

Iraq needs elected government to fill the vacuum

UN forces can do little to defuse situation

THE Bush administration's decision to reduce the strength of US forces and bring in troops from other nations under the UN umbrella faces two major obstacles. The first obstacle springs from the disagreement between the US-UK led occupation authorities and France, Germany and Russia on the precise wording of the proposed resolution at the UN Security Council (UNSC).

The second obstacle lurks from the unwillingness of nations to contribute troops amid serious deterioration in Iraq's security situation. Routine attacks on occupation forces, UN members and even Iraqis cooperating with the occupying powers have deterred otherwise willing nations risking the lives of their soldiers. Nations do remember that the US-UK cabal had little regard for the profound opinion all over the world against an invasion of Iraq under flimsy pretexts.

At the perceptive level, the prospective troops contributing countries suffer from indecisiveness and confusion with regard to troops' commitment. For instance, India seems unwilling to contribute troops due to its initial opposition to Iraq's invasion as well as the risks under which its troops must operate, if deployed.

Unless the UNSC can create a 'blue helmet' force to maintain security in Iraq, Pakistan and Bangladesh too will find it harder to make such contributions. Bangladesh and Pakistan too opposed Iraq's occupation by the US-UK forces.

The case of Turkey is quite different from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. As a NATO member, Turkish troops might work under a different set of mandate irrespective of any UN resolution authorising such force contribution.

That prospect too seems bleak due to the hesitation of France and Germany -- two other NATO members in the pack -- to accept anything but a comprehensive resolution that would begin the process of transferring Iraq's political power to an elected indigenous body.

Nations also question US' intention due to the Bush administration's determination to cling on to the command of an international force. It is one thing to command troops by occupation powers, quite different however it is when the forces are created by the UN and the command is vested in commanders chosen under a totally different set of criteria.

Consequently, and the US-UK desperation to cobble together an international force under the UN umbrella notwithstanding, the US-UK occupation powers must arrange to hold an election in Iraq at their earliest convenience and stipulate a precise time frame for the withdrawal of all occupation forces from that country.

This commitment is likely to pay two dividends: (1) reduction in the instances of guerilla attacks on occupation forces, hence an improvement in the security situation; and (2) willingness of many UN members to contribute troops under the UN in a much stable security situation.

For, even if an international force can be cobbled, it will be a bad precedent to install UN troops in an occupied country, particularly at a time when the request for the same was never entertained with respect to Palestine which too is under Israeli occupation that continues to endanger global peace and tranquillity.

Khagrachhari incident shameful

The arsonists must be brought to book

THE recent attack on indigenous people in some remote villages of Khagrachhari exposes the vulnerability those people are having to live with. We note with trepidation that not just Lemuchhari but seven other villages were set on fire forcing the inhabitants to flee their homes in fear and panic. There are even allegations of marauders having vandalised some Buddhist temples.

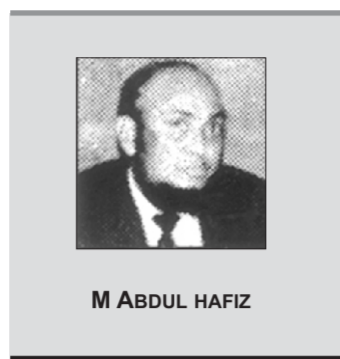
According to reports the attack was triggered after a Bangalee boy was allegedly kidnapped by a gang of tribal people. Even if the allegation is true why should there have been such a massive retaliatory attack on the tribal villages in the form of torching houses? Was there no answer for kidnapping. The incident has been indicative of a rancorous relationship between the two communities which does not bode well for their synergic development and welfare. Moreover, it impinged on the fundamental right of citizens to live on equal terms regardless of religious or ethnic origins.

We wonder why the local administration showed a rather laid-back attitude to the episode. The administration had no definite information on how many houses were damaged or how many indigenous people were made homeless by the reckless attack.

