

Police under attack

Lawlessness touches a new low

CRIMINALS are not sparing even the members of the police force. This illustrates the extent to which criminality has gone. No fewer than 22 police personnel have been killed by criminals in the last 13 months as a vernacular daily pointed out. The figure is high enough to create a sense of insecurity among the law enforcers themselves, let alone the citizenry. If those who are supposed to protect us prove so vulnerable then who do the ordinary citizens look up to for their own security?

The criminals appear to be enjoying a kind of preponderance that completely negates the force of law. Their domination has seemingly increased in direct proportion to the declining grip of police over the situation.

The killing of a police officer last Thursday is a fresh reminder of the increasing dangers their calling is exposing them to. Their threat perception does not appear to be realistic as the criminals are often found to be outmanoeuvring them.

Those who lost their lives set an example of dedication to their profession. Their sacrifice will inspire others to fight crime with courage. We are in sympathy with their bereaved families and urge the government to help them out in their hour of need.

That said, the most ominous development has been the lack of urgency to arrest the killers or to break the back of the crime syndicates which pose a threat to law enforcers. The police department appears to be too slow in realising that its own members are no longer safe.

The nature and origin of the groups of criminals may not be the same all over the country. But one thing is very clear: they possess lethal weapons and are pretty much organised. The abundant supply of small arms and bombs is a source of great worry that has to be eliminated in order to bring about a turn-around.

Police must be better trained and equipped to counter the challenge of organised crime which is becoming more and more formidable. The government must handle the issue on a priority basis.

Good move by Kuala Lumpur

ID card for expatriate workers

WE wonder, why this was not done before! Better late than never, though. It is good to know that the Malaysian government is going to introduce identification cards for foreign workers employed in the country. This will pay two kinds of dividends, one for the host country and the other for the expatriate community. The Malaysian authorities will be able to tell the legal workers from the illegal ones. On the other hand, the authorised foreign workers will be protected against police raids or action.

We are for perfecting the procedures of manpower export to any country, so that the unscrupulous elements cannot subvert the system to their selfish ends. In that context, work permits, identity cards and compliance with contractual obligations are elements that manpower importing and exporting countries must attach equal importance to. The governments' concerns for these should permeate the private sector levels. For, unsuspecting people seeking employment have often been entrapped in dubious circumstances. Sometimes they were also to blame for their streaks of misadventure and gullibility. There have been unfortunate instances of deportation causing embarrassment to the country at the receiving end, which must be avoided. Our relationship with the Malaysian government is based on goodwill and mutual understanding. There are 1.2 lakh Bangladeshis with fully recognised working status in Malaysia.

However, it has to be noted that fresh recruitment of workers from Bangladesh to Malaysia is currently on hold. One would have thought that after the formal signing of the MOU between Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur in October last year, recruitment would be resumed sooner than later.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

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Role of police

In a western country, a police officer is an important person. But what is his position in our country? They are not respected because of their behaviour, service, character and, above all, their activities. They are not friendly and not ready to serve us properly. They are the ones who should maintain law and order and ensure our security. But it is a matter of regret that most of them do not discharge their duties honestly.

If this continues in our country, then what will be our future? They should bear in mind the connotation of the great word—police. Will any change come with the change of their dress? It is only the change

of their exterior, not their inner soul, their mind, their character.
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Stop building eco-park

What is an eco-park? What is the meaning of eco-park and its justification? We have heard about zoo, museum, botanical garden, park, children's park, fish aquarium, wild life sanctuary etc., but hardly about eco-park.

The concept of eco-park might have been exported to Bangladesh by some donor countries or agencies to give us foreign loan and in return we have to pay them back a

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

PRESIDENT Bush's State of the Union address of 20th January was not combative in the sense that it did not contain any warning to the UN from becoming irrelevant. But it also contained no appeal to multilateralism except his sarcasm aimed at his critics by saying that US "duties in Iraq must be internationalised" when so many countries from old and new Europe, South East and Far East Asia, South America and others had committed troops to strengthening the coalition efforts in Iraq. Understandably because of the low caucus of Democratic Presidential nominee hopefuls (won by Senator Bob Kerry) and the coming New Hampshire Primary, President Bush's speech was also directed at the domestic audience illustrated by his challenge to the Congress to complete "some unfinished business on the issue of taxes."

