

## US plan for Iraq

No big role for UN

THE latest move on Iraq by the occupying powers suggests that they are not very enthusiastic about the primacy of the UN role in the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country. The United States and Britain have introduced a draft resolution, seeking an end to the UN sanctions against Iraq and control over its oil resources at least for a year.

Obviously, a legal instrument is needed to authorise sales of Iraqi oil and spending the revenues under a legitimate mechanism. This is specially warranted in the wake of the felt-need for lifting sanctions on Iraq which are in turn linked to the food-for-oil programme. The occupying powers have said they want to raise an Iraqi Assistance Fund for running the reconstruction and humanitarian programmes. They have also worked out the modalities of operation, with the central bank of Iraq playing a role in the management of the said fund. But what is sadly missing is an assertive role of the UN, though the draft resolution has provision for an advisory board that would include officials appointed by the UN secretary general and the International Monetary Fund.

The proposed arrangement suffers from some basic inadequacies, which ought to come under international scrutiny. First, inclusion of UN officials in the advisory board only would mean that the world body would have a token presence in Iraq. And that is one thing that the anti-war lobby, which now wants Iraq to quickly regain its position as a sovereign state, cannot endorse. Second, the UN role has been further reduced by the fact that there is no mention of the weapons of mass destruction in the resolution. The UN was working basically on the premise that Iraq had to be disarmed before the sanctions could be lifted. But the draft Anglo-American resolution has sidetracked the issue. Third, it might just be construed as an attempt to legitimise the military operation against Iraq. Establishing control over Iraq's oil resources through a UN resolution will lend an aura of legality to the US plan.

So there will be some intense diplomatic manoeuvrings in the days ahead, with the US-led coalition trying to have its sole control over Iraq and its detractors striving for a central UN role in the country. However, if freeing Iraq from Saddam Hussein's rule was the only goal of the US administration, it should not have any reservations about accepting a strong UN presence in the country at this juncture.

## The awkward trolley business

Ruthless exploitation of patients' vulnerability

AT the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the elements thriving on the sufferings of patients have found one more way of making money. They are charging a fixed amount for allowing patients to use trolleys, which, of course, should not cost anything normally. The trolley business is now reportedly fetching them Tk 5,000 to 10,000 every day. The racketeering, we are told, is run by outsiders. But it is not clear how outsiders can run an illegal business in front of the emergency room.

This is going on smoothly as relatives of patients do not hesitate to pay for a trolley when they desperately need the service. But imagine what the poor, not in a position to part with Tk 100, are left to do when they are denied a trolley free of cost. For instance, they had to physically carry a badly burnt patient off to the ward on Friday. The situation is clumsy enough to bring shame on any hospital.

The management may like to express regrets over its limitations and helplessness in the face of organised rowdism. But nothing can alter the truth that the hospital managers are showing unpardonable insensitivity to patients' woes, the poor ones in particular.

The trolley business is being run by a handful of people and it defies understanding why the hospital management cannot dislodge them. The situation may have to be interpreted differently if some wayward members of the hospital staff are found to be abetting. One cannot rule out the possibility since outsiders alone cannot run such a racket without the blessing of the insiders. Whatever might be the case, the fact remains that the poor are being exploited ruthlessly.

We hope the hospital management will evict the trolley gang without wasting any more time and bring some relief to patients and those accompanying them.

## Iraq and beyond

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

OF late one has observed a trend towards reconciliation of long standing conflicts. Indian Prime Minister Bajpayee during his recent visit to Srinagar extended an olive branch to Pakistan. Immediately Pak Prime Minister Jamali invited him to visit Islamabad, and also expressed his readiness to visit Delhi should Bajpayee find it difficult to go to Islamabad. Understandably after two fiasco -- bus trip to Lahore during Nawaz Sharif regime and President Musharraf's visit to Agra -- Bajpayee is cautious and has called for careful preparation of any summit if held. In the Middle East Palestine has a new Prime Minister and Quartet prepared road map fully accepted by Abu Mazen but conditionally accepted by Ariel Sharon, has been made public. In Sri Lanka, seventh round of talks between the Sri Lanka Government and the LTTE, though suspended by LTTE because it felt efforts were being made to marginalise its role, may be revived. The question is why? Has the Iraq episode truly brought about a unipolar world where the sole remaining superpower's interpretation of the concept of Westphalian state sovereignty as not being impregnable has dawned upon the world and that in order not to be inviolable all countries have to follow a common minimum standard of behaviour?

