

A necessary move

Success will depend on how the PM resists party pressure to protect own people

It is never easy for a democratically elected government to call in the army to do a civil government's job. For such a move amounts to an admission that the established channels have failed. Bringing in the army also risks alienating the police, the bureaucracy with all their attending institutions which are responsible for maintaining law and order in the country. Khaleda Zia has taken a big gamble in calling in the army. However it is a gamble that had to be taken and one which has been and will continue to be welcomed by the general public provided that it is not used for political ends. It must be recalled that the previous drives against criminals launched by the police and then by a combination of police and BDR all failed because the moves were partisan and as such compromised. Once they started catching the politically connected criminals the drives came under pressure and were soon stopped or made ineffective.

Such mistakes of the earlier attempts cannot be permitted to recur. It is the neutral aspect of the army deployment that must be most meticulously observed. Here we must point out that one of the main reasons for police failure is the politicisation of that vital force and its partisan use. That blunder must not be repeated with the army. Under no circumstances should the army's neutral role and image be compromised through this operation. While the government must ensure it, at the same time the army's leadership must most vigilantly guard against any distortion of it. From reports received so far we feel satisfied that criminals of all shades and political connections have been rounded up. If this 'neutrality' is maintained then we feel the initial public and media support behind the deployment will continue.

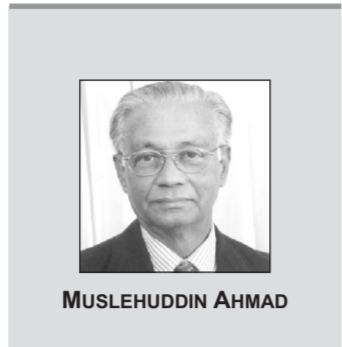
The government must also be painfully aware of the limitations of the army deployment; the most important of which is that it cannot be allowed to last for long. By definition an army operation must be surgical in nature and as such time bound -- the shorter the better. Here again the less the political interference with its work, the more efficient will be the army's operation and faster it will be able to return to the barracks.

The success of this deployment will depend on the co-operation of the government and more specifically the role of the ruling party and its leadership. As the army will start catching the criminals and as more and more of them will turn out to be ruling party cadres and activists pressure will mount on the Prime Minister who is also the BNP chief to spare her party men. Ministers who are well known to have own personal gangs and to protect criminals will start lobbying for those under their protection. BNP leaders themselves will start telling the party chief that the army move is 'destroying' the party as so many of its 'vital leaders' are being caught and the party morale is disappearing fast. The argument will be put forward by such protectors of criminals that AL is gaining because the mastans are joining the opposition. Against all such pleas and lobbying the BNP chief must be absolutely firm and totally uncompromising. More the PM stays firm the bigger will be the public support behind her. But if she buckles under party pressure the credibility of this whole operation will go down the drain.

We need to ask a fundamental question here as to why it become necessary to deploy the army to catch common criminals. The answer is simple. It is the political patronisation of criminals that has brought the situation to this pass. It is true that today we do not have the high profile political criminals like the Hazaris, Maqbul, Osmans, Iqbal etc. But make no mistake hundreds of their smaller versions are in operation and most of them are under the protections of BNP leaders. Many districts are now under the grip of criminal gangs protected and patronised by the local BNP leadership just as another set of criminals or perhaps the same set- was protected by the former AL government.

Khaleda Zia needs to be commended for deploying the army. But she will have to allow them to operate freely if she wants her bold step to bear fruit. She must remember that it was political patronisation of criminals that made the law and order situation so bad that compelled her to call in the army and it will be removing that patronisation which will ensure her government's success.

America and the world split on war on Iraq



AMERICA has now a Peace President (former President Carter) and a "war" President. Interesting! It's more interesting as Oslo Nobel Peace Committee chose particularly this time to honour former President Jimmy Carter by awarding Nobel Peace Prize for his untiring work for over a decade for peaceful resolutions of many conflicts around the world. This was undoubtedly a great decision of the Nobel Peace Committee as one sees this as a very correct step to promote peaceful resolution of any world conflict without resorting to any violent means that kill men women and children - undoubtedly a solid vote against the war.