On his resolve to fight war on terror he was unambiguous and unrelenting. "For diplomacy to be effective" he said "words must be credible, and no one can now doubt the word of America". Though he avoided mentioning Al-Qaida-Saddam Hussein links nor the possible imminent use of WMD as casus belli of the Iraq war, President Bush was unwavering in his belief that but for the war Saddam Hussein's WMD programme would have continued, UN weakened because of non-implementation of its resolutions on Iraq, and the "killing fields" of Iraq where thousands of men, women and children had vanished into sands would still have thrived. He was clearly putting forward the argument of American commitment "to keeping the world's most dangerous weapons out of the hands of the most dangerous regimes", and of the doctrines of preemption and humanitarian intervention in Iraq.

One could find a theoretical basis among Western jurists and political philosophers for the establishment of a new political and legal structure, a kind of Cosmopolis, in Keelson's lexicon a new civitas maxima replacing the "Westphalian model" as an alternative not simply to international disorder but also to prevent the planet's destruction. But it is generally accepted that even the unchallengeable supremacy of a nation, as now is the case of the US, almost inevitably gives rise to other power/ powers who tend to oppose

the ascendancy of the imperium. This has now been the case with the US with almost universal criticism of its conduct of the Iraq war and the resultant fracture in trans-Atlantic alliance, reincarnated by President Bush's emphatic assertion that "America will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our country". People are hesitant to believe President Bush's assurance

that American mission is neither to dominate the world nor to build an empire but to establish democratic peace founded upon the dignity of every man and woman. Hesitancy arises from seeing the key people of the Project of the New American Century crowding the upper echelon of Bush administration.

In 1996 Richard Perle (till recently Chairman of the Defence Policy Board), Douglas Faith and David Wurmser, now administration officials, advised the newly elected Likud government in Israel to make a clean break with the policies of negotiations with the Palestinians. They further advised weakening and containing Syria and to focus Israel's attention "on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq". They also called for "reestablishing the principle of preemption". In 1998 a number of prominent conservatives including Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Armitage, John Bolton, Zalmay Khalilzad, and Richard Perle (all Bush administration officials) wrote to President Clinton urging him to "aim at removing Saddam Hussein's regime from power". The Project of New American Century issued in 2000 a report titled "Rebuilding America's Defences" which suggested that the unresolved conflict with Iraq provided the immediate justification for a permanent US role in the Gulf regional security, regime change in Iraq, a permanent presence of US troops in the Gulf "should Saddam Hussein pass from the scene" as "

ing from environment related deficiencies such as, insufficient commitment, inadequate political will and weak developmental transaction. Besides, the costs of anti-people and anti-development activities have been taking a toll of the scarce national resources (per se) on a continuing basis. A cost-benefit analysis of those activities would reveal inter alia the magnitudes of the resultant impact on the country's economy, its base of usable resources and its people, particularly, on the life and living of poverty stricken Bangladeshis.

The political parties should: stop those activities that hurt Bangladesh, Bangladeshis and their developmental effort; compete for the future election votes on the strengths and the competitiveness of their missions and objectives; eliminate the gap between the election promises and the outcomes of those promises; make necessary adjustments in party structures for improving the services to Bangladeshis, particularly to those at the grassroots level; afford the party officials continuous retraining opportunities for retooling; improve party discipline; enhance intra and inter-party dialogues and feedback particularly, when it comes to the matters of critical national importance;...

What messages all those developments have (so far) for Bangladesh. Bangladeshis and the development partners? One of the messages is: do more with less.

Taking cognizance of the above, Bangladeshis should now decide: whether they would like to continue to maintain the status quo, largely characterized by the above developments - or to work for more with less as the country's committed citizens in the pursuits of promoting inter alia individual and collective well beings through the present and for the future generations - or otherwise?