We urge the government at the highest level to order an investigation into the Khagrachhari incident. Let's identify the culprits behind the violation of human rights and bring them to book. Also the government needs to rehabilitate those hapless, destitute people.

Our indigenous people should not only feel protected but also be seen to have been protected.

The woes of an unequal alliance



M ABDUL HAFIZ

BOUND to the United States in multiple security treaties Pakistan once gained reputation as "America's most allied ally." That reputation slipped in 1960s, but rose swiftly during the Afghanistan war (1979-89) only to fall again in the years following Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. Pakistanis are aptly perturbed by this evident inconsistency in the relationship. Indeed, nothing had drawn more useful public commentary in Pakistan thereafter than what Pakistanis almost universally understood to have been Pakistan's unceremonious dumping by Washington once its usefulness in bringing down Soviet Union expired.

Just how favourably Washington responded to Pakistan's courtship of it depended on bewilderingly diverse factors -- from the state of Pakistan's confrontational relationship with India and the strength of its embrace of the West's mantras, the political democracy and free market economies to the spirit in which it incorporated Islam to its state identity and the freedom it took in the pursuit of its nuclear programme. However, more than any of these factors what always affected Pakistan's standing in Washington most significantly was its strategic utility; whether and to what extent its leaders seemed 'able and willing' to combine Pakistan's national interests with the US policy imperatives of the day. In a blatantly asymmetric relationship it was invariably Washington's perception of strategic necessity together with Pakistan's capacity of adapting to it which, in fact, drove the US-Pakistan relations and obviously it was again the US which always

called the shots.

Pakistan's capacity for adoption to US policy imperatives was put to what was probably its severest test in the period following the fateful event of 11 September, 2001. Washington's immediate identification of Taliban-ruled Afghanistan as the sponsor of al-Qaeda terrorist network and thus an active accomplice to the terrorist attacks and consequently the logical first target in the US global war on terrorism plunged

was publicly applauded by none other than President Bush, the aids were resumed and military cooperation restarted. Thus an old alliance which had been on the verge of collapse when at the end of the last century all aid was stopped and even delivery of military equipment purchased was not allowed under Pressler Law could now be rescued and put on track -- thanks to Pakistan's riding an anti-terrorist bandwagon! That a sanction was

Marines and FBI agents to walk in and out of the country with impunity. None could do the US' bidding in more perfect way than its redoubtable ruler General Musharraf who left no stone unturned in complying with US' demand presumably also to promote his personal agenda. He took high-risk steps to silence the anti-American voices in the country but succeeded in maintaining an upward trend in US-Pakistan relations at the peak of which he was

onal and of a time-span of five years -- it was a total disappointment. Even according to CENTCOM data of May this year Pakistani economy suffered, as a consequence of the US' operations in Afghanistan, the losses of over \$10bn. The critics argue that Musharraf regime has under-sold the country!

As regards Kashmir, the issue of Pakistan's dispute over it with India was perfunctorily dealt with. President Bush only very briefly referred

her attention is shifting elsewhere to preempt the countries possessing WMD. The generations of Pakistanis accustomed to ups and downs in the US-Pakistan relations are genuinely concerned about the continuance of the warmth between the two in the wake of the US' shifting interests and already there are syndromes of expediency in her policy. They bitterly remember that in 1990 immediately after the end of Afghan war when a battered and bruised Pakistan was in the need of continued US assistance and goodwill, the erstwhile ally was punished with the imposition of sanction. It is essentially against this background reeking with suspicion and mistrust that the Pakistanis viewed the outcome of Camp David.

The decade of 1990s witnessed a conscious decision by the US to shape relation with the countries of South Asia in the light of national priorities and India was singled out for being cultivated as the emerging power in the region that could be a counter to China. Though the US clearly attaches greater importance to its relation with India, it finds it expedient to maintain a good working relationship with Pakistan both as an ally against terrorism and as a major moderate Islamic state. The US' stakes have risen significantly in the region and for Pakistan's geo-strategic clout she cannot permanently abandon Pakistan.