However, unfortunate is the majority vote of the US Congress (House 296-133 and Senate 77-23) that approved a resolution to 'authorize' President Bush to use force against Iraq. This resolution virtually gave dictatorial power to President Bush. One wonders how the Congress, the representatives of the people of a democratic country like America could give away the peoples' power to one individual the President! But in any case, this was not 'America speaks with one voice' that the UNSC and the international community should take note of. There were reportedly serious differences of opinion in the Congress. Apart from former Vice President Al-Gore, Senators like Robert Byrd, Edward Kennedy, M Jeffords, House Representatives like Barbara Mikulsky John Lewis, David Bonior and many others spoke and voted against the resolution.

The trickiest part was White House's move to have the resolution before November mid term election. The fear was that any move to go

against the resolution could be interpreted by the American voters as move against the national security and could bring electoral defeat to the Democratic party. But the latest survey by the Pew Research Centre shows that '... 55 percent (Americans) said the economy, and not Iraq, was really the most important issue for the upcoming congressional election'. Therefore the fear of the Democrats was somewhat misplaced. In any case, war is an extremely dangerous thing and

on Iraq would increase terrorism. The Congress should have waited for the results of the administration's consultation with other members of the UNSC. Even after the votes, several Senators expressed the view that the US should continue to follow the UNSC path. Therefore, it will be prudent for President Bush to go by the decision of the UNSC in this complex and highly sensitive issue that is bound to affect the entire world.

automatic attack on Iraq in case Iraq fails to comply with the demands of the UNSC. Over 100 Ambassadors of the member states of the UN in their open debate spoke against the America's possible war against Iraq. In such a situation, it is surprising that a diplomat like Dr Hans Blix gave support to a new resolution and said he and his inspection team would wait for such a new UNSC mandate. One feels that it was inappropriate on his part to go to only Washington and not to other

expected to have similar position. Kuwait reportedly said that its forces would not participate in any war. But is Kuwait under any obligation to allow its soil to be used for launching the attack? What about Qatar, Bahrain, Yemen and also Turkey? As Rumsfeld is in a great hurry, the world would obviously like to know the positions of these countries.

As it appears, the resolution passed by the US Congress did not include the issue of "Regime Change". But some reports say that

wonder about the next step of the White House in the region. Because there must be some reasons for a regime change in Iraq and the White House may find similar reasons in the other states of the region and nearby.

However, many even in America are reportedly saying that regime change is necessary in Washington itself as the regime has not only failed to effectively control corporate corruption and deal with the serious slide in the economy but also failed to catch even a sniper a mini Saddam - in the greater Washington area. When the regime fails to tackle a mini Saddam in Washington itself, then what is the justification for going after the bigger Saddam who is thousands of miles away and probably would not even think in his wildest dream of attacking America. Saddam simply does not have the materials and the means to do so. In the meantime, North Korea, a member of the same "axis of evil" has already developed the nuclear bomb. Is America in a position to do the same with North Korea? Probably not.

Various reports say that there are three doubles of Saddam. Some say even more. Twelve years of deadly sanction has killed about half a million children and may be similar number of adults. But many of those who are still alive have been turned into mini Saddams by Bush Administration's verbal rhetoric, the actual is yet to come. Iraq warned it would be the toughest of all wars. But in any case, this war has already started bombing and killing innocents everywhere the latest in Bali and in the southern Philippines. The terrorists can not be seen; they are the black cats indeed wild and dangerous ones in the darkness that the world has been thrown into since 9/11 and the darkness further deepened by the atrocities conducted by Sharon against the innocent Palestinians.

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

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

Any American war will result in very high Iraqi casualties and that number will certainly be many times higher than what President Saddam achieved in 23 years by killing and 'gassing his own people'. Then how could Tommy Frank be a better replacement, if his temporary accession to Saddam's throne leads to colossal deaths? Moreover, how would he fit in the midst of so many Arab heads of states? Arabs are already tired of Sharon and with Tommy Frank, the things may turn really uncontrollable.

would certainly lead to considerable American and Iraqi casualties. As Iraq would be battered by all the deadly weapons, unarmed civilian deaths and particularly of women and children would be extremely high. Undoubtedly this will disturb the world peace. In such a situation politics should not have played any role.