If Bangladeshis opt for the status quo and unless a development breakthrough overtakes that, there is a possibility - they would have to tolerate inter alia and on a continuing basis the consequences of the above option, such as: continuing poverty; degradation of the quality of life of common Bangladeshis; and allowing the anti-people, as well as anti-development aspects of hartals and strikes to take control over their life and living.

But, on the other hand, if they take

Iran may prove to be a larger threat".

Immediately after nine-eleven Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz urged President Bush to attack Iraq which was opposed by Colin Powell. Powell won but briefly. Wolfowitz was aided by a blitzkrieg of neo-conservatives Michael Kelly, Joshua Muavchik, Michael Leeden -- who wrote that change towards democratic government in Iraq and

Iran would help launch a democratic revolution in the Middle East. This view was opposed by Carnegie Endowment's Tom Carothers, a democracy expert, who called the neo-cons call for a "democratic moment" as "a dangerous fantasy". Tragic results of such fantasy has been well documented by Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay (America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy 2003) who wrote that though President Bush's unilateralist policies produced quick victories in Afghanistan and Iraq, the policies fractured the transatlantic alliance and as a result the global system has become more chaotic and unfriendly and the US is less secure. The two writers added that the deeper problem is that the fundamental premise of the Bush revolution that America's security rested on an America Unbound was profoundly mistaken". But such wisdom is yet to be comprehended by the neo-cons whose protean construct centres on a belief in the righteousness of American power, muscularity of American action abroad, and confrontation rather than co-existence with then Soviet Union during the Cold War days.

This defiance of global opinion was again demonstrated by President Bush in his State of the Union address ably aided, as he is, by Vice-President Dick Cheney, a believer in hard power and aggressive leadership abroad and an opponent to constraint on US ability in the pursuit of her national interests. It is not

surprising, therefore, that Madeline Albright found an unbelievable tectonic shift in the American foreign and defence policies as had happened in the change from Clinton to Bush administrations, a shift the like of which had never happened in the history of the United States. Similar point was made by Joshua Marshall (Foreign Affairs Nov/Dec 2003) that rarely in American history has such a

cohesive and distinct group managed to exert so decisive an influence on such a crucial issue as the neo-cons did on Iraq from the collapse of the Twin Towers through the early stages of the occupation of Baghdad almost two years later. Acknowledging the fact that it is now open season to attack President Bush as Democratic party contenders fight it out for the nomination House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi's remarks appear to have the weight of reason to the international community committed to fairness and justice. Nancy Pelosi criticised President Bush for leading America "into the Iraq war on the basis of unproven assertions without evidence; he embraced a radical doctrine of preemptive war unprecedented in our history, and he failed to build a true international coalition".

If President Bush's State of the Union address has the flavour of defiance and retains the old refrain of justifying an unlawful war, then why is Colin Powell trying to convince a large part of the international community still recovering from American "shock and awe" that the US had never abandoned the UN path and the multilateral course? Powell strongly asserts (Foreign Affairs Jan/Feb 2004) that preemption applies only to the undeterred threats that come from non-state actors such as terrorist groups and was never meant to displace deterrence, only to supplement it. He accused the critics of the doctrine of preemption of distortion "using their

own mottled political histories as a reference point". He claims partnership to be the watch word of the Bush administration which is determined to develop cooperative relations with the world's major powers and to affirm the vital role of NATO and other alliances including the UN. In his article Powell chronicles the repeated efforts of the Bush administration to go to the UN as "indeed it

would have been a departure from policy not to go to the UN".

One, however, has to take Colin Powell's claim of love for the UN with a pinch of salt. Franco-German disenchantment, Kofi Anan's reminder to President Bush that only the UN can provide the unique legitimacy of action that no other body can, Hans Blix's harsh criticism of US officials and almost universal chorus of condemnation of the Anglo-US unjust war are not matters of distant history. Nor is the US refusal to give the UN the central role in post Saddam Iraq. It is, therefore, understandable if Kofi Annan is cautious about the request from the Iraqi governing council and the Coalition Provisional authority to step into the Iraqi quagmire.

