

Mayor wants DCC under PMO

City government still a far cry

THE city mayor has said he believes the Dhaka City Corporation will perform better if it is placed under the Prime Minister's Office. The mayor is apparently convinced that the DCC will be able to overcome lack of speed in decision-making and obviate the need for observing too many formalities, once it is put under the PMO.

Obviously, the idea of the LGRD ministry serving as the regulatory body over City Corporation has not worked well in practice. A closer look at the operational aspects of the DCC will surely reveal that lack of coordination of various activities, that the DCC undertakes, has been responsible for its lacklustre performance. If the DCC activities are supervised by the PMO, it will be easier to coordinate things at the decision making level. But it is difficult to envisage how better coordination among the utility services, no less important than decision-making, will be achieved at the field level by placing the DCC under the PMO.

Apart from the flaws in coordination and implementation of different projects, there are some built-in shortcomings, which have never been addressed in right earnest. The mayor enjoys, for example, the status of a minister, but has the authority to approve a project worth Tk 2 crore only, while a minister can sanction up to Tk 25 crore. So the mayor's executive powers are not compatible with his ministerial status.

There is also the question of dual control. The past government formed a coordination committee with the LGRD minister and the mayor as its co-chairmen. It did not help coordination; on the contrary, the minister's control was enhanced at the cost of the mayor's authority.

The incumbent mayor is also a full minister and is clearly over-burdened and has his time divided between two jobs. Obviously, the management of a city like Dhaka is a tall order for a part-timer.

The rock-bed of modern urban management lies in a unified command structure, known as city government. Efficient management of multi-dimensional utility services in a metropolis or a megalopolis warrants this. City corporations also have an autonomous status in most countries of the world for the same reason. The government must, therefore, get its act together and bring about the required radical change in the organisation and power structure of the DCC. Ad-hocism won't do.

Democracy and free press

One thrives on the other

YOU cannot create a strong democracy if people are not allowed to express their views about what makes a democracy strong," Commonwealth Secretary General Donald C McKinnon told the Commonwealth Journalists Association conference last Thursday. His words will find resonance in the proponents of free media everywhere in the world. Correlation between democracy and unfettered journalism has been underscored at seminars and symposia, reports and editorial comments, public speeches and academic writings across the world. Unfortunately, authoritarian governments -- there are quite a few in the Commonwealth -- prefer to keep their ears wide shut to such advocacy for operational freedom of the media. The reason is obvious: more control on journalists means less exposure of their repressive regimes, invariably marked by human rights violation, corruption and incompetence. However, what these despotic governments completely miss out on is the fact that in an era of greater interconnectedness, information flow cannot be cut off and any attempt to gag the media ultimately backfires. A case in point is President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. His government has bribed and brutalised journalists and put up obstruction to international media at every step but failed in the end to cover up its misdeeds and ended up being scorned by the international community.

Since the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh in 1991, successive governments have talked of press freedom but never quite gone the whole hog to ensure that. Media people were harassed and brutalised when trying to spill the beans of local vested quarters and godfathers of criminals. Moreover, some have even faced detention on as serious an allegation as a 'sedition' charge. The Bangladesh media may not be hamstrung by any legislation; however, sometimes observations from government send across mixed signals to journalists.

The question is of perception; how the government perceives the role of journalists is all that matters. Does it regard the media as antagonistic to it, out there to undermine its and the country's image? Such a perception needs change. If an elected government has to function democratically and efficiently, it must keep faith with the independent media as a life-line of reliable information to be able to do so.

War and morality

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

PROFESSOR Michael Walzer (Institute of Advanced Study-Princeton University) expounded his theory of aggression through six propositions. The first was based on the existence of an international society of independent states where men and women are protected and their interests represented only by their own government. In this case the government is a democratically elected one by the people. His second proposition presupposes that the international society has laws ensuring rights of territorial integrity and political sovereignty of the states. Any use of force of imminent threat by one state against the political sovereignty and territorial integrity of another state would be regarded as aggression and criminal act. Such aggression, Walzer advocates, can justify two kinds of violent responses: war of self-defense by the victim and a war of law enforcement by the victim and/or by any other member of the international society. He, however, was unequivocal that such violent responses can only be justified when there is aggression. The victim must be wronged or facing imminent violence before he can respond violently. Professor Walzer's sixth proposition revolves round the point that once the aggression has been repulsed, the aggressor can be punished.

