

Open space grabbing spree Powerful inter-ministerial committee needed to tackle the menace

LAND expropriation in the metropolis has reached an appalling proportion with the wet lands at the top of the grabbers' choice-list.

When there are specific legislations relating to wet lands, we wonder why their conservation as an environmental asset should present any difficulty.

The essential thing to realise is that our metropolis has been subjected to unplanned urbanisation; it's an overcrowded, highly polluted, and badly administered city.

To this end, we would like to suggest the following for the government's urgent consideration. First, the government should put an embargo on any further changes to the topography of all wet lands and open spaces.

There were directives from the Prime Minister to restore the original status of the lakes through legal means against grabbers of wet lands which have lapsed on account of non-compliance.

We implore the PM now to reactivate her directives, so that the lakes and open spaces of the metropolis are saved and the city is made livable on a sustainable basis.

Failing schools and madrasas So much money misspent!

THE results of SSC examinations brought happiness to a good many deserving candidates no doubt, but the rate of failure in many schools and madrasas should not go unnoticed either.

There must be someone to clarify how such a huge amount was allocated to those institutions in the first place. Who is responsible for ensuring the standard of education in schools? Who is to be held accountable for the dismal performance of so many schools and madrasas financed by the government?

Had the money been used by schools having an inherent potential to fare better, no question would have arisen about the misuse of funds.

Of patriots and quislings



M ABDUL HAFIZ

EVEN as umpteen patriots in Iraq have been fighting a war of resistance and will continue to refuse acceptance of the pseudo sovereignty bestowed last week on the hapless Iraqis hungering for freedom from the occupiers' clasp,

The Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), which was required to assist Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN's special envoy, in his mission of crafting an interim administration that was to assume power on June 30 had already been a collection of America's trusted allies.

On June 1 the IGC announced the composition of the proposed interim government. Consequently, the government that followed was composed of the people -- yet remained loyal to the Americans.

requested that the council formally endorse it. Allawi's action surprised all except the Americans. The international community was equally surprised at the interim prime minister's uncalled for statement that the "sovereignty" stipulated in the UN resolution was "quite adequate."

continued presence of American force in a "sovereign" country. The spirit behind the much-touted transfer of power has consistently been an exercise to hoodwink the world as much as the Iraqis.

occupation of Kuwait in 1990 by Britain's M-16 which later passed him on to the CIA.

can-controlled Kurdish enclave in Northern Iraq. Allawi was also the author of the much-maligned and discredited fantasy that Saddam's forces could launch weapons of mass destruction in 45 minutes.

PERSPECTIVES

Even if the Americans are able to foist their man Allawi on Iraq, he cannot, for a variety of reasons, be acceptable to the vast majority of Iraqis.

The American ploy to retain control of Iraq behind the facade of a "sovereign" Iraqi government became a fail accompli when the interim prime minister Iyad Allawi and his foreign minister Hoshiyan Lebari -- both longtime trusted allies of the US -- conveyed to the UNSC their acceptance of the US troops in Iraq staying on, and

have made every possible effort to dispel the impression that it would be toeing the US line. The members of the UNSC who were trying to totally discard the idea of the US troops after the power transfer, or at least to limit their stay in Iraq to the bare minimum period, were indeed baffled at the interim administration's willingness to accept the

national interest. Allawi's background does vindicate his appointment as prime minister by the Americans. For the past thirteen years of his political career he has been a pampered agent of British and American intelligence agencies.

America into its War in Iraq by feeding her with false intelligence with regards to Saddam's WMD. In the meantime, Allawi thrived in London at the head of the rival Iraqi National Accord (INA). Although Chalabi had the notoriety of being the more ambitious of the two, it was Allawi who dragged his patrons into a costly misadventure in the Ameri-

'Failed state and Bangladesh'

MD FIROJ ALAM

S ELDOM do I miss the comments and views that the Daily Star Editor pens for his newspaper or expresses elsewhere in meetings or seminars. This time I have gone through his post-editorial in The Daily Star of June 11, 2004, under the above title.

