

Half in US for curbs on Muslims' rights

Crackdown call

- 44% want at least some restrictions on the civil liberties of Muslim-Americans
- 48% say liberties should not be restricted in any way
- 27% support requiring all Muslim-Americans to register where they live with the federal govt
- 22% favour racial profiling to identify potential terrorist threats
- 29% think undercover agents should infiltrate Muslim civic and volunteer organisations to keep tabs on their activities

Associated Press
Ithaca (New York), Dec 18

NEARLY HALF of all Americans believe the US government should restrict the civil liberties of Muslim-Americans, according to a nationwide poll.

The survey conducted by Cornell University also found that Republicans and people who described themselves as highly religious were more apt to support curtailing Muslims' civil liberties than Democrats or people who are less religious. Researchers also found that respondents who paid more attention to television news were more likely to fear terrorist attacks and support

limiting the rights of Muslim-Americans.

"It's sad news. It's disturbing news. But it's not unpredictable", said Mahdi Bray, executive director of the Muslim American Society. "The nation is at war, even if it's not a traditional war. We just have to remain vigilant and continue to interface."

The survey found 44 per cent favoured at least some restrictions on the civil liberties of Muslim Americans. Forty-eight per cent said liberties should not be restricted in any way. The survey showed that 27% of respondents supported requiring all Muslim-Americans to register where they

lived with the federal government. Twenty-two per cent favoured racial profiling to identify potential terrorist threats. And 29 per cent thought undercover agents should infiltrate Muslim civic and volunteer organisations to keep tabs on their activities and fund-raising.

The Cornell student researchers questioned 715 people in the nationwide telephone poll conducted this fall. The margin of error was 3.6 percentage points.

James Shanahan, an associate professor of communications who helped organise the survey, said the results indicate "the need for continued di-

alogue about issues of civil liberties" in a time of war.

While researchers said they were not surprised by the overall level of support for curtailing civil liberties, they were startled by the correlation with religion and exposure to television news.

"We need to explore why these two very important channels of discourse may nurture fear, rather than understanding", Shanahan said.

According to the survey, 37 per cent believe a terrorist attack in the US is still likely within the next 12 months. In a similar poll conducted by Cornell in November 2002, that number stood at 90 per cent.

Pressure mounts on Rumsfeld to quit ^{19/12}

By Suzanne Goldenberg ¹¹⁻¹²

WASHINGTON, DEC. 18. The U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, is at the centre of a Republican firestorm over his handling of the war in Iraq, with pressure appearing to mount in Washington for him to quit.

Although Republicans have publicly stood by the U.S. President, George W. Bush's decision to go to war throughout the growing death toll among U.S. troops and spiralling violence on the ground, the acerbic Pentagon chief has become a focus of anxieties about the conduct of the war and about the future of Iraq. Unease about Mr. Rumsfeld reached critical proportions when the former Senate Majority Leader, Trent Lott, told businessmen in Mississippi that the Defence Secretary should be replaced in the new year.

Withering attack

Mr. Lott is from the centre of the Republican party, and was a powerful figure until forced to step down as Senate leader in 2002.

"I am not a fan of Secretary Rumsfeld," he told the Biloxi chamber of commerce. "I do not think he listens enough to his uniformed officers." He added: "I would like to see a change in that slot in the next year or so."

Earlier this week, Mr. Rumsfeld was the object of a withering attack by the editor of the *Weekly Standard*, the in-house organ of the neo-conservative movement, accusing him of "arrogant" buckpassing. "Surely Don Rumsfeld is not the Defence Secretary Bush should want to have for the remainder of his second term," said William Kristol.

Last spring, at the height of the scandal over the Abu Ghraib prison abuse, Mr. Bush resisted calls for Mr. Rumsfeld to stand down.

He reaffirmed his faith in the man after his re-election victory, keeping him on as Pentagon chief, and it is unlikely that the White House will want to signal a change of heart before Iraq holds elections next month. "The President believes Secretary Rumsfeld is doing a great job, and that is why he asked him to continue serving during this time of war," said the White House spokesman, Scott McLellan.

But the latest crisis over his temperament and management style may prove difficult to brush off, when many Republicans are wondering aloud how U.S. troops are going to manage to stabilise Iraq in the coming months.

Mr. Rumsfeld's critics in Congress are on their way home for the holidays, where they will meet families of soldiers serving in Iraq who are outraged by duty-tour extensions made necessary by troop shortages, and by complaints of lack of armour and weaponry on trucks and other "soft" vehicles used by support troops who face guerrilla attacks unforeseen by Pentagon planners.

Rebuked

On Thursday, Mr. Rumsfeld was rebuked by a member of the Senate armed services committee, the moderate Republican Susan Collins, over the Pentagon's failure to provide sufficient armoured Humvees.

The latest crisis to enfold Mr. Rumsfeld was provoked by his airy response last week to a member of the Tennessee National guard who complained about having to forage in scrap heaps for armour for Humvees. Mr. Rumsfeld replied that countries go to war with the army they have, "not the army you might want or wish to have at a later time." — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004

19 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

Bush signs intelligence law

Legislation is largest overhaul in 50 years ■ Aimed to unify spy efforts

USA Today
Washington, December 17

PRESIDENT BUSH signed into law on Friday the largest overhaul of US intelligence gathering in 50 years, hoping to improve the spy network that failed to prevent the September 11 attacks.

The 563-page Bill, which endured a tortured path to congressional passage, also aims to tighten borders and aviation security. It creates a federal counterterrorism center and a new intelligence director, but Bush did not fill that post at Friday's Bill signing.

The measure "will enable us to better do our duty, which is to protect the American people", Bush said on Friday in a short speech before signing the Bill. He noted that the national intelligence director will have budget responsibility over the nation's intelligence community and "will report directly to me".

"The men and women of the intelligence community give America their very best every day, and in return, we owe them our full support," Bush said.

The new structure was designed to help the nation's 15 intelligence agencies work together to protect the country from attacks like the ones that killed nearly 3,000 people in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001.

The September 11 Commission, in its July report, said disharmony among the intelligence agencies contributed to the inability of gov-



US President George W. Bush gives closing remarks at the final session of the White House Conference in Washington on Thursday.

ernment officials to prevent the attacks. The government failed to recognise the danger posed by al-Qaida and was ill-prepared to respond to the terrorist threat, the report concluded.

Commission members and families of attack victims lobbied persistently for the legislation through the summer political conventions, the election and a postelection lame duck session of Congress. The Bill was threatened over disagreements between the White House and key

House Republicans about immigration issues and how the new national intelligence director would work with the nation's military.

Bush was criticised for not engaging aggressively enough with members of his own party to break the impasse. Pundits questioned what that meant for the president's ability to gain approval from a Republican-controlled Congress for his ambitious second-term agenda. But in the final days, he and Vice-President Dick Cheney pushed hard

for the legislation, and both the House and Senate passed it overwhelmingly.

Just as Bush changed his mind on supporting the creation of a Homeland Security Department and creation of the independent September 11 Commission, it took him a while to endorse the commission's strong recommendation that any new director of national intelligence have full budget-making control, necessary to wield true power in Washington. Bush at first rejected that idea but later supported it.

"A key lesson of September 11 is that America's intelligence agencies must work together as a single, unified enterprise," the President said on Friday.

Bush was joined at the signing ceremony by CIA director Porter Goss, FBI director Robert Mueller, members of Congress, leaders of the September 11 commission and relatives of people killed on September 11, 2001.

"Those charged with protecting America must have the best possible intelligence information and that information must be closely integrated to form the best possible picture of the threats to our country," the President said.

The new director position was one of the Bill's most controversial aspects. Although the legislation gives the new director strong budget authority, its language is complex enough that there could be continued debate over the exact extent of the director's power.

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THE TELEGRAPH

THE SECOND TERM

Bush Must Repair Damage Caused By Unilateralism

By SANKAR SEN

George Bush, belying predictions of many analysts and pollsters, won an impressive victory in the American presidential election of 2004. He has thus become the first presidential candidate to win more than 50 per cent of the popular vote since his father in 1988. He has also received the highest number of votes by any presidential candidate in American history — over 58 million. This breaks President Reagan's mark of 54.5 million votes. Bush also became the first Republican President to be elected with both House and Senate majorities since 1924.

Important factors

There are some important factors behind this stunning victory. First, the hard historical fact is that no American President has lost an election in the midst of war. Two Presidents, Truman and Johnson, decided not to run again during the Korean and Vietnam wars that caused thousands of American casualties. But an incumbent President who has put himself up for election has not lost because, in the midst of war, the people are not favour of changing the commandar-in-chief.

Second, the issue of terrorism concerned American voters far more deeply than all other issues. Nearly 85 per cent of the voters who listed terrorism as their first concern voted for Bush. In this segment there were a large number of married women known as *security moms* and the vast majority of them voted for Bush. Thus Bush emerged a clear winner because the people of the world's only superpower feel deeply threatened. Bush's campaign brilliantly played on this pervasive sense of insecurity, especially on TV. Third, Bush also won the votes of a staggering 78 per cent of those who identify moral values as their most important concern.

The people associated moral values with a President who never shied away from publicising the fact that he is a born-again Christian. An overwhelming large number of Christian fundamentalists supported Bush. It seems, as an analyst puts it, that

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the Democrats, ceded to the Republicans a *monopoly of the oral and spiritual sources of American politics.*

Fourth, a large number of undecided voters, instead of voting for the challenger, voted for Bush. Bush's increased margin in the electoral college is also due mainly to demographic changes and not a decisive shift



in the pattern of state votes. Because people are moving to Republican-voting states in the sun belt, the President's electoral college total rose even without winning any states from the Democrats.

Blessing in disguise

Many commentators feel that President Bush and his neo-conservatives will look upon the victory as the vindication of their policies and aggressively push forward their unfinished conservative agenda. But normally a second term administration tends to be less bold and assertive and, in this case, this will be a blessing in disguise. Perceptive analysts like Fareed Zakaria feel that in the second incarnation Bush administration will be *less aggressive, less militant and less arrogant in its foreign policy.* This will happen not because of a change of heart but due to the fact that unilateralism and military force have not really worked.

Now on North Korea, Iran and many other contentious issues, the Bush administration will have to work with inter-

national institutions and also allies. Unilateralism has not worked on the ground. Even in the case of North Korea and Iran, America would not like to go alone. There is speculation in some quarters that Bush may not launch a military invasion of Iran after the misadventure in Iraq but may not hesitate to bomb its nuclear installations. However,

on considerations of realpolitik America may not antagonise Iran now. Bombing of Iran's nuclear installations will push up oil prices with far reaching repercussions on global economy.

Further, America will have to go alone even without the backing of Great Britain. In Britain, Tony Blair and his ministers are trying to dispel the fear and concern of many that a demanding Bush will seek the help of the UK to teach a lesson to Teheran. British foreign secretary Jack Straw has said that bombing of Teheran is inconceivable and he could not see any circumstance in which military action against Iran will be justified.

Turning to India's neighbour, Bush's victory has caused jubilation in the Pakistani establishment. General Musharraf is heaving a sigh of relief. The special relationship with the USA has been beneficial to the military regime in Pakistan in many ways. There is also a feeling in Pakistan's official circles that Democrats are more critical of dictators than Republicans. After all, both Zia-ul-Haq and Musharraf benefited

when the Republications remained in power. But now Bush may look for more tangible support from Pakistan, including nabbing of Osama at the earliest. This is because sooner or later American President may have to face questions from the American people as to why bin Laden and his associates are still able to operate from Pakistani soil.

Again, there will be no peace and stability in Afghanistan if Al-Qaeda and Taliban continue to remain active in Pakistan. It may be hoped that America's friendship with Pakistan will not stand in the way of close collaboration with India. This is because that India and America have a lot of common interest that goes beyond the India-Pakistan crisis.

Still at large

The President has also to redeem his pledge of winning the war against terrorism. The International Institute of Strategies Studies estimates that as much as 90 per cent of 20 thousand militants trained in Al-Qaeda centres in Afghanistan are still at large and willing to strike American targets. On his campaign trail, Bush stuck courageously to his commitment to see through the task in Iraq. He now has to translate his promise into reality. The odds are stacked against him.

In his post-election news conference, Bush has promised to reach out to US allies and organisations such as Nato and repair relations bruised by his unilateralism. He also has given a call to bridge the differences at home caused by a feverishly contested election. However, at home one test of his willingness to reunite the country will be to appoint Democrats to his cabinet. Another test will be the Supreme Court. The present Chief Justice, William Rehnquist, is gravely ill. If Bush allows the Christian right to influence the selection of judges, he will sharpen internal divisions and reignite cultural wars.

It is likely that Bush in his second term will display more pragmatism. His second term, as Henry Kissinger puts, can be historic if he can rally the allies and create an international order where all the key nations feel that this is their system and not an American system, and they have an interest in maintaining it.

US House approves intelligence recast

Washington, Dec. 8 (Reuters): The House of Representatives yesterday approved a sweeping overhaul of US intelligence agencies, ending weeks of wrangling over the Pentagon's power under the reforms demanded after the September 11 attacks.

On a vote of 336-75, the House sent the measure to the Senate for final congressional approval. The bill, which creates a new director of national intelligence post, then goes to President George W. Bush for his promised signature.

The House passed the bill after lawmakers resolved differences over Pentagon authority on intelligence needed to help battlefield commanders, and Republican leaders decided to put off a fight over

as he flew back to Washington from California.

"The President is very pleased with House passage. He knows that this bill will make America safer... He greatly looks forward to Senate passage and ultimately to signing the bill into law," Duffy said in a conference call.

The bill is the biggest revamping of US intelligence in more than 50 years and the second major government overhaul since the September 11, 2001, attacks against the World Trade Center and Pentagon that killed almost 3,000 people. Congress earlier created the homeland security department that brought together various federal law enforcement agencies.

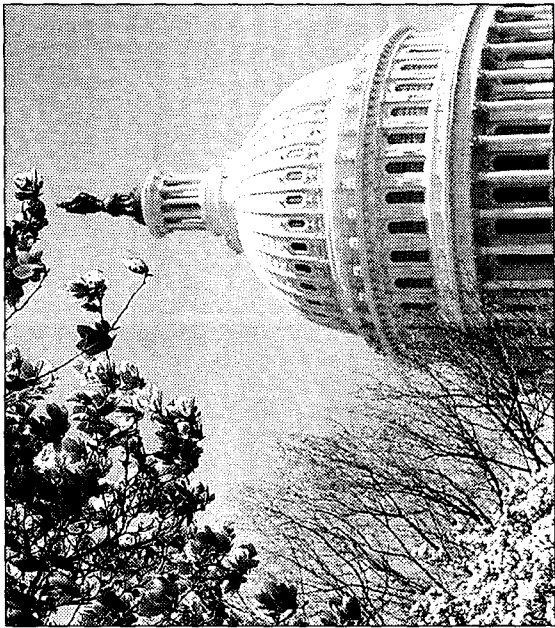
The bill stalled last month

and appeared dead for the year, but found new life under pressure from families of victims of the September 11 attacks. Last-minute appeals by Bush to House Republican holdouts helped secure a final agreement between the House and Senate over language ensuring that battlefield commanders have priority access to intelligence assets.

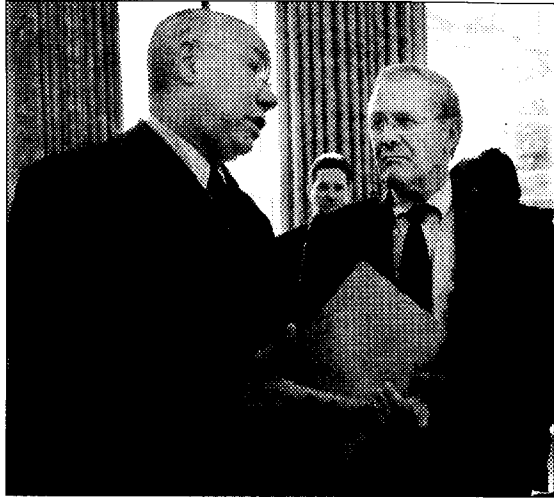
Passage of the legislation was all but secured when House Armed Services Committee chairman Duncan Hunter, a California Republican, and Senate Armed Services committee chairman John Warner, a Virginia Republican, on Monday announced their support after resolving the Pentagon authority issue.

Wrangling about the chain of command issue and a dispute over immigration provisions sought by House Judiciary Committee chairman James Sensenbrenner, a Wisconsin Republican, had delayed passage of the bill after House and Senate negotiators thought they had completed a deal last month.

Sensenbrenner voted against the bill even though House leaders promised they would push next year for immigration provisions he unsuccessfully sought to include in the bill. The bill does contain other immigration and law enforcement measures, including minimum standards for drivers licences and other identification that is needed to board aircraft.



The Capitol building in Washington DC. (Reuters)



AP

Secretary of State Colin Powell talks with Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld during President Bush's meeting with Musharraf in the White House on Saturday.

Rumsfeld to stay defence secretary

S. Rajagopalan ^{WSD}
& Agencies
Washington, December 4

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush has asked Donald Rumsfeld to continue as Defence Secretary, thus ending speculation on the tenancy of Pentagon during Bush's second term.

The 72-year-old Rumsfeld is among a handful of Cabinet colleagues unaffected by Bush's shake-up, which has so far seen the departure of eight of 15 members of the Bush I team.

"This is a time of real challenge. We are waging a war against terror, and at this critical juncture Secretary Rumsfeld is the right person for this position," a senior official said on Friday after Bush's meeting with Rumsfeld at the Oval Office.

In the wake of revelations about abuses at the US-administered Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, doubts began to be expressed about Rumsfeld's continuance in Bush's second term. There were demands for his resignation at the time, but Bush himself has steadfastly backed him all along.

Rumsfeld, himself, has

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said he wants to finish his reforms at the Pentagon and continue overseeing the Iraq war and that country's hoped-for transformation.

Earlier in the day, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson resigned, becoming the eighth member of Bush's 15-member Cabinet to step down since Bush won re-election.

On Friday morning, Bush had nominated Bernard Kerik to lead the Department of Homeland Security, his latest move to restock his Cabinet for the second term.

Bush called the former New York City police commissioner a "dedicated, innovative reformer who insists on getting results." He cited Kerik's work in New York where Bush said Kerik "had great success in reducing crime in New York City."

Kerik, 49, also led the New York City Police Department through the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and their aftermath. "His broad practical hands-on experience makes Bernie superbly qualified to lead the Department of Homeland Security," Bush said.

05 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

MPs attempt to impeach Blair

Vijay Dutt

London, November 25

TONY BLAIR became the first Labour leader to carve the New Labour and divorce the party from its outdated ideologies. He won laurels for it. But now he has become the first Prime Minister in nearly 200 years to face a formal attempt at impeachment.

A group of around 23 MPs have tabled a little-used motion to start an investigation into claims that he was guilty of "gross misconduct" in the run-up to war in Iraq. This gave the cue to other celebrities, against the war, to join the MPs and call for Blair's impeachment in a motion calling for a special committee to investigate his claims in the months before the invasion.

Authors Frederick Forsyth and Iain Banks, actors Susan Wooldridge, Andy de la Tour and Corin Redgrave and the musician Brian Eno went to the House of Commons to show their support, along with Reg and Sally Keys, whose son Thomas, 20, a soldier, died in Iraq last year.

The campaigners are hoping to secure a Commons debate on impeachment, putting Blair's claims about Saddam Hussein's weaponry and the threat he posed under further scrutiny.

Former Tory frontbencher Boris Johnson, the former Tory ministers Douglas Hogg and John Gummer, Plaid



AP

Prime Minister Tony Blair takes part in a phone text session in London on Thursday.

Cymru's parliamentary leader, Elfyn Llwyd, Paul Marsden, who defected from Labour to the Liberal Democrats, and the Respect MP George Gallows, who was expelled from the Labour Party for his comments on Iraq are among the signatories.

But the good thing for Blair is that no Labour backbenchers have signed the motion despite most of them having opposed the Iraq policy quite vociferously. Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish National Party and one of the signatories was quoted saying that he was optimistic that the Speaker, Michael Martin, would grant a debate. "This is no gimmick," he said. "No speaker in history has turned down a motion on impeachment for debate."

26 NOV 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Rice has a vital role when the Bush presidency makes its choices

Not an outsider

SUNANDA K. DATTA-RAY

A Singaporean friend who minces no words was blunt on the telephone. "Bush's 'house nigger' has gone," he bellowed, "but the promoted maid will do just as well!" It was a cruel way of putting the change in the state department of the US, but no one will quarrel with the assumption of continuity in Washington's increasingly imperial and imperious policy abroad.

The National Security Strategy document which gloatingly laid down a global role for the last presidency is even more pertinent now. It warned us then that George W. Bush "has no intention of allowing any foreign power to catch up with the huge lead of the United States of America that has opened up since the fall of the Soviet Union more than a decade ago". Far from being a clash of civilizations, his war on terrorism would, in fact, "reveal the clash inside a civilization, a battle for the future of the Muslim world". That presaged more intrigue, conspiracy, bullying and iniquitous regime changes. That means ignoring the collapse of past puppets to prop up clones of Iraq's Iyad Allawi.

A cartoon in *The Times*, London, showed the woman on whose slender shoulders has fallen the task of articulating this supreme global role as a pin-up girl in swimsuit and high heels plastered on the side of a World War II bomber with a demonic Bush as the nose gunner. As a star pupil at Denver university's graduate school of international studies, Condoleezza Rice may have been introduced to the machiavellian wheeling and dealing of American emissaries in subcontinental politics. Madeleine Albright's father, Josef Korbel, controversial head of the United Nations Commission on India and Pakistan, was her tutor.

It is well known that the Czech diplomat went to extraordinary lengths to conceal his Jewish origins, even from his children. Nor is it a secret that Korbel had no business occupying the post he did since his accreditation was from Czechoslovakia's ousted pre-communist regime. What is less widely known is that in stabbing India in the back by treating "the thief and the owner of the house as equals" (Jawaharlal Nehru's words) on Kashmir, Korbel was really serving his own personal interest.

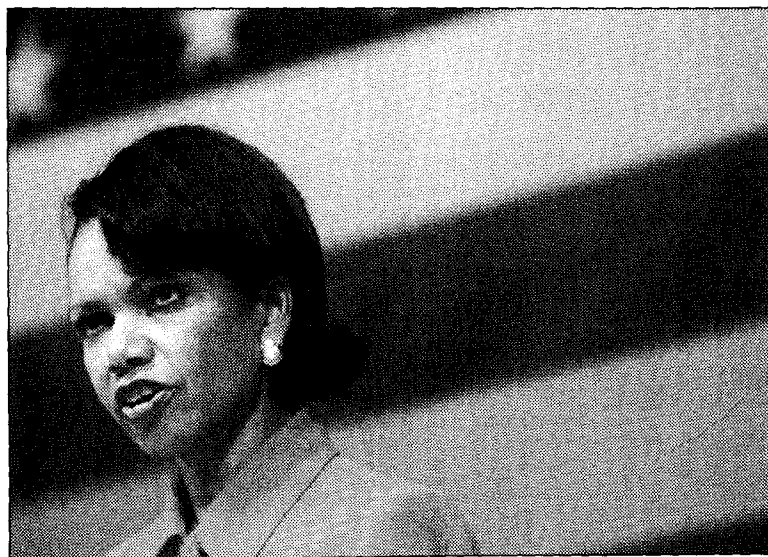
Eyes set on US citizenship, he had to file his papers before the end of the three-year diplomatic term from the non-existent Czech government he represented. He had also to ensure a favourable response from the US im-

migration authorities. Failure would have meant deportation to a Prague that had passed into the control of his bitter political enemies. At best, he would have been another stateless Balkan refugee. The benefit of hindsight suggests that those compulsions determined his conduct on Kashmir.

An Englishman who was attached to the commission tells me they were astonished when Korbel insisted on dashing back to the US (and forcing the rest to do so too) before they had had an opportunity to digest everything they had seen and heard in Kashmir. No one knew then of the deadline by which Korbel had to submit his cit-

weapons. The military intelligence boys who had gulled the old soldier must have been laughing up their sleeves at his naiveté.

Rice is astute, intelligent and utterly loyal. Unlike Powell, she is not an outsider. She assembled the men who became known as the Vulcans to fight Bush's first presidential campaign, and the media invented the name with its Star Trek associations because the steel industry dominates her home town of Birmingham, Alabama, with its statue of Vulcan. Bush's team was supposed to forge Republican policy like the Roman god of fire forged metals. She was rewarded by



Astute, intelligent and utterly loyal

izenship application. They had even less idea that a verdict on Kashmir that displeased Pakistan would have displeased Washington even more.

Whatever the effects of this early brush with deviousness, Rice must work hard to earn credibility. It became clear during Colin Powell's tenure that the Pentagon ranked above the state department and that men like Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz dwarfed the secretary of state. The consensus is that Powell should have resigned then instead of now, but that view ignores the complexities of human nature. Allowance has to be made for the allure of high office and the self-discipline of a distinguished soldier. Nor is there really much evidence of Powell's supposed moderation. Perhaps he was also too trusting, famously holding up a test tube of white powder as proof of Saddam Hussein's diabolical chemical

being made national security adviser.

But familiarity does not always mean influence. Even if it did, by all accounts Rice would be no different from the most bigoted neo-conservative. Her translation, therefore, from the role of president's confidante and trouble-shooter to that of principal boy in the Christmas pantomime of Bush's foreign policy may not make any difference to the policy itself.

The question now is whether she will only carry out orders or impress her own stamp on policy and policy-making. If the latter, will a Rice view of the world be any different from the vision of the white male neo-cons? Popular lore places her to the right of right, just as Powell was seen as a liberal fallen among fundamentalists. There is no means of knowing whether this is where she stands naturally or whether extreme hawkishness is the defensive armour of an insecure

young black woman thrown in the company of a clutch of reactionary men who are as different from her as could be in terms of race and background.

Iraq, Iran, North Korea and the Israel-Palestine question await her attention in her new incarnation. There is little that she or her boss need do on Iran and North Korea save exercise restraint. Another burst of their drum-beating evangelical crusade will only further divert attention from the war on terror that is said to be the administration's main concern. As for Iraq, it has become too complex for any easy formula though it is clear enough that there can be no peace until the US reconciles itself to disengagement. If it does not do so with voluntary grace, it may find itself in the same invidious predicament as in Vietnam, where the American ambassador had to be rescued in humiliating haste, the Stars and Stripes bundled in a plastic bag under his arm.

But it is in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights that the US faces both opportunity and danger. Osama bin Laden's reference to the Palestine cause in his last video broadcast was a serious reminder of the centrality of the problem not only in west Asian affairs but in many Muslim situations. It is a festering sore that aggravates discontent. But it is simplistic to imagine that with Yasser Arafat gone, a solution is round the corner. That would be playing into the hands of Israeli expansionists who calculate that Arafat's successors will be too weak to resist the imposition of a fragmented little Bantustan in Gaza and some shreds of the West Bank while Israel gobbles up the rest, together with East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. That was the whole purpose of Ariel Sharon's recent evacuation of the Gaza Strip. It is a purpose that will intensify the west Asian conflict and, thereby, the wider war between the US and forces that represent Islamic interests.

A vital choice faces the second Bush presidency. It can rely only on its superpower strength to bludgeon the world into subservience for as long as possible. Or, accepting that global stature depends ultimately on the ability to dispense justice, the US can transform itself into peacemaker and partner in development. The secretary of state has a crucial role in that choice. Whether Rice has the wisdom to realize this or will have the courage and ability to implement it are different matters.

মন্ত্রী বদল

রাজা রহিলেন একই, মন্ত্রী কিন্তু পাল্টাইতেছেন। আগের মন্ত্রীর দোষ, তিনি ফাঁকিবাজ নহেন, অযোগ্য নহেন, কিন্তু অনেক বিষয়েই রাজার সঙ্গে তাঁহার মত ও দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির বড় অমিল। এই রাজা যে-সে রাজা নহেন, তাঁহার বহু কাজ, বহুতর পরিকল্পনা, গোটা পৃথিবীর চিন্তা। সুতরাং দ্বিতীয় বার ওয়াশিংটনের সিংহাসনারূঢ় হইয়াই জর্জ ডবলিউ বুশ ঠিক করিয়াছেন, এই বার মন্ত্রী বদলের পালা। বিদেশ সচিব কলিন পাওয়েল ইস্তফাপত্র দিতেছেন, তাঁহার জায়গায় আসিতেছেন বুশের একান্ত প্রীতিভাজন, এত দিনের জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা কন্ডোলিজা রাইস। কুখ্যাত নাইন ইলেভন পরবর্তী দুনিয়া মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশের যে কর্মব্যস্ত যোদ্ধরূপ দেখিয়াছে, তাহার তিন মূল রূপকারের মধ্যে এক জন ছিলেন এই পাওয়েল, বাকি দুই জন অবশ্যই ভাইস-প্রেসিডেন্ট ডিক চেনি ও নিরাপত্তা সচিব ডেনাল্ড রামসফেল্ড। আফগানিস্তান ও ইরাক পর্বের সঙ্গে এই তিন জনের নাম এতই ওতপ্রোত ভাবে জড়াইয়া রহিয়াছে যে অনেকেই খেয়াল রাখেন না যে এই ত্রয়ীর মধ্যে যথেষ্ট মতযুদ্ধ হইয়াছে প্রথমাবধি। স্পষ্ট বিভাজন-রেখা টানা না গেলেও মোটের উপর এই মতযুদ্ধে চেনি-রামসফেল্ড হইলেন চরমপন্থী ও কলিন পাওয়েল নরমপন্থী। এক দিকে চেনি রামসফেল্ডের কট্টর মনোভাব, অন্য দিকে পাওয়েলের রাশ টানিবার সতর্কবাণী, এই দ্বৈরথ গত চার বছরে বহু বার দেখা গিয়াছে। দেখা গিয়াছে যখন বুশের 'অশুভ অক্ষে'র মধ্যে উচ্চারিত হইয়াছে উত্তর কোরিয়ার নাম। দেখা গিয়াছে যখন ইরাককে 'অন্ত্রহীন' করিবার লক্ষ্যে এককাত্তা থাকিয়াও 'স্পয়েল-স্পোর্ট' পাওয়েল রামসফেল্ডের 'এখনই যুদ্ধ' নীতির বিরোধিতা করিয়াছেন। দেখা গিয়াছে যখন যুদ্ধ-ধ্বস্ত ইরাককে সরাসরি মার্কিন হেফাজতে না রাখিয়া রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের হাতে তুলিয়া দিবার সপক্ষে জোর ওকালতি করিয়াছেন পাওয়েল। সন্ত্রাস-দমন লড়াইয়ের পটভূমিকায় এই নেপথ্য দড়ি টানাটানির খেলায় প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ কখনও এই পক্ষে আস্থা রাখিয়াছেন, কখনও ওই পক্ষে। কিন্তু ক্রমশই পরিষ্কার হইয়াছে যে আসলে কট্টরতর মতেই বুশের সায়া। পরিষ্কার হইয়াছে যে এই দড়ির খেলা সকলের পক্ষেই রীতিমতো অসুবিধাজনক, বুশবাহিনীর সম্মুখবর্তী তিন প্রধান সেনানী মতাদর্শগত ভাবে যত নিকটবর্তী হন, ততই সকলের সুবিধা।

সরিতে হইলে পাওয়েলকেই সরিতে হইবে, ইহাও আগেই স্পষ্ট ছিল। নেহাত প্রাক-নির্বাচনী হাওয়ার গতি সম্যক বুঝিতে পারিতেছিলেন না বলিয়াই বুশ-চেনি কঠোর পদক্ষেপটি লইবার সাহস অর্জন করিতে পারেন নাই। দ্বিতীয় খেপে প্রেসিডেন্ট পদে ফিরিয়া আসিয়া আপাতত বুশ আত্মপ্রত্যয়ে বলীয়ান, নিজ ভুবনদর্শনের মাহাত্ম্যে ও গৌরবে টইটধুর, সুতরাং পাওয়েলের প্রহর ফুরাইল। কৃষ্ণাঙ্গ পাওয়েল তাঁহার রিপাবলিকান মতাদর্শের জন্য বিস্তর গালমন্দ খাইয়া থাকেন, স্বগোত্রে 'ঘরশক্র'র আখ্যা পাইয়া থাকেন, এমনকী ইরাক-পর্বে তাঁহার পূর্ণ সহযোগিতা দেখিয়া প্রবাদপ্রতিম কৃষ্ণ-গায়ক হ্যারি বেলফোর্টে বিক্ষোভবশে বলিয়াছিলেন, পাওয়েল হইলেন সেই ধরনের 'দাস' যাহারা প্রভুর বাড়িতে সেবাকর্মে নিযুক্ত থাকেন, আর প্রভুর কথা এক চুল অমান্য করিলেই ~~হাফিয়া~~ গলা ধাক্কা খাইয়া বাহির হইতে বাধ্য হন। জামাইকার ভূমিপুত্র পাওয়েলের অপসারণ হোয়াইট হাউসে বর্ণবিভেদের দ্যোতক মনে করিবার কারণ নাই, কিন্তু 'কট্টর' ভিন্ন অন্য কোনও বর্ণই যে প্রভু বুশ আর বরদাস্ত করিবেন না, ইহা একশো শতাংশ নিশ্চিত হইল।

নূতন যিনি অভিযুক্ত হইতেছেন, সেই কৃষ্ণবর্ণা কন্ডোলিজা রাইস অবশ্যই সহজে চেনি ও রামসফেল্ডের শিবিরের অন্যতম মেরুদণ্ড হইয়া উঠিবেন বলিয়া বুশের আশা। বস্তুত গত চার বছরে বহু ক্ষেত্রে বুশ তাঁহার প্রবলতম সমর্থক খুঁজিয়া পাইয়াছেন এই রাইসের মধ্যে। কিছু দিন আগেই রাইস একটি বহু-প্রচারিত সাক্ষাৎকারে প্রাক-নাইন ইলেভন বুশ প্রশাসনে নিরাপত্তা-স্বাধীনতার সমস্ত অভিযোগ সজোরে উড়াইয়া দিয়াছেন; কোনও ভাবেই যে সন্ত্রাস ও সন্ত্রাস-বিরোধী যুদ্ধের এই অবধারিত সংঘর্ষ এড়ানো যাইত না, তাহা আরও এক বার মার্কিন সাধারণ্যকে মনে করাইয়া দিয়াছেন। দ্বিতীয় পর্যায়ে বুশের নূতন উদ্যমের সঙ্গে এই পদ-পরিবর্তন সঙ্গতিপূর্ণ। পশ্চিম এশিয়ার সংকট গোটা পৃথিবীকে আরও অনেক বেশি বিপন্ন করিয়া রাখিয়াছে। বুশ ও তাঁহার নূতন বাহিনী কী ভাবে মোকাবেলায় নামেন, তাহাই এখন দেখিবার।

20 NOV 2004

ANANDRAZAR PATEIKA

Confidante and rising star

LAST Saturday night, Condoleezza Rice was swept by motorcade from her apartment in the Watergate complex, up Massachusetts Avenue to the British Embassy for what she believed to be a run-of-the-mill, black-tie Washington dinner.

She arrived at Sir David Manning's elegant residence to find it full of family and friends, gathered for a surprise 50th birthday party. The Washington elite was also out in force, filling the small embassy car park with some of the smartest limousines in town.

President Bush and his wife, Laura, topped the guest list, followed by Bush's closest aides, Cabinet members and several of Dr Rice's predecessors as national security advisor. The event went swimmingly - the band in the ballroom played past 11 p.m., late for this early-to-bed administration - and spoke volumes about the tight links forged by Sir Christopher Meyer and his successor Sir David with those parts of the Bush administration that matter.

Its timing was also perfect for a figure whose star continues to shine ever brighter.

Dr Rice's ascent to the top of the State Department is the latest in a long line of landmark achievements: the youngest provost of Stanford University; the first woman to be national security advisor; and the first black woman to be secretary of state.

Her rise will have come as little surprise to her parents, John and Angelina, education evangelists who drummed into their only child growing up in segregated Alabama that to compete with white children she had to be twice as good as them, three times as good to beat them. It was a lesson that she took to heart.