Walzer's world is far advanced than that of Hobbesian state of nature where it is too dangerous to respect the moral law and people cannot be criticized for doing what they feel necessary to do because there is

always competition with other people to survive. In Locke's world people are governed by the laws of nature for their own preservation as well as those of others. Violators of natural laws are to be punished.

Basically, therefore, it is human nature, which determines the state of nature in which human beings live in peace or in state of war. Where human nature follows Kantian moral philosophy where politics bows its

imminent, specific, near certain attack to a far broader concept of preventive attack to eliminate "suspected" threat? Some have seen in the doctrine of preemption "a sign of permanent break by the United States from the international system". But Bush National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice insisted that preemption was not a new concept and there could be no moral or legal ground for a country to wait

For the first time since NATO was established in 1949 the organization found itself in crisis as France, Germany and Belgium refused to consider a US proposal to plan deterrent and defensive measures for Turkey. The argument given by the three countries was that such defensive planning could give a wrong signal to the world of an imminent invasion of Iraq. Turkey then invoked article 4 of the treaty, and biological defense capabilities. All these decisions were taken to bolster defense of Turkey.

Meanwhile Jacques Chirac expressed his anger over the mutinous stance taken by the candidate members of the EU by supporting the US position without consulting all EU members in advance. Most of these countries were from former Eastern Europe. Poland, from among them, reminded Chirac that

It does not have the blessed aura of consummation between US forcefulness and European humanitarianism as in Kosovo. Nor delayed intervention in Iraq or non-intervention would represent western moral lapse of not intervening in Rwanda and in Sebrenicza to prevent massacre of thousand of innocent lives. Waging war for control of oil fields would be immoral and unjust. To secure global approval for any war it must have global acceptability and participants must be accountable at the end of the day.

knees before morality and men do not divide themselves between right and expedience; or in Freudian sense a supreme court of judicature with enforcement capacity can be established then war can be declared immoral and therefore avoided or in case of war peace can be imposed. But the Freudian model presupposes outbreak of war regardless of its moral righteousness and only proposes a way to end the war.

If one were to assume that safeguarding the life and property of the citizens are primary duties of any state and if these are threatened by another state; then the "intended victim" should have the right to protect its citizens from possible mischief. The question is how? Do we then endorse the Bush National Strategy which expands the hitherto uncontroversial concept of true preemption striking first against an

to be attacked before it can address the existential threat. But neither President Bush's repeated threat of the UN becoming irrelevant and Colin Powell's detailed account to the UNSC of Saddam Hussein's deceptions could move the world opinion in the US favor including those of close allies except Britain where public support for the war and for Tony Blair are steadily decreasing. Millions of people throughout the world remain to be convinced of the moral righteousness of an invasion if Iraq. The American frustration was abundantly made clear by the White House spokesman in his daily press briefing on 14th February. Referring the UNSC and NATO he spoke of being "in pretty treacherous water here with the future of the two international organizations, through which we had often worked, hanging in the balance".

for the first time in NATO's history, which obligated allies to consult if any member felt threatened. Luckily Turkey did not invoke article 5 of the treaty, which declares an attack on any NATO member as attack on all. Because if France, Germany and Belgium had blocked action on article 5 it could have spelled the beginning of the end of NATO. Veto by the three countries on action following from article 4 was an attack on the US Iraq policy. Belgian Foreign Minister publicly stated that the veto had nothing to do with Turkey's security needs. Ultimately on 16th February NATO Defense Planning Committee (of which France was not a member) reaffirmed NATO's commitment to UNSC resolution 1441 made at Prague NATO Summit and agreed (a) to deploy AWACS, (b) possible deployment of missile defenses, (c) possible deployment of chemical

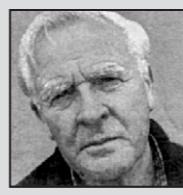
they all had right to decide their own foreign policy. Such public squabble aside EU always had taken common position on all-important matters. Divergent policies if taken by EU members does not portend well for the future of an expanded European Union. Some damage control measures were taken by the extraordinary European Council meeting at Brussels on 17th February in which they declared that the way Iraq situation would be handled would have important impact in the world in the next decades and EU was determined to deal with it effectively; that EU was committed to the UN remaining the center of international order; that war was not inevitable; that the UN inspectors must be given time and resources but that the inspection process can not continue indefinitely; that EU would work with Arab countries and the League of Arab Nations; that the

Middle East peace process needed to be invigorated to resolve Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and they called for early implementation of the road map by the Quartet viz UN, EU, US and Russia.