At last Ershad was forced from power. We voted our own leaders and parties to state power -- first BNP then AL, and again BNP. But has this made any significant difference to our lives? The autocratic Ershad is now

criticising this government for corruption, terrorism, suppression of rights, etc. And his criticisms are no farce! What an irony of fate!

We receive reports from Amnesty International on gross violations of human right. We see the law enforcement agencies dysfunctional, the parliament dysfunctional, the lower courts of judiciary dysfunctional, the essential services like water, electricity, and telephone dysfunctional, and as a whole, who can argue with the proposition that we are a "dysfunctional state"?

intellectuals like Dr Azad, Professor Anu Muhammad, poet Shamsur Rahman, and the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Mr Anwar Chowdhury. We have to mourn the

national, and as a whole, who can argue with the proposition that we are a "dysfunctional state"?

muscle, and influence. These "businessmen" just "invest" a huge amount of money to win the election, and after coming to power, they naturally try to realise that invested money with

hidden objectives. Alas, to prove it I must refer to the report of TI (Transparency International) citing Bangladesh as the most corrupt country in the world.

Therefore, I must suggest that the state is not failed but successful because the government has achieved its objectives of remaining in power for its own benefit. At the same time I must confess (admit) that we general masses, the source of all power are "failed" because we invariably send the wrong people or the wrong political parties to the parliament who exploit us, torture us, and dishonour us all the time by making the state "dysfunctional".

I thank Mr. Anam for writing his timely post-editorial.

The 'tallest leader' is a dwarf: BJP returns to hard-Hindutva



PRAFUL BIDWAI writes from New Delhi

T HE BJP's June 22-24 national executive meeting in Mumbai will go down as a story of incomprehension of and bitterness at its electoral defeat, washing of dirty linen in public, organisational disarray, ideological confusion, and leadership crisis.

The BJP is failed to understand its debacle's causes and to devise a strategy for revival. It emerged from the meeting badly mauled, with divergences between Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr L.K. Advani becoming visible.

The BJP is now ripe for a virtual takeover by the RSS and its hardline associates.

Its 'tallest leader', it turns out, is only a dwarf. Mr Vajpayee's stature has shrunk to a fraction of its earlier size. Once a master tactician, he has fallen to the level of the run-of-the-mill politician, given to thoughtless statements and less-than-mature

retractions. Mr Vajpayee fired the first salvo on June 13, when he blamed Mr Narendra Modi for the BJP's electoral losses and said the issue would be taken up in the national executive. He was promptly rebuffed by party president M. Venkaiah Naidu.

Two days later, four VHP-RSS leaders in their late 70s and 80s, led by Mr Ashok Singhal, demanded the resignation of the Vajpayee-Advani duo and a public admission that the BJP lost because "they discarded

Mishra despite pressure. Mr Vajpayee's clout derived primarily from the Prime Ministership, and secondarily, from NDA allies. He has lost the first. The allies have shrunk to under half their size. When Mr Vajpayee realised he had overplayed his hand, he retreated.

This shows Mr Vajpayee hasn't been serious about opposing an RSS takeover of the BJP. Or else, he would have put up a fight, by cultivating support for himself.

face", softer approach to the same goal. Even that's not acceptable to his party.

In Mumbai, the BJP undertook no serious introspection. Rather, it looked for scapegoats and hardened its ideological stance.

communalism, its first-generation top leadership is no longer in full command (although Mr Advani has improved his position). The power-struggle among its second-rung leaders is unresolved.

Nationally, the BJP has lost its advantage. If it clings to hard-Hindutva, it will decline further. The UPA is making some excellent moves. The Common Minimum Programme and the National Advisory Committee are good examples.

Practical Bidwai is an eminent Indian columnist.

As the BJP moves towards strident communalism, its first-generation top leadership is no longer in full command (although Mr Advani has improved his position). The power-struggle among its second-rung leaders is unresolved. They are too many: Messrs Naidu, Mahajan, Jaitley, and Ms Bharati and Sushma Swaraj.

