

## Choicest plots to ministers and MPs!

### Outright abuse of elective offices

We are surprised to learn that a large number of ministers, state ministers, ruling party MPs and other favourites are to get allotments of premier government land in the posh Gulshan-Banani and Uttara enclaves. But our surprise turned into a shock the other day when the Minister for Works and Housing Mirza Abbas quipped in response to a newsmen's query: what's wrong if a minister gets a plot? Our natural reaction to this will be that a minister and MP were elected to serve the people not themselves.

Need we state the obvious about a whole lot of perks and privileges going with the positions of ministers, state ministers and MPs already? They have duty-free cars, and not long ago, we also witnessed salary increases effected for them, just to mention two of the latest additions to their package of remuneration and facilities. The BNP government has been at it for quite a while now without apparently recognising how much the ministers and MPs already have in term of acquired real assets.

We suggest that you just reassess their 'needs' vis-a-vis those who have genuine necessity for and a natural claim to such land allotment. This is highly disgusting and immoral.

This tendency of utilising elective offices to take extraordinary advantage of public property which is but an outright denial of the same to people who have genuine need and demand for it, had in the past blighted many governments' image beyond repair. And it even caused their doom.

During the AL government there was a smack of similar spoils system. However, it goes to their credit that they stopped short of allotting premier plots to party favourites in the face of strident public criticism. We urge the BNP government to be sensitive to public feelings about sweeping grant of favours, lest it appears as something of an act of expropriation.

## Giving up search for WMD in Iraq

### A conclusive indictment

THE decision to stop looking for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq has only proven the fact that the reasoning behind invading the country was totally based on lies. The whole world has been coming to the conclusion that there were no WMDs at all. It was attested by various reports, agencies, task forces who were given the job to find WMDs. It may have taken longer than expected for the US to reach this point, but the bottom line is most of us are not surprised by the announcement that the US has discontinued the search. We would have been more surprised if they had found any.

President Bush had long ago changed his tune to removing Saddam. But the fact remains that the world was duped into believing a lie. Thousands of innocent people were killed, prisoners were tortured, completely disregarding human rights, and the country is now in a condition of total instability. It wouldn't be wrong to say that the credibility of the US as a superpower has been highly diminished.

This was probably the only case where an armed invasion on a sovereign country was initiated on artificial justification based on some figment of imagination by some high US officials. It makes the invasion not only illegal, but also unjustified and immoral.

Now the question is -- who will be held responsible for all the lies, false statements and wrong evidences that were dished out by the US and its allies to justify one of the most unjustified invasion in the recent history? Would President Bush and Prime Minister Blair publicly acknowledge that their justifications for invading Iraq were based on wrong evidences? Would it be possible to make any one of them stand trial for lying -- about Saddam possessing WMD hence the country needed to be invaded -- not only to their own citizens but also to the rest of the world?

Would the common Iraqis get justice for the injustice meted out to them? Would they ever be compensated for the trauma they encountered in last two years? We pray that they do.



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

THE Sunday after Christmas, a severe earthquake shifted two giant tectonic plates in the Indian ocean, not far from the western coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. It lifted one plate perhaps sixty feet along a 1,000 mile ridge. This seismic bump created a wall of water that pushed outward in all directions at over two hundred miles per hour. This produced large waves and eventually a tsunami.

It led to the death of more than 160,000 persons and injuries to over a million -- all scattered in different countries of the Indian Ocean Rim, stretching from Malaysia in the east to Somalia in the west. This unprecedented catastrophe left in its wake indiscriminate devastation. The destruction caused has been variously estimated at being around US dollars ten billion.

Bangladesh, at the northern most point of the event, suffered the least -- three deaths and very negligible impact. Geologists subsequently indicated that the extended continental shelf in its coastline protected it from harm.

The citizens of this country, who have experienced major natural disasters over the last few decades reacted with great compassion. People from all walks of life expressed their respect for the tsunami victims. Candles were lit at the Central Shaheed Minar, prayers offered in different places of worship and token silence observed in meetings. In addition, as the US Ambassador in Dhaka observed, resource starved Bangladesh, 'as-

sumed the role of donor by sending relief supplies and personnel to Sri Lanka aboard giant C-130 aircraft provided by the US government to support Bangladesh's contribution to peacekeeping and humanitarian missions.' Another small medical detachment was also sent to the Maldives, a fellow member of the SAARC community.

Unfortunately however, no representative of Bangladesh was sent to Jakarta to attend the Tsunami Sum-

mit that was convened there in the first week of January. This was an opportunity missed.

It

was

a

chance

to

improve

our

image

abroad

. We

should

have

gone

to

that

meeting

attended

by

leaders

of

26

nations

and

heads

of

several

multilateral

funding

agencies

and

spoken

about

the

severe

impact

of

natural

disasters

. We

could

have

pointed

out

how

Bangladesh

had

sustained

major

losses

of

over

US

dollar

three

billion

during

the

floods

last

year

. We

have

also

witnessed

salary

increases

effected

for

them

just

to

mention

two

of

the

latest

additions

to

their

package

of

rewards

for

them

just

to

mention

two

of

the

latest

additions

to

their

package

of

rewards

for

them

just

to

mention

two

of

the

latest

additions

to

their

package

of

rewards

for

them

just

to

mention

two

of

the

latest

additions

to

their

package

of

rewards

for

them

just

to

mention

two

of

the

latest

additions

to

their

package

of

rewards

for

them

just

to

mention

two

of

the

latest

additions

to

their

package

of

rewards