

Intensified violence greets 'democratic' Iraqi cabinet



MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

THE so-called "democratic" expatriate dominated government, set up through most strange election that took place some months ago under the guns and the heavy patronage of the US and coalition forces, was greeted with the unprecedented violence resulting in the deaths of over 250 people within 72 hours of the installation of the fractured Iraqi cabinet. Violence has been going on unabated through the American military establishment in Iraq has been giving somewhat different picture of the situation. President Bush's latest mission of spreading democracy in Iraq (also elsewhere) as he failed to find weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is indeed spreading intolerable violence in the country. True, there was no western style democracy in Iraq, but the Iraqis had reasonable peace and did not have the constant threat of getting blown up at any place and at any time. Which one is better -- peace under Iraqi dictator Saddam or to be blown up instantly in the street under American democracy of unilateralist Bush?

It's no use telling President Bush that Iraqis do not like American democracy run by some expatriates; they want something home grown, something of their own -- something they are used to. It is known to all that the Arabs tried to bring the wandering Beduins into the comforts of the cities by providing all modern amenities, but they did not succeed; Beduins left for their natural habitats -- natural surroundings. Similarly, Arabs' culture should determine the type of democracy they want. Bush-Blair never understood this and hence the terrible blood-shed in Iraq.

There is another type of blood-shed in Britain. Blair won the third term but Iraq debacle cost Labour about hundred seats. So, Blair must go -- that's the demand. Unfortunate indeed! A man of such brilliance, intelligence and dynamism has to face such a political disaster just because he fell into Bush's trap in the name of "special" relationship. Prime Minister Blair could not properly read the minds of extremely democratic minded British people and hence the political disaster for him. Bush's case is different. He is spared

because Americans apparently has written off another four years of Bush. He is already a lame duck president. Let him go round and spread "democracy" and the terrible mess along with it. Another 9/11 is highly unlikely as Ariel Sharon and Israeli Mossad have already achieved what they wanted -- removal of their worst enemy Saddam, death of Arafat (many say Israel poisoned him) ending the occupation of Syrians in Lebanon by branding them as assassins of Rafik Hariri. But no word on Israelf's

forces would gradually leave the battle field leaving things to the Americans and poor Iraqis who collaborate with the Americans. Rumsfeld reportedly came up with an offer -- apparently a near-pragmatic one -- to Saddam, something unusual from a man like Rumsfeld. The offer reportedly was that Saddam would get freedom if he openly called on the "insurgents" to stop violence. As expected, Saddam rejected it out of hand. The idea was timely and good for America. Rumsfeld would be

understands very well but is probably helpless. Any country should have the right to have the deterrent -- whether it produces it or buys from somewhere. Unfortunately, this appears necessary under the present system to stop any unilateral attack on any flimsy ground. The non-proliferation treaty is certainly one sided as it gives unchallenged benefit to the N-powers to continue to dominate the world. The simple question is, if they can have N-bomb why can't others? Who decides whether a country is rouge or not? Has the UN set any criteria? What about Israel? Is it not a rogue state? How many innocent Palestinians have been killed by Israel? How many more Palestinians need to be killed by Israel to be declared as the rogue state? Why the UN could not stop Israel in having the N-bombs? Israeli whistle blower Unonou openly said that Israel has over 200 nuclear bombs. Did Al- Baradei do anything to investigate Israel's nuclear arsenal? He is running after only Iran and N Korea. The UN body must answer these questions.

Why the UN could not stop nuclear powers and particularly the US in having vertical proliferations? Does it not fall under NPT? Can the world get rid of all nuclear weapons? If not, then let all others have it if they can afford it. The possession of nuclear bombs has, indeed, turned out to be a stabilising factor as already proved by India and Pakistan. The world may even be safer with practically all countries having nuclear bombs. Nobody would dare attacking any country.

To many states, under the present threat of unilateral attacks, holding on to sovereignty for which they need deterrent, appears to be more crucial than providing food to the people. It is too bad in terms of human rights, but to them sovereignty is no less important. NPT should be strictly applicable only to situations like handing over nuclear materials or dirty bombs to the extremists -- whether Muslims, Christians or Jews.

Iran and N Korea appear to be determined to take advantage of the present precarious situation of the US in terms of its ability to handle any other military crisis occurring in any other place. The US is reportedly not in a position to take care of Iran and N Korea even if they decide to go nuclear openly as long as the US continues to remain bogged down in Iraq. In the event of any attack on either one, the European powers are unlikely to join. Russia's President Putin has already given out its preference not to get engaged in any war -- cold or hot. So the situation remains difficult for the US and also for the world in general.

The US has also to consider the other consequential developments in M-E as a result of its military action and phony democracy in Iraq. M-E would now continue to experience bizarre situation in terms of religious sects -- Shia, Sunni, Kurds and the rest of it. Syria is ruled by Alwaites -- the sect basically a part of Shia community and it has good relationship with Iran. Iran is Shia and now the ruling party in Iraq is Shia. Lebanon has Shia Hezbollah. With the departure of Saddam and Sunni domination, Iran has a unique and invincible position in the Middle East This would be its main strength while it pursues its nuclear ambition.

Muslehuiddin Ahmad is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

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occupation of Palestine and American occupation of Iraq, and most importantly -- onset of a serious conflict between Christianity and Islam.