EU Council declaration was a considerable departure from the US position on Iraq. Given the French, Russian and Chinese reluctance to give green signal to an immediate invasion of Iraq casts doubt on the US aspiration for a second resolution at the forthcoming session of the UNSC. Anti-war demonstration through out the world is perhaps a reflection of the immorality and the unjustice of a hasty war on Iraq before all other avenues have been fully exhausted. A war yet could have, in the words of the German Foreign Minister, "disastrous consequences for long term regional stability (and) possible negative repercussions for joint fight against terrorism". It does not have the blessed aura of consummation between US forcefulness and European humanitarianism as in Kosovo. Nor delayed intervention in Iraq or non-intervention would represent western moral lapse of not intervening in Rwanda and in Sebrenicza to prevent massacre of thousand of innocent lives. Waging war for control of oil fields would be immoral and unjust. To secure global approval for any war it must have global acceptability and participants must be accountable at the end of the day.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary to the Bangladesh government and ambassador

The United States of America has gone mad



JOHN LE CARRÉ

America has entered one of its periods of historical madness, but this is the worst I can remember: worse than McCarthyism, worse than the Bay of Pigs and in the long term potentially more disastrous than the Vietnam War.

The reaction to 9/11 is beyond anything Osama bin Laden could have hoped for in his nastiest dreams. As in McCarthy times, the freedoms that have made America the envy of the world are being systematically eroded. The combination of compliant US media and vested corporate interests is once more ensuring that a debate that should be ringing out in every town square is confined to the loftier columns of the East Coast press.

The imminent war was planned years before bin Laden struck, but it was he who made it possible. Without bin Laden, the Bush junta would still be trying to explain such tricky matters as how it came to be elected in the first place; Enron; its shameless favouring of the already-too-rich; its reckless disregard for the world's poor, the ecology and a raft of unilaterally abrogated international treaties. They might also have to tell us why they support Israel in its continuing disregard for UN resolutions.

But bin Laden conveniently swept all that under the carpet. The

Bushies are riding high. Now 88 per cent of Americans want the war, we are told. The US defence budget has been raised by another \$60 billion to around \$360 billion. A splendid new generation of nuclear weapons is in the pipeline, so we can all breathe easy. Quite what war 88 per cent of Americans think they are supporting is a lot less clear. A war for how long, please? At what cost in American lives? At what cost to the American taxpayer's pocket? At what cost -- because most of those 88 per cent are thoroughly decent and humane people -- in

hypocrisy. The religious cant that will send American troops into battle is perhaps the most sickening aspect of this surreal war-to-be. Bush has an arm-lock on God. And God has very particular political opinions. God appointed America to save the world in any way that suits America. God appointed Israel to be the nexus of America's Middle Eastern policy, and anyone who wants to mess with that idea is a) anti-Semitic, b) anti-American, c) with the enemy, and d) a terrorist.

God also has pretty scary con-

I cringe when I hear my Prime Minister lend his head prefect's sophistries to this colonialist adventure. His very real anxieties about terror are shared by all sane men. What he can't explain is how he reconciles a global assault on al-Qaeda with a territorial assault on Iraq. We are in this war, if it takes place, to secure the fig leaf of our special relationship, to grab our share of the oil pot, and because, after all the public hand-holding in Washington and Camp David, Blair has to show up at the altar.

Iraqi lives?

How Bush and his junta succeeded in deflecting America's anger from bin Laden to Saddam Hussein is one of the great public relations conjuring tricks of history. But they swung it. A recent poll tells us that one in two Americans now believes Saddam was responsible for the attack on the World Trade Centre. But the American public is not merely being misled. It is being browbeaten and kept in a state of ignorance and fear. The carefully orchestrated neurosis should carry Bush and his fellow conspirators into the next election.

Those who are not with Mr Bush are against him. Worse, they are with the enemy. Which is odd, because I'm dead against Bush, but I would love to see Saddam's downfall -- just not on Bush's terms and not by his methods. And not under the banner of such outrageous

connections. In America, where all men are equal in his sight, if not in one another's, the Bush family numbers one President, one ex-President, one ex-head of the CIA, the Governor of Florida and the ex-Governor of Texas.

Care for a few pointers? George W. Bush, 1978-84: senior executive, Arbusto Energy/Bush Exploration, an oil company; 1986-90: senior executive of the Harken oil company. Dick Cheney, 1995-2000: chief executive of the Halliburton oil company. Condoleezza Rice, 1991-2000: senior executive with the Chevron oil company, which named an oil tanker after her. And so on. But none of these trifling associations affects the integrity of God's work.