On 29th April in Moscow Tony Blair was asked to elucidate on his interview with the *Financial Times* in which he spoke about the unipolar world, about one single centre of power in the world - Europe and the United States. In reply Blair spoke of his belief that America and Europe (and indeed Russia too) should form a strategic partnership rather than set themselves up as rivals for a safer and more stable world. He felt rivalry would be highly dangerous and destabilising. He further felt that the overriding common strategic interests binding all would be to fight terrorism and ensure the elimination of WMD in the hands of unstable and repressive states. According to President Putin, Blair's interview with the *Financial Times*, and their discussion on mono-polarity with Europe and the US as the centre of power and the need for close strategic partnership with Russia and China point to a multipolar system. Putin felt that if the centre of power were based on the principles of international stability and security

then Russia would be interested. But if the decision making process in the system was not democratic and if the decisions were made just by one member of the international community and all others were required to simply subscribe to those decisions then such a system would be unacceptable to Russia.

Tony Blair was warned of recreating the division seen during the Cold War and the consequence of his reluctance to provide a central

with WMD and if the doctrine is systematically implemented it would represent a major redirection of policy and a radical revision of established international security rules. (Confusing Ends and Means : The doctrine of coercive pre-emption-John Steinburner-Arms Control Association-January/February 2003). Almost daily pronouncements from the Bush administration (one should immediately distinguish between

attempt to impose one would be viewed by the local populace as neo-imperialism and a latter day imposition of the "white man's burden": Iraq is a fractious country of contradictions and rival ambitions once described by the country's first modern ruler King Faisal I as consisting of "unimaginable masses of human beings, devoid of any patriotic idea, imbued with religious tradition and absurdities..... and prone to anarchy".

troops stay for two years as indicated will "democracy wave" in the region be encouraged or the US will be asked, as it was in Prince Sultan Air base in Saudi Arabia, to withdraw/reduce its troops? Iraq has shaken the core of the Arab world as most recently evidenced by Syrian actions towards extremist Palestinians and Hezbollah. Appointment of Abu Mazen as Palestinian Premier is another example. The question is how long

mentioned that China would be to the 21st century what the Kaiser's Europe was to the 20th century, an argument though flawed, cannot be totally ruled out. The European Union could be another candidate. Dr. Nye sees in Europe in terms of population, economy, technological skills or human resources as a possible equal to the US. But the commonality of interest of EU and US is so over encompassing that ultimately as EU Commissioner Chris Patten told the Euro Parliament that convergence of EU-US interests would do good to the world and make it safer and more prosperous.

Therefore, Dr Nye argues, the true paradox of American power is essentially that US is too great to be challenged by any nation state. However, at the same time US is not strong enough to solve new transnational problems by itself. Therefore, the US should define its national interests in ways that make these congruent to the national interest of other countries. Besides, US needs to embed as many powers as possible in multilateral frame works because as a preponderant power, cooperation would be forthcoming from others if they are consulted than if they are not. In this context, Colin Powell's threat to punish France for its "intransigence" is disturbing. Even the World Bank is questioning the legality of sending a mission to Iraq. Would the US then threaten to withdraw from the World Bank? Nearer home Colin Powell has hailed Bajpayee's offer to Pakistan for talks as a "moment of opportunity" and is sending his deputy Richard Armitage to encourage both sides for greater diplomatic engagement. As regards GOSL-LTTE talks the US has consistently encouraged the Norwegian facilitation of the peace process.

Despite some positive developments in the global scene, apprehensions remain about future American behaviour, future of the United Nations and the transformation of international law. One hopes that Darwinian precept of survival of the fittest; Orwellian satire of being under the microscope of the "Big Brother"; and the ultimate Stone Age precept of might is right will not become a reality.

