns that Muslim converts are a serious problem and in a June 2000 article he appears to approvingly quote a Ku Klux Klan leader who in 1959 outrageously observed that "if we do not fail to stop the Muslims now, the sixteen million niggers of America will soon become Muslims and you

McCarthyite website, "Campus Watch" (www.campuswatch.com) which boasts a "dossier of professors"; a collection of complaints from mostly Jewish students against professors and academic institutions deemed to be biased in favour of Islam, Muslims and Palestinians, and against Israel. Pipes, who is Jewish, labels as "moderate Muslim," the author of a hate

Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC) entered the fray and pressed hard for Pipes' nomination. After reviewing Dr. Pipes' record, however, some Senators became so troubled that they felt compelled to publicly express their concern. Massachusetts' Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy led the charge. He noted that the statements and writings of Pipes were the opposite

were true, then what we would have in Iowa would be exactly the opposite of what we have today... American Muslims who are lawyers, union members, doctors. Muslims who are thoroughly Americanised. When Mr. Pipes talks about Muslims being funny looking, maintaining a different standard of hygiene, I don't know why we are even considering this person, Mr. Chairman (of the Senate Committee)!"

Opposition also came from Connecticut's Democratic Senator: "The purpose of the USIP is to seek solutions to conflict without recourse to violence. Mr. Pipes writes that, diplomacy (with Muslim nations) rarely ends conflicts. Mr. Pipes will not be able to direct colleagues in the mission of the USIP." Rhode Island's Republican Senator Jim Jeffords also opposed Pipes' nomination. With the nomination stalled in the Senate, Arab Americans turned their attention to the White House, appealing to the President to withdraw Pipes' nomination, noting that Pipes' views ran counter to the President's own efforts to promote respect for Islam

and for Arab and Muslim American communities. The President ignored their plea and gave the controversial nominee what is known as a "recess appointment," putting him on the Institute's Board against the wishes of the Senate, when the Senate is in recess.

The American Jewish lobby has once again demonstrated that they own the President, and have the power to put even a proven thug in a position of power bypassing Senate's approval, if that's what it takes. The charge for the nomination of Pipes was led by ultra Zionist Mr. Charles Krauthammer of TIME magazine and The Washington Post. In an op-ed article in the Post on August 14, Mr. Krauthammer distorted facts and misled unsuspecting Americans into believing that the bigot Pipes is a victim! He accused the four Senators who opposed Pipes -- Kennedy, Harkin, Dodd and Jeffords -- of "bigotry and extremism!"

Daniel Pipes is no "Islamic scholar," as Krauthammer so lovingly falsifies. Pipes is a racist hoodlum, an Islam-basher of the extreme kind, unworthy to be on the board of directors of the USIP. Instead of castigating the four Senators who courageously opposed Pipes' nomination as Krauthammer does, average Ameri-

cans should commend the Senators for demonstrating courage to stand up to the neocon Zionist lobby, something President Bush is unwilling or unable to do. It is no surprise that Krauthammer promotes a fellow neocon Zionist extremist like Daniel Pipes. What is disturbing is that Krauthammer is propagating his lies and sponsoring an unrepentant racist through the pages of *The Washington Post*. President Bush, too, seems to have forgotten that in the 2000 Presidential election, Muslim and Arab Americans, three times as numerous as Jewish Americans, voted overwhelmingly for him, whereas the Jewish Americans voted overwhelmingly for Al Gore. If the President believes that he can insult and work against the interest of Arab and Muslim Americans and will still be the beneficiary of their votes come the 2004 Presidential election, he must be living in a fool's paradise!

LETTER FROM AMERICA

will never be able to stop them." As a result of his contempt for the culture of Muslims and his obsessive fear of their attitudes, it is no surprise that Pipes warns the government agencies to beware of Muslims. Just this year he wrote: "There is no escaping the unfortunate fact that Muslim government employees in law enforcement, the military, and the diplomatic corps need to be watched for connection to terrorism, as do Muslim chaplains in prisons and armed forces. Muslim visitors and immigrants must undergo additional background checks. Mosques require scrutiny beyond that applied to churches, synagogues and temples." Pipes also maintains a neo-

website, "Eradicate Islam," whose homepage declares: "This site is created by ex-Muslims to help Muslims leave Islam. Islam is a lie and this site is the proof. The truth is that Islam is not a religion of peace. It is a religion of hate, of terror and war. The only way to confront Islamic terrorism is to eradicate Islam." The owner of the hate website, who Pipes is so fond of quoting frequently, is also a signatory to the "Statement of Muslim Support for Pipes Appointment to USIP Board," published on a pro-Pipes website. There is one little problem here: how can "ex-Muslims" be giving "Muslim support" for Pipes? The pro-Israeli lobby, American

of the principles of USIP. Senator Tom Harkin (Democrat, Iowa), one of the founders of USIP, was outraged: "Some people call Pipes a scholar. But this is not the kind of person you want on USIP. My state has the very first mosque ever built in the U.S., in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Muslims are a vibrant part of our diverse community."

Quoting Pipes, "The increased stature and affluence and enfranchisement of American Muslims will present true dangers to American Jews," an exasperated Senator Harkin said: "Enfranchisement? Mr. Pipes is talking about voting! Mr. Pipes' fears of Muslim enfranchisement fall on deaf ears when it comes to this Senator. If Mr. Pipes' views