In 1993, while ex-President George Bush was visiting the ever-democratic Kingdom of Kuwait to receive thanks for liberating them, somebody tried to kill him. The CIA

-- but oil, money and people's lives. Saddam's misfortune is to sit on the second biggest oilfield in the world. Bush wants it, and who helps him get it will receive a piece of the cake. And who doesn't, won't.

If Saddam didn't have the oil, he could torture his citizens to his heart's content. Other leaders do it every day -- think Saudi Arabia, think Pakistan, think Turkey, think Syria, think Egypt.

Baghdad represents no clear and present danger to its neighbors, and none to the US or Britain. Saddam's weapons of mass destruction, if he's still got them, will be peanuts by comparison with the stuff Israel or America could hurl at him at five minutes' notice. What is at stake is not an imminent military or terrorist threat, but the economic imperative of US growth. What is at stake is America's need to demonstrate its military power to all of us --

ain's opposition leaders can lay a glove on him. But that's Britain's tragedy, as it is America's: as our Governments spin, lie and lose their credibility, the electorate simply shrugs and looks the other way. And who doesn't, won't.

Blair's best chance of personal survival must be that, at the eleventh hour, world protest and an improbably emboldened UN will force Bush to put his gun back in his holster unfired. But what happens when the world's greatest cowboy rides back into town without a tyrant's head to wave at the boys?

Blair's worst chance is that, with or without the UN, he will drag us into a war that, if the will to negotiate energetically had ever been there, could have been avoided; a war that has been no more democratically debated in Britain than it has in America or at the UN. By doing so, Blair will have set back our relations with Europe and the Middle East for

decades to come. He will have helped to provoke unforeseeable retaliation, great domestic unrest, and regional chaos in the Middle East. Welcome to the party of the ethical foreign policy.

There is a middle way, but it's a tough one: Bush dives in without UN approval and Blair stays on the back. Goodbye to the special relationship.

I cringe when I hear my Prime Minister lend his head prefect's sophistries to this colonialist adventure. His very real anxieties about terror are shared by all sane men. What he can't explain is how he reconciles a global assault on al-Qaeda with a territorial assault on Iraq. We are in this war, if it takes place, to secure the fig leaf of our special relationship, to grab our share of the oil pot, and because, after all the public hand-holding in Washington and Camp David, Blair has to show up at the altar.

"But will we win, Daddy?"

"Of course, child. It will all be over while you're still in bed."

"Why?"

"Because otherwise Mr Bush's voters will get terribly impatient and may decide not to vote for him."

"But will people be killed, Daddy?"

"Nobody you know, darling. Just foreign people."

"Can I watch it on television?"

"Only if Mr Bush says you can."

"And afterwards, will everything be normal again? Nobody will do anything horrid any more?"

"Hush child, and go to sleep."

A friend of mine in California drove to his local supermarket with a sticker on his car saying: "Peace is also Patriotic." It was gone by the time he'd finished shopping.

Courtesy: The Times, London.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

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the number of pictures could easily be reduced -- many often depicting semi-nude females (for male readers' gratification I presume).

However if you keep sacrificing the crossword section in this way I don't have any choice but to stop buying *The Daily Star* altogether.

Mridu Thanki
Dhaka

Dinajpur blast

Immediately after the Dinajpur blast, I thought it would be too early to comment on it until a fair investigation is completed. But unlike the previous cases of bomb explosions where the Govt. had instantaneously formed judicial committees to probe the matter, this time it refrained from doing the same.

However, the newspapers simply hinted at the Islamic militant acts behind this blast. Agonisingly, bombs and its preparation are similar to those that caused tragedies in Mymensingh cinema halls, Chhayanat programme at Ramna batamul, Udichi programme at Jessor etc. suggesting a link among themselves.

Tariq
Canada

No crossword puzzle?

As a crossword puzzle addict, I find it very disturbing that with the smallest excuse (at present being cricket) the crossword section gets dropped from the paper.

What does the ruling party has to say about it?

Farhad Ahmed Khan
East Sherwala Para, Dhaka

air parliament session which no doubt enraged millions of cricket fans like me. BTV did the same when South Africa was playing their all-important game against New Zealand. When the match was heading towards its climax suddenly BTV aired the 10-O clock news! They could have broadcast that news easily after the end of the match. Now what is the point of watching a match when you can't enjoy the most crucial moments!

I request the BTV authority to consider the matter so the viewers can enjoy the World Cup tournament uninterrupted.

Mohammed Sohel Hara
Topkhana Road, Dhaka

INS list and the blame game</p