She started piano lessons aged three, gave her first recital at four and plays at concert level. Her mother, also a piano player, fashioned Dr Rice's name from the Italian score instruction "con dolcezza" (to play "with sweetness").

She speaks French - not something to brag about in the current administration - and is a former figure-skating champion. She plays tennis, not quite to the same dizzying levels, but is tough to beat because of her fierce determination.

"She is very competitive," said one diplo-

mat who has played with her. "She has a very effective backhand passing shot, but she plays with a great sense of humour."

Black women are rare in Republican ranks. Bush increased his share of the black vote from nine per cent in 2000 to 11 per cent two weeks ago.

Dr Rice's father was a registered Republican, but chiefly because it was easier to register with them. The Dixiecrats who ran the dominant Democratic machine in the South asked him to guess the number of beans in a jar before he was allowed to register with them.

In 1976, however, Dr Rice was a registered Democrat and backed Jimmy Carter. But she was disenchanted by what she regarded as his inept, naive and dangerously lax approach to the Soviet Union.

Ronald Reagan appealed to her because he stuck very closely to a few very clear principles, not unlike her current boss.



Condoleezza Rice's ascent to the top of the State Department is the latest in a long line of landmark achievements. A profile by ROLAND WATSON

Her moment of intellectual discovery came at Denver University when being taught international relations by Joseph Korbel, a former Czech diplomat and refugee and, coincidentally, the father of Madeleine Albright, the first female secretary of state.

She made her first impressions on the Bush family while serving as a Soviet expert in the National Security Council of the first President Bush. He quickly became a fan. "She has a manner and a presence that disarms the biggest of the big shots," he later said. "Why? Because they know she knows what she is talking about."

She became the foreign affairs tutor to the younger Bush when he was running for President. He

named a hill on his ranch "Balkan Hill" after one particular tutorial during a four-mile hike.

But the pair really bonded over a shared

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17. — Colin Powell, who resigned as secretary of state, was absent when President Bush announced the new secretary - Condoleezza Rice - even as Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Powell had himself welcomed the choice. When journalists pointed out that normally, the outgoing secretary is present on such occasions, calling it a "tradition", Boucher said that he

Missing in action?

did not know that it has "necessarily been the case". "I have not researched it. I think that may be an overgeneralisation. I don't know how the schedules were decided," he told reporters. Asked whether he knew why Powell did not attend, Boucher said, "No. I am not even

sure why you would expect him to have attended." Boucher said Powell welcomed the announcement. "He has known her, worked with her for many, many years, and they have worked very well together", he said. "He (Powell) looks forward to having a very, very smooth transition here, and we all look forward to helping her implement the President's policies," asserted Boucher. — PTI

love of sports. Dr Rice's father was ready to immerse his baby, if it was a boy, in baseball and American football. His influence rubbed off on his daughter just the same. During weekends at Camp David, where Dr Rice is treated as family, she and the President are as likely to be watching American football or baseball as they are discussing policy.

She delights in her tenuous links to sporting greatness; her mother taught Willie Mays, one of the first great baseball players to break the colour barrier. She also knew Tiger Woods at Stanford, but is just as happy proclaiming that she used to do weight training with the golfer's weight trainer.

Dr Rice's domestic politics are largely unknown, but she is fervently pro-gun rights. If her father had had to register his shotgun with the Birmingham police chief, she explains, it would almost certainly have been taken away from him, depriving him of the weapon with which he and neighbours patrolled their neighbourhood.

Dr Rice has had her critics as a national security advisor. Instead of presiding over the settling of policy disputes before presenting the President with a recommendation, she has let arguments rage between Colin Powell and Donald Rumsfeld, keeping her counsel for the President.

However, it is not hard to divine what kind of secretary of state she will make. She has flourished under the Bushes in part by living by their strict code of loyalty. There will be no "Rice doctrine" issuing from the State Department.

She has described herself in the past as a realist who understands that power plays on the world stage require compromise. But she has said: "There cannot be an absence of moral content in American foreign policy. And furthermore, the American people would not accept such an absence. Europeans giggle at this and say we are naive, but we are not European, we are American and we have different principles."

Even in 1999 she was sounding very like the future President Bush. It's not surprising, given that she taught him.

— *The Times, London.*

Bush picks Rice to succeed Powell

S. Rajagopalan
Washington, November 16

TRUE TO expectation, President George W. Bush has chosen his close confidant, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, to succeed Colin Powell as the Secretary of State.

In a formal announcement slated to be made later on Tuesday, Bush is also set to name Rice's deputy Stephen J. Hadley as the next National Security Adviser.

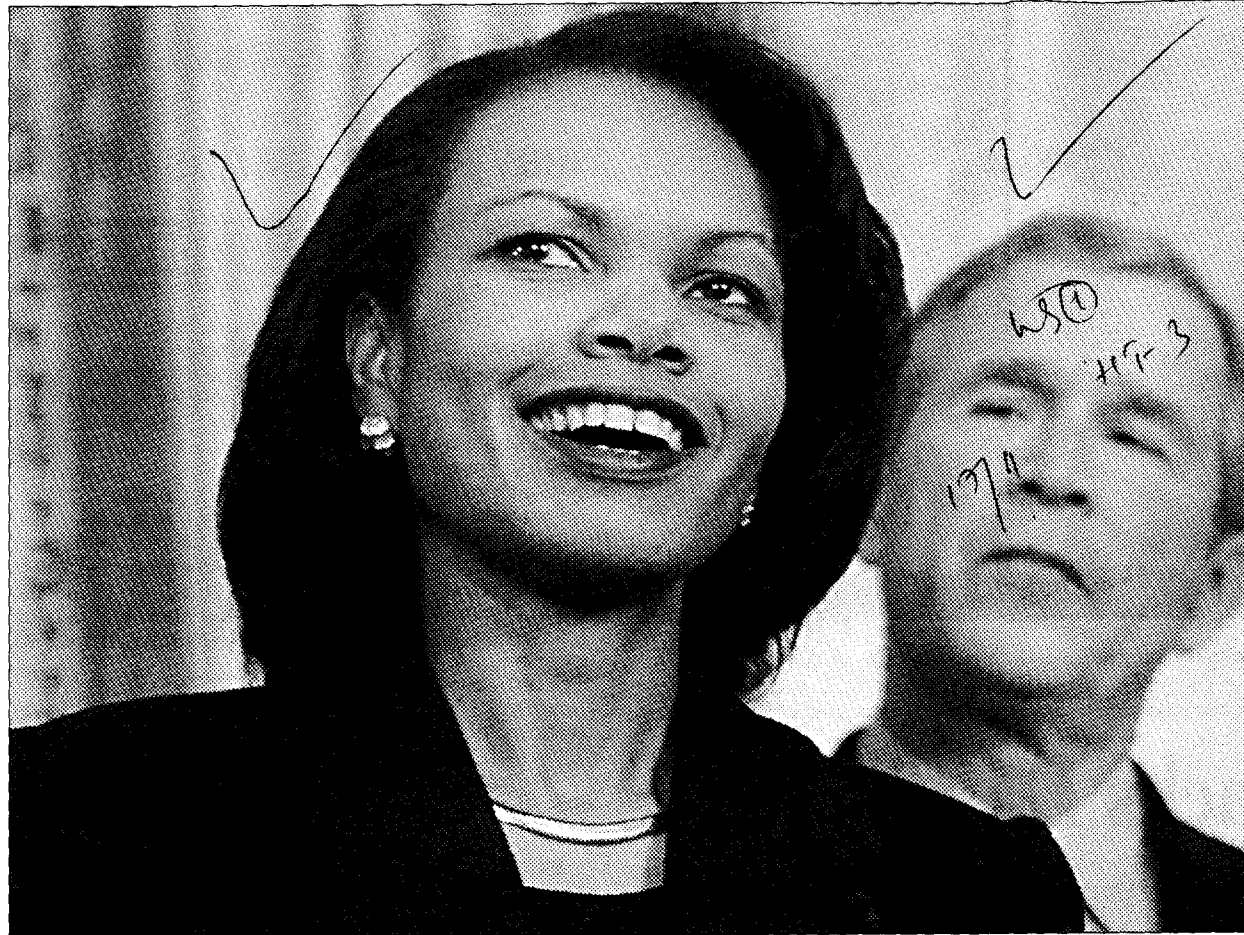
Rice, who turned 50 on Sunday, has been Bush's most trusted adviser on national security and foreign policy matters. Unlike Powell, who had a tough time battling hardliners like Vice-President Dick Cheney and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Rice is expected to have fairly smooth sailing.

Analysts believe that Rice, as secretary of state, will continue to promote the President's views rather than her own. They consider her to be a pragmatist rather than an ideologue.

Indian leaders have enjoyed a good equation with Rice. National Security Adviser J.N. Dixit held parleys with her soon after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's first meeting with Bush in New York in September. Dixit's predecessor Brajesh Mishra used to be in regular touch with her.

That the change of guard at Foggy Bottom will not affect the US's ties with India in any manner was stressed by the White House on Monday. "We certainly have a strong relationship with India and we will continue to build on that relationship with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as we move forward," spokesman Scott McClellan said when asked how Powell's successor would handle Indo-US relationship.

Hadley, tipped to succeed Rice as NSA, has held foreign policy posts under Bush Sr. He has served as Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Policy. During that stint, he was responsible for defence policy towards Nato and Western Europe.



PRESIDENT'S CHOICE President Bush with trusted lieutenant Condoleezza Rice in this December 2000 photograph. AP

Loyal, even when left out by Prez

USA Today
Washington, November 16

TRAVELLING AROUND the world in the past few months, Colin Powell would occasionally come to the back of his plane, where reporters sit, to reflect on the long arc of his career and marvel at how a poor boy from the Bronx rose to become the nation's chief diplomat.

The off-the-record conversations were nostalgic, almost wistful, and often dealt more with the promise of the past than the realities of the present. Few résumés are as packed with accomplishments as Powell's: Secretary of State, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, national security adviser, recipient of multiple military decorations and two Presidential Medals of Freedom.

In announcing his resignation on Monday, Powell pointed to diplomatic

BEHIND THE NEWS

successes on his watch, such as solidifying US relations with China, India and Pakistan and increasing US foreign aid. "I think we've accomplished a great deal," Powell said.

His enormous popularity at home and abroad afford him the opportunity for even more accomplishments. But as he prepares to leave the State Department, there is a nagging sense of unfulfilled promise about Powell, who has had one of the most distinguished public service careers of any African-American. When Powell became Secretary of State, it was assumed he would be a major figure, setting US foreign policy for a President who took office untutored in international affairs. But

President Bush listened more to Cheney, Rumsfeld and Rice in planning a muscular US role in the world.

"It is not so much what he did but what he could have done that the administration did not take advantage of," says retired Marine general Anthony Zinni, a Powell friend who briefly served as State Department envoy to West Asia. "I don't think the administration adopted his philosophy of moderate realism, but leaned toward" a more hawkish view that "put Powell on the outside" on many issues, Zinni says.

Harlan Ullman, a friend of Powell's for 30 years, says Bush will ultimately shoulder most of blame if the Iraq war turns out to have been a mistake. But even Ullman says the question will remain: "Did Powell do enough to keep the nation from launching on a bad course?"

CIA shake-up continues: Two top spies to step down

USA Today
Washington, November 16

THE TOP two officials in the CIA's clandestine service resigned on Monday, bringing into public view an intensifying feud between Bush administration CIA appointees and some of the agency's most experienced spies.

The resignations of Stephen Kappes, head of the Directorate of Operations, and Michael Sulick, his No. 2, come days after Deputy CIA director John McLaughlin and counterterrorism specialist Michael Scheuer announced their departures from the agency.

The CIA issued a news release confirming that Kappes and Sulick would be entering the "career transition programme", a prelude to their departures.

In the release, Porter Goss, in his second month as CIA director, said Kappes and Sulick were "widely respected by the workforce" and had made contributions dating to the Cold War. Goss also said he was appointing a senior covert officer as head of operations. The CIA did not issue the official's name on Monday for security reasons.

Beneath the formalities lay a simmering dispute pitting Kappes and Sulick against Goss and his top aide, Patrick Murray. Under Goss' chairmanship of the House Intelligence Committee earlier this year, Murray drafted a report calling the Directorate of Operations "dysfunctional". Rep. Jane Harman of California, ranking Democrat on the panel, said on Monday that Murray was part of a "highly partisan, inexperienced staff" that Goss brought from Capitol Hill.

SF 1/11

Rice wins race

W/D

WASHINGTON, Nov. 16. — President Bush today promoted his most trusted foreign policy adviser, Ms Condoleezza Rice, to Secretary of State, replacing Gen. Colin Powell as part of his Cabinet overhaul. "The Secretary of State is America's face to the world and in Ms Rice the world will see the strength, grace and decency of our country," Mr Bush said. He thanked Gen. Powell for working "tirelessly and selflessly" on the country's behalf. Also today, Gen. Powell's deputy in the State Department, Mr Richard Armitage, submitted his resignation.

Following her nomination, Ms Rice (50) told Mr Bush: "Under your leadership, America is fighting and winning the war on terror." If confirmed by the Senate, she would be the first black woman Secretary of State.

Mr Bush named Mr Stephen Hadley, Ms Rice's deputy, to replace her as national



Ms Rice smiles as President Bush announces her nomination. — AFP

security adviser. US allies and critics expressed hope that Ms Rice, as Washington's new face to the world, could find solutions to festering problems in Iraq and West Asia. But some worried US foreign policy would harden as she is considered more of a hardliner than Gen. Powell. — AP

17 NOV 2001

THE STATESMAN

Powell's departure triumph of hard-edged diplomacy

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17. — General Colin Powell's departure as US secretary of state and President George W Bush's intention to name his confidante, national security adviser Ms Condoleezza Rice, as his replacement would mark the triumph of a hard-edged approach to diplomacy, according to analysts.

It is the triumph for the hawkish approach espoused by vice-president Mr Dick Cheney and defence secretary Mr Donald H Rumsfeld, the *Washington Post* reported today.

Mr Powell had pressed

for working with the Europeans on ending Iran's nuclear programme, pursuing diplomatic talks with North Korea over its nuclear ambitions and taking a tougher approach with Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon.

Now, the policy toward Iran and North Korea may turn decidedly sharper, with a bigger push for sanctions rather than diplomacy, the daily said. On West Asia peace, the burden for progress will remain largely with the Palestinians.

In elevating Ms Rice, Mr Bush is signaling that he is comfortable with the direction of the past four years and sees little need

to dramatically shift course. The only key official who did not mesh well with the others — Gen. Powell — is leaving, the daily said, noting his departure could trigger a wholesale reshuffling of top state department officials.

There will be "teeth-gnashing" over Mr Powell's departure by many foreign officials," said Mr Samuel R "Sandy" Berger, national security adviser in Mr Bill Clinton's second term. A senior state department official said Mr Powell's exit was almost a foregone conclusion given the tension that prevailed between Gen. Powell, the President, Mr Cheney and Mr Rumsfeld.

17 NOV 2001

THE STATESMAN

'US prisoners tortured by proxy'

Suspects Made To Talk In Countries With Poor Human Rights Record

By Stephen Grey

An executive jet is being used by the American intelligence agencies to fly terrorist suspects to countries that routinely use torture in their prisons.

The movements of the Gulfstream 5 leased by agents from the United States defence department and the CIA are detailed in confidential logs obtained by The Sunday Times which cover more than 300 flights.

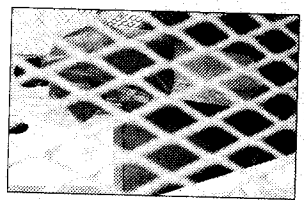
Countries with poor human rights records to which the Americans have delivered prisoners include Egypt, Syria and Uzbekistan, according to the files. The logs have prompted allegations from critics that the agency is using such regimes to carry out "torture by proxy" — a charge denied by the American government.

Some of the information from the suspects is said to have been used by MI5 and MI6, the British intelligence services. The admissibility in court of evidence gained under torture is being considered in the House of Lords in an appeal by for-

eign-born prisoners at Belmarsh Jail, south London, against their detention without trial on suspicion of terrorism.

Over the past two years the unmarked Gulfstream has visited British airports on many occasions, although it is not believed to

two years, shows that it always departs from Washington DC. It has flown to 49 destinations outside America, including the Guantanamo Bay prison camp in Cuba and other US military bases, as well as Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Morocco, Afghanistan, Libya and Uzbekistan. Witnesses have claimed that the suspects are frequently bound, gagged and sedated before being put on board the planes, which do not have special facilities for prisoners but are kitted out with tables for meetings and screens for presentations and in-flight films.



If you want an interrogation, you send a prisoner to Jordan. If you want them to be tortured, you send them to Syria. If you want someone to disappear ... you send them to Egypt

— Bob Baer, ex-CIA operative

have been carrying suspects at the time. The Gulfstream and a similarly anonymous-looking Boeing 737 are hired by American agents from Premier Executive Transport Services, a private company in Massachusetts.

Analysis of the Gulfstream's flight plans, covering more than

Its prisoner transfer missions were first reported in May by the

Swedish television programme Cold Facts. It described how American agents had arrived in Stockholm in the Gulfstream in December 2001 to take two suspected terrorists from Sweden to Egypt.

At the time of what was presented as an "extradition" to Egypt, Swedish ministers made no public mention of American involvement in the detention of Ahmed Agiza, 42, and Muhammed Zery, 35, who was later cleared.

Witnesses described seeing the prisoners handed to US agents whose faces were masked by hoods. The clothes of the handcuffed prisoners were cut off and they were dressed in nappies covered by orange overalls before being forcibly given sedatives by suppository.

The Gulfstream flew them to Egypt, where both prisoners claimed they were beaten and tortured with electric shocks to their genitals. Despite liberal Swedish laws on freedom of information, diplomatic telegrams on the case released to the media were edited to conceal the complaints of torture. The Sunday Times

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

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THE STATESMAN

Powell puts in papers, three more follow

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Nov. 15. — Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell and three other Cabinet members have resigned, the White House said today, escalating the shake-up of President Bush's second-term team. Though a successor was not immediately announced, administration officials said either UN ambassador Mr John Danforth or National Security Adviser Ms Condoleezza Rice were most likely to succeed Gen. Powell.

Gen. Powell's resignation, submitted on Friday, was confirmed today, as were those of Energy Sec-

retary Mr S Abraham, Agriculture Secretary Ms A Veneman and Education Secretary Mr R Paige.

In a related development, the White House asserted that the USA will continue its "strong" ties with India and said Washington doesn't expect any major policy changes with New Delhi after the resignation of Gen. Powell, who was "instrumental in help easing Indo-Pak tensions".

In his letter to Mr Bush, Gen. Powell wrote: "Now that the election is over, the time has come for

me to step down... I am pleased to have been part of a team that launched the global war against terror, liberated the Afghan and Iraqi people." Gen. Powell, who was reportedly planning only a single term with Mr Bush, told the President he intends to "return to private life".

Later he told reporters at the State Department that he and Mr Bush came to a "mutual agreement" that it was time for him to resign. He added that it will be "a number of weeks or a month"



Gen. Colin Powell

before he departs.

Gen. Powell had a controversial tenure in the State Secretary's job, reportedly differing on some key issues with Defence Secretary Mr Donald H Rumsfeld. Gen. Powell, however, has generally had good relations with his counterparts around the world, although his image was strained by the US-led war in Iraq. British Foreign Secretary Mr Jack Straw said he was "a unique figure" who had made the transition "from being a great soldier to being a great statesman". Arab League's Secretary-General Mr Amr Moussa said Gen. Powell was a "voice of moderation" in the US administration.

CIA in turmoil as deputy chief resigns

DANA PRIEST AND
WALTER PINCUS

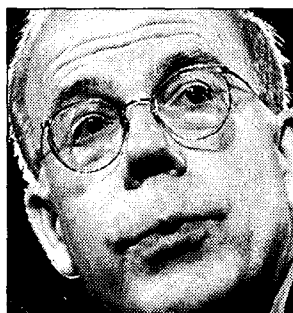
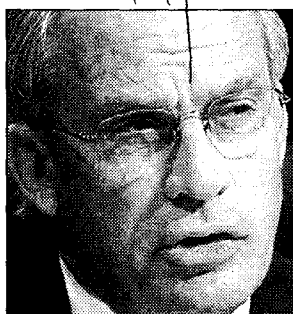
Washington, Nov. 13: The deputy director of the CIA resigned yesterday after a series of confrontations over the past week between senior operations officials and CIA director Porter J. Goss' new chief-of-staff that have left the agency in turmoil, according to several current and former CIA officials.

John E. McLaughlin, a 32-year CIA veteran who was acting director for two months this summer until Goss took over, resigned after warning Goss that his top aide, former Capitol Hill staff member Patrick Murray, was treating senior officials disrespectfully and risked widespread resignations, the officials said.

Yesterday, the agency official who oversees foreign operations, deputy director of operations Stephen R. Kappes, tendered his resignation after a confrontation with Murray. Goss and the White House pleaded with Kappes to reconsider and he agreed to delay his decision until Monday, the officials said.

Several other senior clandestine service officers are threatening to leave, current and former agency officials said.

The disruption comes as the CIA is trying to stay abreast of a worldwide terrorist threat from al Qaida, a



Porter J. Goss (top) and John E. McLaughlin

growing insurgency in Iraq, the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan and congressional proposals to reorganise the intelligence agencies.

The agency also has been criticised for not preventing the September 11, 2001, attacks and not accurately assessing Saddam Hussein's ability to produce weapons of mass destruction.

"It's the worst roiling I've ever heard of," said one former senior official with knowledge of the events. "There's confusion through-

out the ranks and an extraordinary loss of morale and incentive."

Current and retired senior managers have criticised Goss, former chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, for not interacting with senior managers and for giving Murray too much authority over day-to-day operations. Murray was Goss' chief-of-staff on the intelligence committee.

Transitions between CIA directors are often unsettling for career officers. Goss' arrival has been especially tense because he brought with him four former members of the intelligence committee known widely on the Hill and within the agency for their abrasive management style.

Three are former mid-level CIA officials who left the agency disgruntled, according to former colleagues. The fourth, Murray, who also worked at the justice department, has a reputation for being highly partisan. When senior managers have gone to Goss to complain about his staff actions, one CIA officer said, Goss has told them: "Talk to my chief of staff. I don't do personnel."

The overall effect, said one former senior CIA official, who has kept up his contacts in the directorate of operations, "is that Goss doesn't seem engaged at all."

LOS ANGELES TIMES-
WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE

1000 rebels killed in Falluja

Baghdad, Nov. 13 (Reuters): US and Iraqi forces have killed more than 1,000 insurgents in the battle to retake the Sunni city of Falluja, an Iraqi minister said today.

"More than 1,000 Saddamists and terrorists have been killed. Around 200 have been arrested," said Kasim Daoud, minister of state for national security, said. "The operations are almost over. There are only pockets of resistance left in the city."

Insurgents do not disclose their losses and there was no independent confirmation of the figures Daoud provided.

US Marine Lieutenant General John Sattler said yesterday his forces occupied about 80 per cent of Falluja, but that even within that area there was still "clearing up" to do. The military says 22 US and five Iraqi troops have been killed and 170 US soldiers wounded.

An Iraqi Red Crescent convoy entered Falluja today with the first aid supplies to reach the city. Thirty volunteers with five trucks and three ambulances drove into the city, 50 km west of Baghdad.

14 NOV 2004

THE TELEGRAPH



কী ধরনের ভোটদাতা কার পক্ষে

	নৈতিক মূল্যবোধ	সন্ত্রাস	অর্থনীতি	ইরাক যুদ্ধ
কত ভোটারের কাছে এটাই প্রথম প্রশ্ন	২২%	১৯%	২০%	১৫%
এই ভোটারদের কত শতাংশের পছন্দ				
বুশ	৮০%	৮৬%	১৮%	২৬%
কেরি	১৮%	১৪%	৮০%	৭৪%

কেন কেরি নয়, বুশ

নৈতিক মূল্যবোধ আর সন্ত্রাস যাঁদের কাছে সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ তাঁরা বিশাল সংখ্যায় বুশকে ভোট দিয়েছেন। অর্থনীতি আর ইরাক যুদ্ধ যাঁদের কাছে সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ তাঁরা বিপুল সংখ্যায় কেরিকে ভোট দিয়েছেন। পূর্বে ভোটারদের সংখ্যা বেশি, তাই বুশ জিতেছেন। লিখছেন মৈত্রীশ ঘটক

এক আমেরিকান বন্ধুকে জিজ্ঞেস করেছিলাম, আচ্ছা, তোমাদের দেশে নাগরিকদের অধিকার আর ব্যক্তিগত স্বাধীনতা নিয়ে এত আলোচনা, কিন্তু বিদেশ নীতির ক্ষেত্রে তোমরা এ সবের একেবারে তোয়াক্কা কর না কেন বল তো, সে ভিয়েতনামই হোক আর লাতিন আমেরিকায় তোমাদের অনুগত একনায়কদের কীর্তিকলাপই হোক! আমার বন্ধু বলল, উত্তরটা খুব সোজা, ওদের তো ভোট নেই।

আমেরিকার সাম্প্রতিক রাষ্ট্রপতি নির্বাচনের প্রসঙ্গে কথাটা মনে পড়ল। আমেরিকার বিদেশ নীতির প্রভাব কমবেশি সব দেশের মানুষের ওপরেই পড়ে, কিন্তু আমার বন্ধুর ভাষায়, ওদের তো ভোট নেই। থাকলে, বিভিন্ন আন্তর্জাতিক কাগজে প্রকাশিত সমীক্ষার ফল অনুযায়ী জর্জ ডব্লিউ বুশ কোনও ভাবেই জিততেন না। এমনকী ইরাক যুদ্ধে আমেরিকার প্রধান সঙ্গী ব্রিটেনেও বুশের থেকে কেরি অনেক গুণ বেশি জনপ্রিয়।

ভোট যাদের আছে, তাদের কথায় আসি। গণতন্ত্র নিয়ে চার্লিলের উদ্ধৃতি সুপরিচিত: 'it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried.' আমেরিকার এই নির্বাচনের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে অবশ্য গত কয়েক দিন ধরে গণতন্ত্র নিয়ে চার্লিলেরই অন্য একটি উদ্ধৃতি সাধায় ঘুরছে: "The best argument against democracy is a five minute conversation with the average voter."

আমেরিকার এই 'অ্যাভারজ' ভোটার কে? কী তাঁর ভাবনাচিন্তা? বুশকে যারা ভোট দিয়েছেন তাঁদের ৭৫% বিশ্বাস করেন, ইরাকে গণ-বিধ্বংসী অস্ত্র ছিল, আর সাদাম হুসেন আল কায়দাকে প্রত্যক্ষ ভাবে মদত দিয়েছেন। কেরির সমর্থকদের ক্ষেত্রে ঠিক উল্টো। আরও আশ্চর্য ব্যাপার, বুশের সমর্থকদের এই মতামত কয়েক মাস আগের একটি সমীক্ষায় পাওয়া ফলের সঙ্গে প্রায় এক, যদিও এর মধ্যে তাঁদেরই দেশের দুটি সরকারি কমিশনের রিপোর্ট বেরিয়েছে (সি আই এ-র Duelfer Report ও 9/11 Commission-এর রিপোর্ট) যাতে দ্বিধাহীন ভাবে বলা হয়েছে, এ দুটি বক্তব্যের সমর্থনে কোনও প্রমাণ মেলেনি। এ নিয়ে গণমাধ্যমগুলোতে যথেষ্ট চর্চাও হয়েছে। আসলে গণমাধ্যমগুলি তো নিরপেক্ষ ভাবে তথ্য পেশ করে না। সমীক্ষায় দেখা গেছে, টিভির দর্শকরা কোন চ্যানেলে খবর দেখেন তার প্রধান নিয়ন্ত্রক হল তাঁদের রাজনৈতিক মত। যেমন, রিপাবলিকান দলের সমর্থকরা পছন্দ করেন ফক্স টিভি আর ডেমোক্র্যাটিক দলের সমর্থকরা সি এন এন, সি বি এস ইত্যাদি। একই খবর কত আলাদা ভাবে পরিবেশন করা যায় তা এই চ্যানেলগুলো না দেখলে বিশ্বাস করা যায় না। ব্যাপারটা অবশ্য সব দেশেই কমবেশি আছে। মনে আছে, গুজরাতে দাঙ্গার সময়ে ওই রাজ্যের আঞ্চলিক ভাষার কাগজগুলি আর সর্বভারতীয় ইংরেজি ভাষার কাগজগুলি একই ঘটনা কতটা আলাদা ভাবে পরিবেশন করছিল।

বুশের সমর্থকদের একটা বড় অংশ বিদেশ নীতি বিষয়ে এই ধরনের ভুল ধারণার বশবর্তী হলেও, দেশের অভ্যন্তরীণ নানা ব্যাপারে এ ধরনের ভ্রান্ত ধারণা পোষণ করে থাকা তো শক্ত। ২০০২ সালে বুশ যখন ক্ষমতায় আসেন, তার পর থেকে যে অর্থনৈতিক মন্দা চলছে, তাতে লক্ষ লক্ষ লোকের চাকরি গেছে। শুধু তাই না। এই অর্থনৈতিক মন্দার মোকাবিলা করতে বুশের প্রধান আর্থিক নীতি হল বিত্তশালী শ্রেণীগুলির ওপর করের ভার কমানো। এর ফলে যেহেতু সরকারের আয় কমবে, তা সামাল দিতে নিম্নবিত্তদের জন্য সরকারের যে সব কল্যাণমূলক যোজনা আছে, সেগুলোর ওপর খরচ কমানো হয়েছে।

ধন্দ লাগতে পারে, রাম খেতে পাচ্ছে না বলে তার কাছ থেকে টাকা নিয়ে শ্যাম, যার টাকার অভাব নেই, তাকে দিলে কি সমস্যা মেটে? উত্তর হল, শ্যাম সে টাকা বিনিয়োগ করতে পারে, আর তার থেকে কোনও এক দিন রাম চাকরি পেতে পারে। এমন নীতির ফলে কোথাও কখনও আর্থিক উন্নয়ন হয়েছে বলে প্রমাণ নেই, তবে স্বভাবতই এতে শ্যামের লাভ আর রামের ক্ষতি। তার মানে অন্তত অর্থনৈতিক কারণে তো রামের বুশকে সমর্থন করা উচিত নয়, তাই না?

অথচ, আপনি যদি আমেরিকায় আর্থিক ভাবে সবচেয়ে অনগ্রসর ১০টি রাজ্যকে নেন, সে গড় আয়ের দিক থেকেই হোক বা শতকরা কত ভাগ মানুষ দারিদ্র রেখার নীচে আছেন সেই হিসেবেই হোক, তার প্রত্যেকটিতে বুশ জিতেছেন। আর আর্থিক ভাবে সবচেয়ে এগিয়ে থাকা প্রথম দশটি রাজ্য? প্রতিটিতে কেরি জয়ী। আসলে বুশের অর্থনৈতিক নীতিতে প্রত্যক্ষ ভাবে লাভবান হয়েছেন যারা তাঁদের বাদ দিয়ে বাকি সবাই কেরিকে ভোট দিলে কেরি বিপুল ভোটে জিততেন।

তাই বুশের বিদেশ নীতি নিয়ে ভ্রান্ত ধারণা নয়, অর্থনীতি নয়, অন্য কোথাও এই ধর্মের উত্তর খুঁজতে হবে। আংশিক উত্তর পাওয়া যাবে আমেরিকার ভূগোলে। বুশকে সমর্থন



করা রাজ্যগুলো প্রধানত দেশের দক্ষিণে, যাকে ও দেশের 'bible belt' বলা হয়। এই রাজ্যগুলো অর্থনৈতিক ভাবে পশ্চাৎপদ, মূলত গ্রাম এবং ছোট মফসসল শহরের সমষ্টি, সামাজিক ভাবে রক্ষণশীল, এবং এখানে খ্রিস্টান মৌলবাদীরা সমাজে প্রবল প্রভাবশালী। আমেরিকার গৃহযুদ্ধের সময় এই রাজ্যগুলি ছিল দাসপ্রথার সমর্থকদের পক্ষে।

টমাস ফ্রাঙ্ক 'What's the matter with Kansas' বইয়ে বর্ণনা করেছেন রিপাবলিকান দল বিগত কয়েক দশকে এ অঞ্চলের সামাজিক রক্ষণশীলতা ও ধর্মীয় গোঁড়ামিকে ব্যবহার করে কী ভাবে তাদের সমর্থন কজা করে ফেলেছে, যদিও তাদের অর্থনৈতিক কর্মসূচি অঞ্চলের সাধারণ মানুষের স্বার্থের পরিপন্থী। একটা ছোট উদাহরণ দিই। ফ্রাঙ্কের বইয়ের নামে যে কানসাস রাজ্যের উল্লেখ আছে, গত ক'বছরে আমেরিকার জাতীয় সংবাদমাধ্যমে তার নাম বার বার এসেছে একটাই কারণে: ডারউইনের বিবর্তনবাদ খ্রিস্টধর্মের পরিপন্থী বলে সে রাজ্যে আন্দোলন চলছে, বিদ্যালয়ের পাঠ্যক্রম থেকে এই বিষয়টি তুলে দিতে হবে। কৃষ্ণাঙ্গদের গণতান্ত্রিক অধিকার নিয়ে লড়াইয়ে নেতৃত্ব দিতে গিয়ে মাটের দশকে ডেমোক্র্যাটিক পার্টি কানসাসের মতো দক্ষিণের এই রাজ্যগুলোয় সমর্থন হারিয়েছে, তা আর ফিরে পেতে সক্ষম হয়নি।

তবে এই রাজ্যগুলো তো গত নির্বাচনেও বুশকেই ভোট দিয়েছিল, তবু গোরে প্রায় জিতে গিয়েছিলেন। এ বার তা হলে কী কারণে বুশ জিতলেন? এর পিছনে দুটো মূল কারণ। প্রথমত, এই নির্বাচনে সন্ত্রাস আর ইরাক-যুদ্ধ মূল দুটো বিষয় হয়ে দাঁড়ায়, যেগুলো গত বার প্রাসঙ্গিক ছিল না।

দ্বিতীয়ত, এ বার গত বারের তুলনায় প্রায় ১৪ লক্ষ লোক বেশি ভোট দিয়েছেন, ফলে গত বারের তুলনায় ভোটদাতাদের সংখ্যা বেড়েছে প্রায় ১৪%। এই অতিরিক্ত ভোটারদের একটা বড় অংশ হলেন পূর্বোল্লিখিত খ্রিস্টান মৌলবাদী ভোটদাতারা। বুশের প্রধান উপদেষ্টা কার্ল রোভ, ক্ষুরধার রাজনৈতিক বুদ্ধির কারণে মার্কিন রাজনীতিতে যাঁর চাঞ্চল্যসুলভ ভাবমূর্তি, গত দুবছর তৃণমূল স্তরে গির্জাগুলির মাধ্যমে এই শ্রেণীর ভোটাররা যাতে বড় সংখ্যায় এই নির্বাচনে ভোট দেন তার জন্য নিরলস পরিশ্রম করেছেন।

তালিকাটি থেকে দেখা যাচ্ছে নৈতিক মূল্যবোধ আর সন্ত্রাস যাঁদের কাছে সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয় (মোট ভোটারদের ৪১%) তাঁরা বিশাল সংখ্যায় বুশকে ভোট দিয়েছেন। অর্থনীতি আর ইরাক যুদ্ধ যাঁদের কাছে সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয় মোট ভোটারদের ৩৫%) তাঁরা বিপুল সংখ্যায় কেরিকে ভোট দিয়েছেন। পূর্বে ভোটারদের সংখ্যা বেশি হওয়ায় বুশ জিতেছেন। হিসেব করলে দেখা যাবে বুশের জয়ের পিছনে নৈতিক মূল্যবোধ আর সন্ত্রাসবাদ, দুটি বিষয়ের গুরুত্ব প্রায় সমান সমান।

ডেমোক্র্যাটিক দল এই হারের ফলস্বরূপ এক গভীর আত্মসংকটের সম্মুখীন। গত দশটি প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনে তাঁরা হেরেছেন এই নিয়ে সাত বার। কেউ মনে করছেন ভোটে জিততে গেলে দলের ডান দিকে কোঁকা উচিত, কেউ বলছেন না, বাঁ দিকে। যারা আশাবাদী তাঁরা বলছেন, কিছু না করে চূপ করে বসে থাকা সবচেয়ে ভাল, কেননা বুশ পুনর্নির্বাচিত হবার আনন্দে আত্মহারা হয়ে এমন কাণ্ডকারখানা শুরু করবেন, তাতে চার বছর পর দেশের লোক ডেমোক্র্যাটদের 'রক্ষা করো' বলে ডাকতে আসবেন। আর যারা নিরাশাবাদী তাঁরা কানাডা পাড়ি দেওয়ার কথা ভাবছেন।

লেখক লন্ডন স্কুল অব ইকনমিক্স-এ অর্থনীতির শিক্ষক

Blackwill grabs arm, loses power

K.P. NAVAR

Washington, Nov. 12: The abrupt resignation of Robert Blackwill, the former US ambassador to India, from the White House came after National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice pulled him up for verbally and physically assaulting a woman officer at the American embassy in Kuwait, *The Washington Post* reported today.