Hindutva-related issues." They also asked the party to fix a "retirement age" for leaders.

It's laughable that these geriatrics should demand a "retirement age". But the cruellest irony was that their line -- of attributing the BJP's defeat to its departure from hardline-Hindutva -- was accepted by the party only days later!

Mr Vajpayee misread the party's mood. He got used to having his way -- by sulking at criticism, or by cracking the whip. Last year, he made Mr Naidu retract the vikas purush-loh purush formulation inside 24 hours. Earlier, he refused to sack principal secretary-confidante Brajesh

in Mumbai -- by saying that he wouldn't lead the party. A day later, he said this was "a joke". Ultimately, he entertained Mr Modi over breakfast!

This is typical of Mr Vajpayee's inconsistent behaviour -- witness his 2000 statement declaring himself a swayamshevak, but then "clarifying" that the term meant being a "servant of the nation", or his 2002 about-turn in Goa over sacking Mr Modi.

Mr Vajpayee cannot pretend he's a "moderate". He is as steeped in Hindutva as any other swayamshevak. It's just that he favours a less loud, less "in-your-

begging explanations for its defeat like "overconfidence", "complacency", and its "image" as a party given to 5-star indulgence.

But the national executive was held in a 7-Star hotel where delegates had access to seven restaurants, a gymnasium and sauna!

The explanation that prevailed in Mumbai was advanced by margadarshak Advani. The party lost because it neglected its three-legged "ideological constituency" of "karyakartas, our ideological parivar, and our social support-base."

The BJP didn't neglect this triad. It drafted in Mr Modi and Ms Uma

The BJP is day-dreaming. It cannot possibly retain its allies or recruit new ones by returning to its "ideological constituency". Hard-Hindutva will scare them away.

The BJP's past strategy of capitalising on public disenchantment with the Congress cannot work today. The public is willing to give the Congress another chance because it's offering a compassionate government pledged to correcting gross disparities and fighting communal bigotry and fundamentalism. By building regional alliances, the Congress has re-inserted itself into the space BJP occupied.

OPINION

Radical Islam and America

CHARLES BROCK

A MERICAN administrations have not addressed and perhaps did not understand the most fundamental issues of why we are at war against 'terrorism'.

Why are so many radical Muslims willing to die as holy warriors by attacking America?

And Christians, and Jews and all Muslims who reject their distorted doctrines.

Radical Islamists abhor us because we have our troops and others in their holy land of Arabia.

They believe we have misunderstood and humiliated them for centuries -- we are the 'crusaders'.

Why do we need to separate church and state, rather than allowing the moral values of religion to be infused into the nation.

nize its excesses of greed, glamour, and glitz. The lusts for sand, sea, and sex, that characterize many Americans symbolised by Las Vegas and Hollywood are anathema to their puritan way of life.

We continue to separate church and state, rather than allowing the moral values of religion to be infused into the nation.

Clearly the shaming of the prisoners of Abu Ghraib as well as the invasion of Iraq itself has made the situation worse, and thousands continue to volunteer for suicide bombings.

them the American Dream for the few is an immense nightmare for the rest of the world. The Pentagon epitomises military hegemony that forces others to do what the White House cabal wants.

They see their rejection as the story of Isaac and Ishmael all over again. Sarah could not conceive, so she persuaded Abraham to take her slave Hagar and have a son.

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Work on alternative fuel supplies. Conserve power. Trade is not the highest goal of society, and spiritual

values should trump materialism. We needn't separate religion and public life as much as we do. That concept is not in the Constitution.

American arrogance must be curtailed, and consultation with others is crucial. This is starting to happen because we are desperate to rebuild Iraq.

working, but neo-cons wanted total victory and rubbished the State Department. Yet trying to establish a democracy in Iraq is a pie in the sky ideology pushed by some Americans who never lived there.

These moves could make a big difference, but it will take courage from us and the radical Islamists who need to revise their intolerant views of everything Western as well.

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