The contradictions in the difficult relationship between the US and Pakistan have been best exemplified by Syeda Abida Husain, Pakistan's former ambassador to Washington while taking part in a TV discussion recently in London. She argued that "Pakistan has always desired marriage with America but the latter has preferred *muta*." She was referring to the derogatory practice of one night stand, considered permissible in some sects in Islam and still seen in parts of Iran.

Brig (ret'd) Hafiz is former DG of BISS.

PERSPECTIVES

Though the US clearly attaches greater importance to its relation with India, it finds it expedient to maintain a good working relationship with Pakistan both as an ally against terrorism and as a major moderate Islamic state. The US' stakes have risen significantly in the region and for Pakistan's geo-strategic clout she cannot permanently abandon Pakistan.

the army-ruled government of Pakistan in acute crisis. For sheer proximity it could not possibly escape its involvement. Also Pakistan with its image of a country that helped bringing Taliban to power couldn't but be suspicious of being the US terror target. To make things tricky for Pakistan's military government, neighbouring India promptly offered Washington her total support for impending war on terror. Thus Pakistan's actual choice announced on 16 September to join the global coalition against terrorism surprised none.

Addicted to an American connection since 1950s the bulk of Pakistan's military who matters in Pakistan's decision making almost spontaneously supported the government's *volte face* in portending a period of U-turn in the country's regional and domestic policy. With no compunction Pakistan went ahead to ditch the Taliban it once helped creating, severed its relationship with regime in Kabul and provided bases and extended other military facilities for the US' first war on terror in Afghanistan. In a *quid pro quo* the US lifted the sanction imposed earlier. Appreciating Pakistan's crucial support turning itself into a frontline state to fight terrorism, not only Pakistan's role

imposed in 1999 for the military takeover and a sullen President Clinton, during his five hours' stay in Pakistan, on his way back from 5-day India visit called upon the country to fight terrorism and to restore democracy were forgotten altogether.

Eversince Pakistan meticulously followed the US' anti-terror script -- hunting down fleeing and hiding Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives, handing over terrorist suspect to American authority and allowing US

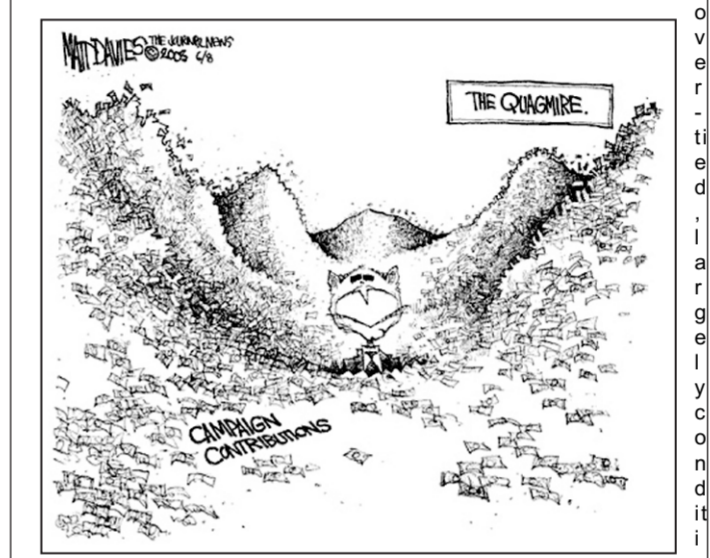
summoned to Mount Camp David -- considered an honour for any third world leader.

Understandably, the Pakistanis pinned their high hopes on the outcome of Camp David, particularly with regard to their country's core issue -- Kashmir, long-term partnership and compensation for the meritorious services rendered during Afghan war. But when their president settled for what many of them considered 'pea-nuts' -- a 3.1bn dollar aid package which is

to it during his talk with the press. In fact that was hardly the way Pakistan's 'core issue' deserved to be treated. Obviously Bush did not seem to have pushed Vajpayee towards a dialogue with Islamabad on Pakistan's term as expected by the Pakistanis. After all, there could be a price tag for all of Musharraf's anti-terror reforms initiated under American pressure. On the contrary, Pakistan's opposition camp suspects even a sell-out! A PPP leader sarcastically said that the general's body language indicated that "he had done a dirty deal on Kashmir," whatever that was supposed to be.