The newspaper talked to six American officials for its report and said a furious Blackwill grabbed the woman's arm while verbally abusing her after he discovered at the Air France counter at Kuwait International Airport that he was not booked on the flight he was supposed to board for home after a trip to Iraq.

Blackwill insisted on boarding the flight because he

was to join President George W. Bush on his campaign for re-election and his victim had accompanied him to the airport to see him off.

Although the woman, whose husband is also at the US embassy in Kuwait as a diplomat, did not file any formal complaint, secretary of state Colin Powell heard about the incident and took the matter to the White House.

There is no love lost between Blackwill and Powell on the one hand and between the ex-ambassador and officials of the state department, who always accused the one-time Harvard professor of being rude and overbearing.

The *Post* said Powell ordered an inquiry into the incident, which occurred in public and even had the woman's arm photographed, which was sent to Rice for action.

Rice then conducted her

own investigations, personally interviewing members of the National Security Council who had travelled with Blackwill on the occasion.

She "took action to ensure that Blackwill dealt with his colleagues and subordinates appropriately", although it was not explained what those actions were.

Meanwhile, Powell got the number two man in the state department, Richard Armitage, to telephone Blackwill's victim and express regret for the incident.

There were jokes in the state department today that Armitage had become the US diplomat in charge of apologies, a reference to his public apology to former defence minister George Fernandes for his treatment at the hands of American airport security.

Armitage later visited her and her husband in Kuwait to

assure the couple that action would be taken on the matter.

Before the incident became public, Blackwill was tipped to succeed Rice as National Security Adviser in the second Bush team. But he abruptly announced his resignation last Friday and yesterday Barbour Griffith & Rogers LLC, a leading Republican lobbying firm, announced that Blackwill was joining the firm in a newly created job as President of its global affairs division.

In all likelihood, Blackwill will now pressure his friends in New Delhi to shift the Indian government's lobbying account to his company, cashing in on the considerable IOUs he accumulated at the US embassy there as a friend of India.

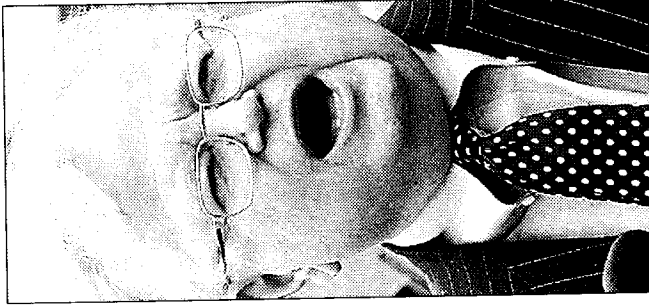
The Bush administration is trying to put the incident behind it at a time when it is anxious to go ahead with elections

in Iraq, which was part of Blackwill's responsibilities at the White House.

A spokesman of the National Security Council was quoted as saying "the President and Dr. Rice hold ambassador Blackwill in the highest regard, and the decision to leave was ambassador Blackwill's own".

The *Post* spoke to one official familiar with Blackwill's version of the incident, which is that the woman's account of events is not accurate.

Whatever may be the case, it must have been extremely embarrassing for Rice to pull up Blackwill because he served the first President Bush as his special assistant for Soviet and East European affairs. Rice was his junior at that time, but he mentored her to the point where she became America's first black National Security Adviser.



Robert Blackwill

Getting past the American election

Other countries should stand firm on their convictions and that will not only moderate President Bush in his second term but also serve their own and even America's interests, says **Joseph E Stiglitz**



THE pundits have now weighed in mightily in interpreting the American presidential election. Did the outcome — together with Republican gains in the Congress — represent

an endorsement of Bush's positions? Has the American electorate swung to the right? Are Americans now more concerned about "values?" Like price in economics, a single electoral choice compresses a lot of information. It is a summary of whether, taking everything into account, a citizen prefers one candidate to another. A host of surveys is required to figure out what it really means, for the United States — and for the world.

This much is clear, however: there is little confidence in Bush's economic policies. The typical American family knows that it is worse off today than it was four years ago, and appears unconvinced that the tax cuts targeted at upper-income Americans brought the benefits heralded by the Bush administration.

But while Bush was not held back four years ago by the lack of a popular mandate in pushing his agenda, he may be emboldened by the seeming ringing endorsement to push even harder — such as making the tax cuts permanent and partially privatising social security. If adopted, these measures will further compound America's fiscal mess.

To the rest of the world, these are America's problems. Yes, the soaring deficits may contribute somewhat to international financial instability. Real interest rates may rise, as America borrows more and more. If declining confidence in US fiscal policy leads to a weaker dollar, Europe and Asia may find it more difficult to export, and if the deficits prove a drag on the American economy, global growth may stall.

But for much of the rest of the world, the real concern is American unilateralism. An interconnected world needs cooperation and collective action. Historically, the US has exercised enormous leadership



BONNY THOMAS

in a world committed to the proposition that no state should dictate collective decisions. Unfortunately, over the past four years, America's president has lost the credibility necessary to exercise that leadership. Even if the 59 million votes cast for Bush represented a ringing endorsement of his Iraq policy, it would not restore America's international credibility.

I believe most Americans reject Bush's unilateralism no less than his administration's economic policies. Before the invasion of Iraq, they wanted America to go to the UN, and today they recognise that America alone cannot maintain order in the Middle East. Even if Iraq is to bear more of the cost of its own reconstruction, there will have to be debt forgiveness, and this too requires international cooperation. Those who voted for Bush may not be as outraged by US involvement in torture, or the misleading information about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and connections with Al Qaeda, as those abroad. But they do not want America alone to shoulder the burdens of international peace, and are gradually coming to the realisation that leadership and cooperation do

not come automatically, simply because America is the only superpower.

Some worry whether Bush will use his electoral mandate to engage in more ventures. As he himself put it, "I earned capital in the campaign... and now I intend to spend it." Had the Iraq venture been more successful, these worries would have been justified. There is little secret that there were discussions concerning Iran.

BUT the doctrine of preemptive war has been badly tarnished, and I remain hopeful that Congress and the American people have learned a painful lesson. Peace will not quickly be restored to Iraq, and it is hard to conceive of opening up a major new front, when America can hardly manage what it has already undertaken. Others will, of course, have to continue to bear the costs of the mistaken and mismanaged adventure in Iraq. Instability in the Middle East will continue to limit oil supplies, discouraging the expansion of production. High oil prices will dampen global growth in the remainder of 2004 and into 2005. In the short run, the only response is more conservation, and Amer-

ica's allies should put pressure on America to conserve. (Another reason stems from recent reports concerning the rapid melting of the polar ice cap, which seem to reconfirm worries about global warming.)

Presidents do make a difference, but every president operates within constraints. The good news is that the constraints that Bush and the American government will face in the next four years will almost surely limit the damage they will cause. The rhetoric and posturing, the lack of commitment to human rights or democratic processes, may be — and should be — upsetting, but there will be far more bark than bite. While America may continue on a path of unilateralism, other countries' stance will make a difference. Some suggest that the US constitution provided fewer constraints on the president in the conduct of foreign policy, because the requisite checks and balances were to be provided by the powers of the time — Britain and France. Today, with the US as the only superpower, it is even more important for countries to stand up and express their views — and to stick by them even when pressured.

Some worry that this will worsen relations with the US. But long-term relationships are based on friendship and respect; coherent, well-argued positions will earn that respect. Today, many Americans, especially the young, feel far more respect for the countries that recognised the lack of evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction than for those whose leaders repeated the American distortions.

It may be unfortunate that Realpolitik is the order of the day, but it is, so others must learn to play the same game. Standing up for multilateralism and international rule of law may not only be the morally right thing to do; it is also in the interests of America's allies and, ultimately, America itself.

(The author is professor of economics at Columbia University and a member of the Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization).

C. Project Syndicate, November 2004

US elections: What happened?

The world should not be surprised by the results of the US election, for Bush is not the first candidate to win on the basis of fear and misguided aggression, writes HUCK GUTMAN

WHAT HAPPENED? That was the entire message I received by e-mail from a friend in Kolkata the day after the Americans voted for President, and elected George W Bush to a second term.

That's a tough question, one that commentators and political experts will be pondering endlessly in the coming months. The question is especially tough, given the circumstances in which its quadrennial presidential plebiscite was held. Domestically, the American economy is in the doldrums, unable to reinvigorate itself after a serious recession. Fifteen per cent of all manufacturing jobs disappeared in the years when Bush was in office. For the first time in 75 years, there was no overall job growth during a Presidential term.

Fiscally, a federal budget that was in balance in 2000 when Bush entered the White House climbed to a deficit of \$413 billion this year. Trade with other nations was also in severe unbalance, with a current accounts deficit this year of nearly \$600 billion, or around 6 per cent of gross domestic product.

Internationally, the USA had started a pre-emptive war on Iraq on the basis of intelligence now acknowledged to be erroneous. The cost of the war was already \$200 billion, and rising daily; over 1,000 American soldiers had died, a number that was also rising. There had been over 1,00,000 Iraqi casualties.

With the economy weak, government fiscal policy sowing disaster, and a needless and costly war, why would Americans re-elect their President?

Let's start with that war. It is a near-truism of American politics that, to cite an adage so often repeated it has almost grown stale, "You don't change horses mid-stream." No American President has ever failed to be re-elected during the course of a war, although Lyndon Johnson in 1968, burdened with a war that like Iraq was costly and had no end in sight, chose not to seek re-election.

The current American President, faced with an act of terrorism on 11 September 2001, turned that tragic event into a "war on terrorism". For that is what Bush always calls it, signaling his deep desire to fight terrorism with every resource the American nation has available. But a war on terrorism has no possible conclusion: there will always be terrorists, or the threat of terrorists, or the possibility of terrorists. (A corollary of the war on terrorism, in political terms, is that you can never change governments, because that would mean changing horses mid-stream.)

Thus, the war on terrorism itself had to be sold to Americans. To do that, Republicans reversed one of the boldest pronouncements made by an American President. In his first inaugural address in 1932, President Franklin D Roosevelt proclaimed, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," thus offering a American nation in the midst of economic depression an optimism that is nowhere in evidence today. Quite the contrary. The plan of Karl Rove, Bush's chief political strategist, was to create a deep well of fear in Americans, and to get them to vote on the basis of that fear. When the WTC was attacked and demolished, Rove saw that it might be possible to convince Americans that no American, no community, would any longer be safe. Irrational and evil men from abroad could attack at any moment. No single school or shopping centre was safe. People who had sworn to destroy Americans were liable to rise up anywhere, wreaking destruction and havoc on even the most serene or innocent American neighbourhood.

Bush's campaign strategy centred on showing that the incumbent President was a leader who could be trusted to command the USA in time of war, and to unmask Kerry as someone less than trustworthy or capable. Bush's advisors insisted he keep the attention of the electorate focused on the war against terror, since they did not want voters choosing which candidate was better for the economy, or which candidate was attentive to the needs of the working and middle classes.

Thus, as the campaign developed, the constant refrain in Bush's self-presentation to the nation was that there was a war on, and he was the better leader. Kerry, according to charges made by Bush supporters, was weak and vacillating and without adequate steadfastness. Kerry could not be trusted to lead the USA's troops in the "war on terror", even though he had served with distinction in war (wounded, he



George and Laura Bush with Dick Cheney (left) after the results are announced, and (below) Kerry is hugged by his wife Teresa as he delivers the concession speech. — AFP

received a high medal for bravery), while Bush had served only in domestic military service, in fact dropping out of his unit before his period of service had ended. (A vicious public relations effort late last summer to cast doubt on Kerry's wound was remarkably successful: for millions of Americans, Kerry's wound was turned into a badge of dishonour.)

But Rove had a second tactic in hand, not public but subterranean, a strategic move which the Democrats underestimated. He, and Bush, would try to motivate a significant sector of the electorate to go to the polls, and vote, on the basis on certain "moral" issues, chief among them opposition to gay marriage and to abortion. Abortion has long been a major force in American politics: ever since the nation's Supreme Court ruled in 1973 that a "right of privacy... is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy," a woman's right to abortion has been a galvanising issue in American politics. Women, overall, support the right to choose whether to terminate a pregnancy; Christian fundamentalists, overall, are bitterly opposed.

Then there were gay rights. When the Supreme Court of Massachusetts decided last November, and clarified bluntly this past February, that there was not "any constitutionally adequate reason" to deny homosexuals the right to marry, this November's presidential election was decided. For the swing issue, the issue which carried Bush to victory was undoubtedly the question of homosexual marriage.

First, the figures. About 20 per cent of 2004 voters considered themselves born-again (evangelical) Christians, and 80 per cent of them voted for Bush. More importantly, a very large number of evangelicals — who had not voted in the last election — voted, giving Bush an edge over Kerry.

It had been expected a large turnout would favour the challenger, but figures reveal that despite the largest number of voters in American history, and a 60 per cent voter turnout — the largest since 1986 — it was the increased evangelical turnout that carried the day. One in seven people who voted did not participate in the 2000 election. Some were young, and the young favoured Kerry. But many were evangelicals. As analyst Larry Sabato bluntly put it: "Bush lost the popular vote in 2000 because three or four million fundamentalist Christians stayed home. Well, guess what? They turned up in 2004." Bush, in a surprise to analysts but not to his campaign strategist Rove, gained 1.5 percentage points in the polls for every 10 percentage points that turnout increased.

Exit polls showed that voters cited three central issues as bearing on their vote. One was the economy, the strong suit of Kerry. Another was terrorism, the strong centre of Bush's campaign. The third was "moral issues".

"Moral issues" is a coded phrase. In American politics it does not refer, as one might think, to issues of social justice, peace or equality. That one sixth of children in the richest nation in the history of this planet live in poverty, that a destructive war was initiated on the basis of trickery and deception, that racial and gender inequality stubbornly endure: these are not considered

"moral issues".

Rather, in a stunning appropriation of the language of ethics by fundamentalist Christians, "moral issues" refer to certain kinds of religious codes governing private life. Abortion is a moral issue; so is homosexuality; so, often, is the "sanctity" of private property. Rove developed a strategy to mobilise new voters to turn up at the polls and vote for the President's re-election. Key to that strategy — its very cornerstone — was the issue of homosexual marriage.

The first move in this strategy came last February when President Bush called for a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. "In recent months some activist judges and local officials have made an aggressive attempt to redefine marriage. In Massachusetts, four judges on the highest court have indicated they will order the issuance of marriage licenses to applicants of the same gender... After more than two centuries of American jurisprudence, and millennia of human experience, a few judges and local authorities are pre-

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suming to change the most fundamental institution of civilisation... Activist courts have left the people with one recourse. If we are to prevent the meaning of marriage from being changed forever, our nation must enact a constitutional amendment to protect marriage in America." Amending the Constitution is a long and difficult process: the amendment was offered not because it would be enacted (it failed to pass the House of Representatives, and never even came up for a vote in the Senate) but to sound a battle cry, a clarion call, to evangelical Christians that what was at stake was "the sanctity of marriage".

Second, in 11 states Republicans placed an initiative on the ballot which would ban any marriage not between a man and a woman. President Bush won in every one of those states. In most, he would have won without the gay marriage ban, but its presence on the ballot energised conservative voters, and their

increased turnout swelled his margin of victory in the popular vote. (In the USA, the President is elected not by direct popular vote, but by the Electoral College, a system which privileges state-by-state voting.)

But the key to this election, as all political strategists predicted, were three key states, each very much in play, each with a large number of electoral college votes. It was widely thought — accurately it turned out — that whoever won two of the three would be the USA's next President.

One was Pennsylvania, where Kerry won on the basis of economic issues. One was Florida, where a very close election in 2000, and the intervention of the US Supreme Court, gave the presidency to Bush. This time Bush won Florida easily. The third was Ohio, a state in the heartland of the USA. Traditionally Republican, Ohio had suffered more job losses under Bush than any other state. Based on that circumstance it, like Pennsylvania, seemed to be winnable by Kerry.

But on the Ohio ballot was a (state) constitutional ban on gay marriage. What happened in Ohio was articulated by the minister of a fundamentalist church in that state, Reverend Tim Oldfield, who said, "Yesterday, the evangelical church rose up and declared what they wanted."

The evangelical churches in Ohio made sure that their parishioners voted: sermons from pulpits, personal exhortation and massive use of printed flyers in 17,000 Ohio churches urged members to go out and vote for "moral" government — and by extension, for President Bush. According to exit polls, evangelical Christians supported Bush by three to one; if one narrows this down to white evangelicals, the margin was 10 to one. Voters who declared that their most important priority was "moral values" voted for Bush by five to one. As Reverend Oldfield said to a reporter, "When judges in Massachusetts imposed an agenda upon the people and sent a message across the country, I think it woke up a sleeping giant. Years past, people of faith have been uninvolved, but I think this particular issue stirred them".

It is not that Americans are totally opposed to homosexuality. In fact, a 2003 poll found that 88 per cent believe homosexuals should have equal rights in terms of job opportunities, and a narrow majority believe homosexuality is an acceptable lifestyle. Why, then, the signal importance of gay marriage to the mobilisation of the electorate in this recent election? Or, put another way, how could Rove build so successfully on the fact that, by nearly two to one, Americans oppose (59 per cent) rather than favour (32 per cent) legalising gay marriage?

The harsh reality is that the American economy is not working well for most Americans. The wealthy are, in fact, getting wealthier, not just in actual dollars but in wealth share. The poor are getting poorer. And the middle class is shrinking: those in the middle class are for the most part are increasingly beleaguered, working ever harder to keep their heads above water.

But the Democratic party has not been able to speak effectively to that circumstance, or to the sense of discomfort and even despair, much of it economic, faced by a large number of Americans. Kerry made an effort, as Democrats at times do, to address certain economic issues,

especially job losses. But nationally when Democrats talk about the forces shaping the economic life of the nation and its citizens, they always talk about statistics, and never talk about class.

There is a war going on between the rich and the rest of the USA, and the latter is losing. Democrats refuse to acknowledge this. True, they want to roll back some of the tax advantages bestowed on the wealthy, and they talk about the unemployment rate and the rising number of people who live in poverty. But the Democrats, like the Republicans, get huge campaign contributions from corporate USA. They tread carefully when it comes to rolling back centralised economic power. And they never want to "offend" the wealthy by speaking of the remarkable inequities of wealth and income that characterise the USA today.

Although the Democrats are unable to address class issues, the same is not true for the Republicans. Although they are the party of the wealthy, they have found a way to speak to the middle and working class. They talk about the discomfort, the alienation, the despair, that working Americans feel. But the language they use purposely elides the economic terms that address the root causes of distress and despair, and instead substitutes on the language of morality. By defining alienation in a discourse on "moral values", they shift both alienation's cause and its solution into the ethical realm. Thus, President Bush could at one and the same time offer comfort to those who feel that the USA has gone astray, and provide protection to those who profit from the inequities and dislocations of a skewed economic system.

In the recent election, millions of Americans ignored their class interest: To use the bluntest of terms, they ignored their perilous fiscal condition and their future economic security in order to hold the line against gay marriage.

In the USA's greatest political novel, *Moby-Dick*, a mad ship's captain named Ahab sails the seas in pursuit of a white whale, Moby-Dick, against whom he has a grievance. (Its author, Herman Melville, is not unaware of the folly of trying to wreak retributive justice on the natural world.) The narrator of the novel provides a remarkable assessment of how it can be that Captain Ahab brings such anger and fury to the pursuit of the white whale. The narrator, a sailor called Ishmael, speaks of "that intangible malignity which has been from the beginning; ... all that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought — all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby-Dick. He piled on the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it."

Karl Rove understands that passage profoundly, and Bush won re-election to the American presidency because of it. All the frustrations of American life — all the striving after material success which founders on an inequitable economic system, all the insecurities of growing old in a callous society, all the ignoring of the needs of the young — were piled on that "hump" of gay marriage. Then Bush said, "Fire away!" and millions of Americans, as if their chests were mortars, burst their hearts' hot shell upon those who would undermine marriage. The issue of homosexual marriage, in the shrewd Bush calculus, was made to be "all evil, visibly personified." It became the symbol for what was going wrong in American society: the President harnessed that rage against social malfunction and turned it into votes for his candidacy.

The world should not be surprised, though it can certainly be disappointed, by the results of the American election. Bush was not the first candidate, nor will he be the last, to win on the basis of fear and misguided aggression. It is a matter of profound discouragement to almost half the American electorate that a candidate could win using such base appeals: but that is what Bush did, and the 49 per cent of the electorate who voted for Kerry, as well as the world at large, will live with the consequences.

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Ashcroft, Evans resign from Bush Cabinet

S. Rajagopalan & AP
Washington, November 10

ATTORNEY GENERAL JOHN ASHCROFT and Commerce Secretary Don Evans have quit their posts in the first in a series of expected departures before President George W. Bush goes ahead with his plan for a major Cabinet shake-up.

A prominent conservative who transformed the Justice Department but incurred the wrath of civil rights ac-

tivists, Ashcroft had signalled his intent to leave some time ago. Ashcroft, 62, who underwent surgery last March to remove his gallbladder after severe pancreatitis, has indicated he will stay on until his successor is nominated and confirmed.

Evans, 58, a close friend of Bush from Texas, said in his letter of resignation: "While the promise of your second term shines bright, I have concluded with deep regret that it is time for me to return



Ashcroft & Evans

Calling it quits

home." Bush, while accepting the resignations, heaped praise on both Cabinet colleagues. Ashcroft, he said, worked tirelessly to make Ameri-

ca safer. As for Evans, he said: "Don has worked to advance economic security, and prosperity for all Americans."

Ashcroft has been well liked by many conservatives. At the same time, he has been a lightning rod for criticism of his handling of the American end of the war against terror, especially the detention of terror suspects.

Evans was instrumental in Bush's 2000 campaign and came with him to Washington. Evans has told aides

he was ready for a change. He was mentioned as a possible White House chief of staff in Bush's second term, but the President decided to keep Andy Card in that job.

One name being mentioned for Evans' job is Mercer Reynolds, National Finance chairman for the Bush campaign. Speculation about Ashcroft's successor has centred on his former deputy, Larry Thompson. If appointed, Thompson would be the nation's first black attorney general.

US for gung-ho foreign policy

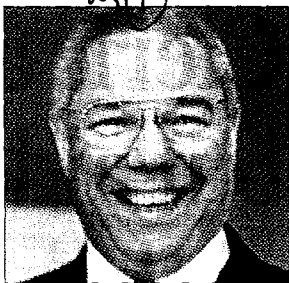
Reuters
London, November 10

PRESIDENT BUSH has a fresh mandate to pursue an "aggressive" foreign policy, Secretary of State Colin Powell said on Tuesday.

In an interview with Britain's *Financial Times* newspaper, Powell said Bush had no intention of pulling back and insisted the newly re-elected president had a mandate to pursue American national interests in international affairs. "The President is not going to trim his sails or pull back," Powell told the newspaper. "It's a continuation of his principles, his policies, his beliefs."

Powell made no mention of any specific country, but said US foreign policy had been "aggressive in terms of going after challenges, issues" and Bush was "going to keep moving in this direction".

While the Bush administration would seek to reach out to the international community and pursue a foreign



Colin Powell

policy that was "multilateral in nature", Washington would act alone where necessary, the newspaper also reported Powell as saying.

Asked about the West Asia conflict, Powell said a transition of power from Yasser Arafat, who is seriously ill in hospital in Paris, could offer a chance to make progress. "We are ready to seize this opportunity aggressively," he said, but did not elaborate.

British PM Tony Blair is due this week to become the first world leader to hold talks with Bush since his reelection.

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

গণতন্ত্রের রক্তাক্ত পথ

রিপাবলিকান প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ ডব্লিউ বুশ দ্বিতীয় বারের জন্য মার্কিন প্রশাসনের কর্তৃত্ব হইবার সমসময়েই ইরাকের অন্তর্বর্তী সরকার সে দেশে অভ্যন্তরীণ জরুরি অবস্থা জারি করিয়াছে। বস্তুত, করিতে বাধ্য হইয়াছে। কেননা বুশের পুনর্নির্বাচনকে ইরাকি জঙ্গিরা স্বাগত জানাইয়াছে ফালুজা ও রামাদি শহরে একের পর এক গাড়িবোমার বিস্ফোরণ ঘটাইয়া, যাহাতে অন্তত ষাট জন ইরাকি পুলিশ ও নিরাপত্তা রক্ষী নিহত হইয়াছেন। বুশ প্রশাসন ও বাগদাদে তাহার নিযুক্ত ইরাকি সরকার সে দেশে গণতন্ত্র ও নির্বাচন প্রবর্তন করিতে যত দৃঢ়তার সহিত অগ্রসর হইতেছে, জঙ্গিদের নাশকতা ততই বৃদ্ধি পাইতেছে। জানুয়ারিতে এই নির্বাচন হওয়ার কথা। তত দিন যে জরুরি অবস্থা জারি থাকিবে, তাহা একপ্রকার নিশ্চিত। জরুরি অবস্থার অর্থ স্বাভাবিক অবস্থায় ভোগ করা নাগরিকদের বিভিন্ন অধিকার খর্ব হওয়া। মার্কিন আগ্রাসন ও দখলদারি এবং তাহার প্রতিরোধী জঙ্গি অভ্যুত্থানের সাঁড়াশি চাপে ইরাকে এমনিতেই জনসাধারণের মৌলিক অধিকার যে ভাবে খণ্ডিত হইয়া চলিয়াছে, জরুরি অবস্থা সেই অধিকারকে আরও সঙ্কুচিত করিবে, সন্দেহ নাই।

তদুপরি এই নিরবচ্ছিন্ন রক্তক্ষয়। জঙ্গি উপদ্রুত ফালুজায় মার্কিন বাহিনী বড় ধরনের সমরাভিযানের জন্য প্রস্তুত হইতেছে, এই সংবাদের মধ্যেই জঙ্গি হামলার ঘটনা। জঙ্গিরা যে সহজে হার মানিবে না, তাহারা যে মার্কিন সমরশক্তির মহড়া লইতে প্রস্তুত, তাহার ইঙ্গিতও যেন এই উপেক্ষা ও অহমিকার মধ্যে প্রচ্ছন্ন। দূর বিদেশে অচেনা-অপরিচিত পরিবেশ এবং বিরূপ জনগোষ্ঠীর মধ্যখানে দাঁড়াইয়া 'মুক্তিযুদ্ধ'র আদর্শবাদে দীক্ষিত গেরিলাদের মোকাবিলা যে অতিশয় দুরূহ কাজ, দিগ্বিজয়ীদের সামরিক ইতিহাসেও তাহার বহু প্রমাণ ছড়াইয়া আছে। এই ফালুজাই তো ইতিপূর্বে মার্কিন অভিযানে 'জঙ্গিমুক্ত' হইয়াছিল। যেমন হইয়াছিল মসুল, টিকরিত, কির্কুক, সামারা এবং বাগদাদ। ব্রিটিশ অভিযানে জঙ্গিমুক্ত হয় বসরা। কিন্তু এই সবকটি শহর ও জনপদেই জঙ্গিরা নূতন করিয়া এত তৎপর হইয়াছে যে মার্কিন নৌসেনাদের নূতন আক্রমণ হানিতে হইতেছে। এ ধরনের আক্রমণ ও তাহার 'আনুষঙ্গিক ক্ষয়ক্ষতি' কিন্তু ইরাকি জনসাধারণের প্রতিরোধের অভিপ্রায় ও স্বাধীনতার আকাঙ্ক্ষাকেই আরও দুর্বল করিয়া তুলিতে বাধ্য। প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ ডব্লিউ বুশের দ্বিতীয় দফার রাষ্ট্রপতিত্ব তাই ইরাক-বিড়ম্বিত হইবার আশঙ্কাই বেশি। বস্তুত, ইরাক বুশের গলায় 'এনশেন্ট মেরিনার'-এর গলা বেঁধন করিয়া থাকা সেই অ্যালব্যট্রিস পাখির মতো গুরুভার হইয়া উঠিতে পারে, যাহাকে হত্যা করার অভিপ্রায় হইতে নাবিক মুক্তি পায় নাই। সেই হিসাবে পরাজিত প্রেসিডেন্ট প্রার্থী জন কেরিকে পশ্চাদৃষ্টিতে কিঞ্চিৎ ভাগ্যবান বলিয়াই মনে হইতে পারে।

সুধু কি ইরাক? এই পশ্চিম এশিয়াতেই বুশের সামনে রহিয়াছে তাঁহারই বর্ণিত 'শয়তানের অক্ষ'-এর অন্য বাছ ইরান, পরমাণু মারণাস্ত্র নির্মাণের প্রযুক্তি যাহার করায়ত্ত এবং মার্কিন রক্তচক্ষু অগ্রাহ্য করিয়া যে দেশ আন্তর্জাতিক অস্ত্রপরীক্ষকদের সঙ্গে ক্রমাগত অসহযোগিতা করিয়া চলিয়াছে। তা ছাড়া আছে সৌদি আরবের মতো মৌলবাদী স্বৈরতন্ত্র, আজ-না-হোক-কাল মৌলবাদী বিভিন্ন জেহাদি গোষ্ঠীকে মদত দেওয়া যে দেশকে খর্ব করিতে 'মুক্ত দুনিয়া' দায়বদ্ধ। আছে আরাফত-বিহীন প্যালাস্তাইনি মুক্তি-আন্দোলনে জেহাদি সন্ত্রাসবাদীদের অনিয়ন্ত্রিত, তুমুল হিংসা ও অন্তর্ঘাতের মুখোমুখি হওয়ার অনিবার্যতা। পশ্চিম এশিয়ায় স্থায়ী শান্তির জন্য বুশের সম্বন্ধরচিত 'রোড-ম্যাপ' কেবল আরাফতই শিরোধার্য করিয়াছিলেন, মার্কিন মিত্র ইজরায়েল করে নাই। আর জায়মান উত্তেজনা ও অশান্তির বিস্ফোরক বিন্দুগুলি যে তাঁহার নেতৃত্বাধীন মার্কিন প্রশাসনই উস্কাইয়া চলিয়াছে, তাহা আর অস্বীকার করার উপায় কোথায়? ফালুজা ও রামাদিতে মার্কিন বাহিনী যে প্রচণ্ড শক্তি লইয়া বাঁপাইয়া পড়িয়াছে, তাহাতে নূতন করিয়া কিছু রক্তপাত ঘটিবে বটে, নিরীহ বহু ইরাকির প্রাণও যাইবে, কিন্তু ইরাক পাশ্চাত্য তথা মার্কিন ধাঁচের গণতন্ত্রের উপযুক্ত পরীক্ষাগার হইয়া উঠিবে, এমন নিশ্চয়তা নাই। বরং বিপুলসংখ্যক মার্কিন বাহিনীর উপস্থিতি অবশিষ্ট আরব ভূখণ্ডে নূতন-নূতন মুজাাহিদ গোষ্ঠীর জন্ম দিতে পারে, যাহারা রাজনৈতিক সার্বভৌমত্ব অর্জনের লড়াইয়ে মৌলবাদ ও সন্ত্রাসকে অবলম্বন করিয়াই পরিপুষ্ট হইবে। পশ্চিম এশিয়ায় গণতন্ত্র রফতানির প্রকল্পটি নস্যাৎ করিয়া দিবার পক্ষে সেটা যথেষ্ট।

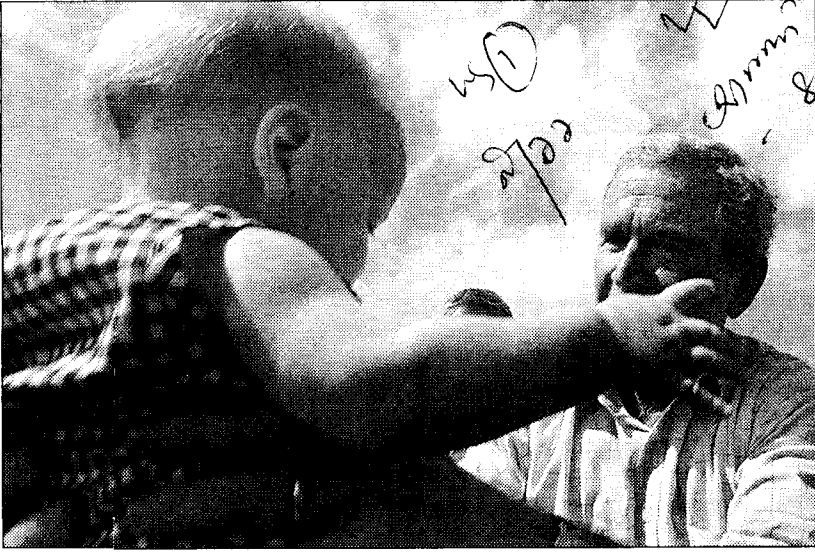
বাঙালি দ্বিভাষিক

09 NOV 2004

ANADABALAR PATRIKA

‘এখন আবার আমরা নিরাপদ’

এমনটা ভেবেছেন যাঁরা, তাঁরা ভোট দিয়েছেন বুশকে। তাঁদের ভরসা কাল্পনিক হতে পারে, কিন্তু তাঁরাই জয়ী। বুশের জয়ের অনেক ব্যাখ্যা শোনা যাচ্ছে, কিন্তু হাড়কাঁপানো ভয় = নিরাপত্তাসঙ্কান = স্থিতাবস্থা সমর্থন— এই সহজ সমীকরণ বাদ দিয়ে কোনও ব্যাখ্যাই কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়। লিখছেন **সেমন্তী ঘোষ**



ভরসা? নির্বাচনী প্রচারে জর্জ ডব্লিউ বুশ। ছবি: এ এফ পি

আইয়াদ আলাওয়ির সঙ্গে লাঞ্চ মিটিংটা শেষ পর্যন্ত ‘কাটিয়ে’ দিলেন জাক শিরাক। ইউরোপীয় শীর্ষবৈঠক চলছিল। ফরাসি প্রেসিডেন্ট এমনিতেই হাজারো ব্যস্ততার মধ্যে, ফলে তাঁর লাস্ট-মিনিট প্রোগ্রাম পরিবর্তনে কপালে ওঠা ডুরুলোকে অনায়াসে সামাল দিলেন সঙ্গী-শাগেরদরা, ‘দেরি হয়ে গেছে, এখনি আবার ওঁকে আবু ধাবি ছুটতে হবে, তাই...’