As the Bush administration has decided to hand over power to some sort of Iraqi government by 30th June (the coalition troops can stay indefinitely) Kofi Annan has to advise if elections are possible before the "transfer of power" to the Iraqis, and if not, advise on the alternatives. The problem which the occupation authorities and the UN will have to face is the insistence by Ayatollah Ali Sistani, Iraq's version of Ayatollah Khomeini on one-man-one-vote direct election to the Constituent Assembly (sixty per cent Iraqis are Shiites). In his view the American plan to choose members of the Transitional Legislative Assembly is a model of concision and does not guarantee the establishment of an assembly that truly represents the

Iraqi people. In the face of opposition from other Shiite Ayatollahs, ten years of autonomy enjoyed by Kurds which has meant de-facto separation, enfranchisement of the Shia majority which may horrify the greater Sunni Muslims (Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia) including the Iraqi Sunnis who were living an Orwellian nightmare during Saddam regime, Paul Bremmer would be better advised to act less "Promethean" if the trust of the Iraqis and the Arab world is to be regained.

Given the complexity of the Iraq problem one is tempted to believe the critics from amongst the Bush administration that the hawks had focused far more attention on how to win the war than on how to contain the problem in post-war Iraq. As it is "democracy deficit" is more readily accepted in Islamic countries because overt support for democracy in Muslim countries is not a sufficient condition for democratic institutions to emerge. Cultural factors like trust between political opponents, social tolerance of different groups, economic development, popular support of gender equality, freedom of speech and popular participation in decision making are essential for success of democracy. For Bush administration to have even a modicum of success in Iraq it will have to take the Arabs seriously and not try to propagate the Middle East Partnership Initiative with a budget of less than thirty million dollars for women's rights and civil society support, education and development programmes and stop/improve on the telecast of "shared values" TV documentaries when the realities faced by the Muslims on US soil are reported to be undignified and discriminatory. Only future would tell if the Bush administration's Iraqi adventure was timely even if one were to concede President Bush's claim "for all who love freedom, the world without Saddam Hussein's regime is a better and safer place". One would, however, wish the occupation forces well if they can return Iraq to the Iraqis where they themselves would be empowered to chart out their own future.

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Political parties should assist Bangladeshis in doing more with less

DR M S HAQ - *Writes from New York*

BANGLADESH is gifted with a number of natural and other resources including its human resources (hereinafter: HR). But it is lagging behind many world countries. There are several reasons for it. For example:

Firstly, the country is yet to harness its full HR potential for local, national and global developments. The mode and outcome of the present day HR utilization in the country is not apparently adequate and highly productive. Further, the aggregate role of the political parties in facilitating the over all progress and prosperity of Bangladesh through a continuous improvement of national productivity often lacks the desired aggressiveness and high result-orientations. Those and other related factors are inter alia and in varying degrees responsible for promoting societal stress, law and order situation, intolerance, and anti-development (in the country); affecting the efforts (at local, national, regional, global and other levels) towards a rapid transformation of Bangladesh into a developed country. In addition, the ramification of those factors has been instrumental in converting one of its developmental advantages (in a sense, the population of Bangladesh) into a developmental disadvantage;

Secondly, the gap between the country's usable, as well as affordable resources and its developmental needs has been widening. Further, the outcomes of its recycling effort towards regenerating useful resources have not so far led to a sizeable increase in the resources available for developmental activities. The minimization of the wastage of resources is a formidable challenge; it is yet to become a comparative advantage for the country's development. Also, the efforts towards generating additional resources in the short term (through the exportation of gas and other means) for advancing, among other things, sustainable development (in the country) have not yet culminated into a reality; and

Thirdly, the country's development has, relative to time and space and among other things, been suffer-

ing the matter of the country's, as well as individual development more seriously and realistically and decide to work for creating more within the existing resource constraints, they should start that now in their homes, at their work places and in other areas of human endeavours. In that event, they would be required, among other things, to withstand the pressure of political parties for election votes in order for them to be able to cast their votes in favour of the candidate(s) and for that matter the party(ies) of their own choice in the national and other elections.