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role to the UN in post-Saddam Iraq. President Putin recognised that the differences during the Cold War embedded in different ideology had indeed gone forever but denying the UN the central role in addressing major challenges in this century (i.e. Iraq) would exacerbate the differences within the international community. He was emphatic that legally the sanctions on Iraq introduced by UNSC was based on the suspicion of its possession of WMD and those sanctions could be lifted only by the UNSC once clarity had been fully established that those weapons no longer existed. It would therefore seem that Tony Blair's attempts to rope in Russia into a "unipolar multipolar" system did not succeed in his primary aim. It however remains to be seen what result the forthcoming EU-Russia summit on 31st May at St. Petersburg would bring as well as those of the first state visit to Britain by a Russian head of state since 1870s to take place between 15-27 June of this year.

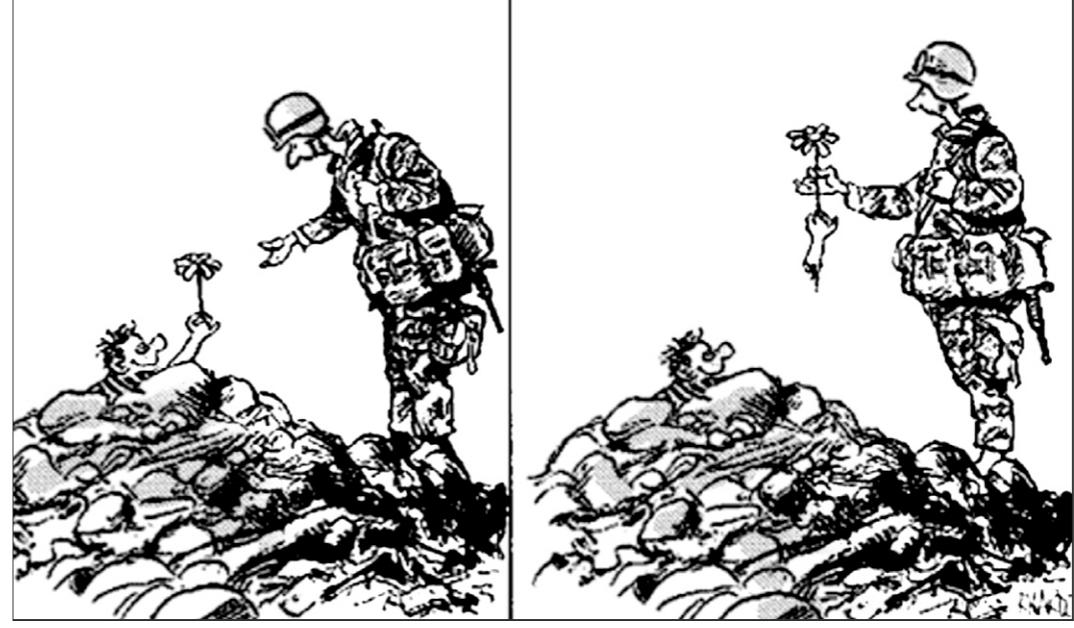
Regardless of these efforts the turbulences caused by Bush doctrine of coercive pre-emption (so described by John Steinbrenner of Centre for International and Security Studies at Maryland) relying primarily on coercive power that is to initiate violence in order to prevent it ignoring international legal restraint is more likely to generate further turbulence than contain it. Bush doctrine, Steinbrenner argued, suggested that the US would henceforth attack adversaries to prevent them not only from using but also from acquiring technologies associated

the American people -- one of the most generous, fair, just and democratic nations on earth -- from the ultraconservatives currently in power) gives out the pungent flavour of ordering a seemingly disorderly world into submission.

Of the three burning issues of the day i.e. Iraq, Indo-Pak tension and GOSL-LTTE peace talks: we may momentarily focus on the first one. Ephraim Karsh of the University of London wonders whether Iraq can realistically be transformed into the first ever Arab democracy (After the war : Reflection on post Saddam Iraq-March 3, 2003). According to him there is no grassroots yearning for democracy in Arab world and any American

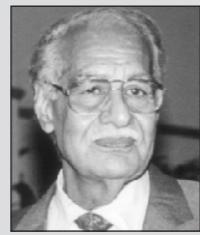
Military governor of Iraq Jay Garner would have a tough time in finding a coalition from the cauldron of twenty percent Sunnis, sixty percent Shites and twenty percent Kurds. Even humanitarian agencies are reportedly keeping the coalition forces at bay. UNSC as yet appears unlikely to lift sanctions on Iraq without inspection certification on Iraq's total disarmament. US installed interim government will lack legitimacy and international companies may be reluctant to buy Iraq -- oil outside UN ambit -- lest they get embroiled in future litigation.