কিন্তু হাজার হোক, লাঞ্চে যাঁকে বিস্ত্রিত অপেক্ষায় বসিয়ে রাখা হল, তিনি তো আর যে সে নন, তিনি স্বয়ং আলাওয়ি। সারা দুনিয়ার চোখ আজ যে দেশের ওপর, সেই ইরাকের অন্তর্ভুক্ত সরকারের নেতা তিনি, খোদ প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ তাঁকে নিযুক্ত করেছেন— আর তাঁকেই এমন হেলাফেলা? আন্তর্জাতিক মহল মোটেই গলে যায়নি শিরাকের ছলছুতো শুন, ধরে ফেলেছে আসল কথাটা। আসল কথাটা এই যে জর্জ ডব্লিউ বুশ দ্বিতীয় বার ওয়াশিংটনের সিংহাসনে বসায় ফরাসি রাষ্ট্রনায়ক শিরাক অত্যন্ত ক্ষুব্ধ, বিরক্ত; হাতের কাছে আলাওয়ি ছিলেন, তাঁর প্রতি যথাসাধ্য ঠাণ্ডা ব্যবহারে শিরাক বার্তা পাঠিয়ে দিলেন হোয়াইট হাউস অন্দরমহলে।

শীর্ষবৈঠকেও বেরিয়ে এসেছে শিরাকের উচ্চা আর দুশ্চিন্তা। ইউরোপের ২৫টি দেশের নেতার মাঝে দাঁড়িয়ে যা বলেছেন তিনি, তাতে স্পষ্টতই ব্ল্যারের সঙ্গে তাঁর মতামতের প্রকাশিত হয়ে পড়েছে। উঁচু গলায় জানিয়েছেন শিরাক, আমেরিকার এই প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচন দেখিয়ে দিল কেন ইউরোপকে এখনই রাজনৈতিক, অর্থনৈতিক ভাবে সঙ্কটবদ্ধ হতে হবে, কেন এখনই একটা ‘মালটিপোলার’ বা বহুমুখী বিশ্ব গড়ে তুলতে হবে। ইরাক পর্ব নিয়ে স্ফোভ বেরিয়ে এসেছে জার্মানির চ্যান্সেলার শ্রেডারের মস্তব্যেও। পুনর্নির্বাচিত বুশকে প্রীতিসম্ভাষণ জানাতে ভোলেননি তাঁরা, কিন্তু ইরাকে নেটোর সৈন্য পাঠিয়ে আমেরিকাকে দায়মুক্ত করতে বয়েই গেছে তাঁদের, এ কথাও আবার করে বলাবলি হয়েছে। নরওয়ের প্রধানমন্ত্রী বন্দেভিক এত দিন ছিলেন ওয়াশিংটনের ঘনিষ্ঠ বন্ধু, ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নে যোগ দিতে তাঁর ছিল ভয়ানক আপত্তি। এ বার তিনিই বলছেন, ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকার এই দূরত্বের জন্য প্রধানত দায়ী প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ। বুশ আবার এসেছেন, আর সময় নষ্ট নয়, ইউরোপকে একত্ববদ্ধ হতে হবে।

হাওয়া! ভালই বুঝতে পারছেন ব্রিটিশ প্রধানমন্ত্রী টোনি ব্ল্যয়ার। তাঁর সঙ্গে বুশের মাঝোমাঝো বন্ধুত্ব নিয়ে কটু কথা বলা বয়ে গেছে স্বদেশে বিদেশে, এই মুহূর্তেও অস্বস্তি তাঁর সঙ্গিন, না পারছেন আমেরিকাকে চটাতো, না পারছেন ইউরোপকে ফেলতো। বার বার ইউরোপীয় সতীর্থদের আশ্বাস দিচ্ছেন, এ এক নতুন পৃথিবী, এই পৃথিবীর নতুন চ্যালেঞ্জের মোকাবিলা করার জন্য বুশই যোগ্য লোক, তাঁর সঙ্গে হাত মিলিয়ে কাজ করে বিপন্ন দুনিয়াকে বাসযোগ্য করে তুলতে হবে তাঁদেরও।

বাসযোগ্য? ব্ল্যয়ারের মতে তা হলে দুনিয়াটা বুশের আমলেই বেশি বাসযোগ্য?

কথাটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। ব্ল্যয়ার যে এমন ভাবছেন, তাতে আশ্চর্যের কিছু নেই। নাইন ইলেভন-এর পর যত রকম অবিমূর্শ্যকারিতা দেখিয়েছেন মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট, সব কিছুতে তাল মিলিয়েছেন ব্ল্যয়ার। ফলে গত দুই বছর ঘরের গাল খেয়ে বনের মোষ তাড়িয়ে আসলে যে তাঁরা ঘরকেই বিপদ-মুক্ত করতে

চেয়েছেন, সে কথা আজ তো বলতেই হবে শত মুখে।

আসল বিষয় অন্য জায়গায়। বুশ যে এমন সাবলীল ভাবে পেরিয়ে এলেন নির্বাচনী দরিয়া, তার পেছনেও কিন্তু রয়েছে এই একটি মৌলিক বোধ: বুশ দুনিয়াকে আরও বাসযোগ্য করছেন। সমালোচনা তো আছেই, অনেকেই বলছেন যে বুশের অকারণ আক্রমণমূলক বিদেশনীতি সমস্ত আমেরিকা-বিরোধী জঙ্গিদের খেপিয়ে দিচ্ছে, পশ্চিম ও মধ্য এশিয়ায় যতগুলি প্রাণ বিনষ্ট হচ্ছে, তার গুণিতক-হিসেবে বেড়ে চলেছে জেহাদীদের সংখ্যা— কিন্তু বেশির ভাগ মার্কিন নাগরিকের কাছেই এ সব কথা মনে নেই তত। এগুলো সব ‘লিবারেল প্রোগ্রামগ্যান্ড’। তাঁরা মনে করেন, নাইন ইলেভন সভ্যতা ধ্বংস করতে বসেছিল, কাণ্ডারি বুশ তাঁর নৌকায় করে রক্ষা করছেন আমেরিকা যুক্তরাষ্ট্রকে। ইউরোপ কী বলে, ডেমোক্রেট দল কী বলে, বাকি দুনিয়া কী বলে, কোনও কিছুতেই তাঁদের হেলদোল এসে যায়নি তাই, কারণ বুশ-বিহনে এই সভ্যতার সংকট পেরোনো যাবে না, এটাই তাঁদের কাছে শেষ সত্য। অর্থাৎ ‘এখনও আমরা বিপন্ন’, এই ধ্রুয়েয় ভোট জমা হয়েছে কেরির বাসে, আর ‘এখন আবার আমরা নিরাপদ’ ভেবেছেন যাঁরা, তাঁরা ভোট দিয়েছেন বুশকে।

এত অন্যান্য, এত মিথ্যা, তবু

জার্জ এটাই। গত প্রেসিডেন্সিতে আক্ষরিক অর্থে ল্যাজে-গোবরে হয়েছেন জর্জ ডব্লিউ বুশ: সাদ্দাম হুসেনের সঙ্গে আল কায়দার যোগ আজও প্রতিষ্ঠা করা যায়নি, ইরাকে ‘ওয়েপনস অব মাস ডেস্ট্রিকশন’ খুঁজে পাওয়া যায়নি, মারগান্ড নিয়ে যে সচেতন ভাবে মিথ্যে প্রচার করা হয়েছিল ইনটেলিজেন্স-এর তরফে, তার ভুরি ভুরি প্রমাণ মিলেছে, আবু ঘাইবে বন্দি ইরাকিদের ওপর পাশবিক অত্যাচারের বিস্ফোরক ছবি কাঁপিয়ে দিয়েছে মার্কিন বিবেক, প্রত্যাশার চেয়ে অনেক বেশি আমেরিকান ধন-প্রাণ বিনষ্ট হয়েছে ইরাক-প্রান্তরে, এমনকী বিদেশ সচিব কলিন পাওয়েল-এর পিছু ধরে প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ নিজের ক্রটি স্বীকারও করেছেন সর্বসমক্ষে। তবু জনতার চোখে তিনিই নায়ক, কাণ্ডারি, জয়ী। প্রতিটি অভিযোগ ও কেলেংকারিই শেষ পর্যন্ত ক্ষমা করে দেওয়া হয়েছে তিনি নায়ক বলে। ‘যে আমাদের দলে নয় সে-ই ওদের দলে’, ‘বুশকে না জেতালে দাম গুনতে হবে মার্কিন পর-প্রজন্মকে’: এই সব সোজাসাপটা স্লোগান এক দিকে যেমন সমালোচিত হয়েছে, অন্য দিকে তেমনই কান দিয়ে মরমে পশেছে সন্ত্রস্ত সাধারণের।

মার্কিনরা বিপদ থেকে নিরাপত্তায় নিয়ে যাওয়ার ‘কাজে’ আবার ডেকে এনেছে বুশকে। আমাদের চোখ বরং থাকুক শিরাক, শ্রেডার, বন্দেভিকদের উপর। কেননা তাঁদের উপরেই নির্ভর করছে, বুশ-ব্ল্যয়ারের ‘কর্মযজ্ঞের’ ওপর শেষ পর্যন্ত কতটা রাশ টানা যাবে!

চার দিকে বুশের জয়ের অনেক ব্যাখ্যা। কিন্তু এই হাড়কাঁপানো ভয় = নিরাপত্তাসঙ্কান = স্থিতাবস্থা সমর্থনের সহজ সমীকরণ বাদ দিয়ে কোনও ব্যাখ্যাই কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়। কেউ প্রশ্ন তুলছেন, তরুণদের ভোট কম আসাতেই কি লিবারেলদের পরাজয়? সংখ্যাতন্ত্র বলছে, মার্কিন দেশে নতুন ভোটাররা যেখানে এমনিতেই কম ভোট দেয়, তুলনামূলক বিচারে এ বারে সেই তরুণ ভোট যথেষ্ট বেশি, ১৯৭২-এর পর আর কখনও এত বেশি সংখ্যায় অল্পবয়সীরা ভোটের অধিকার প্রয়োগ করতে চায়নি। (কে জানে, হয়তো ভিয়েতনাম বা ইরাক না হলে তারা বিদেশনীতির বিরোধিতায় যথেষ্ট উদ্দীপিত বোধ করে না!) মোট কথা, গড়ের চেয়ে বেশি তরুণ অংশগ্রহণ ছিল এ বার, তবু জন কেরির নৌকো তীরে ভেড়েনি।

মূল্যবোধের যুদ্ধ?

কেউ বলছেন, এ বারের নির্বাচনী যুদ্ধ আসলে ছিল মূল্যবোধের যুদ্ধ। রক্ষণশীল, গোঁড়া, ধর্মভীরু, জাতিবিদ্বেষী মার্কিন, যে ঘণা করে সমকামিতাকে, মরিয়া হয় গর্ভপাতের অধিকার বন্ধের দাবিতে, কিন্তু সরব হয়ে ওঠে ঘরে ঘরে বন্দুক রাখতে পারার অধিকার চেয়ে, সেই ‘লাল’ আমেরিকা হারিয়ে দিয়েছে প্রগতিশীল ‘নীল’ আমেরিকাকে। এই ব্যাখ্যা কিয়দংশে ঠিক, হতেই হবে তা। কিন্তু কতগুলি মৌলিক প্রশ্নের উত্তর মেলে না কিছুতেই। ২০০০ সালের তুলনায় বুশের এ বছরের জয় অনেক বড়, অনেক নিশ্চিত। ৫০ টির মধ্যে অন্তত ৪৫টি প্রদেশে বুশ গত বারের চেয়ে বেশি ভাল করেছেন। নিউ ইয়র্ক, কানেকটিকাট, এবং সর্বোপরি লিবারেল পীঠস্থান ম্যাসাচুসেটস-এ বুশ এ বার আগের চেয়ে বেশি ভোট পেয়েছেন। কী করে হল? ‘বাইবেল বেল্ট’-এর মধ্যে পড়ে না নিশ্চয়ই এই প্রদেশগুলি! আবার, যে এগারোটি প্রদেশে সমকামী বিবাহের বিরুদ্ধে গণ-রায় বেরিয়েছে, সেগুলিতে কিন্তু বুশের ভোট এ বার কিছু উল্লেখযোগ্য রকম বেশি নয়।

আবার কারওর মতে, ডেমোক্রেটিক পাটি আসলে দেশের মাটির সঙ্গে সংযোগটাই হারিয়ে ফেলেছে। তারা এখন ক্রমশ আরও ‘এলিটিস্ট’, উত্তর-পূর্ব উপকূল ও পশ্চিম উপকূলের ইউনিভার্সিটি-কেন্দ্রিক লিবারেল ও প্রফেশনাল সমাজের মধ্যেই তার ক্রমবর্ধমান শেকড়। তাই দেশের বিশাল সাধারণ কর্মী-জনতা, কেরি জিতলে আয়কর সংশোধনে, হেলথ-কেয়ার সংস্কারে, দেশীয় কৃষি বা শিল্পের যথাসম্ভব সংরক্ষণে যাঁদের স্পষ্টতই উপকার হওয়ার কথা, তাঁরাও কিন্তু আরও বেশি করে হলে পড়েছেন বুশের দিকেই। মূল্যবোধ-সংক্রান্ত যুক্তির মতোই এই যুক্তিতেও অনেকটাই সত্যতা আছে, কিন্তু আবারও, পূর্ব ও পশ্চিম উপকূলেরই লিবারেল-অধ্যুষিত প্রদেশগুলোতে বুশের নামে বেশি ভোট কী ভাবে, সে ব্যাখ্যা এতে মেলে না।

ডেমোক্রেটদের এলিটিজম-এর পাশাপাশি অন্য যে কথাটা শোনা যাচ্ছে, তা হল বুশের জনমুখী ‘সিম্পলিসিটি’ বা সরল স্পষ্টতা। কেরির দিকে তাকালেই ব্যাপারটা বোঝা যায়। ভোটের কথা থাক, প্রচারের সময়েও কি বোঝা যাচ্ছিল না যে কেরি একটু পিছিয়ে আছেন? কেন? কী ছিল না তাঁর? সাহস? না, ভিয়েতনাম-যোদ্ধা কেরির এই বদনাম কেউ দিতে পারবে না। তবে কি মনের জোর? না, বুশের প্রবল পরাক্রমের পাশে যে ভাবে তিনি আগাগোড়া লড়লেন, তাতে এমনও তো বলা যাবে না। তাহলে বুদ্ধি? কই, তর্কযুদ্ধ শুনতে গিয়ে তো বরং উল্টেই মনে হয়েছে। সম্ভবত একটা জিনিসই কেরির মধ্যে ছিল না, সেটা স্পষ্টতা। বুশ যখন বলেছেন ‘আমাদের রাষ্ট্র কতগুলো কাজ করতে চায়, ভীষণ ভাল ভাবে করতে চায়,’ কেরি তখন যত্নহীন বাক্যে ঘোরালো যুক্তিতে সংবেদনশীলতার কথা বলে গিয়েছেন। আমরা ভেবেছি অতিসরলীকরণ দিয়ে মানুষকে বোকা-বানাচ্ছেন বুশ। আর মার্কিন জনতা মনে করেছে বুশই হলেন কাজের মানুষ, কেরি কেবল কথাসর্বশ্ব।

সুতরাং, এই সেই ‘কাজ’, ব্ল্যয়ার এখন যে ‘কাজের’ কথা প্রতি মুহূর্তে ‘ইউরোপ’কে মনে করিয়ে দিচ্ছেন। এই সেই ‘কাজ’, যে কাজের জেরে বিক্ষুব্ধ জাক শিরাক বহুমুখী বিশ্বের ডাক দিচ্ছেন। মার্কিনরা বিপদ থেকে নিরাপত্তায় নিয়ে যাওয়ার ‘কাজে’ আবার ডেকে এনেছে বুশকে, জয়োৎফুল্ল বুশ অচিরেই সন্ত্রাস-তড়ানোর উদ্ভ্রান্ত অশ্বমেধ যজ্ঞে মন দেবেন। আমাদের চোখ বরং থাকুক শিরাক, শ্রেডার, বন্দেভিকদের উপর। কেননা তাঁদের স্বল্পপূরণের ক্ষমতার উপরেই নির্ভর করছে, বুশ-ব্ল্যয়ারের ‘কর্মযজ্ঞের’ ওপর শেষ পর্যন্ত কতটা রাশ টানা যাবে!

লাদেনই জেতালেন বুশকে?

অন্ধ বাম আর অন্ধ দক্ষিণ প্রায়শই মিলেমিশে যায়, ইচ্ছায় অনিচ্ছায়। সেই সূত্রে শেষবেলায়

জ্যোতিপ্রকাশ চট্টোপাধ্যায়

অবিদ্যাস্য।

কোনও তফাত নেই

খেলতে নেমে ওসামা বিন লাদেনই হযত জিতিয়ে দিলেন বুশকে। ভারতের তুলনায় ক্ষুদ্র মাপের গণতন্ত্র মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে ভোট হয় মাক্কাতার আমলের পদ্ধতিতে। এ পদ্ধতি তৈরি হয়েছিল অষ্টাদশ শতকের শেষে। এ পদ্ধতিতে পঞ্চাশটি রাজ্যে ভোট হয় ভিন্ন ভিন্ন কায়দায়। এই পদ্ধতি-মহাছোঁ গতবার অধিক সংখ্যক নাগরিকের ভোট পেয়েও গোরে হেরেছিলেন বুশের কাছে। নির্বাচকমণ্ডলীর আসনসংখ্যায় এগিয়ে ছিলেন বুশ। জালজোচ্ছুরি তো ছিলই। সেবার যে ভোট হয়েছিল তার পাশে বিহারও এক উজ্জ্বল গণতন্ত্র। এবার ভোটযুদ্ধ চলছিল সমানে সমানে। কখনও কেরি এগিয়ে কখনও বুশ, কখনও আবার কেরি। জেতার সম্ভাবনা দুজনেরই প্রায় সমান সমান। ফলাফলেও তার প্রতিফলন। বুশ পেয়েছেন ৫১ শতাংশ, কেরি ৪৮। ভোটসংখ্যার পার্থক্যও অল্পই। এই পার্থক্যটুকুই ঘটিয়ে দিলেন লাদেন, প্রচারের শেষ দিকে। আল জাজিরা টিভি তাঁর যে-ভিডিও প্রচার করল, তাতেই ঘটে গেল পার্থক্যটুকু।

ইরাকে মার্কিন আক্রমণের বিরুদ্ধে, শান্তির পক্ষে, বুশের বিরুদ্ধে দেশজুড়ে আন্দোলন গড়ে তুলেছিলেন ছাত্র-যুবক-বুদ্ধিজীবী-শিল্পী-সাহিত্যিক-গায়ক-গায়িকারা। তাঁরাই হয়ে উঠেছিলেন কেরি প্রধানে প্রচারক। বুশনিধনের প্রধান বার্তাবহ।

প্রচারে বুশ ক্রমাগত জোর দিচ্ছিলেন 'সন্ত্রাসবাদের বিপদ'-এর ওপর, জাতীয় নিরাপত্তার ওপর। তার প্রভাব বয়স্কদের ওপর খানিকটা পড়লেও তরুণদের নাড়া দিতে পারেনি তেমন। তারা ওসব প্রচার যুদ্ধবাজ বুশের ভোট পাওয়ার কৌশল হিসেবেই নিয়েছে। তারপরেই এল লাদেনের হুমকি। সব কিছু যেন বদলে গেল। ভোটের প্রেক্ষাপটে অন্য রঙ লাগল।

লাদেনের ভয়ই দেখাচ্ছিলেন বুশ। লাদেনকে ৯/১১-এর সন্ত্রাসবাদী হামলার খলনায়ক হিসেবে চিত্রিত করছিলেন। লাদেনের জুজু দেখিয়ে নিজের মিথ্যাচারিতা, অপদার্থতা (তাঁর আমলের মতো কাহিল কখনও ছিল না মার্কিন অর্থনীতি) এবং যুদ্ধবাজ চরিত্র চাপা দিতে চেষ্টা করছিলেন। মার্কিন প্রচারমাধ্যমও সেভাবেই আঁকছিল লাদেনের ছবি। ফলে মার্কিন জনমানসে লাদেন শুধু খলনায়ক নন, নাগরিকদের ব্যক্তিগত ও সমষ্টিগত নিরাপত্তা বিপন্নকারী সন্ত্রাসবাদের প্রতীক হয়ে উঠেছেন।

সেই লাদেন ভোটের কদিন আগে নেমে পড়লেন আসরে। হুমকি দিলেন, মার্কিন দেশকে ধ্বংস করবেন, পৃথিবীর সর্বত্র আক্রমণ চালাবেন তাদের বিরুদ্ধে, মার্কিন অর্থনীতিকে দেউলিয়া করে ছাড়বেন!

বুশের প্রচার যেন মূর্ত হয়ে, সত্য হয়ে মার্কিন ঘরে ঘরে টিভি-র পর্দায় ভেসে উঠল। ফল? ভোটের দিন দলে দলে সাদা রঙের, কটর থ্রিস্টান, বুদ্ধ ও মধ্যবয়সীর দল লাইন লাগাল। বিপন্নতার এক অনুভূতিই তাঁদের টেনে নিয়ে গেল ভোটকেন্দ্রে। অন্যদিকে পাল্টা প্রচার যারা করছিল, তারা যেন হয়ে পড়ল অস্বহীন। এবারের ভোটের ভোটদানের এক বৈশিষ্ট্য রেকর্ড সংখ্যা। আর এক বৈশিষ্ট্য ভোটের দীর্ঘ লাইনে ঘণ্টার পর ঘণ্টা অপেক্ষারতদের মধ্যে তরুণ ও যুবকদের তুচ্ছ উপস্থিতি। প্রায় সমস্ত সংবাদমাধ্যমই এ খবর দিয়েছে। এই তরুণের দল যুদ্ধবিরোধী আন্দোলনের উৎসাহে ভোটের লাইনে এলে ৩৫/৩৬ লক্ষ ভোটের ব্যবধান ঘুচিয়ে কেরির পক্ষে বড় ব্যবধান তৈরি হয়ে যেত, সন্দেহ নেই।

এ সব দেখে একটা সন্দেহ জাগেই। লাদেনের ভিডিও-র পেছনে সি আই এ-র লম্বা হাতের কোনও কারুকাজ আছে কি? খুনের পর ফেলুদারা আগে দেখে, এ-খুনে কার লাভ হবে বেশি। মার্কিন খুনে সবচেয়ে লাভবান বুশ। এবং তাঁর হাতের বহু কলঙ্কিত অস্ত্র সি আই এ পারে না এমন কর্ম নেই। সন্দেহ আরও বাড়ে আর একটি ব্যাপার দেখে। মার্কিন গোয়েন্দা সংস্থাগুলি যে-দ্রুততায় ঘোষণা করল, এ ভিডিও নির্ভেজাল, ভিডিও-র মানুষটি নিঃসন্দেহে লাদেন, তা প্রায়

বুশ হারলে, কেরি জিতলে কি সত্যিই কোনও বড় তফাত হত? ইরাক স্বাধীন, শান্ত, সুস্থিত হয়ে যেত? পৃথিবী থেকে যুদ্ধের বিপদ চলে যেত। মুসলিম বিরোধী মার্কিন-ইতালীয় জেহাদের অন্ত হত? অতীত অভিজ্ঞতা প্রতিটি প্রশ্নের উত্তরে বলে, না। প্রায় কোনও তফাতই হত না।

কেরি এইসব আন্তর্জাতিক প্রশ্নে কোনও স্পষ্ট অবস্থান নেননি। কীভাবে তিনি ইরাকে যুদ্ধ থামিয়ে মার্কিন ফৌজকে ঘরে ফেরাবেন তা স্পষ্ট করে বলেননি। সম্পূর্ণ নীরব থেকেছেন প্যালেস্তিনীয় প্রশ্নে। ইজরায়েল চটে যায় এমন একটি শব্দও উচ্চারণ করেননি। মার্কিন-ইহুদি লবিকে ঘাঁটানোর ক্ষমতা নেই কোনও দলের কোনও নেতারই।

দল হিসেবে, কর্মসূচি ও নীতির বিচারেও কি দুই দলের মধ্যে কোনও তফাত আছে?

নিগ্নন ও কেনেডির প্রশাসনের মধ্যে অর্থনৈতিক নীতিতে, বিদেশ নীতিতে, মার্কিন আগ্রাসী মনোভাবে কোনও তফাত কি দেখা গিয়েছিল? ভিয়েতনামের আগুন দু'জনের আমলেই সমান জ্বলেছিল। আসলে টিকাকাররা যা-ই বোঝান, 'মার্কিন গণতন্ত্র' দেশের মালিক সে-দেশের নবুইটি পরিবার। তাদের হাতেই অস্ত্রের, তেলের, কেমিক্যালের, ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিংয়ের, তথ্য প্রযুক্তির— সব কিছুর ব্যবস্থা। তারা চালায় দেশ। তাদের স্বার্থেই চলে শাসনের রথ। সারথি কে, তার গায়ে কোন দলের জামা তাতে কোনও তফাত হয় না।

তবু, বুশ হারলে...

বুশ হারলে আমার মতো পৃথিবীর কোটি কোটি শান্তিকামী, যুদ্ধবিরোধী, এক-দেশের-আধিপত্য- বিরোধী মানুষ সুখী হতেন। শান্তি পেতেন।

বুশ যে শুধু বিশ্বের সবচেয়ে জ্বর সন্ত্রাসবাদের প্রতীক তা-ই নয়। তিনি আমেরিকারও সবচেয়ে বড় শত্রু। তাঁর আমলের মতো কাহিল হাল সে-দেশের কখনও হয়নি। বিপুল ঋণের বোঝা দেশের ঘাড়ে। বেকারের সংখ্যা সর্বোচ্চ। ডলারের দাম পড়তির মুখে। বিপুল পরিমাণের 'ডেফিসিট বাজেট' ডলার ছেপে ছেপে সরকার চালাচ্ছেন তিনি। ও দেশে এ বোঝা বইতে হবে অন্তত পরের তিনটি প্রজন্মকে।

বুশের সময়ে আমেরিকা যত বিচ্ছিন্ন তেমন সে কখনও ছিল না। রাষ্ট্রসঙ্ঘে, তার নিজের তৈরি সংস্থা 'ন্যাটোতে' সে বিচ্ছিন্ন। এশিয়া-আফ্রিকা-আরব, জগতে তো বটেই, জার্মানি-ফ্রান্স-রাশিয়ার মতো 'মিত্র'ও তার কাছ থেকে দূরে সরে গেছে।

আমেরিকার মানুষ আজ খাড়াখাড়া দু'ভাগে বিভক্ত, পঞ্চাশ পঞ্চাশ। বিপুল সংখ্যক মানুষ নিরাপত্তাহীনতায় কাতর। এমন বিচ্ছিন্নতা, এত অনৈক্য, এত নিরাপত্তাহীনতা, এত বেকারি, এত করুণ অর্থনীতি কখনও ছিল না মার্কিন দেশের।

বুশ হারলে পুরোপুরি না হলেও এ সবের কিছু মেরামতির কাজ হয়ত হত, কে জানে। তা, হওয়ার নয়।

এখন, এই ভোটকে তাঁর নীতির প্রতি গণভোটের সমর্থন মনে করতে পারেন বুশ। মনে করে, তাঁর 'টেকসান গোঁয়ারতুমি' আরও চড়িয়ে বোম্বটেগিরি আরও বাড়িয়ে দিতে পারেন। আরও অনেক রাষ্ট্র, আমেরিকাসহ, বিপন্ন হতে পারে। আরও বহু মানুষের মৃত্যু হতে পারে।

আবার এমনও হতে পারে, তিনি ইতিহাসের পাতায় জায়গা চাইতে পারেন 'ভাল রাষ্ট্রপতি' হিসেবে। আব্রাহাম লিঙ্কনের মতো, রুজভেল্টের মত। তা করতে হলে শুধু তাঁর টেকসান জামা-প্যান্ট-জুতো এবং উচ্চারণ বদলালেই হবে না। স্বভাব-চরিত্র-নীতি-কর্মসূচির মতো অনেক কিছুই বদলে ফেলতে হবে। তা কি তাঁর সাধ্যায়ত্ত?

ইতিহাস অপেক্ষা করবে কলম হাতে, কোন পথ নেন তিনি।



The Bush and Dick Cheney families with Republican supporters at a victory rally on Wednesday.

Second term on Bush's terms

S. Rajagopalan
Washington, November 4

HOURS AFTER having emerged as one of the most powerful US Presidents in a long time, George W. Bush pledged to intensify his war on terror "with good allies at our side".

Winner of more popular votes than any other Presidential candidate in history (a far cry from 2000 when popular mandate eluded him), Bush also promised to act across the political spectrum to unify a deeply divided nation.

Listing his second-term goals, Bush said their pursuit would require the support of all Americans. "So today I want to speak to every person who voted for

Manmohan invites US President

PRIME MINISTER Manmohan Singh congratulated President George Bush on Thursday and invited him to visit India. Such a visit would be a "milestone" in bilateral ties. "I hope that we will have the opportunity to welcome you in India very soon," the PM said

my opponent: 'To make this nation stronger and better I will need your support, and I will work to earn it,' he said. "I will do all I can do to deserve your trust."

Bush's words of assurance were set out in his ac-

in a letter. He hoped that India and the US would move ahead expeditiously to the "next steps in strategic partnership". South Block sources said Bush, keen to visit India, might be received in Delhi around autumn next year.

HTC, New Delhi

ceptance speech, made soon after Democratic challenger John Kerry delivered what analysts ranked as a graceful and conciliatory concession speech. The Bush remarks also sought to quell concerns in some quarters

over the emergence of a more muscular Republican party not only in the White House, but in both Houses of the Congress as well.

With 55 Republicans in the 100-member Senate and 231 in the 435-member House, Bush can now pursue his legislative agenda with vigour. In the past, several of his key initiatives hit the roadblock on Capitol Hill because of his party's thin majority in the Senate.

Amid applause, he also professed his commitment to help the emerging democracies of Iraq and Afghanistan so that the two countries can "grow in strength and defend their freedom".

■ See also Page 13

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

WHAT THE WORLD SAYS

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan
We pledge to work with Bush on issues facing the world body and the globe. He also applauded defeated Democrat John Kerry on his 'prompt and statesman-like' decision to accept the outcome. He also congratulated the American people on the 'impressive demonstration of democracy they have given by turning out in record numbers to participate in the election'

British Prime Minister Tony Blair
Bush's re-election came at a critical time for a world that is fractured, divided and uncertain. There was a need now to move forward on poverty and West Asia peace process and resolve conditions on which the terrorists prey

Russian President Vladimir Putin
'International terrorism had a goal of frustrating Bush's victory in the election. I can only feel joy that the American people did not allow themselves to be intimidated, and made the most sensible decision.'

S-Korean President Roh Moo-hyun
The government hopes that the second term of the Bush administration will continue to cooperate with its allies to secure peace and prosperity in the world, including on the Korean Peninsula

German Chancellor Schroeder
I will continue the good and close cooperation that we have. This is in the interests of the US as well as those of Germany and Europe

Chinese President Hu Jintao
Both China and the US are great countries and share a wide range of common interests and basis for cooperation

Philippines President Gloria Arroyo
I congratulate President Bush for his victory and Sen Kerry for a fight well fought. I do this on behalf of 80 million Filipinos, including 2.5 million Filipino-Americans

Conciliation could be a bridge too far

USA Today
Washington, November 4
AS THE winner in the most rancorous, divisive presidential campaign in memory, what is George Bush's obligation: to reach out to the vanquished Democratic minority, or to press the agenda of his victorious Republican majority? In an election that exit polls said amounted to a referendum on moral values, slightly more than half the voters won, and slightly fewer than half lost. The latter now control neither the White House nor the Senate nor the House, and face diminished influence on the Supreme Court. That left some questioning their place in their own country.

"I'm in a depression," said Zakkia Sumter, 29, a paralegal and John Kerry voter who stopped in at a Starbucks in Philadelphia. "Seeing that map of blue and red this morning shows me how divided we are."
Howard Dewey, 37, an Atlanta financial adviser, said Democratic and Republican leaders must "work on an even keel in the Senate and the Congress. In the last four years, any kind of conversation or discussion, it usually ends up in a yelling, screaming, name-calling match."
Asked yesterday whether they thought Bush would do more to unite the country or divide it, 57 per cent of respondents to a USA Today/CNN/Gallup Poll said the

President would unite; 39 per cent said Bush would do more to divide the nation.
The poll also asked voters what Bush should emphasise in his second term. Because the election was so close, 63 per cent said the President should emphasise programmes that both parties support. But 30 per cent said that, because he won a majority of votes, Bush had a mandate to advance the Republican agenda.
Lincoln or Jefferson?
Will Bush be like Lincoln in 1864, who promised "malice toward none... charity for all" and shaped a conciliatory post-Civil War policy toward the South? Or like Jefferson after the election of 1800, who paid lip service to national unity but went on to govern like the candidate who won? If his first term is any guide, Bush will be like Jefferson — and move more toward his goals than his opponents'.
Democrats weren't expecting conciliation. O'Daniel Outlaw, 56, said that although Bush should reach out to Democrats, "I saw nothing in the campaign to make me think he would."
Many Republicans said conciliation wasn't necessary. Angela Lutz, 33, a Bush voter, said she understands the divisions the campaign opened. She said, "It would be nice if everyone could just get along." But how to do that? "It would be nice if some people could just change their minds."

Where candidates found support

Percentage of total	Sex	Kerry voters	Bush voters
46%	Male	42%	50%
54%	Female	58%	50%
Race/Ethnicity			
77%	White	66%	88%
11%	Black	20%	2%
9%	Hispanic/Latino	10%	7%
2%	Asian	2%	1%
Party Identification			
35%	Republican	5%	68%
26%	Independent	27%	24%
38%	Democrat	68%	8%
Marital Status			
62%	Married	55%	70%
38%	Not married	45%	30%

Terror & toughness: The twin towers of victory

Poll strategy took shape soon after Sept 11

USA Today
Washington, November 4

IN THE end, terrorism trumped everything.
The first presidential election after the September 11 attacks was defined and ultimately decided by voters' fear of another attack. Surveys of voters as they left polling places in a dozen key states revealed voters' thinking. Those exit polls found that President Bush won the support of 85 per cent of those who said terrorism was the campaign's top issue. Voters trusted Bush more than John Kerry to handle terrorism.

There were other reasons for Bush's victory. His campaign raised a record \$270m and spent it on an unprecedented grassroots effort. He attracted more women, Hispanics and African-Americans than he did four years ago. Opinion polls taken this fall found that Bush had succeeded in tagging Kerry as a vacillating liberal with a penchant for raising taxes.
Bush's folksy persona felt more comfortable to voters than Kerry's Yankee austerity. They thought Bush's morals values matched theirs. His wife, Laura, was a warm and persuasive character witness. His controversial Vice-President, Dick Cheney, wasn't the drag on the ticket some thought he would be.

But the event that transformed the country and gave Bush a mission after just eight months in office mattered most to voters. "If they hadn't blown up the World Trade Center, this election would have been fought over Social Security, education, health care and the economy," says Maurice Carroll, director of the Quinipiac University Poll. "But they blew up the World

DADDY'S GIRLS



Bush twins Jenna (left) and Barbara are all smiles during their father's victory speech. (Below) Kerry's daughters, Alexandra (right) & Vanessa, comfort each other during their father's concession speech.

of the Republican National Committee in Austin, Texas. "We can go to the country on this issue," Rove said in January 2002, "because they trust the Republican Party to do a better job of protecting and strengthening America's military might and thereby protecting America". He was talking about congressional elections later that year, but the strategy also became the foundation of Bush's campaign.

It sometimes looked like a shaky rationale for re-election. Osama bin Laden remained at large. Terrorists struck in Madrid, Indonesia, Turkey and the Philippines. There was little evidence to support Bush's assertion that the war with Iraq was an essential step in the eradication of terrorism. The 9/11 Commission, former Bush terrorism adviser Richard Clarke and filmmaker Michael Moore all documented failures of intelligence before September 11. When violence in Iraq escalated after Bush stood beneath a "Mission Accomplished" banner on the USS Abraham Lincoln, he was ridiculed.
Bush's job-approval ratings fell as doubts rose. But it didn't matter enough. "Kerry made it worse," says Matthew Dowd, Bush's chief campaign strategist. "Voters saw him as a person they couldn't trust to take a firm stand. They at least knew where George W. Bush stood."

Throughout the campaign, most people consistently chose Bush over Kerry when pollsters asked them which man they trusted more to handle terrorism. "People looked at Bush and didn't like a lot of what they saw, but they still didn't think Kerry could do it better," says Merle Black, a political scientist at Emory University.