The supply of F-16 warplanes urgently needed and specifically requested by Pakistan as part of its defence needs was summarily turned down at Camp David as if it was an irrelevant demand altogether. These coveted planes have emerged as some sort of a status symbol in Pakistan's military ties with the US. Pakistanis obviously grudge the fact that they could not be acquired even at the present state of relationship.

What is however disturbing most the Pakistani minds is a spectre of suspicion if Pakistan would again be abandoned as the US' war on terrorism is all but over in Afghanistan and



Japan's 'no' to the draft Cancun Ministerial Text

MONZURUL HUQ writes from Tokyo

AS the Cancun chapter of World Trade Organization (WTO) talks draws nearer, there are emerging signs that the five-day ministerial meeting is not going to be an easy one for different countries and economic blocks to forge a consensus on vital issues related to agriculture and trade liberalisation. At the upcoming September 10-14 talks in Cancun, Mexico, a draft of an agreement outlining the basic points of a global trade treaty by the end of 2004 will be presented to trade ministers from 146 WTO member states. Sweeping reform in agro sector is central to WTO negotiations on lowering trade barriers so that a free market system can be applied in trade on farm products as well.

Developing nations of the world, including Bangladesh, have already expressed concern that the talks at Cancun are destined to favour the rich and the powerful, and also made it clear that they suspect that the United States and the European Union are going to use the negotiations as a pretext to help their agro industrial sector break into the economies of the backward nations, resulting in severe consequences as agriculture provides the main support for absorbing the bulk of the workforce in those countries. For quite sometime, they were suspicious too about the motives of Japan, which they thought was poised to join the powerful western lobby in exploiting the weak economic strength of the developing countries. But Japan now seems to have come out of its earlier position of helping the Western block stretching its long

hands well beyond the industrial sectors of each and every country, although the main reason for this changing Japanese approach has less to do with country's sympathetic approach towards the position of the developing world. The Japanese leadership is under strong pressure from the farming lobby to take necessary step to protect the interest of farmers who feel threatened that bringing down all barriers on trade in farm products and reducing tariffs will have a serious consequence on country's agriculture.

Although a broad range of

penetrate that part of their private life in the name of trade liberalisation could only lead to a new cycle of poverty and suffering. This, they also argue, is bound to lead to an unprecedented uneven competition where the disadvantaged farming sector of the poor can have no match to that of the subsidy inflated agro industries of the West.

Farm subsidies in advanced countries of the West, for example, exceed the total per capita income of many poor nations. The \$4 billion cotton subsidies that the United States annually provides to 25,000

a competitive world of liberal trade practices where their competitiveness has no match to that of the advanced countries.

The position of Japan, on the other hand, is not that disadvantageous as that of the developing world. But even so, Japan has already expressed concern about the blueprint that has been drafted last month at a meeting in Geneva to help the stalled global trade talks make a fresh start at Cancun. As the negotiating parties at the Geneva meeting failed to reach an agreement on issues ranging from

understanding of trade, Japan strongly supports the concept of the coexistence of various types of agriculture. Based on that principle, Japan is willing to propose modalities that have flexibility among products, capable of continuing policy reforms, and are well balanced between exporting and importing countries. He also expressed concern that the pressure being created by the United States and some other advanced countries to wave the barriers in trade in agro products would jeopardise the survival of many developing countries and

country's market would have a serious consequence on the surrounding environment as well as on healthy social practices that has proven far more effective in solving various needs of the society, he said. This multiple function of agriculture, according to Kamei, has not been explained properly in the Draft WTO ministerial text.