America is a great country and the world expected its representatives to use their conscience and not immediate political considerations to determine the super power's role in this complex world. They should have at least seriously taken into consideration the assessment of the most important Intelligence Agency the CIA. There are reports of differences of opinion between CIA and the White House on whether there is any imminent danger that America faces from Iraq. NY Times report [10/10/02] said that the CIA do not support the White House's view that Iraq presents an immediate threat to the American homeland and may use Al Qaidah to carry out attacks at any moment. Then why such a rush? Indeed, CIA also warned that "a US attack may ignite terror" which some clearly highlighted weeks ago in our comments. Recently French President Jacques Chirac himself expressed the view that any attack

It will be highly dangerous to depend only on Prime Minister Tony Blair just to show it as an alliance as he himself has no support of the Party and the people of Britain to go beyond multilateral path. His visit to Moscow to secure support of President Putin was described by some as "humiliating" and some British news papers were very critical of Blair's role and his visit to Moscow. President Putin was very assertive and said he had 'no proof of Iraq's having weapons of mass destruction and there was no legal ground to launch an attack on Iraq'. Similar views have also been expressed by President Chirac. The most humiliating was Putin's remark that British dossier which Tony Blair placed before the Parliament contained materials of "propaganda". Of course, a British MP also described the materials in the dossier as "fiction". Putin, however, said that he was prepared to consider any move to have a resolution that could strengthen the hands of the weapons inspectors. This virtually meant support to French proposal for two resolutions and not to the one demanded by the US.

France, Russia, China and practically all other rotating members of the UNSC has so far remained against America's one resolution that should include

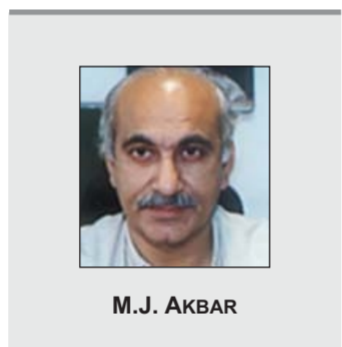
capitals of the permanent members after the UNSC briefing. One would obviously like to know whether Hans Blix, being an employee of the UN got any clearance from the UN SG for such a visit? Dr. Blix very clearly said earlier in Vienna that 'UNSC is his master and not Washington'. Why such a sudden change? This has unfortunately raised some questions about his total neutrality in the inspection affair. The issue is brought in specifically as his support stalled the dispatch of the weapons inspectors to Iraq, which was to take place today, October 19. If his team started to work, President Saddam would not have got the extra time as he has under the present stalemate.

NY Times reported "Rumsfeld Orders War Plans Redone. For Faster Action." Indeed, battle forces are moving to Kuwait, Qatar and other places in the region. One wonders what has happened to the Arab decision taken at a summit in Beirut some months ago against any attack against any Arab country. The war equipment are being brought in obviously with approval of the countries like Kuwait, Qatar. If these are for attacking Iraq which appears to be the case then what would be the position of Arab countries? Saudi Arabia reportedly said it would not allow any attack from Saudi soil. Egypt, Jordan are

the White House has been preparing the plan for occupation of Iraq and it reportedly went to the extent of mentioning Tommy Frank as the Head of Iraq's administration after the fall of President Saddam Hussein. Is Tommy Frank going to be the (temporary) President of Iraq? This can happen only after the 100 per cent "yes" vote on October 15 referendum that gave him another 7 years in office. In Iraq it's a dictatorial democracy but undoubtedly a decision of some sort of the people and a not a decision of the court.

In any case, any American war will result in very high Iraqi casualties and that number will certainly be many times higher than what President Saddam achieved in 23 years by killing and 'gassing his own people'. Then how could Tommy Frank be a better replacement, if his temporary accession to Saddam's throne leads to colossal deaths? Moreover, how would he fit in the midst of so many Arab heads of states? Arabs are already tired of Sharon and with Tommy Frank, the things may turn really uncontrollable. If this is a fact (this has reportedly been denied by the White House but whether denied or not, a regime change must have a replacement plan), then one would

Some apples short of a picnic



THE declared result of an election is not always the real result. You have to peel off a layer from fact in order to reach the meaning. Two elections have produced two outcomes in the second week of October, one in Jammu and Kashmir and the other in Pakistan. They had one thing in common. There was little immediate clarity about who won these elections. But there was great clarity about who had lost them.