And if Iraq's oil cannot be sold freely how will the reconstruction cost be paid? If the American



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## What's the alternative?



KULDIP NAYAR  
writes from New Delhi

at Srinagar that India would like to have a dialogue with Pakistan. Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali would not have responded with a phone call if he had not been driven by the compulsions of peace. Both sides realise that another round of hostilities may be disastrous because both of them have nuclear weapons which kill in lakhs.

I do not think that Washington nudged New Delhi to have talks. It would be unfair to Vajpayee if America were to take the credit.

blamed it for selling India to an Islamic country. Yet Vajpayee faces a predicament: how to effect an agreement when there is anti-Pakistan pressure on him from within the party and when Islamabad is not unequivocal on cross-border terrorism. The only way to bring around and convince Pakistan is to tell it frankly how sincere India is in spite of the mistrust about India in Pakistan. It should be clear to both countries that a settlement has to be evolved, taking care of every detail. The edifice needs to be built brick by

tiles on the agreement. Vajpayee believes in striking while the iron is hot.

Some parliamentarians from Pakistan were coming to India for creating a thaw in the frozen relations between the two countries. But their visit became secondary because the purpose was served by Vajpayee's speech at Srinagar. The Indian Prime Minister's letter to Jamali, suggesting "a calibrated approach," is wise and realistic. Fanatics on both sides are trying to sabotage the process. At least New

ing trade before Kashmir. Whatever goods are manufactured in Pakistan should be allowed to enter the Indian markets without an impost. (This should also be applicable to Bangladesh which has already obtained some concessions on this count). Once Islamabad has trade ties with New Delhi, it will come to have a vested interest in the jobs and the earnings which are bound to accrue in their wake.

The idea of an economic common market may not mature for a long time to come because India is a developed country compared to Pakistan. Bhutto once told me: "We will have to see whether we can mutually benefit. But as far as a common market is concerned, I think we are not yet ready for such an arrangement." However, trade among the three countries -- India, Pakistan and Bangladesh -- should grow. One estimate made a decade ago was that if India and Pakistan were to have even normal trade, there would be a turnover of Rs. 4,000 crore a year.

But if distrust and suspicion continue to overtake the subcontinent and if the goodwill generated by Vajpayee's initiative and Jamali's positive response is allowed to be dissipated, events will meander to a situation where there is no escape from trading threats and counter-threats. We have covered the ground many a time before.

in India and Niaz Naik from among the retired bureaucrats of Pakistan had almost reached an understanding before former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was ousted. Vajpayee regretfully said after the military coup: "We were almost there."

The crucial question is: How far is the military in Pakistan ready to go to reach an agreement? If its agenda is just to stay in power, as it seems to be, it will oppose any understanding that will weaken its hold in Pakistan. Once India is not the enemy, there may be a demand in Pakistan to cut the military's size. Its visibility in civil service will also go. One suggestion coming from Islamabad is worth consider-

Kuldip Nayar is an eminent Indian columnist.

## BETWEEN THE LINES

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There was a tinge of emotion in his voice when he spoke in the Rajya Sabha the other day: How long shall we play with the lives of people in India and Pakistan? He spoke from the heart and he honestly wanted to bury the hatchet. I was present at his impact-making speech at the Lahore civic reception. The stand-off has been there for years. Yet it is clear to everybody on both sides that there is no option other than rapprochement, no matter how long it takes. That the common people on both sides want peace is clear from the wave of jubilation that spread in the two countries after Vajpayee's speech

brick. We failed so many times in the past probably because we wanted the India-Pakistan settlement to be a big show. Agreements were reached at the eleventh hour in a dramatic manner after early phases of reverses.