Agriculture also has a function to ensure safe food supply, not only simply to ensure ample supply. This important aspect of farming too should have its reflection on any document dealing with agriculture and farm products, he said. Moreover, as for many developing countries agriculture forms the foundation of the society, Japan, according to country's agriculture minister, would call for a flexible approach so that their already disadvantaged position does not deteriorate further.

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There is a no doubt secret negotiation, arm-twisting and simple display of raw economic power by the rich will once again find their way in Cancun to make sure that the interests of the powerful are protected. Only a firm united stand by the developing countries can make things different. And as they now have an unexpected supporter from the rich group like Japan, Cancun most likely would provide a better chance to achieve a fairer global trading system that they are hoping for.

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subjects like drugs and intellectual property, textiles and fare competition in international trade are to be discussed at Cancun meeting, issues related to agriculture and trade on farm products are considered to be crucial for the developing countries as well as for Japan. In the developing world most people live in the rural sector and are involved in some way or other with farming. In agrarian societies that most of the developing countries represent, agriculture provides the vital link for the sustenance of social structures that have been in place from time immemorial. Hence, maintaining that rural form of life and social behaviour is crucial for the very survival of such societies, many of which now feel threatened that paving the way for the rich to

well-off farmers bring misery to 10 million Africans involved in cotton farming. Bringing down all trade barriers in those countries to introduce a free market system so that American cotton can penetrate the market without any obstacle would easily destroy whatever remains of the already cornered cotton farming in Africa and thus making the societies dependent on imports from outside, which would no doubt give further boost to the already very high unemployment rate back at home. The amount of subsidy that every European cow is enjoying amounts to \$2.50 a day or roughly \$880 per year, which is more than double the amount of per capita income in Bangladesh. There is no shortage of such equations to prove the vulnerability that the backward nations are now facing in

farm subsidies to tariffs on industrial and farm products, the chairman of the meeting, Uruguayan Ambassador Carlos Perez de Castillo, with the backing from the WTO chief Supachai Panitchpakdi, drafted the Cancun ministerial text to give the talks a boost.

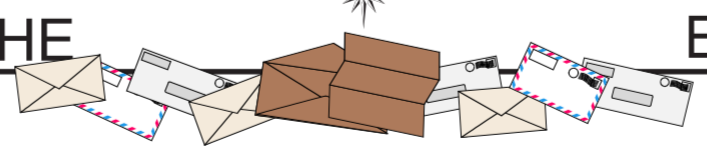
Japan claims that the draft gives preferential treatment to big farm exporting countries and hence presents many problems. Speaking at a press conference earlier this week in Tokyo, Japan's Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Yoshiyuki Kamei made it clear that at the meeting in Cancun he intends to press strongly for revisions to the text.

According to the Japanese minister, as agriculture provides a function the scope of which goes much beyond the narrow

disrupt the normally practiced lifestyle of many other countries including Japan. A situation where only a handful of countries will control agriculture while in most others the agrarian bases tracing back to thousands of years will be destroyed is, according to Kamei, not a welcoming idea at all.

He reminded the press that agriculture has always played diversified roles in different societies and that need is yet to be overturned just to facilitate free market trading practices. The green rice paddies that cover Japanese countryside, for example, prevent flooding and serve to preserve water naturally in addition to providing a staple for the dining table. Destroying that farming culture by allowing cheap imported products to compete freely in

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.

Sportsmanship got the victory out of hand!

I was really shocked just like other millions of viewers watching Bangladesh's last Test match -- to see how all the efforts came to a losing end. I really do not understand why Mohammad Rafique did not run out Umar Gul when he was short of crease. Because this was a great chance and there was no need to remind the batsman of his mistake.

Where our gentle Rafique shows his sportsman spirit, the English bowler Giles got South African all-rounder Kallis out when he was out of the crease. Giles did not show any kind of sportsmanship, but he was admired for being careful and clever and earned respect in his team and in the cricket world. I wonder how

much respect did Rafique earn by showing such gesture? Hard luck for the leg spinner!
Arman Khan
Tejkunipara, Farmgate, Dhaka

Well done Bangladesh!