President Bush got a mild warning from President Putin on America's insistence on human rights in Russia. America has its worst record of white-black discrimination for centuries, which still exists in some perceptible form, its recent trampling of human rights in Guantanamo Bay, Abu Garab and other prisons in Iraq and Afghanistan, also its record of kick-open the doors of the Iraqis by the US forces while women and children were enjoining their midnight sleep on the plea of finding the "insurgents", deliberate flattening of Fallujah and killing of civilians there and other towns of Iraq to stop Iraqi insurgency, bombing of civilians in a marriage party in Afghanistan etc. So President Bush should not go round and preach the values of human rights, freedom and democracy to others. The US must try to improve upon its own record in these areas. The world is no more in a mood to take things lying down. All are aware of the atrocities of Saddam, but what about the atrocities of today? Saddam gassed Kurds as he took them to be the insurgents and Bush has been doing the same thing to the Iraqi civilians by taking them to be the insurgents. The difference seems to be only in the use of type of weapons. Interestingly, Saddam was given all these weapons by America -- to be more precise by Rumsfeld in early '80s. It's a terribly unjust world.

Iraq would continue to be a battleground and unfortunately many more Americans would give their lives. The remaining coalition

LEST WE FORGET

Dr M A Naser

A pioneer in engineering education

DR. MOHAMMED MUNIRUZZAMAN

THE first death anniversary of Professor Dr. Mohammed Abu Naser, former Vice-Chancellor, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), former Chairman, Bangladesh University Grants Commission (BUGC), former Professor Emeritus of Chemical Engineering, BUET and recipient of the prestigious Ekushey Padak, was observed on 12th May 2005.

Dr. Naser was born on April 2, 1921, in the village of Damla of Srinagar Upazila, Bikrampur in the Munshigonj district. His father Mr. M. Ismail Ali Khan and mother Abida Begum were respected members of the village community. Dr. Naser started his early education at the famous Kazir Pagla A. T. Institution, Kazir Pagla, Louhajong in Munshigonj and passed the Matriculation Examination in the First Division in 1937. He passed the Intermediate Examination from the B. M. Collage, Barisal. In 1942 and 1943 he received the B.Sc (Hons.) and M.Sc. degrees, respectively, in Chemistry from the Dhaka University. He then went on to study Chemical Engineering at the Bengal Engineering College at Shibpur, West Bengal.

While at Shibpur he got a scholarship to study for his M.S. in Chemical Engineering at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, U.S.A. This indeed was a rare accolade for him to be selected for such a scholarship in undivided India, when Muslims were less favourably considered. While in America he traveled extensively to New York City, Michigan, Washington DC, Pennsylvania, and Rochester, NY to visit KODAK, which is still headquartered there. He was an avid photographer and he owned a Kodak camera and took lots of B&W pictures that are neatly captioned and fills up so many albums to this day.

On his return home and after brief stints at the Industries Ministry and The Directorate of Technical Education, he came back to his favourite job of teaching at the Ahsanullah Engineering College, later which became BUET. In 1955 he went to London under a fellowship from the Nuffield Foundation to study for a year at the University of London. This time he took his family with him and rented a house in the Bourrough of Hammersmith in London. I still remember the excitement my wife, our three year old son, M. Shahriar Zaman, myself and my wife's elder brother Dr. Khan Hasan Zahid (he had come to visit us from USA) felt, when we visited the house in 1986 (my family accompanied me on a Commonwealth Post-doctoral Fellowship to the UK).

In 1962 he left again for the USA to study for his PhD. It took him four years to finish. First he spent about two years at Columbia University, then he went to Texan A & M to complete the rest of his PhD. In 1986 when we visited the USA for the first time, we again made it a point to visit the apartment that Dr. Naser, rented while a student at the Columbia University. The very next day after he completed his PhD he got on a plane to Dhaka.

He was made the Vice-Chancellor of BUET in 1970 and continued holding his position after the liberation of Bangladesh. He is credited with

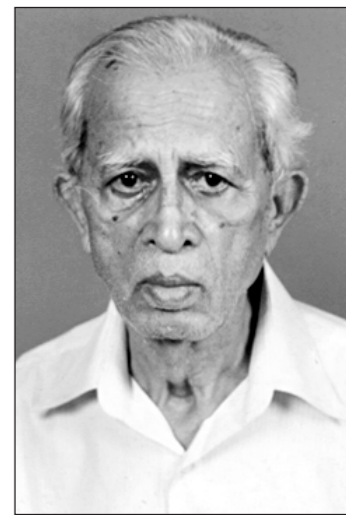
holding the first Convocation of BUET in 1973. This event is considered a milestone in the history of BUET as well as the nation. Justice Abu Syed Chowdhury, the Chancellor of the University and the then Honorable President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh distributed certificates to 2224 graduate and 39 post graduate engineers and architects on the occasion. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the then Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh was the Chief Guest on the Opening Ceremony of the Convocation.

In 1975 Dr. Naser became the Chairman of the Bangladesh University Grants Commission, a position he held till his retirement in 1980. He also served as the Chairman of the Board of Governors of Bangladesh Institute of Technology, Khulna, later which became Khulna University of Engineering and Technology.

In recognition of his contribu-

tions to education he was awarded the Ekushey Padak in 1987. In 1988 he was made Professor Emeritus, in the Chemical Engineering Department of BUET, a position he held till the day of his death. Also in 1988 he was honoured with the Bikrampur Foundation Gold Medal and in 1995 with the Abdul Hakim Bikrampur Memorial Medal. On the occasion of 50 years of Chemical Engineering in Bangladesh, he was made a Life Member of the Chemical Alumni Association of BUET in 2003.

My eldest son Mohammed Shahriar Zaman a student of the Department of Electronics and Electrical Engineering at BUET, sums up our felling when he says "whenever I walk into BUET it reminds me of Nana Bhai and makes me feel proud that he dedicated more than fifty years of his life for the betterment of Engineering Education in Bangladesh" Dr. M. A. Naser, to us all is a wonderful example of a



simple man who rose from modest surroundings to occupy one of the prestigious educational positions in our country, through sheer dedication, honesty and hard work.

Dr Mohammed Muniruzzaman is Professor, Department of Physics, Jahangirnagar University.

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