make necessary adjustments in party structures for improving the services to Bangladeshis, particularly to those at the grassroots level; afford the party officials continuous retraining opportunities for retooling; improve party discipline; enhance intra and inter-party dialogues and feedback particularly, when it comes to the matters of critical national importance; intensify party-people communications and promote transparency in transactions; strengthen and expand the party constituencies through inter alia helping Bangladeshis in education, health care and income (as

bers and supporters of different parties through helping them to internalize the fact that they may differ on political ideologies but they are not each other's enemy; help prevent political and extra-judicial killings including the killing of the journalists; defend, support and recognize the constructive work of the media and help them to improve further their role as a society's watch dog; mobilize, as well as harness the people's support for promoting, say, human rights, the right justice, equity, equality, respect and peaceful co-existence in the society; and ensure that no one is above the law of

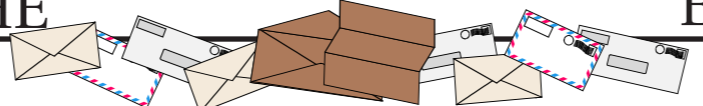
ture, function, operation mechanics (such as, coordination and networking), physical plus non physical operating environment (such as, ergonomics, work culture, employee motivation and result-orientation), successors' arrangement (such as, devolution of pertinent activities in the foreseeable future) and in other areas with a view to reducing the per unit cost of the public service, increasing the number of beneficiaries, improving the quality of the service and making it more relevant, as well as responsive to the needs and expectations of Bangladeshis including those at the grassroots level and those who live in rural areas.

The political parties should be able to provide more meaningful assistance to the country's development partners in order to optimize the return on their resources that are currently in use or to be used in the future for developmental purposes. An effective role of the political parties in enhancing the outcome of say, donor resources in the country could inter alia help promote the image of Bangladesh as a reliable and dependable partner in world development and that could brighten the prospect of Bangladesh as a lucrative destination for future FDI's.

The political parties should strengthen its partnership with civil society inter alia for: supplementing and complementing the effort towards advancing sustainable human development in the country; helping them (= civil society) to be more effective in delivering development support and services to communities at the right time and costs; designing and implementing (with them) joint programmes for, say, educating the rural people and the poor about their rights, obligations and entitlements; promoting local innovations and inventions; and improving bottom-up transactions in the country's governance - all in the pursuit of eliminating the wastage of scarce resources and lowering the per capita costs of enlarging the development choices for Bangladeshis and other world people, to mention a few.

The last word: the political parties must change for good at the soonest.

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



More seats in JS

The ruling BNP led four party alliance government is going to extend the seats of parliament from 300 to 450 through amending the constitution. Moreover, 50 seats for women are likely to be reserved to be distributed proportionately. To evaluate such a decision, we must focus on certain matters in the socio-economic context.

Election, by which MPs are elected, is a pre-condition for democracy. In fact, holding election is a process which expends the lion's share of national revenue. So, increase in constituencies will raise public expenditure. Besides, increased constituencies will pave the way for conflict among upazila chairmen and MPs.

The proposed expansion plan badly needs consensus among all the political parties, woman organizations and people at large. A plebiscite can be arranged in this respect.

Local government should be strengthened by involving upazila chairmen in development schemes, so that lawmakers will have more time to concentrate on law-making
Md. Al Amin Sagar
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Retirement age

There is a move to increase the retirement age of government employees. I want to put forward the following points for consideration of the authorities concerned.

In our country, most people have

a fictitious date of birth. So a sudden upward adjustment of the retirement age will block the avenues for new employment. Young university graduates will face the problem of unemployment more acutely.

It is therefore, suggested that the increase of age may be considered in steps of one year after every five year. Further, retired officers having expertise in different fields may be employed on contract basis as consultants. This will not block the way for the qualified personnel awaiting promotion to higher positions.

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