I am simply amazed by Bangladesh's Herculean effort against the Pakistan cricket team in the final test. The boys showed lot of character and mental strength. Bravo! We really are proud of you! The tigers played the game in its true spirit and didn't resort to any unethical means. I would like to convey my heartfelt felicitation to Bangladesh team for their outstanding performance and wish them best of luck for upcoming one-day series.
Mohammed Sohel Hara

Withdrawal of third class bar

The education authority has kindly withdrawn the third class bar by cancelling the clause nine of the 'nine-point agreement' that was signed during the past government. This decision was published in all the national dailies on April 2, 2003. In spite of this decision some advertisements are still found to include a clause restricting applicants having third class in any public examination from applying for appointment. This is a clear violation of government's decision. We fail to understand how such advertisements can be published in the national dailies by any Educational Institution and why the government should remain silent if

the decision withdrawing the third class bar has been taken to the effect of the non-government educational institutions in general.

From the report published in the national dailies on April 2, 2003, we find no ambiguity in the decision. All the government colleges are bound to obey the decision regarding their recruiting process. So, imposing a third class bar denying the right of any applicant, should be considered as an offence and any educational institution violating the order should be dealt with accordingly. We would also request the Ministry of Education to ensure that the order of withdrawing the third class bar reaches each and every educational institution of the country in the form of a circular. The decision of the Ministry of Education published in the news-

papers cannot strictly bind the institutions unless it is communicated to them in the shape of an official circular duly memo numbered and dated. I would like to note here that I wanted to collect a copy of the same from our college office. But the office informed me that no such circular was received by them yet. Similar answer I got from few other colleges.

From the above negative answers of the colleges of Dhaka city, one should rather be confused whether the Ministry of Education has at all issued any official circular on the issue.
M. Sadeq
Chairman, Department of Management, Tejaqon College, Farm gate, Dhaka

Statistical puzzle!

This is in reference to DS's first page news titled "Wake up to foreign investors' woes" on September 5, 2003, where it was mentioned that a debate arose between United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Dhaka and Board of Investment (BoI) about Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) figures in Bangladesh. According to the UNCTAD, Bangladesh received \$45 million FDI in the 2002 calendar year, but the BoI showed the figure as \$328.22 million FDI in the same calendar year. Pointing to the debates over the FDI figures between Bangladesh Bank (BB) and the BoI, UN resident coordinator in Bangladesh Jorgen Lissner said the government organisations should be much more responsible in their services. He also said the debate exposed the quality of service available in Bangladesh. Apparently from my recent research experience I am

fully concur with Mr. Lissner about the statistical puzzle. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) is the seminal source of data amongst the researchers and the different domestic and foreign data publication organisations. In some cases BBS data are misprinted and ambiguous. Here I cite some samples.

According to BBS Statistical Pocketbook 1999 (page. 280), GDP at current market price is 1663240 million Taka in the 1995-96 fiscal year, but the BBS Statistical Yearbook 1996 (p.485) shows Taka 1301600 million for the same fiscal year. Interestingly the BBS Statistical Yearbook 1996 shows export figure (p.305) 51415, 60272, 74198, and 88215 million taka for 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 fiscal year respectively at current market prices, and the same BBS Statistical Yearbook 1996 shows in another place (p.485) 61422,

73634, 90696 & 104169 million Taka at current market prices for the same mentioned fiscal years respectively.

For import data the case is also ambiguous. Thousands of misprinted and ambiguous data are found in BBS data publications. As in most cases World Bank, IMF, UNCTAD, WTO, UNESCO, UNICEF and many other foreign organisations publish yearly data and they follow the BBS data, when these organisations publish their data, the researchers fall in a puzzle about the validity of BBS data like myself. So, the government and the BBS should be much more careful and cautious about their data publications and should change their habitual way of data computation. So that the researchers will not fall in a statistical puzzle!

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