Peace, democracy in Iraq tops Bush's policy goal

Associated Press
Washington, November 4

'PRESIDENT BUSH heads into his second term with the stabilisation of Iraq under a democratic government as his top policy goal. But he also has unfinished domestic business, including making his sweeping tax cuts permanent, reforming Social Security, and promoting energy production. Here is a summary of his plans:

Foreign affairs

Bush intends to continue using diplomacy to try to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons programmes and is ready to offer assurances he would not

use force. Negotiations are being conducted jointly with South Korea, Japan, Russia and China.

In West Asia, Bush has affirmed strong support for Israel and its security but avoided taking stands or providing details on how he intended to advance it or promote agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Bush approved of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to relinquish all of Gaza and to evacuate a handful of Jewish settlements on the West Bank.

Bush has worked for good relations with China. Last December, with visiting Premier Wen Jiabao at his side at the White House, he sent a strong warning to Taiwan not to take any action toward independence and cause



Colin Powell & Donald Rumsfeld
On way out?

dangerous new tensions with Beijing.

Iraq-terrorism

Bush intends to keep a US presence in Iraq until the country is stable and run by a democratically elected govern-

ment. He has offered no timeline for withdrawing US forces, but does plan to seek additional help from other countries in securing Iraq while it is rebuilt. He has ruled out instituting a draft to bolster the US military should the Iraq situation worsen or drag on.

Bush is not likely to abandon his policy of pre-emptive action against potential threats to the US. But, with Iraq still a big uncertainty, it is not clear if Bush will devote a greater share of his second-term attention to the worldwide dragnet for Osama bin Laden.

Comprehensive restructuring of US military forces overseas, begun in Bush's first term, is likely to continue. But it is doubtful that Defence Secre-

tary Donald Rumsfeld will stick around to see that effort through. If Secretary of State Colin Powell departs as expected, Bush will have to select a new top diplomat.

Intelligence-homeland security

Bush has promised to improve security for ports, borders, transportation and critical infrastructure, particularly by staying on the offence against terrorists. Odds are Homeland Security Department Secretary Tom Ridge won't stay in that post and may head to the private sector. At the CIA, Republican Porter Goss, who left the House to become director in late-September, is expected to stay.

Tearful Kerry saves best speech for the bitter end

Guardian News Service
Boston, November 4

EVER THE dutiful soldier, John Kerry delivered the most painful speech of his life yesterday, choking back the tears and the bitter aftertaste of defeat as he appealed to fellow Democrats to work to heal America's divide.

Amid the raw emotions that occasionally overwhelmed him, forcing Kerry to gaze up at the ceiling for composure, the Senator was careful to tell the faithful that he had thoroughly explored the prospects of a legal challenge and recounts before giving up on the election. "In America, it is vital that every vote counts and that every vote be counted, but the outcome should be decided by voters, not a protracted legal fight," Kerry said.

"I would not have given up this fight if there was a chance we would prevail, but it is now clear that if all the provisional ballots were counted, which they will be, there won't be enough outstanding votes for us to win Ohio, and therefore we can't win the election."

It was in many ways, Kerry's finest appearance — the flinty New Englander's feelings on full display for perhaps the first time in his candidacy.

Yesterday's concession speech, delivered in the 18th-century splendour of Boston's Faneuil Hall meeting place, was a rare encounter with failure for Kerry.

The product of a privileged New England upbringing, a graduate of Yale, a Vietnam War hero and husband to two heiresses, Kerry has lost just one election in his political career, and that was some 30 years ago. But in ending the quest that has consumed him for more than half of his lifetime, the Democratic leader remained mindful of the extraordinary passions unleashed during the course of this election season, and the dangers of leaving his supporters to nurse their resentments.

"I did my best to express my vision and my hopes for America," he said. "I wish things had turned out differently."

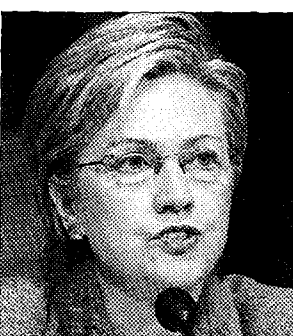
Defeat opens doors for Hillary

Guardian News Service
Miami, November 4

THE DEFEAT of John Kerry could bring a silver lining for one Democratic presidential hopeful: Hillary Rodham Clinton, whose chances of reoccupying the White House as chief executive looked better yesterday than ever before.

In four years' time, the Democrats and the Republicans will be presenting new candidates to US voters. It was widely agreed among Democratic insiders that John Kerry's defeat means that Mrs Clinton, the 57-year-old New York senator, is now the leading figure to challenge the Republicans in 2008.

Had Kerry won, he would almost certainly have run again in 2008. By the time Mrs Clinton's next chance came around, in 2012, she would have been 65, and



probably perceived as too old. Party figures would not speculate yesterday about the former first lady's chances, and Hillary's official line has long been that she hoped for a Kerry win. "That would be great with me," she said soon after the Democratic convention in Boston this year. "I want a Democratic White House for as long as we can have one."

winner", the independent pollster Lee Miringhoff predicted. The most extraordinary scenario would pit Hillary against Jeb Bush, though the Florida governor last month ruled out a run for the presidency. "I'm not going to run for president in 2008," Bush said. "That's not my interest. I'm governor of this state. It's the best job in the world."

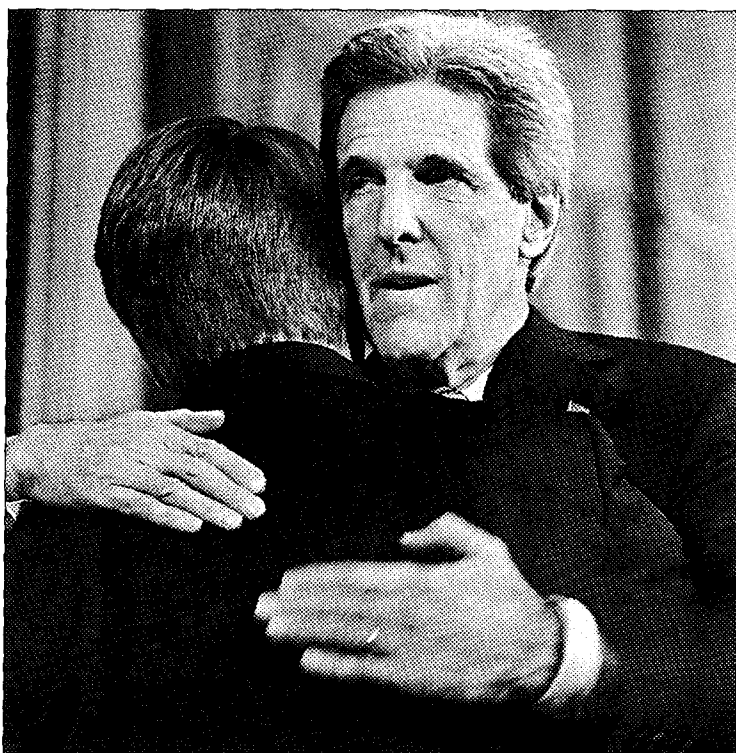
The identity of a possible Republican candidate in 2008 remains a matter of pure speculation. But two other names have repeatedly featured amid the rumour-mongering: the former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani and Senator John McCain of Arizona.

Both are popular figures who have aligned themselves closely with George Bush over recent weeks. But they are very much maverick Republicans, both socially and economically, and either can-

didate would mark a radical break with the expected course of a second Bush administration on issues such as abortion and tax cuts.

The California governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, has made his presidential ambitions clear — but that would require a constitutional amendment to lift the ban on foreign-born Americans holding the office. One name already being touted as a possible Clinton running mate is Barack Obama, the charismatic 43-year-old who will become the only serving black senator, and only the third in 150 years, after an easy win in Illinois on Tuesday night.

Though passionately championed by many Democrats, Hillary might face unprecedented levels of hostility — and not just from those who object to the very notion of a woman president.



Sen. John Kerry hugs his running mate Sen. John Edwards before delivering his concession speech in Boston on Wednesday.

Course Correction

Bush Should Review His Anti-terror Strategy

By K Subrahmanyam

The British bookies were a remarkably clear-headed lot: Even as pollsters and political pundits the world over were unsure of George Bush's re-election, they backed him heavily. Their argument was that the American election was not about issues, as Senator Kerry tried to project, but about personalities. Here the conservative, reborn Christian George Bush had a distinct advantage over liberal Kerry.

American Democrats as well as the rest of the world are wondering whether president Bush would consider this victory as a popular endorsement of his aggressive and unilateralist foreign policy, and therefore accelerate down the same road. Foreign policy analysts fear Iran would be his next target for military action. The speculation persists despite Bush's military misadventure in Iraq. Bush may not launch a military invasion of Iran. However, he may resort to bombing Iranian assets, particularly its nuclear installations.

The neocon hawks in Washington are not a highly admired lot. They have miscalculated on various counts — expecting Pakistan's cooperation in capturing Osama bin Laden, assuming European and other Arab countries would follow them after their initial military victory in Iraq, underestimating the resistance to US occupation of Iraq and overlooking Al-Qaida's ability to infiltrate and operate successfully in the Iraqi resistance.

Most US presidents behave differently in their first and second terms. In the first term they focus on getting re-elected and in the second they attempt to secure their place in history. President Reagan was a typical cold warrior in his first term, but adopted a conciliatory attitude towards Mikhail Gorbachev in his second term. President Lyndon B Johnson, who took over after the assassination of John F Kennedy in 1963 and won handsomely in 1964, lost his popularity in the next four years of the Vietnam war. As a result, he could not stand for re-election. His place in history is not marked by his civil rights and Great Society programme, but by the Vietnam debacle. For Bush, who would surely have Johnson at the back of his mind, Reagan is his role model.

Any confrontation with Iran will only harden Teheran's resolve to go nuclear. According to the October 26 *Washington Post* article, based on intelligence briefings, there is a fourth nation, an Arab one, to which Pakistan has proliferated nuclear weapon technology. Though US intelligence assigns a lower probability to Saudi Arabia being the beneficiary of Pakistani proliferation, an objective assessment points in that direction. If that were to turn out correct, the Iranian proliferation cannot be dealt with without tackling simultaneously

Pakistani and Saudi proliferations.

Any bombing of Iran will push up oil prices with its inevitable consequences for global economic recovery. Such action against Iran is bound to lead to Teheran using terrorism as an instrument of policy as they did in the 80s. The prevailing Shia-Sunni balance would be destroyed to the disadvantage of the US. The neocons are also practitioners of realpolitik, as demonstrated by their dealings with Pakistani and Saudi leaderships in the war against terrorism. Similar considerations of realpolitik would dictate the need to cultivate Iran rather than alienate it.

Without cultivating Iran, it will be difficult to ensure stabilisation in Shia Iraq. Iranians have shown themselves to be adept at realpolitik. They secured nuclear enrichment technology by dealing with Pakistan and handled the US tactfully in the Iran contra affair. They have been sending out signals on their willingness to negotiate with the western countries even on uranium enrichment. Iran would like to keep its nuclear options open; it is flanked by Sunni-dominated Pakistan, where Shias are mowed down in mosques, and Wahabi

Saudi Arabia, which has nuclear capability thanks to Pakistan's proliferation and US permissiveness. Both Pakistan and the US cannot carry on with their strange ways for all times to come.

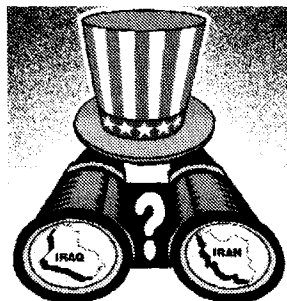
The US president cannot indefinitely delay answering the American people why bin Laden and his associates are able to operate freely on Pakistani soil, even as the latter claims to be a frontline

ally in the war on terrorism. Nor can one expect peace and stability in Afghanistan so long as Taliban and Al-Qaida are active in Pakistan.

These problems call for a course correction in the US strategy of absolute unilateralism, adopted by the neocon advisors of president Bush in his first term. One does not expect the US to give up unilateralism altogether. After all, the entire Cold War was conducted by the US on that basis and France, even at that time, left the NATO military structure. The real problem is not so much the unilateralism in strategy but the assessment of threat.

During the Cold War, there was total agreement between the US and its allies on the assessment of the Soviet threat. This time there was an agreement on the Al-Qaida-Taliban threat. Only in Iraq the US neocons went their own way and parted company with the allies. They have been proved wrong on the nature of threat.

The real threats are the financiers of jihadi terrorism and the sources of multiple nuclear proliferation. One hopes Bush will introspect on his mistakes of the first term and act with a greater sense of judgment to ensure his place in history.



RETURN OF BUSH

Conservatives set for revolution

HAPPINESS, HEARTACHE FOR DAUGHTERS



(Top) Jenna and Barbara Bush wait for their father to speak at the Reagan Office Building in Washington DC and Alexandra and Vanessa Kerry comfort each other as they listen to their father at Faneuil Hall in Boston. (Reuters, AP)

DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK

Arlington (Virginia), Nov. 4: Exulting in their electoral victories, President Bush's conservative supporters immediately turned to staking out mandates for an ambitious agenda of long-cherished goals, including privatising social security, banning same-sex marriage, remaking the Supreme Court and overturning the court's decisions in support of abortion rights.

"Now comes the revolution," Richard Viguerie, the dean of conservative direct mail, told about a dozen fellow movement stalwarts gathered around a television here. "If you don't implement a conservative agenda now, when do you?"

By midday yesterday, fights over the spoils had already begun, as conservatives debated the electorate's verdict on the war in Iraq, the Bush administration's spending and the administration's hearty embrace of traditionalist social causes.

'Values voters won polls'

FOREIGN POLICY

- Continue training Iraqi security forces to double the current 88,000 by mid-2005
- Carry on six-party talks with North Korea but no direct bilateral negotiations
- Support European efforts to get Iran to back away from developing nuclear weapons

TERRORISM

- Create office of national director of intelligence with authority over much of the intelligence community but not full budgetary powers sought by the independent 9/11 commission
- Shift forces from Cold War-era bases in Europe to outposts closer to countries on the frontline of the war on terror
- Renew all provisions of the USA Patriot Act, some of which are set to expire in 2005
- Increase border-patrol agents and step up biometric identification using machines that can read documents containing digital fingerprints or photos at major border crossings

most important issue." Dr James C. Dobson, the founder of Focus on the Family and an influential evangelical Protestant, said he had issued a warning to a "White House operative" who called yesterday morning to thank him for his help. Dr Dobson said he told the caller that many Christians believed the country "on the verge of self-destruction" as it abandoned traditional family roles. He argued that "through prayer and the involvement of millions of evangelicals, and mainline Protestants and Catholics, God has given us a reprieve."

tions to be offered anaesthesia for their foetuses.

Austin Ruse, president of the conservative Catholic Culture of Life Foundation, suggested that if Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist steps down, Bush could begin to repay his social conservative backers by naming Justice Antonin Scalia to replace him. "We'd love to see Scalia in that spot, and I think we have earned it," Ruse said.

The strongest argument that Christian conservatives played a decisive role in the election came in Ohio, where a ballot measure to ban same-sex marriage passed by an overwhelming margin. Conservatives said the proposal increased conservative turnout and helped Bush win a narrow pivotal victory.

Phil Burress, the veteran Christian conservative organiser who headed the effort to pass the measure, said his campaign registered tens of thousands of voters, distributed 2.5 million church bulletin inserts and passed out 20,000 yard signs. His group called 2.9 million homes, he said, identifying 850,000 strong supporters whom it called again on Monday as a reminder to go to the polls.

Although the Bush campaign courted conservative Christians assiduously, the exact level of their turnout is not yet clear. Surveys of voters leaving the polls showed that "moral values" outweighed concerns about the economy or the war with more than 20 per cent of the voters — and about 80 per cent of those voters supported Bush. But some pollsters cautioned that the multiple-choice format of the questions asked might have influenced the responses.

Sarah Chamberlain, a spokeswoman for the Republican Main Street Coalition, a group of moderates within the party, argued that high-profile moderates on social issues also played a pivotal role for the campaign in Ohio.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Life after Boeing & beefy men

Boston, Nov. 4 (Reuters): Life will be at once different and familiar for John Kerry. The crowds, motorcades and media entourage will be gone, but a new US Senate session and some old battles await.

class tax cuts and a sensible foreign policy. Kerry now takes that battle back to the US Senate, where he has served since 1984 and has another four years left of his current term.

speech and, within the hour, three black SUVs deposited him and his party back at his townhouse.

The custom outfitted red, white and blue Boeing 757 emblazoned with Kerry's name and campaign logo "The Real Deal" prepared to fly staff back to Washington. It will be stripped, refitted and used to ferry oil executives around Central Asia. The beefy men in dark suits and earpieces will disappear soon. As a former presidential nominee, Kerry will not rate around-the-clock Secret Service protection.

Edwards wife has cancer

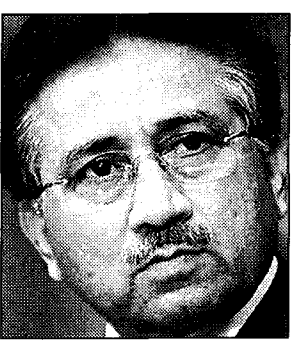
Elizabeth Edwards, wife of former Democratic vice-presidential candidate John Edwards, was diagnosed with breast cancer the day her husband and Senator John Kerry conceded the US presidential race.

Ebadi sues US over embargo

New York, Nov. 4 (Reuters): Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi has sued the US because its economic embargo on Iran is blocking publication of her memoirs in America, a literary agency said yesterday.

Musharraf upbeat over election result

Islamabad, Nov. 4: Pakistan today was clearly upbeat over the re-election of George W. Bush as the new US President.



Prevez Musharraf

level of trust with the Bush administration on various issues including nuclear non-proliferation and Afghanistan.



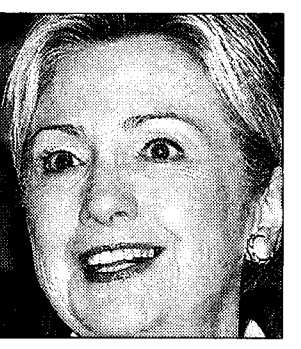
Bruce Springsteen

Stars fail to shine for Democrats

Los Angeles, Nov. 4 (AFP): Even the mega-wattage of Hollywood's brightest stars from Titanic icon Leonardo DiCaprio to rock "Boss" Bruce Springsteen wasn't enough to illuminate the US presidential candidate John Kerry's campaign.

Hillary looks like the one to beat in 2008

Washington, Nov. 4: The defeat of John Kerry has left Hillary Rodham Clinton as one of the most powerful elected officials in the national Democratic Party — as well as the top prospect for the presidential nomination in 2008, according to party officials and strategists.



Hillary Clinton

plate any presidential candidacy: her own re-election back home in New York in 2006. Her aides and other strategists argue that she must win her re-election decisively — not merely eke out a victory — because it would be futile for her to begin a national campaign with a shaky base of support back home.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

DIVIDED EMPIRE

⁵⁷⁴ ^{W50} ^{G.18}
The quirkiness of Ohio's electoral laws may have delayed President George W. Bush's victory speech on Wednesday, but it cannot detract from his conclusive, but narrow, win in the American election. In what was a passionate and savagely contested election, Mr Bush won a clear majority of the popular vote. At the same time, the election has exposed the sharp social and ideological schisms within the United States of America; it has divided the world's most formidable nation into two potentially antagonistic blocs. Those who rallied behind the president's Democratic Party challenger were primarily motivated by a visceral antipathy to everything he stood for. Such an intense polarization may have been a natural consequence of Mr Bush's forthright positions on the war on terrorism and the conflict in Iraq, but its continuation into his second term is undesirable. More than anything else, America needs harmony and reconciliation. Mr Bush needs to iron out the rough edges of his first administration.

The task is not going to be easy. The staggering counter-mobilization of a silent majority against Senator John Kerry's challenge was not effected by the personality of the president. It was managed by ideologically-committed networks of evangelists, conservatives and neo-conservatives. Bolstered by Republican majorities in Congress, there will be sustained pressure on the second Bush administration to deviate from consensual politics. It would be imprudent of the president to succumb totally. Tempting as the idea of a Bush Revolution is, America's immediate priority is to rebuild a national consensus and restore its moral standing in the world. An exaggerated unilateralism in the conduct of foreign policy has enhanced the image of the Ugly American and given a fillip to both terrorists and faith-inspired radicals. Indeed, it has been responsible for the mess the US finds itself in Iraq. Rather than treat re-election as a vindication of pig-headedness, the new Bush administration has to focus on the delicate task of managing an orderly retreat. Well-meaning pipe-dreams of reordering west Asia for democracy may have to be shelved for a more opportune occasion.

An advantage Mr Bush has is that a second-term president can afford the political luxury of statesmanship. He may be unwaveringly committed to Christian ethics in matters like abortion, gay marriage and stem-cell research. However, when it comes to political and economic issues, his instincts are those of a right-wing pragmatist. This has served India well. He resisted pressures to be protectionist over outsourcing and discarded non-proliferation for a quiet acknowledgement of India's nuclear status. His kid-glove handling of Pakistan may have reeked of double-standards, but has yielded dividends in the war on terrorism. Reverting to traditional, Republican pragmatism — hallmarks of his father's administration — may be the way to make Uncle Sam less contentious and, by implication, more secure. The last thing the US needs now is more enemies.

Bush on top

An election that matters to the world

President Bush has won a second term in power, and his victory is more convincing this time as he has wrapped up the popular vote as well, by 51 percent against 48 percent to Democratic challenger John Kerry. First, credit where it is due. Elections have proceeded without chaos and without too many legal challenges over procedures and votes when, after the precedent of Florida 2000, it had seemed at one point the US might give Afghan elections a run for its money in terms of unsavoury controversies. President Bush led from the front, articulated clearly and forcefully what he stood for, and came up trumps against Kerry in a hard fought, closely contested election. By contrast Kerry gave mixed messages — he sounded hesitant and cautious, hitting his stride only late into his campaign.

Under Bush's leadership Republicans have also retained control of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Technically that gives him a free hand as he goes into his second term, without fear of gridlock in implementing his policies. But he should also remember that Republican majorities are narrow everywhere, and a significant minority of Americans stand starkly opposed to his policies. The world, too, largely sees him as narrow-minded and would have preferred Kerry, whose outlook is more internationalist. Oil prices started rising as soon as word of Bush's lead got out — the oil market thinks he is close to oil barons (he was one himself before he took to politics) and will not do anything for oil conservation. Besides, he has a hard line on Iraq and Iran, and has largely been ineffective in the war against terror, both of which could disrupt oil supplies in his second term.

On the plus side Bush is likely to be more of a free trader than Kerry, who is close to labour lobbies desiring curbs on outsourcing. Kerry wouldn't have been able to stop outsourcing, but he could have put significant obstacles in its way. Bush's electoral performance has been creditable compared to his father, as both laboured under similar burdens. Bush Sr waged war in Iraq, presided over an ailing economy, and couldn't win a second term. Bush Jr launched Gulf War II and presided over the loss of a million jobs, besides turning a record budget surplus into a gaping deficit. Apart from the fact that Kerry couldn't match up to the political skills and charisma of a Bill Clinton, the "commander-in-chief" syndrome helped Bush Jr better his father's record. Gulf War II is still in progress, and Americans don't like overthrowing a war leader mid-stream: every president who escalated the Vietnam war won in subsequent elections.

But a significant minority still remember the Vietnam war, and they were proven right. They should keep this in mind as he heads into his second term. When Kerry fell on his sword and conceded defeat to Bush the two had, according to reports, a cordial conversation where both agreed about the dangers of a polarized country. Bush would be making a mistake if he thinks this is only atmospheric ending an American election; he needs to find that centre now.

5 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

বুশের ফের সঙ্কল্প, লড়াই চলবে সন্ত্রাস মোকাবিলায়

ওয়াশিংটন, ৪ নভেম্বর: মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট-পদে দ্বিতীয় বার নির্বাচন জেতার পরেই জর্জ ডবলিউ বুশ সন্ত্রাসবাদের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াই চালিয়ে যাওয়ার সঙ্কল্প ঘোষণা করেছেন। রিপাবলিকান দলের সদর দফতরে নির্বাচনী বিজয় ঘোষণাসূচক বক্তৃতায় বুশ বলেছেন, আফগানিস্তান ও ইরাকে হাঁটি হাঁটি পা ফেলতে শুরু করা গণতন্ত্রকে মদত দিতে আমেরিকা তার যাবতীয় শক্তি নিয়োগ করবে। বুশ বলেছেন, “আমাদের বিশ্বস্ত মিত্রদের সঙ্গে হাতে হাত মিলিয়ে আমাদের যাবতীয় শক্তি কাজে লাগিয়ে সন্ত্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াইয়ে আমাদের জিততেই হবে, যাতে আমাদের আগামী প্রজন্ম স্বাধীন ও নিরাপদ জীবনযাপন করতে পারে।” কিন্তু বুশ প্রশাসনের এক কর্তব্যক্তি এবং রিপাবলিকান দলের শীর্ষস্থানীয় নেতারা রয়টার্সের সংবাদদাতাকে বলেন, বিজয় উৎসবের সময় নয়, হরাক নিয়ে আমেরিকার দায়িত্ব অনেক বেড়ে গেল। কারণ, আমেরিকার সামনে সবচেয়ে বড় চ্যালেঞ্জ ইরাকে রক্তপাত বন্ধ করা ও পূর্বঘোষিত কর্মসূচি অনুযায়ী জানুয়ারিতে সেখানে নির্বাচনের আয়োজন করা। কিন্তু নিরাপত্তার অভাবের কথা বলে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ ইরাকে নির্বাচনের প্রস্তাবপত্রের জন্য কর্মী পাঠাতে রাজ হচ্ছে না। এই অবস্থায় নির্ধারিত সময়ে সেখানে ভোট করা যাবে কি না, তা নিয়ে বুশপ্রশাসনের মধ্যেই সংশয় রয়েছে।

সংশয় রয়েছে রক্তপাত বন্ধ করা যাবে কি না, তা নিয়েও। গ্লোবাল সিকিউরিটি-র প্রাক্তরক্ষা বিশেষজ্ঞ জন পাইক মনে করেন, ইরাকে গেরিলাযুদ্ধ যদি সাময়িক ভাবে নিয়ন্ত্রণে আনা

এর পর চারের পাতায়

● বুশ সংক্রান্ত আরও খবর....পৃঃ ৪

BUSH KERRIES ON

Democrat dials White House to concede

K.P. NAYAR

Washington, Nov. 3: America and the world were spared a sequel to Fiasco 2000 when John Kerry called George W. Bush to concede defeat in a gracious gesture, bringing to an end a bitter election that had yet to throw up a winner.

Bush had polled 3.5 million more popular votes than his Democratic challenger but was stuck on 254 seats in the electoral college which decides presidential elections in the US. Kerry had 252.

A winner could not be declared because the simple majority mark is 270 and the result in three states — Ohio, Iowa and New Mexico — were too close to call. It would take some 10 days to officially settle the question of who won the election.

Kerry ended the uncertainty by calling the White House around noon. "Congratulations, Mr President," he said, in a conversation that lasted no more than five minutes.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan gave some details of the phone call Kerry made in which the Massachusetts Democrat conceded defeat to the President, handing Bush a second four-year term.

"I think you were an admirable, worthy opponent," Bush told Kerry. "You waged one tough campaign. I hope you are proud of the effort you put in. You should be."

In his second term, Bush may rule as one of the most powerful presidents in American history. He returns to office with simultaneous control of both Houses of the US Congress.

Republicans, who often had to rely on Vice-President Dick Cheney's casting vote in the outgoing Senate to push their agenda, increased their strength to 54 in the 100-member chamber.

In the new House of Representatives, Republicans are expected to have 233 members, 15 more than a simple majority.

Bush will also leave an imprint on the judiciary. Chief justice William Rehnquist of the Supreme Court is seriously ill with cancer and three

other vacancies on the bench are expected soon.

Bush is expected to fill those vacancies with justices who hold conservative views on issues such as abortion, homosexuality and religion, which had a big role in the President's campaign. Some analysts believe these, possibly more than Iraq, played a decisive role in the election.

Despite his impressive majority of popular votes, the re-election of Bush was a cliffhanger and for nearly 12 hours after vote-counting was virtually over, the President was not assured of victory.

Even after Kerry conceded defeat, Bush is 16 votes short of a majority in the electoral college. The outcome is delayed because of uncertainty over results from Ohio, which has 20 seats in the electoral college.

At the end of counting in the early hours of this morning, Bush had a majority of 130,650 votes in Ohio. But about 175,000 provisional votes — though no one is sure of this number — remain to be counted in the state. There are also absentee ballots, whose number, too, is uncertain.

The provisional ballots and absentee votes will be counted only after 10 days. Although Kerry has conceded defeat, the final result may yet be overturned if Kerry's showing in provisional voting is enough to change the tentative voting figure in Ohio in his favour.

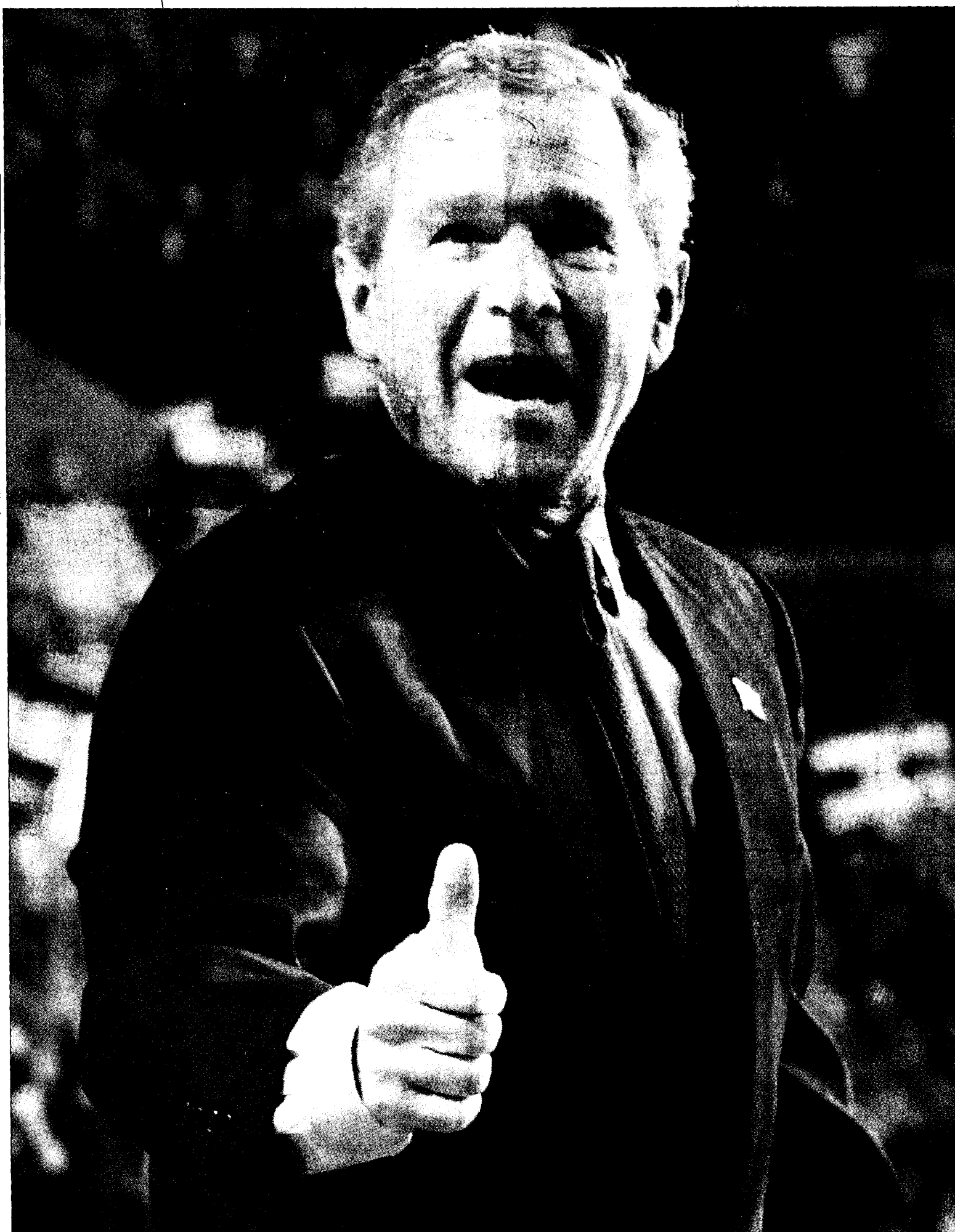
But Kerry told his supporters in an emotional speech that "there won't be enough outstanding votes for us to be able to win Ohio".

Before he is sworn in on January 20, 2005, Bush will need Ohio's 20 electoral votes to be the next President.

Since early morning today, Kerry was under pressure within his party to concede defeat because Bush had won the popular mandate.

Kerry's campaign advisers were huddled in his home town of Boston to decide whether to fight the outcome of the election till the bitter end or even go to court like Al Gore, the Democratic candidate, did four years ago when it took 36 days to decide the winner.

BY GEORGE, FOUR MORE YEARS



THE LONG WAIT



●WHAT KEPT AMERICA WAITING?

The race in three states — Ohio, Iowa and New Mexico — was too close to call

●DID ALL THREE STATES HAVE A DECISIVE SAY?

No. Only Ohio could have swung the balance because it has 20 electoral votes. Iowa has seven and New Mexico five — neither large enough to influence the outcome, individually or together

●WHY IS THAT?

Because Bush was stuck on 254 and Kerry on 252 and seven plus five could have taken Bush only up to 266 and Kerry to 264 while 270 is the majority mark

●SO WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM IN OHIO?

With 100 per cent of the counting over in the state, Bush was leading Kerry by 130,650. But provisional ballots were not counted

●WHAT ARE PROVISIONAL BALLOTS?

Provisional ballots are cast by voters who have moved, those who are not on registration rolls or by people who had previously been deemed ineligible to vote

●HOW MANY SUCH VOTES ARE THERE IN OHIO?

There could have been as many as 175,000 provisional ballots cast, plus there are absentee ballots, which are known as postal ballots in India. Their number is as yet unknown

●COULD THESE BALLOTS HAVE CHANGED THE RESULT?

Theoretically, yes. But Kerry would have had to win 3/4ths of the provisional votes to turn around a deficit, of 130,650, into a lead

●WHEN WILL PROVISIONAL VOTES BE COUNTED?

Here we're re-entering 2000 territory when a deadlock in Florida took 36 days to crack. The trouble with provisional votes is that before counting their legitimacy has to be established

●HOW LONG WILL THAT TAKE?

