

Bush's secret visit to Baghdad

Why was it necessary?



HARUN UR RASHID

BOTTOM LINE

Twenty-five years ago, the Americans took great pleasure in giving Moscow its very own "Vietnam War" in Afghanistan.

On 13th June, President Bush arrived in Baghdad on a stealthy five-hour visit.

The venue of the meeting was confined to the Green Zone, the highly protected area and it is hardly the place to witness the "real" Baghdad.

What is the purpose of such secret visit? There are several reasons for the visit and some of them deserve mention in the following paragraphs.

First, the popularity of the President in the US has reportedly fallen to mere 31 per cent, lowest among the incumbents.

The President has to do something to boost the morale of his party. The visit would manifest that optimistic future lies ahead in Iraq.

Second, there is a perception in Iraq and outside that the al-Maliki's government is dominated by the pro-Iranian elite.

President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, is decidedly pro-Iranian, having fought on the side of Iran during Iran-Iraq war in the 80s.

It shows that Arab people watch with amazement that the greatest superpower battles to achieve even the level of power and oil production that a sanction-shackled Saddam Hussein managed in the months before the invasion in March 2003.

It illustrates that Bush did not get one of the paradoxes of American power as articulated by Professor Joseph Nye -- that the US is too great to be challenged by another state in the world.

It demonstrates that the conflict in Iraq has revealed not so much

important member of the Dawā Party, which was based in Iran. He was one of the architects of the Iraqi Constitution which gave a raw deal to the Sunnis in Iraq.

Third, al-Maliki's government in Iraq does not mean anything for common people in Iraq.

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It appears that President Bush now realises what a mess he created in Iraq. Increasingly this is looking like a failed Presidency.

Barister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

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Cost of occupation

The ECB and Euro-area's economic recovery



CHAKLADER MAHBOOB-UL ALAM writes from Madrid

LETTER FROM EUROPE

There is no doubt that economic recovery is taking hold in Europe. But this recovery is also facing certain uncertainties like oil prices and impact of higher value-added taxes in Germany, next year.

On June 8, the president of the European Central Bank raised the euro-zone benchmark interest rate by one quarter percent from 2.50 to 2.75%.

The job of the president of the European Central Bank is not an easy one. He is expected to stimulate economic growth, keep inflation under control and create employment in the euro area.

First of all, the latest ECB interest rate increase was not an isolated move, but part of a current world-wide trend toward higher interest rates.

anking act under constantly changing circumstances.

Despite high energy costs, euro-area economy is expected to grow by 2.4% in 2006, which is 0.6% higher than forecasted only three months ago.

While announcing the latest increase, the president of the ECB hinted that the interest rates will keep rising until he is satisfied that the inflation is under control.

Chaklader Mahboob-ul Alam is a Daily Star columnist.

cess that would allow troops to come back home. He did not offer any specific targets to measure when Iraqis will be able to govern themselves.

Conclusion Despite the day-time curfew, implemented by 65,000 Iraqi security forces by the new Iraqi government, insurgents had been able to continue violence and on 16th June, 11 were killed and 25 injured when a suicide bomber hit Shi'ite mosque in Baghdad.

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BUDGET 2006-07

Poverty reduction measures inadequate

ALI IDRIS

In the national budget of 2006-2007 the finance minister has put emphasis on poverty eradication under the principles of PRSP.

Customs duty has been reduced but ... it is praiseworthy to note that customs duty on essentials like rice, pulses, chilli, turmeric, sugar etc has been reduced.

Even without studying economics one can say that supply in the market determines the price of commodities demanded.

national strategy for poverty alleviation of Bangladesh also identified most of these reasons and suggested remedial measures to achieve the targets of millennium development goals.

FIGHTING POVERTY

Investment in rural economy is a must

DHIRAJ KUMAR NATH

"MAKE Poverty History" is the global call to action against poverty.

Responding to this call, all nations around the world have reaffirmed their commitment to poverty alleviation and redesigned their planning approaches to achieve the targets within the shortest possible time.

Poverty, being a multidimensional issue having different roots, needs to be combated with well designed planning having a definite vision.

The reasons for poverty in rural areas of Bangladesh are almost the same as many other countries of the world but there are some differences in nature and diversity, which are as follows:

- Lack of opportunity of employment. Obstacle to access to resources. Absence of ownership of the land and farm equipment.

private enterprises would receive allocation from TCB. The poor people of the country won't be able to save any thing, rather they would resort to borrowing if the price of essentials continues to go up.

Direct taxes don't seem balanced: The direct taxes are a major source of revenue which are paid by the assesseees of income tax.

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slab) will be allowed a tax rebate @ 10 per cent on the income in excess of 10%. For the employees, exemption of tax has been enhanced from Tk 12,000 to Tk 18,000 in respect of travelling allowance only.

Allocation and subsidy for agriculture: In the budget 7.5 per cent revenue amounting to Tk 5,230 crore has been proposed to be spent for improvement, research and subsidy of agriculture sector.

vided as subsidy, but it is doubtful if only one third of it had reached the actual needy.

Whitening of black money: During the last few years the black money owners have been given opportunities to declare their black money in various forms on payment of certain taxes.

Tourism, software industries, lump sum allocations etc: In many countries of the world (the nearest being India) billions of dollars worth of foreign exchange is earned from tourism and software industries.

ing mushroom, orchid, ornamental plants, tissue culture, pisciculture, horticulture, floriculture, milk production etc under a massive human resource program for rural areas.

We need a policy guideline to develop a broad based technical know-how group for the rural areas of the country.



Ali Idris FCA is a freelance contributor.

Gender Equality: The result of many researches and case studies, conducted round the third world, have proved a close relationship between gender equality and rural economic development.

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To abolish poverty from a country or a society, the vision of the nation should be, "people prosperous, nation powerful, society just and civilized".

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Dhiraj Kumar Nath is a freelance contributor.