There were two principal losers in Jammu and Kashmir. One was Dr Farooq Abdullah. The other was President-General Pervez Musharraf. In Pakistan also there were two clear losers. The first was America. The second was the doubly unfortunate Pervez Musharraf.

Farooq Abdullah's defeat is as understandable as is his unwillingness to accept it. No one in power ever believes that he is going to lose. No one who has lost ever thinks it is anything but a conspiracy that has defeated him. Farooq Abdullah's defeat came fifteen years too late, in fact. He should have lost in 1987, when the popular mood in the valley had turned completely against the National Conference-Congress alliance. He was saved that year by rigging, just as he had been helped before by electoral manipulation. Arun Nehru, who was a critical player in Kashmir affairs from the years of Mrs Indira Gandhi,

through most of the Rajiv Gandhi prime ministership and then into V.P.Singh's tenure, confirms this. It was Arun Nehru's influence that played a substantial part in the first of the series of political mistakes that created this tragedy: the arbitrary dismissal of Farooq Abdullah's government in that catastrophic year of 1984 when Mrs Gandhi accelerated both the crises that bedeviled India for more than a decade, in Punjab and in Kashmir.

Delhi. Dictatorship has this problem: you are told what you want to hear. Moreover, obsequiousness can be a courtier's revenge. But advice is not a decision. It was President Musharraf's call to make this a centerpiece of his message to Pakistan and then, rather unnecessarily, overdo the theme in his United Nations speech in New York in September. I suppose it is obligatory on the part of a Pakistan leader

response from some elements across the line of control? A dramatic terrorist attack that will shatter the optimism in Srinagar, taunt nerves in Delhi and drive India and Pakistan back to the brink of war? The only hope against adventurism in Srinagar is confusion is Islamabad. The Pakistan election began on a strange note and kept getting weirder. This was not an election about change of power. The army was in power, and ensured, by

another, these have been hinge elections. What happens after them will be more crucial than the elections themselves. A great deal will depend on how Islamabad deals with the rise of the clergy, whether it chooses to buy them, appease them or confront them. Policy, and events, will emerge out of this decision. Delhi is more focused. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee pursued his commitment to free and fair elections even at the cost of his own party. The BJP would certainly have done better in a rigged poll. Vajpayee knew the outcome, which might explain why he did not go to the state to campaign for his party. Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani took a significant step forward when, on the eve of the results, he announced that Delhi was prepared for talks with both the elected representatives of the Kashmiri people as well as those who had not participated in the elections. One hopes that similar sensitivity to ground reality, rather than an arid commitment to arithmetic will determine who will be the chief minister of the state after the formation of the alliance between the Congress and the party of the ex-Congressman, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the PDP. The Congress may have won 20 seats against the PDP's 16. The more important fact is that the Congress defeated the BJP in Jammu, while it was the PDP that stopped the National Conference in Kashmir. The state has to be led by the person who represents the valley rather than the plains. The problem is in Kashmir, not in Jammu.

It is rare when an election becomes a basis for hope. Such an election has taken place in Jammu and Kashmir. If that hope were to be belied, we would lose another generation to the gun.

another, these have been hinge elections. What happens after them will be more crucial than the elections themselves. A great deal will depend on how Islamabad deals with the rise of the clergy, whether it chooses to buy them, appease them or confront them. Policy, and events, will emerge out of this decision. Delhi is more focused. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee pursued his commitment to free and fair elections even at the cost of his own party. The BJP would certainly have done better in a rigged poll. Vajpayee knew the outcome, which might explain why he did not go to the state to campaign for his party. Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani took a significant step forward when, on the eve of the results, he announced that Delhi was prepared for talks with both the elected representatives of the Kashmiri people as well as those who had not participated in the elections. One hopes that similar sensitivity to ground reality, rather than an arid commitment to arithmetic will determine who will be the chief minister of the state after the formation of the alliance between the Congress and the party of the ex-Congressman, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the PDP. The Congress may have won 20 seats against the PDP's 16. The more important fact is that the Congress defeated the BJP in Jammu, while it was the PDP that stopped the National Conference in Kashmir. The state has to be led by the person who represents the valley rather than the plains. The problem is in Kashmir, not in Jammu.