According to Ohio officials, 11 days

QUOTE

I think you were an admirable, worthy opponent

GEORGE W. BUSH
to John Kerry

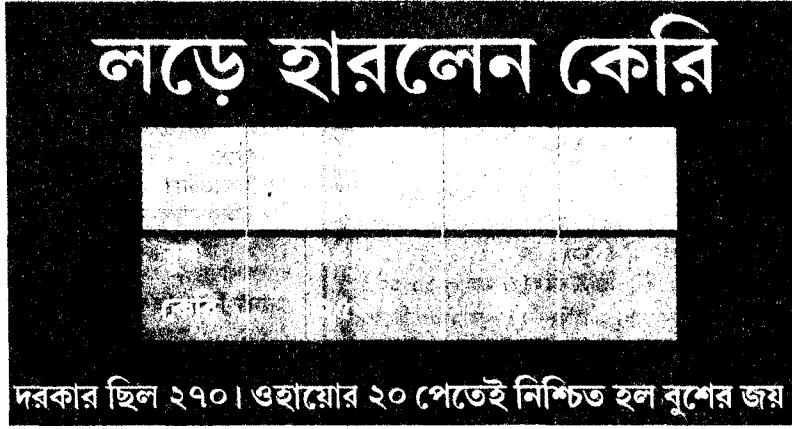
আবার বুশ

১ পাতার পর
ব্যালট গোনা যাবে না। ফলে ঘনিয়ে
ওঠে দীর্ঘ এক অনিশ্চয়তার ছায়া।
ফিরে আসে ফ্লোরিডার ৩৬ দিনের
যুদ্ধের স্মৃতি। বিজয়-ভাষণ তৈরি
করেও পকেটে রেখে দেন বুশ। সঙ্কট
কটল ভারতীয় সময় রাত সাড়ে
নটায় কেবির ফোনে।
কী হল ফ্লোরিডার? ৪/১০

চন্দনা কুণ্ডু, নিউ ইয়র্ক

৩ নভেম্বর— লড়লেন, কিন্তু বুশের মুঠো আলগা করতে পারলেন না কেবির। আরও চারটি বছরের জন্য রিপাবলিকান জর্জ ডব্লু বুশকেই প্রেসিডেন্ট পদে রাখল মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র। রাতভর গণনার শেষে বেশ এক প্রশ্ন নাটক ঘনিয়ে উঠেছিল ওহায়ো প্রদেশেই ফলাফল নিয়ে। মনে হচ্ছিল, ওহায়োই এবারের নির্বাচনের ফ্লোরিডা। কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত আজ ডেমোক্র্যাট প্রার্থী জন কেবির নিজে বুশকে ফোন করে পরাজয় মেনে নিলেন। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে পরিষ্কার হয়ে গেল প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনের ফল। ৫৩৮ আসনের ইলেকটোরাল কলেজ বা নির্বাচকমণ্ডলীতে দরকার ছিল ২৭০টি আসন বা ভোটের। ২৭৪টি দখলে এসে গেছে বুশের। কেবির দখলে আপাতত ২৫২। আয়োয়া (৭) এবং নিউ মেক্সিকোর (৫) গণনা এখনও কিছুটা বাকি আছে। এই দুটি প্রদেশের ফল যা-ই হোক, বুশের জয় আটকাচ্ছে না। কেবির ধাক্কা খেলেন ফ্লোরিডা, ওহায়োতে। দুটিই বড় রাজ্য। ফ্লোরিডার ২৭ এবং ওহায়োর ২০ আসন বিরাট এগিয়ে দিল বুশকে। এ পর্যন্ত তাঁর দখলে ২৮টি প্রদেশ। কেবির দখলে ১৯টি প্রদেশ এবং কলম্বিয়া ডিস্ট্রিক্ট। আমেরিকায় আমজনতার ভোটে প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচিত হন না। ৫০টি প্রদেশ ও কলম্বিয়া ডিস্ট্রিক্ট থেকে জনসংখ্যার অনুপাতে নির্ধারিত আসন নিয়ে গড়া হয় নির্বাচকমণ্ডলী। নির্বাচকমণ্ডলীর ভোটেই নির্বাচিত হন প্রেসিডেন্ট। লক্ষণীয়, জনতার সরাসরি ভোট বা পপুলার ভোটের হিসেবেও

আবার বুশ



এবার বুশ নজর কেড়েছেন। পেয়েছেন ৫০ শতাংশের বেশি ভোট। গত নির্বাচনে তো নয়ই, ১৯৮৮-র পর কোনও প্রেসিডেন্ট ৫০ শতাংশের বেশি পপুলার ভোট পাননি। এবার এই তীব্র প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতার নির্বাচনে বুশ সেটা করে দেখালেন। এ পর্যন্ত ৯৮ শতাংশ ভোট গোনা হয়েছে। এর মধ্যে বুশের দখলে ৫১ শতাংশ, কেবির ৪৮

শতাংশ। ব্যবধান প্রায় ৩৭ লক্ষ ভোটের। নির্দল প্রার্থী র্যালফ নেভার মাত্র ১ শতাংশ। 'যুদ্ধবাজ' বুশের ইরাকনীতি আর জাতীয় নিরাপত্তার আবেগে ভেসে গেল মার্কিন জনতা। অন্তত অর্ধেক দেশ তো বুশের পাশে বটেই। তবে গোটা মার্কিন সমাজই যেন বিভাজিত হয়ে গেল এই ভোটে। ওহায়ো নিয়ে আইনি যুদ্ধ চললে সেই বিভাজন

হয়ত আরও তীব্র হত। কিন্তু বুশকে ফোন করে কেবির মেনে নেন, তিনি পরাস্ত। অভিনন্দন জানান বুশকে। মিনিট পাঁচেক কথা হয় দু-জনের।
কী হয়েছে ওহায়োতে?
ওহায়োতে গণনার শেষে কেবির চেয়ে ১ লাখ ৪৫ হাজার ভোটে এগিয়ে যান বুশ। কিন্তু ডেমোক্র্যাটদের বক্তব্য ছিল, এই ব্যবধানে মোটেই বিরাট কিছু নয়। প্রতিশনাল ব্যালট গুনতে হবে। ভোট দিতে এসে তালিকায় নাম খুঁজে পাননি, বা ভোটদানের যোগ্যতা নিয়ে প্রশ্ন উঠেছে, এমন ভোটদাতাদের ভোটও এদেশে নিয়ে রাখা হয়। সেটাই প্রতিশনাল বা বিচারসাপেক্ষ ব্যালট। যাঁরা বিদেশে আছেন, বিশেষত সৈনিকরা, তাঁদের ভোটও রয়েছে এর সঙ্গে। ডেমোক্র্যাটদের দাবি, এই ভোটের সংখ্যা আড়াই লক্ষের মতো। পুরো ভোট গোনা হলে ফল বদলে যেতেই পারে। কিন্তু রিপাবলিকান শাসিত ওহায়োর নির্বাচনী কর্তারা বলেন, প্রতিশনাল ভোটের সংখ্যা ১ লাখ ৭৫ হাজারের মতো। ১ লাখ ৪৫ হাজারের ব্যবধান উল্টে দিতে পারে এই ভোট? রিপাবলিকানরা বলেন, কোনও অঙ্কেই এটা সম্ভব নয়। সম্ভব বা অসম্ভব যা-ই হোক, দু-পক্ষের আইনজীবী মহলেই নড়াচড়া শুরু হয়ে যায়। কেবির সঙ্গী, ভাইস প্রেসিডেন্ট পদের প্রার্থী জন এডওয়ার্ডস ঘোষণা করেন, প্রতিটি ভোটের জন্য আমরা লড়ব, প্রতিটি ভোট গুনতে হবে। ওহায়োর সেক্রেটারি অফ স্টেট কেন ব্ল্যাকওয়েল জানিয়ে দেন, প্রদেশের আইন অনুযায়ী আগামী দশ দিনের মধ্যে প্রতিশনাল

এরপর ২ পাতায়

রিপাবলিকানদের আসন ৫১
ডেমোক্র্যাটদের ৪৮। আগামী
সেনেটে রিপাবলিকানদের সংখ্যা
দাঁড়াবে সম্ভবত ৫৫। ৫৩টি এসেই
গেছে। আলাস্কা ও ফ্লোরিডার গণনা
শেষ হয়নি। এগিয়ে আছে
রিপাবলিকান পার্টি। ইলিনয় থেকে
জিতেছেন উদীয়মান ডেমোক্র্যাট
নেতা বারাক ওকাসা।
রিপাবলিকানদের হাত থেকে তিনি
আসনটি কেড়ে নিয়েছেন। ১০০
সদস্যের সেনেটে ওকাসাই একমাত্র
কৃষ্ণঙ্গ। গৃহযুদ্ধ-উত্তর পুনর্নির্মাণ
যুগে লুইসিয়ানার আসনটি এই প্রথম
রিপাবলিকানদের দখলে গেল। টম
ড্যাশলের হার সেনেটে
ডেমোক্র্যাটদের নেতা বদল করবে।
নেতৃত্বে আসতে পারেন নেভাডার
সেনেটর-স্মারি রিড। ড্যাশল বনাম
থুর্নবার্গের মধ্যে যুদ্ধে
ডলার খরচ হয়েছে বলে খবর।
প্রবাসে ভোটের বাশে
বছ বছর দেশে নেই তো কী হয়েছে।
দেশের ভোট নিয়ে আগ্রহ থাকবে না
কেন প্রবাসীদের? কাজের সূত্রে
মেক্সিকোয় বসবাসকারী
আমেরিকানরা দিনভর ভোট
দেখলেন, ভোট গণনার খবর
দেখলেন। ওদের আগ্রহ এবার দুটো
कारणे বেশি। এক, গত নির্বাচনে
নির্ণায়ক ভূমিকা ছিল প্রবাসী ভোটের।
দুই, ৯.১১-র ঘটনার পর আমেরিকার
বিদেশ নীতি ও সম্মতি বিরোধিতা
সম্পর্কে জনগণের রায় জানা জরুরি।
মেক্সিকোয় প্রায় ১০ লাখ মার্কিন
নাগরিক থাকেন। ছাত্র, ব্যবসায়ী,
অবসরপ্রাপ্ত চাকুরে সবাই দুতাবাসে
বা হোটেলে, বাড়িতে বা রেস্টোরায়
বসে ভোট দেখলেন।

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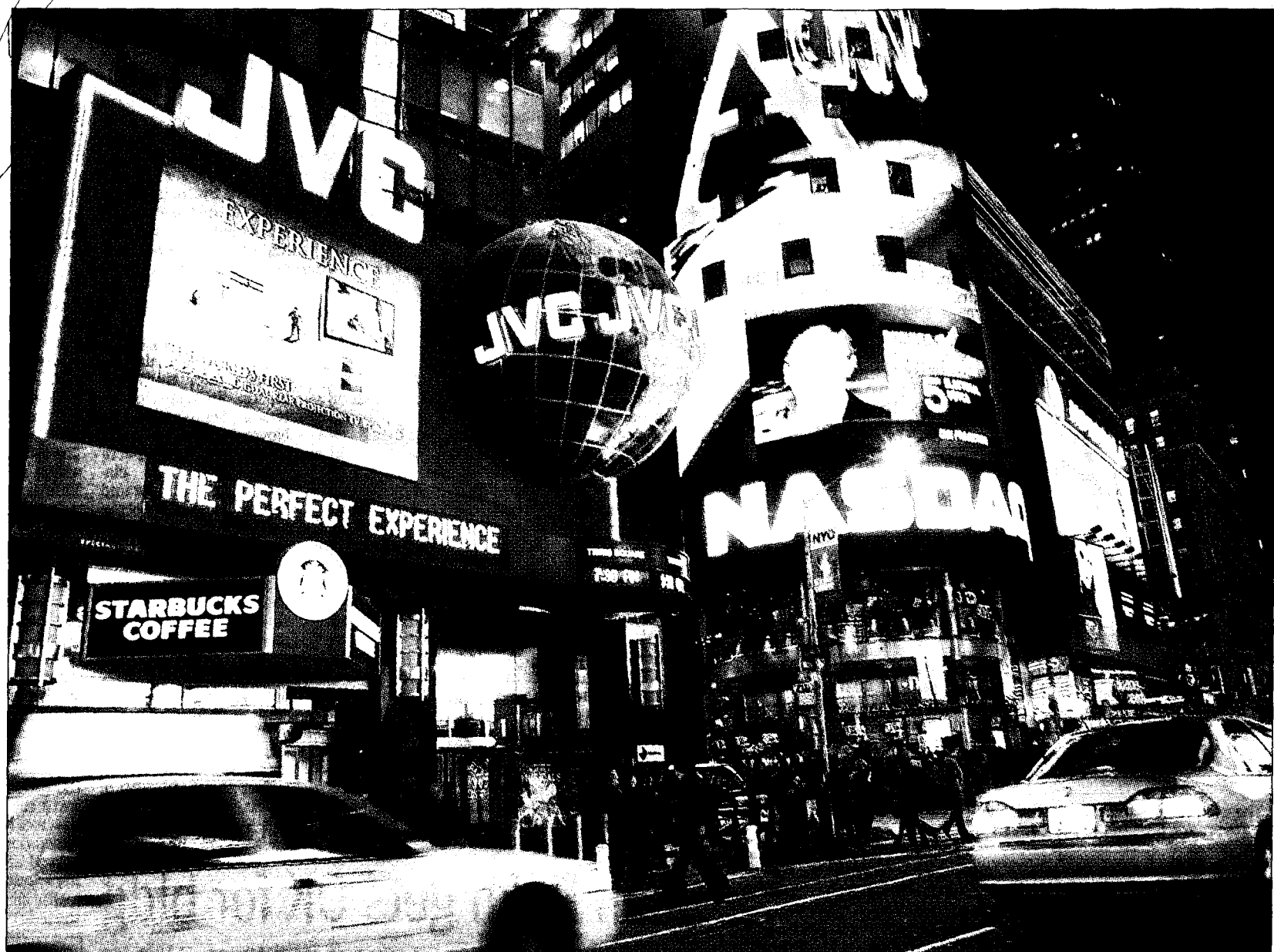
White House Limbo

UN General Assembly should resolve US deadlocks

The five-billion-dollar race to the White House is increasingly resembling a shaggy dog story: A huge and detailed build-up which holds the audience in nail-biting suspense as to the punchline. Which never seems to come or which, when it does, is a woeful anti-climax. This happened in the 2000 elections — the results of which are still being debated in some courts — and now it's happened again. Last time it was Florida, and this time it's Ohio with its pesky provisional votes that are causing the constitutional logjam which could take 11 days to unclog. Can the world's most powerful nation — not to mention the rest of us insignificant others — afford such a political impasse? Suppose, God forbid, an international crisis were to erupt, a major terrorist attack, a nuclear confrontation or a global financial convulsion? Without a clear figure of authority in the White House, the resultant panic could well spiral out of control with disastrous international results. Lack of a clear-cut verdict in the US elections also raises other problems. With Bush's legitimacy still in legal question from the last polls, one could hypothesise future plaintiffs filing damage suits against America for the enormous injury caused to the people of Afghanistan, in Iraq and other areas of controversial operation.

So how does America and the rest of the world insulate itself from such constitutional gremlins which cause major glitches in the working of the world's most muscular democracy? In the coming days and maybe weeks, pundits will doubtless come up with many prescriptions. Ought America to give up its either/or presidential system and opt for a cabinet-based prime-ministerial option which can accommodate coalitional governments? Should America adopt some variant of the proportional representation formula followed in countries like Germany and France? Here for what it is worth is our suggestion. Since the US has made the United Nations virtually an annexe of the White House, we propose that in the event of a tie or disputed contest, the final vote be taken by a simple head count in the UN General Assembly. This suggestion is in continuation of our earlier proposition that the whole world ought to have a say in who rules America, which in turn rules the world. Should the equivalent of a UN peace-keeping mission preside over the next US polls? Should the US outsource its electoral process to India's remarkably efficient Election Commission? Things to think about during the long intermission before we get to see who is the next tenant of the White House.

US SWEEPSTAKES



Early projections in the presidential election shown on the Nasdaq screen in New York's Times Square on Tuesday

Bush Was Leading Kerry On Wednesday, But Democrats Said They Were Not Giving Up Yet. The Vote Could Be Turned Around Once The Provisional Ballots Had Been Talled In The State

By James Dao

Cleveland: For the second straight time, the state of the presidential election rested in the hands of a single state as poll officials in Ohio worked well into Wednesday morning counting ballots after a frenzy of late voting kept the polls open late. President George Bush seemed headed towards winning enough electoral college votes to ensure his re-election, but the John Kerry's campaign refused to concede the state.

"It's been a long night, but we've waited four years for this victory," Senator John Edwards, the Democratic vice presidential nominee, said. "We can wait one more night." Portending a Florida-like battle over each vote, Edwards said, "John Kerry and I made a promise to the American people that in this election, every vote would count, every vote would be counted."

Kerry's campaign manager, Mary Beth Cahill, sent an e-mail message to reporters about 1.30 am saying that 250,000 votes had yet to be counted in Ohio. "We believe when they are, John Kerry will win Ohio," she said.

The uncertainty came at the end of a long day in which hundreds of thousands of voters waited in long lines, and polls were kept open well beyond closing times. The prospect of a drawn-out battle over provisional votes, absentee ballots and even a return to a recount of chads on punch-card voting machines loomed. As other states fell into familiar places, Ohio became the battleground of battlegrounds that it was billed to be throughout the election season. At the end of a long night of uncertainty, George Bush's issues and his ground game gave him a solid, if not quite decisive, lead.

As of 2 am Wednesday morning, Bush had 2,685,059 votes, compared with 2,564,047 for Kerry, or an edge of 121,012 votes. Kerry's aides said that they believed the vote could be turned around once provisional ballots—those submitted by people

who were unable to vote because their names not on registration rolls—had been tallied.

Even on Wednesday morning, Democrats declined to concede the race, arguing that there might be enough provisional ballots outstanding to tip the election to Kerry. Democrats contend, and many analysts agree, that the majority of those ballots were probably cast by Democrats, who tend to move more often than Republicans, and provisional ballots are more likely to be used by people whose addresses have changed.

The question was: How many provisional ballots were cast? Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell estimated that the number might be between 130,000 and 150,000. But Democrats asserted it could be as high as 250,000. Provisional ballots are held for 10 days after the election while election workers determine whether the person who cast them is eligible to vote. The candidates spent more time in the state than any other. Bush talked security, and Kerry hammered the economy. Bush sent an army of volunteers into suburban areas to turn out believers, and Kerry and his allies sent paid workers into the inner city to find new voters.

In the end, both parties improved on their 2000 performance. Bush ran better in suburban areas in the southwest part of the state, and he picked up more votes in the rural areas that he had won decisively in 2000. Kerry reaped more votes than his strategists had hoped for in Cleveland, but did not get enough new voters in the big cities to overcome Bush's margins elsewhere.

Democrats still hoped to overcome the lead and had begun to talk about provisional ballots, votes that are cast in the event of a dispute over



IOWA DELAY

Washington: Problems with vote-counting machines in two small Iowa counties will delay final results from Tuesday's presidential election for at least a day, a top state official said early on Wednesday.

Deputy Secretary of State Barb Huey said optical scan machines used to tally votes in Greene and Harrison counties, which have a combined total of about 15,000 registered voters, needed repairs.

Huey said the state was also still in the process of counting several thousand absentee ballots. According to CNN, President Bush held a lead of just under 12,000 votes in the state, with 97% of precincts reporting. Reuters

registration. It was unclear how many provisional ballots were cast, but estimates ranged high enough to make a difference in the margin between the candidates.

Turnout was strong everywhere. In spite of widespread rain and long lines, the secretary of state said turnout would be 5.8 million, or 73%, the highest since 1992. It was so heavy in parts of Columbus, Akron, Cleveland and even rural Knox County - where hundreds of Kenyon College students waited six hours to vote - that Democrats ordered volunteers to abandon phone banks and rush food, hot chocolate, chairs, umbrellas and radios to voters who had been waiting in the dreaching rain. Republicans, who had proclaimed the superiority of their 72-hour strategy of intensive face-to-face contact in the last three days of the election, were deeply pleased with the results in their most important counties in the southwest part of the state and in the suburbs of Columbus. NYT News Service



Black Eyed Peas member Stacey Ferguson performs for supporters at the Kerry-Edwards election night headquarters in Boston on Tuesday

The winner can't take it all, says Colorado

By Kirk Johnson

Denver: Voters overwhelmingly rejected a ballot proposal on Tuesday that would have made Colorado the first state to replace the winner-take-all distribution of Electoral College votes in Presidential elections with a proportional system based on the popular vote.

The measure, Amendment 36, would have meant that candidates, beginning with this election, would split the state's nine electoral votes, so that a candidate receiving, say, 33 percent of the popular vote would also get one-third of the Electoral College total, or three votes.

But preliminary tallies late on Tuesday showed that two-thirds of voters rejected the proposal. Analysts said it was clear from the results that no core constituency had emerged to fight for the amendment.

"It never gained any traction," said Floyd Ciruli, an independent public policy researcher in Denver.

From the outset, Amendment 36 was caught in the crosswinds of the Presidential race in Colorado. By deciding to apply it immediately, the drafters had insured that voters would largely weigh the measure in terms of whether it would help or hurt one or another of the Presidential candidates.

But residents also divided on whether one state's going alone into Electoral College reform would be an act of visionary wisdom or of utter folly that would make Colorado a political backwater. Opponents of the measure, basing their calculations on past Presidential voting, said a winner here would hardly ever receive more than five electoral votes under proportional distribution, while a loser would rarely get fewer than four. That meant, they argued, was that the incentive for future national politicians to care about



Colorado, with the stakes perhaps only one or two votes either way, would disappear.

Supporters said that the system of electing Presidents was broken and that leadership in changing it must start somewhere.

Voters who supported the proposal also had to run against a tide of negative newspaper editorials across the state and the arguments of many elected officials, including Gov. Bill Owens, a Republican. Both major party candidates in the closely fought United States Senate race also opposed the amendment. NYT News Service

Republicans retain Congress

If Bush... If Kerry... Conservative... Back Bush...

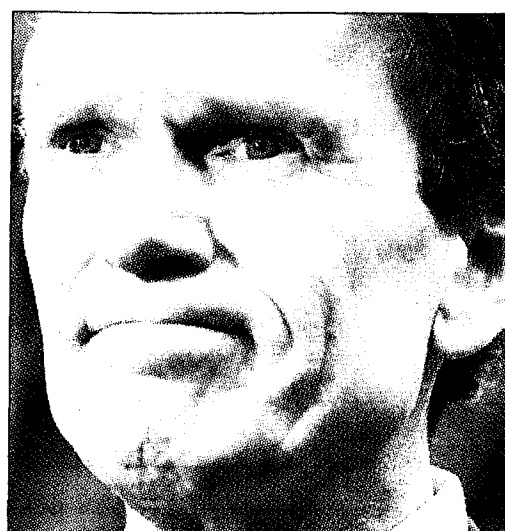
By Thomas Ferraro

Washington: Republicans expanded their hold on Congress in Tuesday's elections and Democrat Tom Daschle became the first Senate leader in a half century to be voted out of office, according to network projections. While the outcome of the presidential race remained in dispute, Republicans retained control in the Senate and House of Representatives and positioned themselves to wield greater power in the U.S. capital.

The network projections showed Republicans would hold at least 53 of the 100 Senate seats, two more than they now have, and a slim majority of the 435-member House in the new 109th Congress, set to convene on Jan. 3. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist said it looked likely Republicans would win a total of 55 seats in the Senate, and add at least three seats in the House. "It really is monumental. Nobody expected that. It is huge," Frist told CNN, describing the election results as "a huge endorsement of the president of the United States."

Daschle, the Senate minority leader, was the Republicans' top congressional target and deemed the "chief obstructionist" to Bush's conservative agenda. He was the first Senate leader to be defeated since 1952 when Democrat Ernest McFarland of Arizona was unseated by Republican Barry Goldwater.

Daschle lost to former Republican U.S. Rep. John Thune, who came within 524 votes in 2002 of unseating the other senator in the Republican-



Tom Daschle, the first Senate leader in half a century to be voted out of office

leaning state, Democrat Tim Johnson.

Speaking on ABC, Frist said he hoped strengthened Republican leadership in Congress could help end the "extreme partisanship" that has plagued Congress in the past few years.

However, Republicans will not have the 60 senators that are needed to end Democratic procedural

hurdles against what critics have called "extreme" initiatives or nominees.

As of early on Wednesday, Republican Mel Martinez held a strong lead over Democrat Betty Castor in the Florida Senate race. Also undetermined was the Alaska race, but incumbent Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski appeared likely to best former Democratic Gov. Tony Knowles.

House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, a Texas Republican, predicted that his party, now with 227 House seats, would add at least a few more by the time vote counting ended. "With a bigger majority, we can do even more exciting things," DeLay told a local TV station in Texas.

If Bush wins a second term, a Republican Congress would help him push what promises to be a stepped-up conservative agenda, certain to include more tax cuts and anti-abortion judicial nominees.

If Democratic challenger John Kerry were to win, he would face plenty of opposition to his vows to roll back a number of Bush initiatives, particularly tax cuts that went largely to the rich the past four years. The next president could also make several nominations to the US Supreme Court, whose members must be confirmed by the Senate.

All the House seats were up for re-election along with 34 Senate seats. But only nine of the Senate races — in South Dakota, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Kentucky — and about 30 of the House races were seen as competitive. Reuters

In 11 states, it's not happy news for gay couples

San Francisco: The presidential race may be a cliffhanger, but US voters have overwhelmingly rejected gay marriage in 11 state ballots held in parallel with the election. While backing a \$6 billion measure to fund stem cell research, California on Tuesday rejected steps that would have expanded gambling in the nation's most populous state.

Ohio, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Michigan, North Dakota, Arkansas, Montana, Utah and Oklahoma solidly backed state constitutional amendments to define marriage as a union between man and a woman. Although Oregon, where more than 3,000 same-sex couples married in March, also backed a similar amendment, it was by a smaller margin.

California mayor Gavin Newsom said, "There was obviously an agenda by the cultural conservatives to make this a wedge issue in the campaign. It failed to reach the intensity that they had hoped for. Nonetheless, it is obviously indicative of the mood of the public." He said it would take a while to get public approval for gay marriage, much as with inter-racial marriage years ago.



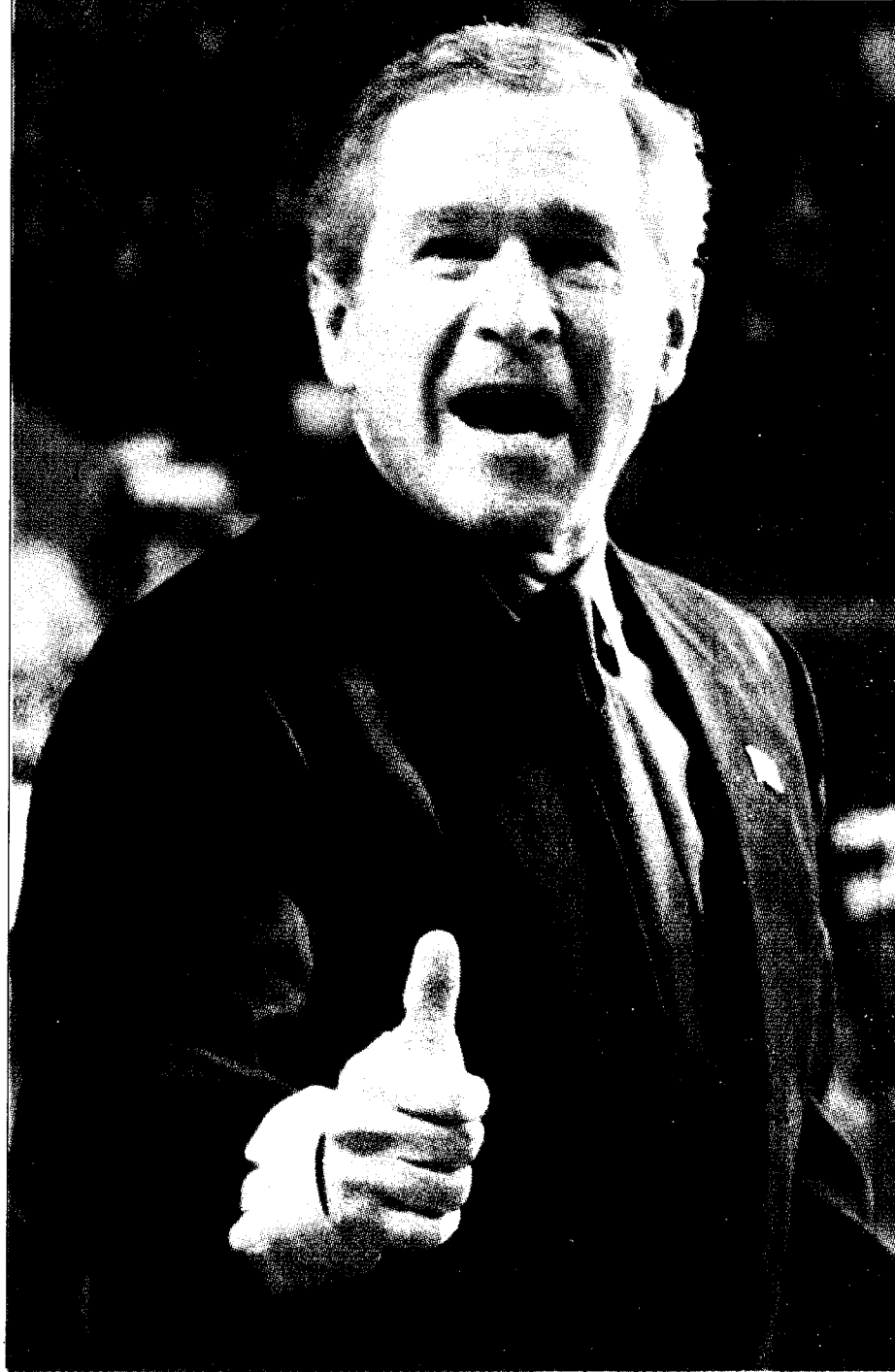
Supporters of John Kerry and opponents of Oregon Measure 36, the legislation to ban gay marriages, watch in disbelief as results of the measure come out in Portland, Oregon

Meanwhile, activists have spent hundreds of millions of dollars—an estimated \$200 million in California alone—on 163 state voter initiatives in 34 states tackling issues as varied as tobacco taxes, electoral changes and tort reform.

In Arizona, voters comfortably passed a controversial proposition targeting illegal immigrants entering the south-western US border state from Mexico. The measure requires individuals to prove eligibility when applying for non-Federally mandated public benefits. Workers not doing so could face four months in jail and a \$750 fine. A legal challenge is expected. In fact, California had passed a similar measure a decade ago only to have it struck down in court. "This is a big win for the people of Arizona," said Randy Pullen, chairman of Yes on Proposition 200. "It sends a message to our political leaders that they need to do something about illegal immigration and what it's doing to the country." Meanwhile, Floridians backed a measure that would require minors to gain parental consent to get an abortion and a boost in the minimum wage to \$6.15, a dollar above the national level. Reuters

হোয়াইট হাউসে ফিরলেন বুশ

আরবদুনিয়া
হতাশ,
শঙ্কা আরও
রক্তপাতের



কায়রো ও বাগদাদ, ৩ নভেম্বর: হোয়াইট হাউসে বুশই থেকে গেলেন খবর পেয়ে ইজরায়েল, কুয়েত এবং ইরানের একাংশ ছাড়া আরবদুনিয়ার অধিকাংশ মানুষের মধ্যে হতাশা ছড়িয়ে পড়েছে। আরবদুনিয়ার আশঙ্কা, আগামী চার বছরে তাঁদের জন্য আরও অনেক সংঘর্ষ আর রক্তক্ষয় অপেক্ষা করছে। দামাস্কাস বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে রাষ্ট্রবিজ্ঞানের শিক্ষক সরাসরি বলেছেন, পরের বছরগুলো ফের দুঃস্বপ্নেরই বছর। একটাই সাঙ্কনা, কেরির প্রতি বিশেষ ভরসাও তাঁদের ছিল না। কেননা, ইরাক নিয়ে বারংবার বিধলেও কেরি প্যালেস্তাইন সঙ্কট নিয়ে তেমন কিছু বলেননি।

মরক্কো-বাহরিন-সৌদি আরব সর্বত্র মানুষ মনে করছেন, বুশ তাঁর অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে শিক্ষা নেবেন বলে মনে হয় না। ইরাক-আফগানিস্তান তো বটেই, হিংসার মেঘ ঘনাবে সুদান, ইরান, সিরিয়াতেও। বাহরিনের বিশ্লেষকের মতে, এই জয়ের ফলে বুশ ভেবে নিতেই পারেন, পশ্চিম এশিয়ায় তাঁর নীতি সফল দিচ্ছে। সৌদি আরবের একটি সংবাদপত্রের প্রধান সম্পাদক বলেছেন, কিছু সংবেদনশীল মানুষ যদি এ বার বুশের পাশে না থাকেন, তা বলে আরও বহু নিরীহ মানুষের মৃত্যু অনিবার্য। সৌদিরা মোটের উপর কেউই এই জয়ে খুশি নন বলে জানান তিনি।

সন্ত্রাসবাদের বিরুদ্ধে আমেরিকার সঙ্গে হাত মেলালেও ইয়েমেন সরকার জানিয়েছে, বুশ-কেরি সকলেরই লক্ষ্য মার্কিন সামরিক-আর্থিক আধিপত্যের বিস্তার। ফলে যেই জিতুক, কিছু আসে যায় না। সামগ্রিক ভাবে বুশ-বিরোধিতার মধ্যেও ইরানে প্রশাসনের

এর পর দেশের পাতায়

প্রতীক্ষার প্রহর শেষ। জন কেরির হার স্বীকার। উৎফুল্ল জর্জ বুশ। — রয়টার্স

৪/১১
১৫/১

তরুণদের ভোট টানতে
ব্যর্থ কেরির হার স্বীকার

সীমা সিরোহি ● ওয়াশিংটন

৩ নভেম্বর: ইরাক যুদ্ধ ও মার্কিন জীবনের নিরাপত্তার প্রশ্নে দ্বিধা-বিভক্ত আমেরিকা শেষ পর্যন্ত জর্জ বুশকেই বেছে নিল। ইরাক ও আফগানিস্তানে যুদ্ধ চলাকালীন আমেরিকা তার প্রধান সেনাপতিকে বদলাতে রাজি হল না। গণনা সামান্য বাকি থাকতেই ডেমোক্র্যাট প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী জন কেরি পরাজয় স্বীকার করে নেওয়ায় আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে বুশকেই দ্বিতীয়বার প্রেসিডেন্ট ঘোষণা করতে আর কোনও বাধা রইল না। ওহায়ো, নিউ মেক্সিকো ও আইওয়া রাজ্যে ভোটগণনা শেষ হওয়ার আগেই কেরি পরাজয় স্বীকার করে নেন। গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ওহায়োতে বুশ এতটাই এগিয়ে ছিলেন যে কেরি-শিবিরের পক্ষে পরাজয় মেনে নেওয়া ছাড়া উপায় ছিল না। বুশ-শিবির থেকে এ জনাই কেরিকে হার স্বীকার করে নিতে চাপ দেওয়া শুরু হয়। গোড়ায় কেরি-শিবির শেষ ভোট গোনা পর্যন্ত অপেক্ষা করার কথা বলেও শেষ পর্যন্ত কেরিই বুশকে ফোন করে হার স্বীকার করে নেন। বুশও তাঁকে ধন্যবাদ জানিয়ে বলেন, কেরি সত্যিই একজন যোগ্য প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী। তাঁকে শক্ত লড়াইয়ে ফেলেছিলেন। পরে বিজয়-বিবৃতিতে বুশ বলেন, "আমরা এক জাতি, এক সংবিধান, আমাদের ভবিষ্যৎও এক। সন্ত্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে লড়ে আমরা বিশ্বকে নিরাপদ করেছি। এই লড়াই চলবে।" বিজিত কেরি বলেন, "কঠিন সময়। মার্কিনদের একাবদ্ধ হতে হবে।"

বুশের জেতার ইঙ্গিতে তার আগেই আন্তর্জাতিক তেলের বাজারে দর পড়তে শুরু করে। আমেরিকা ও ইউরোপের শেয়ারবাজারও চাঞ্চা হয়ে ওঠে। বুশ ও কেরির হাড্ডাহাড্ডি লড়াইয়ের দিকে তাকিয়ে ইউরোপের রাজনীতিকরা গোড়ায় কিছুটা সাবধানী

প্রতিক্রিয়া জানাচ্ছিলেন। বুশের জেতার খবর পেয়ে রাশিয়ার প্রেসিডেন্ট ব্লাদিমির পুতিন খুশি। সন্ত্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে যুদ্ধে বুশের অন্যতম সহযোগী পুতিনের প্রতিক্রিয়া, আমেরিকাবাসী বুশকে জিতিয়ে প্রমাণ করলেন, তাঁরা সন্ত্রাসবাদীদের কাছে মাথা নোয়াতে রাজি নন। আর এক সহযোগী ইতালির প্রধানমন্ত্রী বার্লুসকোনি বলেছেন, বুশের নেতৃত্বে আমেরিকা আগের মতোই স্বাধীনতা ও গণতন্ত্রের রক্ষক হিসাবে কাজ করে চলবে। বুশের ঘনিষ্ঠ



উল্লাস সমর্থকদের। — রয়টার্স

সহযোগী ব্রিটেনের প্রধানমন্ত্রী টনি ব্লেরার পার্লামেন্টে বলেন, আমেরিকার ফলের দিকে তিনি সাগ্রহে তাকিয়ে আছেন। বুশের জয়ের পরেই রানি এলিজাবেথ ফোনে ব্লেরার সঙ্গে কথা বলেন। অন্য দিকে, ইরাক যুদ্ধকে ঘিরে আমেরিকার সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক তিক্ত হওয়ার পরে ফ্রান্স ও জার্মানির প্রতিক্রিয়া কিছুটা সংযত। জার্মানির স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী অটো স্কিলি বলেছেন, "অতীতের মতপার্থক্য সত্ত্বেও ইরাক, ইরান সহ আরবদুনিয়ায় আমাদের একসঙ্গে

অনেক কাজ করতে হবে।" ফ্রান্সের বিদেশমন্ত্রী মিশেল বার্নিয়ারের মন্তব্য, নতুন অধ্যায় শুরু করার সুযোগ রয়েছে। ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নও বুশকে অভিনন্দন জানিয়েছে। কুয়েত ও ইজরায়েল ছাড়া আরবদুনিয়ায় বুশের জয়ে উল্লাস তো নেই-ই, উল্টে আরও রক্তপাতের আশঙ্কা।

তিন রাজ্য ওহায়ো, নিউ মেক্সিকো ও আইওয়া বাদ দিয়ে বুশ পান ২৫৪টি, কেরি ২৫২টি ভোট। এই অবস্থায় নজর ছিল ওহায়োর দিকেই, কারণ ওই রাজ্যের ২০টি আসন বুশ বা কেরি, যিনিই পেতেন তিনিই পরবর্তী প্রেসিডেন্ট হিসাবে হোয়াইট হাউসে ঢোকার অধিকারী হতেন। সাধারণ মানুষের ভোটে বুশ কেরির চেয়ে ওহায়োতে ১ লক্ষ ৩৬ হাজারেরও বেশি ভোটে এগিয়ে ছিলেন। গোনা বাকি ছিল ১ লক্ষ ৭৫ হাজার প্রভিশনাল ভোট, যা ওহায়োর নিয়ম অনুযায়ী ১০ দিন পরে গোনার কথা। সে ক্ষেত্রে পরবর্তী প্রেসিডেন্ট কে হচ্ছেন তা সরকারি ভাবে জানার জন্য আরও ১০ দিন অপেক্ষা করতে হত।

কেরি শিবিরকে চাপে রাখতে হোয়াইট হাউসে প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশের মুখপাত্র অ্যান্ড্রু কার্ড বলেন, ভোটের যা গতিপ্রকৃতি, তাতে সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠের হিসাবে কেরির পক্ষে (ওহায়োতে) বুশকে হারানো অসম্ভব। মোট সাধারণ ভোটের ৫১ শতাংশ (৫ কোটি ৮১ লক্ষ) পেয়েছেন বুশ, কেরি ৪৮ শতাংশ (৪ কোটি ৪৬ লক্ষ)। পরে কেরি-শিবির সব দিক বিবেচনা করে হার স্বীকার করে নেন। কেরি হার স্বীকার করায় ওহায়োর ২০টি আসন বুশের বুলিতেই গেল। এখন পর্যন্ত ২৯টি রাজ্যের ২৭৪টি ভোট পেয়েছেন বুশ, ১৯টি রাজ্যে ২৫২টি কেরি।

মঙ্গলবার রাত থেকে ভোটের ফল এর পর দেশের পাতায়

BUSH BACK WITH A BANG



Jindal wins

REPUBLICAN Bobby Jindal won the vacant US House seat for suburban New Orleans becoming the only Indian-American in the Congress.