La Bahadur Shahstri and General Ayub Khan first announced their failure at Tashkent. The BIP, despite its electoral objective of having an anti-Pakistan stance, has supported his initiative as it did after Lahore. It is a welcome development that the BIP should be taking the initiative and settling matters with Pakistan.

If any other political party in power had done so, the BIP would have dubbed it anti-national and

Delhi should not be seen as dragging its feet. This fear has already begun to be perceptible in Paki-

stan.

However, I have an uneasy feeling about New Delhi's officialdom. In the name of preparing "adequate ground" it has undone many agreements in the past. In fact, the bureaucracy in both countries has developed a vested interest in the status quo. It gives it an alibi to explain when anything goes wrong either in India or Pakistan. At the same time, the bureaucracy has come to acquire importance because of the confusion in the minds of leaders on both sides. They want to have their cake and eat it too. That can never happen

when a government has to choose between war and peace, between jingoism and normalcy.

It would help if Vajpayee and President General Pervez Musharraf were to open an unofficial communication channel, away from the glare of publicity and the day-to-day drudgery of meeting a point with a counterpoint. This channel should be used to sound the top without bringing them in officially. It is an open secret that the unofficial dialogue between RK Mishra from the information world

in India and Niaz Naik from among the retired bureaucrats of Pakistan had almost reached an understanding before former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was ousted.

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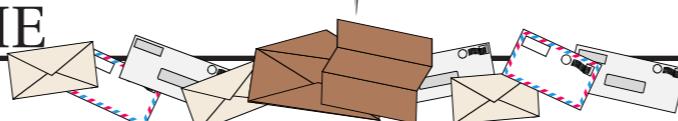
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For reasons of political convenience, indifference and cowardice this mass murder and ethnic cleansing has been ignored, countenanced and/or hushed up by the rest of the world particularly ASEAN, US, EU, China, Japan, Australia, Papua New Guinea and, of course, the UN itself. The murder and oppression of West Papuans continues right now. Unquestionably the UN, ASEAN, US, EU, China, Japan, Australia and Papua New Guinea should be taking an active lead in rectifying this situation which they themselves arranged and legitimised. An ignored, subjugated and slaughtered people needs human rights and justice urgently.

John Finch  
Brunswick, Australia

## TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

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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.

## Apartment Committee

My husband is a retired covenanted officer and we have been living all through in houses provided by the company he worked in.

Recently, we have moved to an apartment in Dhanmandi, where there is a committee consisting of only the owners of the apartments. There being no members representing the tenants, we are living in a tensed atmosphere all the mercy of the owner member committee.

Even the security guards' behaviour are not the same towards the owners and the tenants! Instead of doing security job they are more busy policing the tenants. It feels like the rulers are the owners

and the tenants are the subjects. Though as tenants we have to share the salary of the security guards and also pay for other expenses levied by the committee.

My primary question is how legal are these committees? Is there any Apartment Law where such clause of Committee is mentioned?

Minhaj Ahmed  
Uttara, Dhaka

## Who is in-charge?

Since our independence many foreign-aided projects involving intensive and comprehensive studies on various disciplines have been conducted in Bangladesh. This involved a huge amount of money as well as time to gather necessary primary data and infor-

mation and finally putting them down in the form of project reports. Moreover the common-man of the country has to carry the burden of foreign aid by repaying the loans through taxes. Let's also not forget the amount of trees cut to produce paper on which those reports were printed.

Who is in-charge of keeping track of all these huge volumes of reports at the end of these projects? In recent years, to name a few, Flood Action Plan (FAP), Sunderbans Management Project (SMP), Forest Resources Management Project (FRMP) carried out detailed studies and produced valuable reports. Flood Plan Coordination Organization (FPCO) was responsible for FAP but FPCO no longer exists now and was supposed to merge with Water Resources Planning Organization

(WARPO), but did that happen? And what about the massive volumes of reports produced by FAP? Even before, Master Plan Organization (MPO) produced a bulk of valuable reports those too are untraceable.

Common sense tells me that the relevant government agencies/organisations should have kept and maintained all the reports produced during the respective projects. I was out of the country for more than five years and recently I needed