

# 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 interconnectivity, 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

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

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,

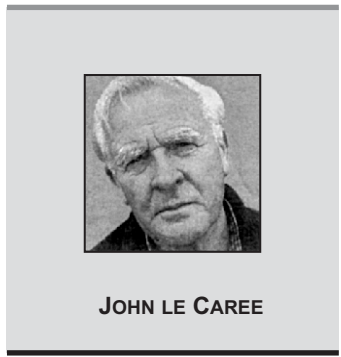
and biological defense capabilities. All these decisions were taken to bolster defense of Turkey. Meanwhile Jacques Chirac expressed his anger over the mutinous stance taken by the candidate members of the EU by supporting the US position without consulting all EU members in advance. Most of these countries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

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 unjustness 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 Sebrenezta 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



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 be telling 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-

believes that "somebody" was Saddam. Hence Bush Jr's cry: "That man tried to kill my Daddy." But it's still not personal, this war. It's still necessary. It's still God's work. It's still about bringing freedom and democracy to oppressed Iraqi people.

To be a member of the team you must also believe in Absolute Good and Absolute Evil, and Bush, with a lot of help from his friends, family and God, is there to tell us which is which. What Bush won't tell us is the truth about why we're going to war. What is at stake is not an Axis of Evil

to Europe and Russia and China, and poor mad little North Korea, as well as the Middle East; to show who rules America at home, and who is to be ruled by America abroad.

The most charitable interpretation of Tony Blair's part in all this is that he believed that, by riding the tiger, he could steer it. He can't. Instead, he gave it a phoney legitimacy, and a smooth voice. Now I fear, the same tiger has him penned into a corner, and he can't get out.

It is utterly laughable that, at a time when Blair has talked himself against the ropes, neither of Brit-

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 bank. 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."

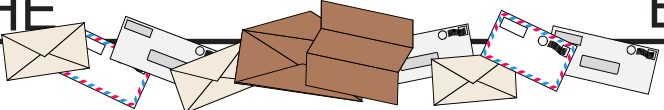
"And afterwards, will everything be normal again? Nobody will do anything horrid any more?"

"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 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.

## Amar Ekushey

Those daring young men who made a supreme sacrifice to uphold the honour and dignity of Bangla language on 21st of February, 1952 are also the first martyrs of a free Bangladesh. Our nationhood is uniquely intertwined with our language and culture. No nation in this world has taken their language so close to their hearts. We have a deeply emotional and romantic feeling for our language and culture and we have a valid reason for that.

During the repressive Pakistani rule our identity as a nation was threatened in the name of religion and during the Liberation War there was a deep and bloody conspiracy to destroy us as a nation. Human memory is very fragile, today those might be fading away but a proud nation never forgets its history and the sacrifices made by its brave sons and daughters. There is an inherent strength among us which helped us to sustain our spirit since we began our journey as a nation and I am confident that we shall overcome whatever odds we are facing these days.

**Akbar Huusain**  
Toronto, Canada

## Congratulations to

## Poet Al-Mujaheedi

On behalf of the Bangladesh Community in Kosovo and on behalf of the Ministry of Culture for the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) of Kosovo I congratulate Poet Al-Mujaheedi for being awarded Ekushey Padak 2003.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the government to nominate him as a potential poet for this award. I believe this award is the highest recognition of the country and I am sure after being honoured with such a prestigious award, Poet Al-Mujaheedi will be more responsible in terms of his contribution in Bangla Literature.

I wish him a sound health and long life.

**Quazi Johirul Islam**  
UNMIK, Kosovo

## 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.

I simply can't understand that why with four pages devoted to sports one corner cannot be kept safe for this purpose. I am certain

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 Jessore etc. suggesting a link among themselves.

What does the ruling party has to say about it?

**Farhad Ahmed Khan**  
East Shewra Para, Dhaka

Whenever anyone accuse the presence of religious fanatics in Bangladesh, we tend to blush all these as a mere propaganda. We were never ready even to investigate. The Government tried to make us believe that everybody in the world is engaged in conspiracy against us and we, as an ideal citizen believed so.

Whenever anyone inside the country said something about this, we branded him as a traitor. We never looked around us. Because of our mental setting, these group has become stronger and stronger day by day. The recent incident in Dinajpur proves the fact.

I am sure nobody will be arrested (let alone be punished) this time just like all the previous cases. Very recently there may be another blast, another mass killing. And I am sure that nobody can do anything about it.

**Tariq**  
Canada

## Unreasonable BTV!

BTV has started playing prank with its viewers during the on going World Cup tournament. The other day when India was playing against Zimbabwe they suddenly started to

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 Sohail Hara**  
Topkahana Road, Dhaka

## INS list and the blame game

Mr Yahya may find the blame game amusing, but for the Bangladeshis being harassed by mobile police units in NY, is not at all funny. While it is true that Sheikh Hasina does not have the power to sway Congress, her tireless efforts along with the likes of FEER and Times has contributed to the paranoia that has gripped the powers that be in the US.

Blame must be given where it is due, whether or not, the outcome is

unstoppable. Bangladeshi citizens who engage in activities that are counterproductive for the country must be held accountable.

**Shomit Chowdhury**  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

## Let justice prevail on earth!

It seems that the arrogant US ruling coterie with the complicity of the UK government is heading to wage an unjust war on Iraq irrespective of the clear message from the UN inspectors that Iraq has already been disarmed and has no storage of 'weapon of mass-destruction'. US is showing total disregard to the international community and trying to find or, if not possible, concoct an utterly inconceivable linkage between Iraq and September 11 disaster. Such practice appears to be deeply ingrained in the US statecraft.

Is the impending war because of any threat posed by Iraq? If we replace the word 'Iraq' by 'USA' in this question, an affirmative answer may find credits of credibility. The real intention, as millions of people demonstrated on February 15, is clearly to get an absolute command over the second largest petroleum

storage in the world. So why killing people of other nations for parochial national interest? Why this bloodshed for oil?

History testifies that that Iraq was America's staunchest ally and America supplied destructive weapons to Iraq during Iraq-Iran war. History is a witness that when Saddam was using chemical weapons against the Kurds, US maintained a policy of reticence and connivance. The only reason for supporting Saddam was that he was serving US interest in more than one ways. But when Saddam defied being a US puppet, Iraq had to undergo the severest economic embargo; Iraqi civilians were killed; health and education infrastructures were destroyed; innocent children and women were slain.

My request to the peace loving people of the world: Please wake up and toughen your resistance. This is a moral and human responsibility. Let us hope that justice will prevail and oppression will meet defeat and humiliation.

**Mostafa Khaled**  
Dhaka

## Dolly's death and cloning risks

Dolly, the cloned sheep is dead! It died

while it was only six years old. The baby sheep Dolly was the first animal to be successfully cloned from the adult cell. Dr. Ian Wilmut of Roslin Institute of Scotland created Dolly in 1996 after extensive research.

In the mean time some more animals including human child have been cloned. There is a furor over the matter and human cloning has been prohibited in many countries. Many of the heads of the state of the world rejected the idea as unethical and illogical. The Theologists are vehemently protesting the method, as it is a "Mastery on the God". Even Dolly's creator Dr. Ian Wilmut himself is one of the fiercest critics of human cloning.

Physicians were apprehending various complexities regarding Dolly's health after her birth. The premature death of Dolly proved their predictions correct. The death of Dolly suggests clones may age prematurely because their DNA source is older. Even if cloning emerges as safe and reliable, duplication of human gene will be viewed with abhorrence and it will surely be a bad news for human evolution. The Scientists must take note.

**M. H. Bari**  
Bionic Seafood Exports Ltd, Khulna