O, HI, O!

Oh no, not again! For the second election running, Americans woke up the day after polling-day without a declared winner in the presidential contest, and that was the phrase that just about summed up the mood across a vast swathe of the USA on Wednesday morning as Ohio threatened to do to the 2004 vote-count what Florida did to the 2000 ballot. But, in the end, it was not to be. Republican and Democratic lawyers who had converged on Ohio for a potential new overtime presidential court fight, were presumably disappointed as there will be no overtime, this time! — Agencies

US Polls 2004: page 7
Impact on India: page 2

Agencies

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3. — President George W. Bush has won a second term from a divided and anxious American nation, his promise of steady, strong wartime leadership trumping Senator John Kerry's fresh-start approach to Iraq and joblessness. After a long, tense night of vote counting, the Democratic candidate called Mr Bush on Wednesday to concede Ohio and the presidency, an aide of the Senator said.

Mr Bush won with a resounding 51 per cent of the popular vote, the largest ever in terms of the number of people voting for a President in America's history, according to the White House. His Democratic rival polled 48 per cent. The voter turnout this time was massive in comparison to earlier polls.

Mr Kerry ended his quest, concluding one of the most expensive and bitterly-contested races on record, with a call to the President shortly after 4 p.m. (GMT), according to two officials familiar with the conversation. The victory gives Mr Bush four more years to pursue the war on terror, a conservative domestic agenda and probably the opportunity to name one or more justices — a contentious issue — to an aging Supreme Court. He also will preside over expanded Republican majorities in Congress.

"Congratulations, Mr President," Mr Kerry said in the conversation described by sources as lasting less than five minutes. One of the sources was Republican, the other a Democrat. The Democratic source said Mr Bush termed Mr Kerry a worthy, tough and honourable opponent. Mr Kerry told Bush the country was too divided, the source said, and Bush agreed. "We really have to do something about it," the Senator reportedly added.

Mr Kerry's throwing in the towel, though, came a little too late in one respect for Mr Bush — after waiting all night with his presidency and place in the history books hanging in the balance, the President gave up plans for a victory speech earlier on Wednesday. Instead, he sent White House chief of staff Mr Andrew Card to address the Republican faithful and assert that the President had won a "convincing electoral college victory".

Mr Bush monitored returns throughout the night from his White House residence, surrounded by friends and family. He went to bed

near dawn as Mr Card travelled the two blocks to address Republican supporters gathered at a downtown federal office building. "We are convinced that President Bush has won re-election with a margin of a three-and-a-half million popular votes and at least 286 electoral college votes," Mr Card told the weary, cheering troops (the magic-mark is 270 electoral seats). That certainty came from Bush having been declared the winner of Nevada — and the campaign declaring itself the winner in Ohio, Iowa and New Mexico, where votes were still being tallied.

Before Mr Kerry finally conceded, though, everything hinged on the state of Ohio where the Democrats were planning a legal challenge. The controversy centred on this Mid-Western state where the Bush brand of "compassionate conservatism" sought to offset a huge loss in manufacturing jobs in the area. Eventually, as it turned out, successfully.

The dispute in Ohio was over the so-called provisional votes, or votes cast by those thought to have the right to vote but whose names are not on the voters' list on polling day. Such voters are allowed to cast their vote but whether their ballots will be counted would depend upon the state authenticating that they do, indeed, have a vote.

Earlier indications had been that the official results could be delayed for as many as 10 days as the Democrats had insisted they wanted "every vote to be counted" and the statute allows for armed forces' and other postal ballots to be counted even if they are posted on elections

'A little late, a little short'

BOSTON, Nov. 4. — Sen. John Kerry brought his long White House campaign to an end Wednesday saying the time had come to "begin the healing". "I'm sorry that we got here a little bit late and a little bit short," said a hoarse and stoic Mr Kerry. "In America, it is vital that every vote count... but the outcome should be decided by voters, not a protracted legal fight," he said. "I would not give up this fight if there was a chance that we would prevail." But Mr Kerry also said that "there won't be enough outstanding votes for us to win Ohio, and therefore we cannot win this

day and reach later. Both sides even considering sending legal teams to the state before Mr Kerry called it all off by conceding the election to Mr Bush.

Incidentally, Mr Bush cruised to victory with ease in politically crucial Florida, that has 27 electoral votes. Even when early forecast results were coming in, Mr Bush was saying he was "very upbeat".

Mr Kerry's campaign team, on the other hand, had initially said that 250,000 votes remained to be counted in Ohio and claimed the number of unaccounted provisional ballots would be greater than the difference between the candidates. This was despite the fact that some TV networks had called Ohio for the incumbent. But Mr Kerry, who at that stage had a total of 252 electoral votes called for him by CNN, responded defiantly. His vice-presidential running mate Mr John Edwards said: "We would fight for every vote... we will wait for another night." But some analysts believed this was more an attempt to exorcise the ghost of the 2000 election when a section of the Democratic party felt Mr Al Gore gave up the fight too early. And Mr Edwards' words indicated that there was a tussle within the Democratic camp even early on as to how far they should push a prospective challenge in Ohio.

At the White House, Mr Card said: "President Bush's decisive margin of victory makes this the first presidential election since 1988 in which the winner received the majority of the popular vote. President Bush received more votes than any presidential candidate in our country's history."



	274	252
ELECTORAL COLLEGE VOTES		
POPULAR VOTE	58,598,283 (51%)	55,067,893 (48%)
STATES WON	29	19 & District of Columbia

election." "In this journey, you have given me the honour and the gift of learning," the Senator said. "I'm going to fight on for the people and the principles that I've stood for," said Mr Kerry, who returns to the Senate to complete his term. — AP

In the dark and driving rain, polls roll

Florida set for another close one

ABBY GOODNOUGH

West Palm Beach (Florida), Nov. 2: The machines are in place, thousands of lawyers poised, and absentee ballot counts under way.

The presidential candidates are finally finished campaigning here, and up to two million of the state's 10.3 million voters have made their choices through early voting.

So is Florida ready? Accusations and disclosures continued to surface even yesterday, suggesting that absent a landslide winner, Election Day and its aftermath will be messy here, just as it was in 2000.

Republican lawyers said they had identified 1,700 felons who had not received clemency yet were illegally registered to vote. Republican poll watchers have each felon's photograph and criminal record, the lawyers said, so they can mount legal challenges should any try to vote.

Governor Jeb Bush said in Jacksonville: "I don't think you're going to see a lot of challenges at the polls." He also predicted that President Bush, his brother, would carry Florida by four percentage points.

In Palm Beach County, voting rights groups sued the elections supervisor, Theresa LePore, after learning that she had banned reporters and others from talking to voters outside polling places. A freelance journalist was arrested on Sunday and charged with disorderly conduct after photographing people waiting to vote outside LePore's office.

"Subverting the Constitution in order to bully and arrest journalists or poll monitors whose purpose is to ensure a fair and democratic electoral process should not be



A poll worker sorts absentee ballots in Miami. (AFP)

tolerated," said Elliot M. Minberg, general counsel for the People for the American Way Foundation, which says it fights for "legal and social justice progress."

LePore said she issued the rule last week because people felt harassed by reporters and others who approached them in long early voting lines. Minberg said state law let people talk to voters at least 50 feet from a polling place.

If nothing else, Floridians are more than ready to put the anticipatory stage behind them and face whatever comes next. Those who waited through days of grim prediction for recent hurricanes are experiencing a feeling of déjà vu and looking forward to the recovery stage.

But given the apparent closeness of the race, the partisan rancor and the complex procedures and machinery that will be used for the first time in a presidential election, no one has a clue how Florida will fare. "There are so many imponderables," said Donald Jaffin, a Republican who was watching the Palm Beach county officials inspect boxloads of absentee ballots yesterday. "I think the state is doing their very best, and I have confidence in the governor. But we've never faced anything like this."

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Washington, Nov. 2: From schools to firehouses to community centres, Americans streamed into polling stations today to vote for the next President of the US, choosing between men with very different visions of the future in a race many experts said was too close to call.

By flipping a mechanical lever or tapping a computer screen, voters will finally register just how successful each candidate was in selling his agenda on national security, the economy and other issues at the forefront of eight months of grinding campaigning.

Trying to sway the undecided voters in key states, Senator John Kerry, the Democratic nominee, and President Bush spent yesterday shuttling to events in Ohio and Florida and several other states considered crucial to the outcome.

Bush voted at a fire station in Crawford, Texas and then told reporters: "My hope, of course, is this election ends tonight. I think it is very important for it to end tonight. The world watches our great democracy function."

20 years on, a voter steps out

Four years ago, he had to wait 36 days before being declared the winner.

Kerry, who addressed his last rally at 2 am got little sleep. He could not resist a final appearance at an election morning get-out-the-vote event this morning in Wisconsin.

"We are going to link hands and hearts and we are going to take America to a better place," Kerry said at that event. He later flew home to Boston and cast his vote.

Kerry's wife Teresa is registered as a voter in Pennsylvania, where she voted.

After voting, Kerry, who is superstitious, went to Boston's Union Oyster House for lunch as he has done after every election in his public life.

Voter turnout was expected to be very large, perhaps surpassing the 105 million

that voted in the 2000 election. That turnout represented 51 per cent of the voting age population. This year, Curtis Gans, director of the non-partisan Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, is predicting turnout of between 118 million and 121 million, or 58 per cent to 60 per cent of the electorate, he said.

Indeed, early turnout appeared steady, with lines forming at polling stations well before they opened.

Even in the driving rain and while it was still dark, eager voters waited outside the North Rosedale Park Community Center on Detroit's west side.

Oretha Pettway, 49, a principal at a special education school, held a folder over her head to shield herself from the rain. She waited to cast her ballot for Kerry.

In North Philadelphia, Valerie Morman, 42, a legal secretary, walked to her polling place at Saint Malachy School. "The last time I voted," she said, "was about 20 years ago," she said, adding that she intended to vote for Senator John Kerry. "I stayed home because I haven't felt like it counted. I have had a change of heart and I think there are hundreds of thousands of others like me," she said.

When the counting begins in one state after another, a spotlight will be shone on a brave new world of post-2000 presidential voting, showing the consequences of changes put into place four years ago that may mark a turning point in the way Americans choose their leaders.

Two of the biggest changes since 2000 are that more people are registered to vote now, as many as 15 million more in the entire country by some counts, and both parties and their supporters have worked harder and are spending more money than ever before to get these voters to the poll.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE AND OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT



Ayda Khalil, a Palestinian-American from Jerusalem, leaves a poll booth in New York. (Reuters)

Republicans get their own way in Ohio

JAMES DAO AND ADAM LIPTAK

Columbus (Ohio), Nov. 2: In a day of see-sawing court rulings, a federal appeals court ruled early this morning that the Republican Party could place thousands of people inside polling places to challenge the eligibility of voters, a blow to Democrats who argued those challengers will intimidate minority voters.

The ruling, by the 6th circuit US court of appeals, in Cincinnati, reversed two lower courts that had blocked the challenges just a day before. It also came as squadrons of lawyers from both parties in Ohio and other swing states from Pennsylvania to Florida to New Mexico were preparing for Election Day skirmishes that will include using arcane laws that allow challenges at the polls.

The lawyer for a pair of Cincinnati civil rights activists who had challenged the Republican plans to challenge voters said he would appeal this morning's decision to the US Supreme Court.

But it appeared likely that when Ohio polls open, the Republicans would be able to put 3,500 challengers inside polling places around the state. Democrats also planned to send more than 2,000 monitors to the polls, though they said those people would not challenge voters.

The cases may foreshadow lawsuits that are likely to be filed if the election is close in any state crucial to the Electoral College calculus. Lawyers for both sides are already examining disparities in election policies, nuances in court rulings and potential irregularities at polling places for material that may be used to challenge results in places where margins are paper thin.

The battle over Election Day challenges has been most intense in Ohio, not only because the race here is so close and so vital to President Bush and Senator John Kerry, but also because the Republican Party has announced larger and more aggressive plans to challenge voters here than in other states.

The Republicans contend that challenging — a practice that has been allowed under state law for decades but

rarely used — will weed out fraud often missed by election workers. Democrats assert that the challenges disproportionately single out low-income and minority voters, which Republicans deny.

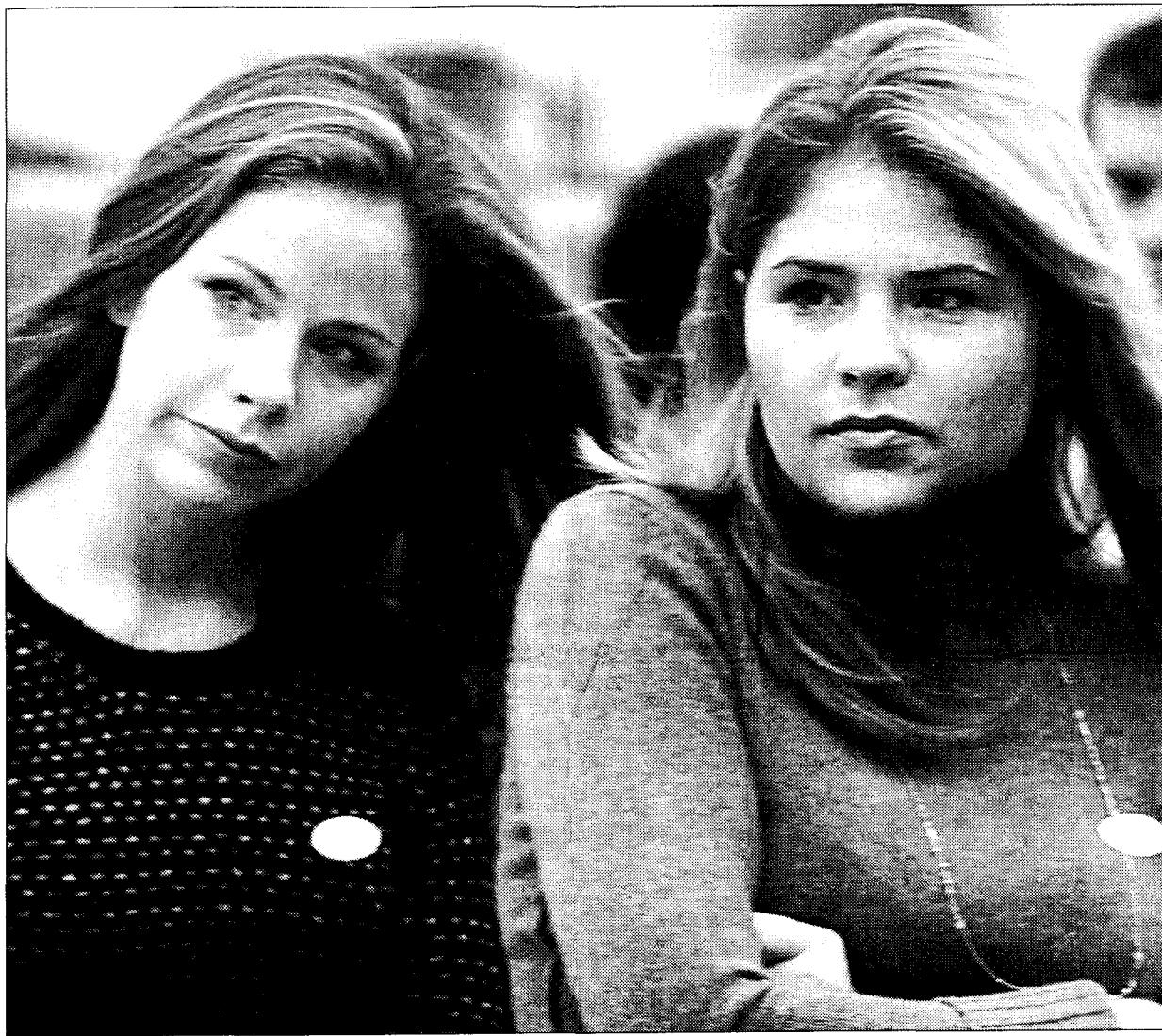
In their separate rulings in the lower courts, Judge Susan J. Dlott of US district court in Cincinnati and Judge John R. Adams in Akron agreed that procedures already existed to prevent fraud at the voting place. And they said that aggressive, time-consuming challenges inside polling stations might create chaos and delays that could intimidate voters or rob them of the chance to vote.

In seeking the delicate balance between preventing fraud and upholding voting rights, the judges said the scales should tip toward voting rights.

"Voter intimidation severely burdens the right to vote, and prevention of such intimidation is a compelling state interest," wrote Dlott, who was appointed by President Bill Clinton. Adams was appointed by Bush.

"The goal of the Ohio Republican Party is to guarantee a fair election for everyone," said Mark Weaver, counsel to the state Republican Party. "Each time the Democrats remove an additional safeguard, the potential for voter fraud increases."

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE



Barbara (left) and Jenna Bush watch their father speak to the press after casting his ballot in Crawford, Texas. (Reuters)

Parties brace for everything

JO BECKER AND DAN EGGEN

Washington, Nov. 2: Legions of lawyers, party volunteers, paid activists and even foreign observers descended on polling places across the country in what promises to be the most heavily monitored presidential election in US history.

The tens of millions of voters heading to the polls will face new election laws and, in many places, new voting machines — aimed at remedying the problems that produced the bitterly disputed outcome

four years ago. But many election officials are worried that some of the changes could instead ensure a repeat in a race as tightly contested as the one between President Bush and Senator John F. Kerry.

An army of lawyers from both parties will be manning polls in battleground states, and the legal wrangling over ballot issues continued to rage hours before the polls were to open.

In battleground states, Democrats have plans to challenge the challengers. Democratic officials in Philadelphia, for example, have threatened to file federal lawsuits against individual poll challengers who violate citizens' voting rights through harassment or intimidation.

Election officials also are fretting about the impact of provisional ballots, which are used by people whose names do not appear on voter rolls. Such ballots cannot be counted until after Election Day and, for the first time, are being mandated nationwide.

Officials and observers also worry about voting ma-

chines, whether new and untested or old and problematic. Given these and other problems, election directors in battleground states are girding for long lines, legal challenges and glitches that could leave the outcome in dispute for days or weeks.

"There will be several states where we will not know the winner on election night," predicted New Mexico secretary of state Rebecca Vigil-Giron, president of the National Association of Secretaries of State. "If we do, great, I'll eat my words. But I don't think I will have to."

Jan Baran, a Republican election lawyer not involved in this year's campaign, said: "If it's close, we'll be right back to where we were four years ago. It may not be the same issues, or the states, but there will be plenty of problems for lawyers and campaigns to fight about."

Despite the problems, election officials across the country stress that they have gone to great lengths to ensure fair balloting. Poll workers have undergone more detailed training, registrars have been

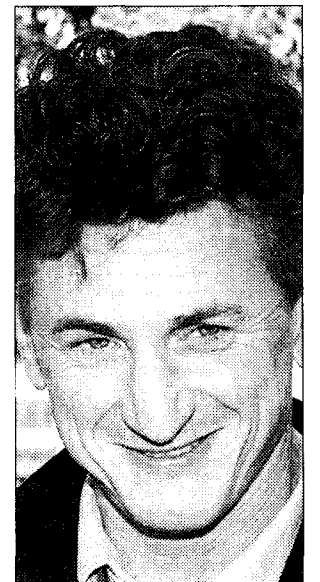
briefed on laws governing voting in their states, and voters across the country have received guides that spell out their rights.

Extra security was also in place, reflecting concerns about terrorism in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks and deep suspicions on both sides that the other party is up to no good. In Lake County, Ohio, the sheriff's department is guarding voting machines with the same vigilance "as they do the nuclear power plant," according to election director Jan Clair.

Robert A. Pastor, a long-time international election observer who directs the Center for Democracy and Election Management at American University, predicted "a very chaotic election" that may be more akin to contests seen in developing countries.

And DeForest B. Soaries Jr., chairman of the US Election Assistance Commission, worries that advocacy for the two candidates "is turning into acrimony".

LOS ANGELES TIMES WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE



Actor Sean Penn campaigns for John Kerry in Las Vegas. (Reuters)

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And the winner is...

You will know the results of the American presidential election within hours of having read this piece or may even have caught the first news flash a few hours before you laid your hands on the newspaper. But whatever the result, one thing is absolutely certain — this election should refute once and for all the widespread belief that voting behaviour in advanced Western democracies is determined largely by 'pocketbook issues', writes ANATOLE KALETSKY

I WOULD suggest that this election proves something deeper about modern democratic politics. I believe this election has been about economics — but the influence of economics on politics has been very different from the one that pundits normally emphasise.

The Bush record suggests that the macroeconomic indicators that are usually believed to motivate ordinary voters — unemployment, inflation and wage growth — are less important than the policies which govern the social distribution of income and economic power. More intriguingly, what Bush has demonstrated is that people can readily be persuaded to vote in accordance with the economic interests of people much richer than themselves. The fact is that, even if Bush loses (or has already lost), many millions of poor and middle-class Americans will be voting for tax and public spending policies that are directly against their personal economic interests, but hugely beneficial to a small elite.

This elite, which could for simplicity be defined as the top 5 per cent of the US income distribution (households with annual earnings over \$150,499 in 2001), has not only benefited disproportionately from President Bush's tax policies but, much more importantly, it has lost nothing from the cutbacks in welfare that his budget deficits will surely require. Its after-tax income had already risen by 53 per cent in real terms in the two decades before President Bush came to power — nearly four times the increase in living standards enjoyed by America's middle 20 per cent.

These affluent voters might therefore be expected to provide the core of the President's support — and in a sense they do, since the great majority of wealthy Americans continue to vote Republican, notwithstanding their supposed distaste for the illiberal social and religious policies of the party's dominant Right wing.

The real numerical base of the Republican Party, however, are



FIRST FAMILY: On stage during one of his last campaign rallies. — AFP

the lower-income Americans whose economic interests it clearly does not represent. This is evident in polling data that show the proportion of Republican voters to be almost as high in the middle and lower-middle income groups as it is in the top 20 per cent.

Even more striking is the regional pattern of party support. The states solidly backing Bush are much poorer than the ones supporting Kerry, whatever the result of the race.

The political triumph of the American Right has been to advance relentlessly the economic interests of the country's richest people, while emphasising a swath of moral, social and foreign policy issues that motivate — and certainly distract — middle-class and poor voters.

This has been a spectacularly successful strategy which the elites in other countries, includ-

ing Britain, are likely to follow if they feel that their interests are seriously threatened by a resurgent Left. If Bush wins (or has already won), this makes some sense, but how can I jump to this broad conclusion, especially as I believe Bush could lose the election, if he hasn't already?

Because the most striking result of this election is already clear. The fact that Bush has any chance at all of re-election, forget the margin by which he has won/lost, is evidence enough of the Republicans' political success. After all, his economic policies have resulted in unprecedented job losses, his tax reforms have produced a massive shift of income from poor to rich, his public spending plans have favoured corporations at the expense of jobless families, his foreign policies have plunged the nation into war on false pretences and failed to bring to jus-

tice the perpetrators of 9/11.

By almost every economic criterion, the average American voter has had a very hard time during the past four years. Unemployment has risen, per capita income growth and real wages have stagnated and Bush has been the first President since Herbert Hoover to preside over a net loss of jobs.

Even inflation, which has remained remarkably low and stable at about 2 per cent on the official figures, is widely perceived to be much higher than the government admits.

According to the Conference Board's monthly survey, public expectations of inflation in the next 12 months are now 5 per cent, almost the highest level in the survey's 13-year record.

Moreover, the economic misery has been worst in the manufacturing states, a significant proportion of whom, regardless

of the result, would have voted for Bush. The US manufacturing sector has suffered a net decline of 20 per cent in employment in the past four years, implying that while most of the US economy has managed to tread water reasonably comfortably since President Bush was elected, the manufacturing states really have suffered their worst economic setback since the 1930s.

On any objective reading of this evidence, President Bush should already have been consigned to history. Yet he may have won by now.

And even if he's lost, most of his policies — especially on tax and public spending — will remain intact.

In other words, the Republican Right has won the US policy debate on all the important economic issues, forget who is warming the chair at the Oval Office. — *The Times*

3 NOV 2001

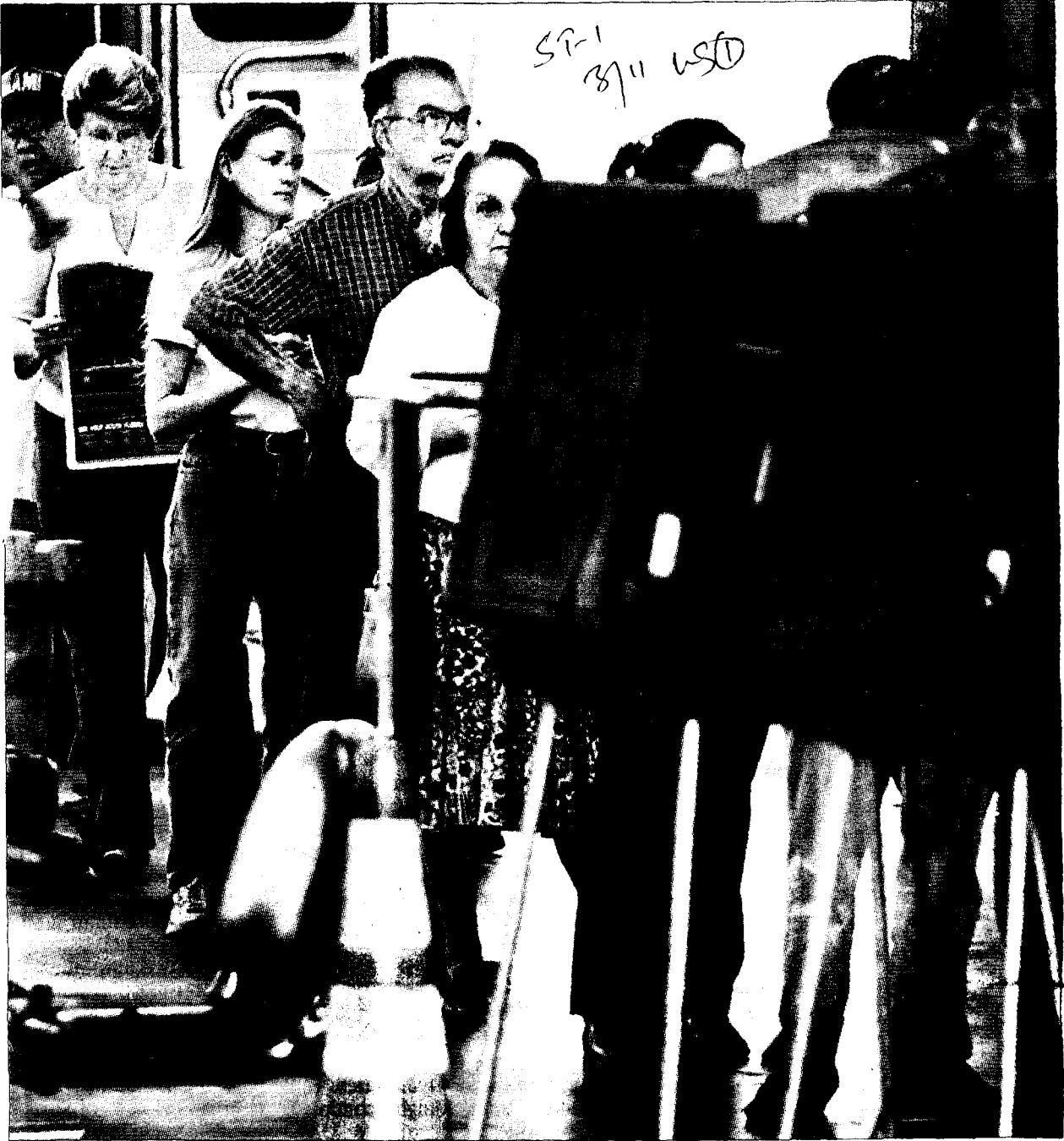
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THE STATESMAN

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FINAL COUNTDOWN: Americans wait to cast their votes in Miami, Florida, on Tuesday. — AFP (Special poll package on pages 4 & 9)

Associated Press

DALLAS, Nov. 2. — The first presidential election since the USA plunged into its epochal war on terrorism was finally handed off to voters today, with President Bush declaring the “safety and prosperity of America” is at stake and his Democratic challenger, Mr John Kerry, saying that the “hopes of our country are on the line”.

A dizzying final dash across the Midwest and points south capped a campaign that found the contenders deadlocked at every vital turn and stirred expectations that Americans, for once, were highly motivated to vote.

“This election is in the hands of the people, and I feel very comfortable about that,” Mr Bush said after he and Mrs Laura Bush and twin daughters Barbara and Jenna cast ballots this morning in Crawford, Texas. “Now’s the time for the people to express their will.”

Mr Kerry was handing out packets of material to hundreds of volunteers in La Crosse, Wisconsin, as they set out this morning to encourage people to vote for the Democratic ticket. “We’re going to take America to a better place.

Let’s get the job done,” the presidential challenger said. “We’re going to put common sense and truth back into the decisions of this nation.”

Overnight, the Bush campaign sent an e-mail from the President exhorting people to vote — “It comes down to today” and asking that the recipient forward the e-mail to five more people.

Mr Kerry e-mailed a similar call to arms yesterday: “When you go to

more than a dozen people waiting, and that’s heavy.”

The final pre-election polls turned up tied — 49 per cent to 49 per cent in one CNN-USA Today-Gallup survey, with independent candidate Mr Ralph Nader at one per cent. Tight surveys in Florida and a variety of Midwestern states including Ohio deepened the mystery over who would collect the necessary 270 electoral votes.

“In all honesty, I don’t think it’s possible to predict what’s going to happen,” Democratic vice-presidential candidate Mr John Edwards told NBC’s *Today* show. “I think we’re going to see unprecedented turnout, I think we’re going to see huge voter participation. And when that happens, democracy works. So we feel very confident, very optimistic.”

The first votes cast and counted on election day, in the mountain hamlet of Hart’s Location, New Hampshire, reflected in miniature what seemed likely to happen across the country: a close race.

Following a quirky tradition of post-midnight voting in New Hampshire’s North Country, 16 people voted for Mr Bush, 14 for Mr Kerry and one for Mr Nader. Mr Bush beat Democrat Mr Al Gore 17-13 in the hamlet in 2000.



the polls bring your friends, your family, your neighbours. No one can afford to stand on the sidelines or sit this one out.”

Long lines were reported at precincts from Florida and North Carolina to West Virginia and Michigan. “We even had people waiting in line before we opened at 6.30 a.m.,” said County clerk Mr Robert Pasley in Wayne, West Virginia. “In some places, there was

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THE STATESMAN

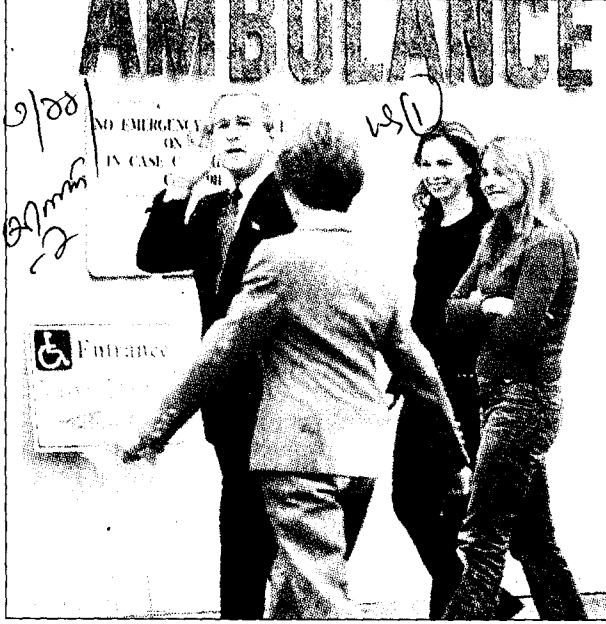
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চেয়ার আর বই নিয়ে ভোটের লাইনে

সীমা সিরোহি • ওয়াশিংটন

২ নভেম্বর: ভোট শুরু হওয়ার অনেক আগে থেকেই বিভিন্ন শহরে বুথের সামনে ভোটারদের দীর্ঘ লাইন ফের মনে করিয়ে দিল, মার্কিন মূলুকে সাম্প্রতিক কালের সবচেয়ে কঠিন নির্বাচনী লড়াই হচ্ছে এ বারই।

আজ সকাল থেকেই ভোটারদের লাইন এতটাই লম্বা যে, বুথে ঢোকান আগে দীর্ঘ প্রতীক্ষার প্রস্তুতি হিসাবে অনেকেই সঙ্গে করে নিয়ে এসেছেন ফোন্ডিং চেয়ার আর বই। রিপাবলিকান প্রার্থী, বর্তমান মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ ডবলিউ বুশ ও তাঁর ডেমোক্র্যাট প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী জন কেরির মধ্যে এ বার হাড্ডাহাড্ডি লড়াই হবে বলেই বিভিন্ন জনমত সমীক্ষায় ইঙ্গিত দেওয়া হয়েছে। বুশ আজ টেক্সাসের ক্রফোর্ডে সপরিবারে ভোট দেওয়ার সময় আশা প্রকাশ করেছেন, গত বারের নির্বাচনের মতো এবার আর ভোটের পুনর্গণনা করতে হবে না, বরং আজই ভোটের চূড়ান্ত ফল জেনে যাওয়ারই সম্ভাবনা। ভোট দিয়ে বেরোনোর সময় বুশের স্ত্রী লরাকে সাংবাদিকরা প্রশ্ন করেছিলেন, ভোটে হেরে গেলে তারা কী করবেন?