It is rare when an election becomes a basis for hope. Such an election has taken place in Jammu and Kashmir. If that hope were to be belied, we would lose another generation to the gun.

MJ Akbar is Chief Editor of the Asian Age.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



innocent women and children. George Bush said on 11th Sept "We will not allow any terrorist or tyrant to threaten civilisation with weapons of mass destruction". But when Israel is wiping out the entire Palestinian civilisation, he calls Sharon a man of peace! He helps Israel with F16s and he ignores the fact that Israel also has nuclear weapon. Invading or helping someone to invade any country by force is against international law. Why is America helping Israel in its invasion of Palestine? UK and US want to bomb Iraq for defying UN, yet US completely ignores UN when it doesn't serve its interests.

What started as a "war on terrorism" has been carefully muddled up with the "war on Iraq", which now appears to be a "war on Islam". There was a time when I used to blame US, Israel and the West for all the genocide committed against

Muslims worldwide. But no more. It is Muslim leaders, and Muslim leaders alone who are responsible for the misery of other Muslim nations! When it comes to helping a Muslim country i.e. Palestine, they don't do anything. But when it comes to bombing a Muslim country i.e. Afghanistan, Iraq, a lot of Muslim countries volunteer to help US/UK by providing Air-bases i.e. Pakistan, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan etc. It is a disgrace for all the Muslims (including myself)!

Azad Miah
Oldham, UK

The new crusaders
We as moderate Muslims thank the US for fighting Islamic fundamentalists "Al Qaidah" and the "Taliban" and we are with the US 100% in its fight against terrorism and to seek justice and rid the world of such evils. But isn't it about time also to

fight and curb the power and influence of Christen and Jewish Zionist fundamentalists who used and still using the might and power of the US government to implement theirs fundamentalist views, prophecies and agenda.

Those Christian and Jewish Zionists have succeeded in creating in 1948 their own "Taliban" government in Palestine and called it "Israel" and wish to lead the world into destruction and have been terrorising the people of the Middle East and the world for that matter ever since.

As much as our Islamic fundamentalists do scare the West, Christen and Jewish fundamentalists are scaring and terrorising us in the Muslim World, particularly in the Middle East. What we are witnessing nowadays is a new crusader war waged by President Bush and his cabinet against any one opposes

his Taliban "Israel".

For example when we examine his "axis of evil" Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. We find that none of these countries actually threatens the US, but in fact pose a threat to the security of Israel. Iraq and Iran pose a direct threat while North Korea sells weapons to the other two.

Fahad Salamah
Abu Dhabi, UAE

Hiroshima redux
At every instance possible some contributors have a tendency to bring up the matter of the atomic bomb dropped at Hiroshima to end the World War II. The tragic event is portrayed less to sympathise with its victims and more to point a finger at certain countries. Rarely though is the incident considered in perspective.

It was a brutal, and tragic event. We must also keep in mind the fact

that the then fascist and racist regime of Japan had vowed to fight till the last man, last bullet. The atomic bomb on Hiroshima may or may not have been the only option left to save Allied lives; wars by their nature leave moral questions unanswered for long. But it was not a decision taken in vacuum.

As someone whose grandfather and granduncle, on each side of the family, both put on the uniform to stand up to the German/Japanese Axis, I resent the presumption that somehow the Allies were the bad guys. Given the fact that the Japanese bombed Chittagong and Calcutta multiple times killing many, I would like to see some criticism of the Japanese assault on our civilians as well. Or is it that we are concerned about civilian casualties and war-related brutalities only when the Europeans and Americans are in the dock?

ES
Missouri, USA

Mahathir's memory
Mahathir Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad expressed indignation at the treatment meted out to his deputy at an American airport and preached that all citizens of a particular country should not be treated like this due to the crimes committed by a few.

He has conveniently forgotten that his country imposed additional paperwork and all kinds of barriers to citizens of Bangladesh who wished to visit Malaysia.

Ironic, but amusing, that Mahathir cannot take the same treatment he doloes out to the people from Bangladesh. **Abdullahi Bahui**
China