ভোট দিতে যাচ্ছেন সপরিবার বুশ। টেক্সাসের ক্রফোর্ডে। — এ এফ পি

লরার উত্তর, “জেতার ব্যাপারে আমরা খুবই আশাবাদী। তবে ফল যা-ই হোক না কেন, আমরা ভালই থাকব।” অন্য

দিকে, ফ্লোরিডায় শেষ মুহূর্তের প্রচার সেরে বেরোনোর সময় কেরি বলেছেন, “আমেরিকার মানুষকে এ বার সিদ্ধান্ত

নিতে হবে। গোটা দুনিয়া তাকিয়ে আছে আমাদের দিকে।” কেরি ভোট দিচ্ছেন নিজের শহর বস্টনে।

ভোটের লড়াই এ বার কতটা তীব্র তার একটা ইঙ্গিত পাওয়া যায় বিভিন্ন জনমত সমীক্ষায়। ভোট পর্ব শুরুর ২৪ ঘণ্টা আগে দেখা যাচ্ছে রয়টার্স-জোগবি সমীক্ষায় বুশের জেতার সম্ভাবনা ৪৮ শতাংশ, কেরির ৪৭ শতাংশ। ওয়াল স্ট্রিট জার্নাল-এন বি সি সমীক্ষায় বুশ ৪৮ শতাংশ ও কেরি ৪৭ শতাংশ। ফক্স নিউজ-ওপিনিয়ন ডাইনামিক্সের সমীক্ষায় কেরি ৪৮ শতাংশ ও বুশ ৪৬ শতাংশ। এ বি সি সমীক্ষায় বুশ ৪৯ শতাংশ ও কেরি ৪৮ শতাংশ। ইউ এস টুডে-সি এন এনের হিসাবে বুশের জেতার সম্ভাবনা ৪৯ শতাংশ ও কেরির ৪৭ শতাংশ। আবার রয়টার্সের সমীক্ষায় সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ন'টি রাজ্যের মধ্যে কেরির জেতার সম্ভাবনা ছ'টিতে, দু'টিতে বুশ জিততে পারেন, একটিতে সমান সমান। বলা হচ্ছে, কেরি জিতবেন আইওয়া, মিশিগান, মিনেসোটা, নিউ মেক্সিকো, পেনসিলভানিয়া, উইসকনসিন রাজ্যে। বুশ জিতবেন কলোরাডো ও ওহাইয়ো এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

ভোট আমেরিকায়, রাতেই ফল?

১ পাতার পর

দূরত্বের হিসেবে ২৫৪৮ মাইল! ভোট দেওয়ার পর স্ত্রী লরাকে পাশে নিয়ে সংবাদমাধ্যমের মুখোমুখি দাঁড়িয়ে বললেন, ‘আমি আত্মবিশ্বাসী। মনপ্রাণ দিয়ে প্রচার করেছি, আমার সঙ্গে প্রতিপক্ষের ফারাকটা নিশ্চয় বুঝিয়ে দিতে পেরেছি।’ আত্মবিশ্বাসী বললেও বুশকে কিছুটা নার্ভসই লাগছিল, কিছুটা ক্লান্তও। কিন্তু জিরোবার সময় নেই। ভোট দিয়েই বুশ রওনা হয়েছেন ওহায়োর উদ্দেশে। সেখানে আমেরিকার সুপ্রিম কোর্ট রিপাবলিকানদের অনুমতি দিয়েছে ভোটকেন্দ্রে অবৈধ ভোটপাতাদের চ্যালঞ্জ করার জন্য দলীয় প্রতিনিধি রাখার। ওয়াশিংটনে ফেব্রার আগে একবার ঘুরে যেতে চান বুশ। কেরির ভোট বস্টনে। যাওয়ার আগে আজ ঘুরে গেলেন উইসকনসিন, মিশিগান এবং সেই ওহায়ো। ভোটের দিনেও কেরির প্রতিশ্রুতি, এক উজ্জ্বল আমেরিকা গড়ে তোলার। উইসকনসিনে ভোটারদের মধ্যে দাঁড়িয়েই তিনি এই প্রতিশ্রুতি দেন। প্রাক্তন প্রেসিডেন্ট জন এফ কেনেডির প্রিয় রেস্তোরাঁয় মধ্যাহ্নভোজ সারেন কেরি। আশা, এই রেস্তোরাঁই এবারের ভোটে ফিরিয়ে দেবে তাঁর ভাগ্য। সমীক্ষক-বিশ্লেষকরা সবাই একমত যে এবার ব্যাপক হারে ভোট পড়বে। গত ৪০ বছরে যা পড়েনি। আমেরিকার ১৫ কোটি ৬০ লক্ষ বৈধ ভোটারের মধ্যে আনুমানিক ১২ কোটি ১০ লক্ষ তাঁদের ভোটাধিকার প্রয়োগ করবেন বলে আশা। সে ক্ষেত্রে ভেঙে যাবে ২০০০ সালে ১০ কোটি ৬০ লক্ষ ভোট পড়ার রেকর্ড। তবে, নির্বাচনী সংস্কারের পর নতুন আইন, অসংখ্য নতুন ভোটার, প্রতিশ্রুতি ব্যালট পদ্ধতি, এক জায়গার ব্যালট অন্য জায়গায় পৌঁছে যাওয়া, ইলেকট্রনিক ভোটিং মেশিনের যান্ত্রিক ত্রুটি— ইত্যাদির কারণে প্রথম ঘণ্টা থেকেই নানারকম সমস্যা দেশের বিভিন্ন প্রান্তের ভোটকেন্দ্রগুলিতেই। ওহায়োর ফ্র্যাঙ্কলিন কাউন্টিতে ভোট কর্মীরাই আসেন অনেক দেরি করে। ভোট নেওয়া শুরু হয় আধঘণ্টা পর। সাউথ ক্যারোলিনার একটি বুথে ভোটিং মেশিন আদৌ কাজ না করায় ভোটাররা ভোটপত্রের মাধ্যমে ভোট দেন। মেরিল্যান্ডের এসেক্সের একটি বুথে ইলেকশন জজ নিজের বাড়িতে ভোটের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় কাগজপত্র ফেলে এসেছেন বলে বৃথ ছেড়েই বেরিয়ে চলে যান। ভোটারদের অপেক্ষা করতে হয় তাঁর ফিরে আসা পর্যন্ত। অপেক্ষমাণ ভোটারদের মধ্যে কারুর তাড়া থাকলে তাঁকে দেওয়া

হয়েছে প্রতিশ্রুতি ব্যালটের সুযোগ। গতকাল ফ্লোরিডার একটি অগ্রিম ভোটকেন্দ্রে ভোট নেওয়ার পর ভোটিং মেশিন থেকে কোনও তথ্যই উদ্ধার করা যাচ্ছে না। ফলে সেখানকার ১৩ হাজার ভোট হয়ত গোনাই যাবে না। এমনিতেই এবার ভোটারের সংখ্যা বেশি, অথচ ভোটকর্মীর সংখ্যা কম। ফলে সমস্যা থাকছেই। তার সঙ্গে যোগ হয়েছে দেশজুড়ে অভিন্ন নির্বাচন নীতির অনুপস্থিতি। সব মিলিয়ে পরিস্থিতি আমাদের দেশের মতোই। তবু কোনও কিছু সম্ভাব্যতার ভরসায় রাখছেন না রিপাবলিকান-ডেমোক্র্যাট কর্মীরা। গত কয়েকদিন ধরেই বাড়ি বাড়ি, দরজায় দরজায় ঘুরে, বাজারহাটে প্রচারপত্র বিলি করে, টেলিফোন ডিরেক্টরি খুলে নিজের নিজের এলাকার প্রতিটি ভোটারকে ফোন করে, লাগাতার ই-মেল, ভয়েস মেল পাঠিয়ে গেছেন। আর আজ তাঁদের তৎপরতা যেন যুদ্ধক্ষেত্রে হার মানাচ্ছে। ওহায়োর ক্লিভল্যান্ডে আবহাওয়ার পূর্বাভাস— বৃষ্টি হতে পারে। দু'দলের স্বেচ্ছাসেবকরা রাস্তার দু'ধারে সার বেঁধে, ছাতা হাতে দাঁড়িয়ে। ভোট দেওয়ার উৎসাহকে কিছুতেই ভিজতে দেওয়া চলবে না! এ ছাড়া কোথায় বাড়ির প্রবীণ ভোটারদের গাড়ি করে নিয়ে আসতে হবে, কোথায় অনিচ্ছুক কিশোর-কিশোরীদের বিনি পয়সার টি-শার্টের টোপ দিয়ে টেনে আনতে হবে, সবদিকে এই স্বেচ্ছাসেবকদের নজর। নিখরচায় খাদ্য পানীয় বিলি তো আছেই। শোনা গেল, এক জায়গায় বিনামূল্যে বিতর্কিত হয়েছে নামী লেবেলের অন্তর্ভাস! আজ আমেরিকায় ভোট শুরু হয় পূর্বাঞ্চলের নটি রাজ্য— ভার্জিনিয়া, নিউ হ্যাম্পশায়ার, কানেকটিকাট, নিউ জার্সি, মাইন, ভারমন্ট, নিউ ইয়র্ক, ইন্ডিয়ানা এবং কেনটাকি থেকে। শেষ হবে আগামীকাল, বুধবার ভারতীয় সময় সকাল সাড়ে এগারোটায় আলাস্কাতে। তারপরই গোনার কাজ। ৫০টি রাজ্যের মোট ৫৩৮টি ইলেকটোরাল ভোট। ২৭০টি ভোট বার দখলে যাবে তাঁরই সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠতা। সাধারণ ধারণা, উত্তর আমেরিকার শিল্পোন্নত রাজ্যগুলি এবং ক্যালিফোর্নিয়ার ভোট কেরির পক্ষে যাবে। তার মানে ২০৭টি ইলেকটোরাল ভোট। অন্যদিকে দক্ষিণের ‘বাইবেল বেল্ট’ বলে কথিত রক্ষণশীল রাজ্যগুলি এবং মধ্য-পশ্চিমের এক বড় অংশ ভোট দেবে বুশকে। অর্থাৎ কেরির থেকে বুশ চার ভোটে এগিয়ে থাকবেন। সে ক্ষেত্রে চূড়ান্ত ব্যবধান গড়ে দেবে শেষ মুহূর্তেও মনহির করতে না পারা মোট ১০ রাজ্যের ১২০টি ইলেকটোরাল ভোট।

চেয়ার নিয়ে ভোটের লাইনে

প্রথম পাতার পর

রাজ্যে। সবচেয়ে বিতর্কিত ফ্লোরিডায় অবস্থা সমান সমান।

এমনিতে মার্কিন নির্বাচনে ভোটদাতারা তেমন ভাবে সামিল না হলেও এবার সকাল থেকে প্রথম কয়েক ঘণ্টায় যা ইঙ্গিত, তাতে মনে করা হচ্ছে ভোটের হার বাড়বে। মোট সাড়ে ১৫ কোটি ভোটদাতার নাম নথিবদ্ধ রয়েছে। ভোট নিয়ে এবার মার্কিন জনগণ যে অন্যান্য বারের চেয়ে অনেক বেশি উৎসাহী, সেটা বিভিন্ন শহরে ভোটকেন্দ্রের সামনে ভিড় দেখে বোঝা যাচ্ছে। ভোট শুরু হওয়ার অনেক আগে রাজধানী ওয়াশিংটন ডি সি-র শহরতলি ভার্জিনিয়ায় ভোর ছটার সময়েই একটি ভোটকেন্দ্রের সামনে শ'খানেক মানুষের লাইন চেখে পড়েছে। গোটা মার্কিন দেশের মধ্যে সবচেয়ে আগে ভোটপর্ব শুরু হয় নিউ হ্যাম্পশায়ারের হার্টস লোকেশন নামে এক জায়গায়। হাড্ডাহাড়ি লড়াইয়ের চেহারাটা ভোটের শুরুতেই স্পষ্ট করে দিয়ে সেখানে বৃষ্টি ১৬ ও কেবি ১৪টি ভোট পেয়েছেন। ডেমোক্র্যাট দলের ভাইস প্রেসিডেন্ট প্রার্থী জন এডওয়ার্ডস বলেছেন, “সত্যি কথা বলতে কী, এবারের ফল কী হতে চলেছে বলা বলা কঠিন। আমার মনে হয়, এবার ভোট পড়বে নজিরবিহীন বেশি হারে। সেটা ঘটলে গণতন্ত্রেরই জয় হবে, জেতার ব্যাপারে আমরা যথেষ্ট আত্মবিশ্বাসী।” উল্লেখ্য, এ বারের নির্বাচনে ভোটদাতারা যে ভাবে বৃষ্টি ও কেবির শিবিরে বিভক্ত হয়ে গিয়েছেন, সেটাও নজিরবিহীন।

এ বারের নির্বাচনে একই সঙ্গে সেনেটের ৩৪টি আসন, ১১ রাজ্যের

গভর্নর এবং হাউস অব রিপ্রেজেন্টেটিভের ৪৩৫টি আসনেও ভোট হচ্ছে। তবে মূল আকর্ষণ অবশ্যই প্রেসিডেন্ট পদে নির্বাচন। এবং সেই নির্বাচনে এবার নিরাপত্তার প্রশ্নটিই যে সবচেয়ে বেশি গুরুত্ব পেয়ে যাচ্ছে, ত স্পষ্ট করে দিয়ে নিউ ইয়র্কের মার্জি মিলার বলেছেন, “প্রতিটি নির্বাচনই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ, কিন্তু এ বারের ভোট আমায় নিজের জীবনের নিরাপত্তা: প্রশ্ন যতটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হয়ে উঠেছে এমনটা আগে কখনও হয়নি।” উল্লেখ্য ৯/১১ ঘটনায় ওয়ার্ল্ড ট্রেড সেন্টারের ৯৭ তলার অফিসে কর্মরত অবস্থায় মার্জি-র স্বামী প্রাণ হারিয়েছিলেন। আবার ৯/১১ ঘটনার জন্য বৃশকে দায়ী করে বিরোধীরাও শেষ মুহূর্ত পর্যন্ত প্রচার চালিয়েছেন। ফারেনহাইট ৯/১১ সিনেমার পরিচালক মাইকেল মুর তাঁর ওয়েবসাইটে শেষ সময়ের প্রচারে বলেছেন, বৃষ্টি যে চূড়ান্তভাবে ব্যর্থ, আপনারা জানেন।...কেরিকে একটা সুযোগ দিন।”

বাগদাদে বোমা, হত ৬। ইরাকের শিক্ষা দফতরের বাইরে গাড়িবোমা বিস্ফোরণে দুই মহিলা-সহ ছ'জনের মৃত্যু হয়েছে। শিক্ষা মন্ত্রকের বাড়ি ও আশেপাশের অন্তত আধ ডজন গাড়ি এই ঘটনায় ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছে। কারা বিস্ফোরণ ঘটিয়েছে, তা জানা যায়নি। ইরাকের অন্য অঞ্চলেও রক্তপাত অব্যাহত। মার্কিন মেরিন ও জঙ্গিদের সংঘর্ষে রামাদি শহরে ১০ জনের মৃত্যু হয়েছে। নিহতদের মধ্যে সংবাদসংস্থা রয়টার্সের এক ফ্রিল্যান্স চিত্রগ্রাহক রয়েছেন। মেরিন ও জঙ্গিদের মধ্যে গুলির লড়াই চলাকালীন প্রিন্স নাজিম নামে ওই চিত্রগ্রাহকের মৃত্যু হয়।

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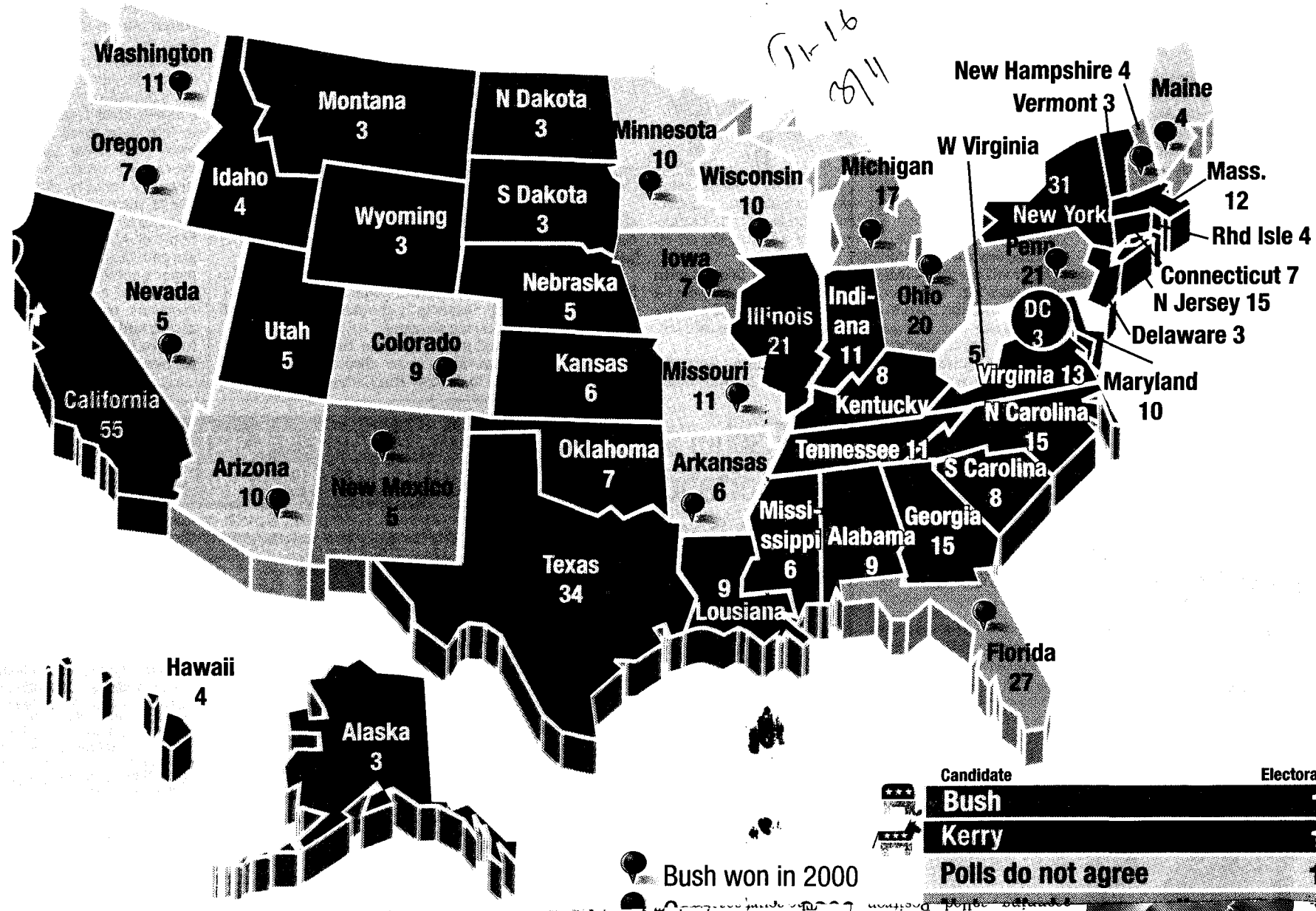
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US SWEEPSTAKES

WHO'LL BE CAPTAIN AMERICA?

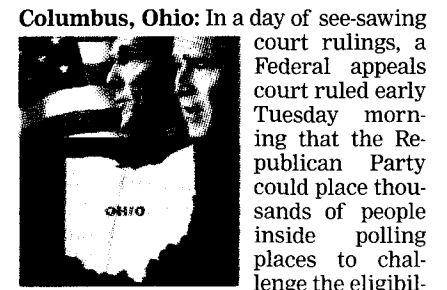
TOI brings you a status report from the battleground. As the pollsters see it, here is how the states stand

SWING STATES	Florida (27)	Pennsylvania (21)	Ohio (20)	Michigan (17)	Iowa (7)	New Mexico (5)	N Hampshire (4)
	Bush won in 2000 by 537 votes after a series of recounts and court hearings over the disputed results. Latest poll: USA Today/CNN/Gallup (Oct 28-31), Kerry 49%, Bush 46%	A swing state since 1970. Gore won in 2000 by 204,840 votes. Among the states Bush has visited most. Latest poll: USA Today/CNN/Gallup (Oct 28-31), Bush 50%, Kerry 46%	Since 1964, the winner here has ended up President. Bush won in 2000 by a margin of 166,735 votes. Latest poll: USA Today/CNN/Gallup (Oct 28-31), Kerry 50%, Bush 46%	Gore won in 2000 by 217,279 votes. Solidly Republican in '70s & '80s, but won by Democrats since '92. Latest poll: Detroit news tracking poll (Oct 26-28), Kerry 43%, Bush 41%	Among the tightest races in 2000 which Gore won by 4,144 votes. Has always voted Democrat since 1988. Latest poll: USA Today/CNN/Gallup (Oct 28-31), Bush 48%, Kerry 46%	Gore won the closest state in 2000 by a mere 365 votes. It has picked the winner in all but two elections since 1912. Latest poll: American research group poll (Oct 27-30), Kerry 48%, Bush 47%	In 2000, Bush won by 7,211 votes. Votes for Ralph Nader could make the difference. Latest poll: American research group poll (Oct 27-30), Kerry 47%, Bush 47%



Republicans can challenge voters in Ohio

By James Dao and Adam Liptak



Columbus, Ohio: In a day of see-sawing court rulings, a Federal appeals court ruled early Tuesday morning that the Republican Party could place thousands of people inside polling places to challenge the eligibility of voters, a blow to Democrats who argued those challengers will intimidate minority voters.

The ruling reversed two lower courts that had blocked the challenges just a day before. It also came as squadrons of lawyers from both parties in Ohio and other swing states from Pennsylvania to Florida to New Mexico were preparing for Election Day skirmishes that will in-



clude using arcane laws that allow challenges at the polls.

The lawyer for a pair of Cincinnati civil rights activists who had challenged the Republican plans to challenge voters said he would appeal the decision. But it appeared likely that when Ohio polls open, the Republicans would be able to put 3,500 challengers inside polling places around the state. Democrats also planned to send more than 2,000 monitors to the polls.

The battle over challenges has been most intense in Ohio, not only because the race here is so close and so vital to Bush and Kerry, but also because the Republican Party has announced larger and more aggressive plans to challenge voters here than in other states. The Republicans contend that challenging will weed out fraud. NYT News Service

USA Today, Economist, Time & B...

Florida re-run fear haunts USA

Associated Press

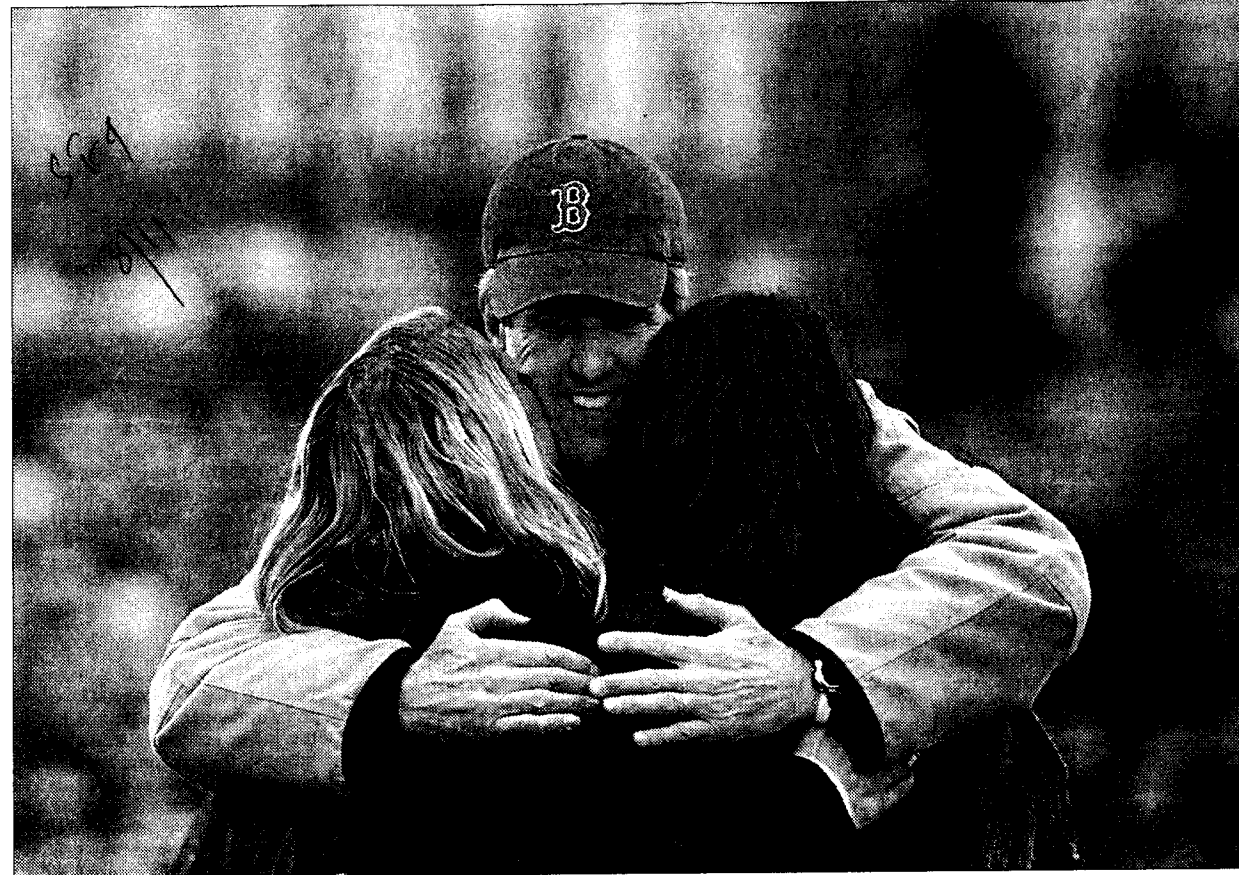
NEW YORK, Nov. 2. — Lawyers, election-rights activists and computer scientists fearing mayhem at the polls descended on Florida, Ohio and other key states on Tuesday, vigilant for trouble with such matters as provisional ballots and electronic voting machines.

New rules, new voters and a tight presidential contest combined to create "a recipe for problems" and the likelihood that results won't be known for weeks, said Mr Sean Greene, who was assigned to watch Cleveland polls for the Election Reform Information Project, a non-partisan research group on election reform.

Voters had already lined up when polls opened in Miramar and Fort Lauderdale, Florida. At one location in Cleveland, Mr Greene said he watched as poll workers tried to help one voter who didn't appear on any list find the correct place to vote.

Nearly one in three voters, including about half of those in Florida, were expected to cast ballots using ATM-style voting machines that computer scientists have criticised for their potential for software glitches, hacking and malfunctioning.

Ms Chellie Pingree, president of the citizens lobbying group Common Cause, said she feared poll workers faced with long lines would be pressured to make quick but bad interpretations on rules governing registration validity and identification require-



John Kerry hugs daughters, Vanessa and Alexandra, at a campaign rally in Milwaukee on Monday. — AFP

ments. "There's no question it's going to be a high turnout," she said. "It's going to just add more confusion to already overburdened, understaffed polling places, many of which will have as many lawyers and poll challengers as they have people voting."

During the March primaries in California and Maryland, software bugs and inexperienced poll workers accidentally eliminated some races and allowed voters to cast ballots for contests in wrong precincts. *VerifiedVoting.org*, a group of e-voting critics organised by Stanford Uni-

versity professor Mr David Dill, has recruited more than 1,300 technology professionals to serve as poll monitors on Tuesday.

Both parties had thousands of lawyers dispatched and on call to respond to the first sign of trouble.

A key problem is the lack of a unified voting system for the nation, the legacy of a patchwork of balloting technologies, regulations, partisan bickering and litigation.

Among other problems, Ohio Republicans had sought over the past week to challenge some 35,000 voters, saying mail to them

was returned undelivered, while in Colorado, Republican poll watchers complained that election officials in a Democratic stronghold failed to require early voters to produce identification.

In Palm Beach County, Florida, on Sunday, authorities arrested a freelance journalist taking pictures of voters waiting outside election headquarters.

"From what we've seen so far ... I think smooth is probably not the word used to describe" Tuesday's elections, said Kimball Brace, president of the nonpartisan consulting

firm Election Data Services. A federal law passed in response to the 2000 election mess required states to offer provisional, or backup, ballots to voters who find they are not listed on the rolls, or whose eligibility is somehow in question. The ballots are set aside and evaluated after the election — they could take 10 days or longer to resolve.

But states have interpreted the law differently. Millions of newly registered voters may wrongly assume they can vote at any precinct in their city, town or county.

Court nod to scan eligibility

CINCINNATI, Nov. 2. — A federal appeals court has cleared the way for political parties to challenge voters' eligibility at polling places throughout the key state of Ohio, ruling early Tuesday that their presence on Election Day was allowed under state law.

Overturning the orders of two federal judges from the day before, a three-judge panel of the 6th US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 2-1 early Tuesday to grant emergency stays that will allow Republicans and Democrats one challenger per precinct each. The judges consolidated the two appeals, which stemmed from separate lawsuits. Ohio is one of the states that could decide the presidential election, with support for President Bush and Mr Kerry nearly evenly divided in recent polls.

In nearly all states, including Ohio, a candidate that wins a state by any margin takes all of its electoral votes. Republicans say they wanted challengers in many polling places because of concerns about fraud. Democrats have accused the Republicans of trying to suppress Democratic turnout. — AP

Arab world watches

CAIRO, Nov. 2. — One satellite station is urging Arab viewers phone in their votes for US President George W Bush or Sen John Kerry. Kuwait television plans live coverage overnight until official results are in. The US elections are Page 1 news in almost every newspaper in the region.

No matter the medium, the message was the same: The result of Tuesday's US presidential election will greatly impact the Middle East. And Arabs are paying close attention.

While Middle East governments officially brush off the impact the outcome will have on relations with the United States, many Arabs have been frustrated and angered by what they view as Bush's misguided Middle East policy and American military aggression in Iraq.

"Arabs and Muslims are looking forward to the election results.

Maybe if Kerry wins, then there will be some hope to resolve the issues of Iraq and Palestine," said in an editorial in Jordan's pro-government Al Rai newspaper. Bush is widely viewed in the Arab world as unflinchingly pro-Israel.

Ali Okla Ersan, head of the Arab Journalists' Union in Syria, said Arabs are closely following the U.S. elections because "they are directly affected by their results due to the US occupation

of Iraq and its repercussions on neighbourin countries" as well as the Arab-Israeli conflict.

"We hope that the next US president would take a balanced and objective stand toward our basic issues, especially in Palestine," he said.

In Lebanon, Joseph Samaha, editor-in-chief of the leftist daily *As-Safir*, wrote that international relations for the foreseeable future will be affected by Americans' decision Tuesday "and the Middle East is at the heart of this equation."

It is regrettable, Samaha wrote, that the elections "will decide the fate of people who cannot vote in it." Maybe not for real, but the Arab satellite network Al-Arabiya — promoting its coverage with the slogan, "George Bush or John Kerry? The result will affect us all" — was giving its viewers a chance to pretend.

"If you had the right to vote, who would you elect?" the network asks. Call-in voting began an hour before the polls opened on the east coast.

Two hours into the calling, Bush had the early lead: 53 per cent to 47 per cent for Kerry in the unscientific gauge of viewer interest.

Television stations across the region plan special coverage of the race. State-owned Kuwait Television will air a program, "The Road to the White House," till results are announced. — AP

কেরি জিতলেও আমাদের উল্লসিত

১৯৩২
১১/১১/৩২

হওয়ার কোনও কারণ নেই

মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে যে প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচন গতকাল হয়ে গেল, সেই নির্বাচনে আমেরিকার

গৌতম সেন

কেরি প্রকাশ্যে তাঁর দায়বদ্ধতার কথা ঘোষণা করেছেন।

বামপন্থীদের এক প্রভাবশালী অংশ বুশের বিরুদ্ধে কেরিকে সমর্থন করা অধিকতর বিধেয় হিসেবে গণ্য করেছেন। না, তাঁরা কেরিকে সাম্রাজ্যবাদ-বিরোধী ব্যক্তিত্ব অথবা জনগণের সংগ্রামের শরিক হিসেবে চিহ্নিত করছেন না। তাঁরা আশ্রয় নিচ্ছেন সেই পুরনো 'কম ক্ষতিকারক' যুক্তির। তাঁদের মতে, যেহেতু আজ বুশ হচ্ছে আমেরিকা ও বিশ্বশান্তির এক নম্বর শত্রু, সুতরাং, প্রেসিডেন্ট প্রার্থী কেরিকে সমর্থন 'বেশি ক্ষতিকারক' বুশের হাত থেকে আমেরিকা ও পৃথিবীকে বাঁচাবে।

বুর্জোয়া শিবিরের মধ্যকার 'কম ক্ষতিকর' দল বা প্রার্থীকে সমর্থন করে নিজেদের এবং ব্যাপক জনগণের স্বাধীন উদ্যোগ ও বিরোধিতার ধারাকে অবদমিত করার প্রবণতা বামপন্থী শিবিরে নতুন নয়। এই বামপন্থী শিবিরের দেউলিয়াপনা এবং বুর্জোয়াদের কাছে আত্মসমর্পণকেই নির্দেশিত করে। এই প্রবণতা বাস্তব রাজনীতিতে চূড়ান্ত ক্ষতি ডেকে আনলেও এ দেশে ও অন্য দেশে এই প্রবণতা বারবার মাথাচাড়া দিয়ে উঠেছে। এই রণকৌশলের বিপর্যয়ের সবচেয়ে বড় ও আদর্শ উদাহরণ হল জার্মানিতে প্রাক-ফ্যাসিবাদী নির্বাচন।

আমরা জানি, আমেরিকার চলতি সাম্রাজ্যবাদ পলিসি রূপায়ণের নায়ক যুদ্ধবাজ বুশের বিরুদ্ধে ব্যাপক জনগণের ন্যায্য ক্রোধ, ক্ষোভ ও ঘৃণা স্বদেশে ও বিদেশে বুশ-বিরোধী বিশাল বিশাল বিক্ষোভ-মিছিল রূপে আত্মপ্রকাশ করেছে। নির্বাচনী প্রচারণার সূচনায় খোদ নিউ ইয়র্কে রিপাবলিকান কনফারেন্সের সামনে লক্ষ লক্ষ মানুষের জমায়েত এক অভূতপূর্ব বিক্ষোভের চেহারা নিয়েছিল। আমরা জানি, নির্বাচনী খেলার রীতি মেনে ডেমোক্রেটিক প্রার্থী জন কেরি প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশের বহু পদক্ষেপের (বিশেষত আফগানিস্তান ও ইরাক যুদ্ধের প্রশ্নে) সমালোচনা করেছেন। কিন্তু আমরা একই সঙ্গে জানি, মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের অভ্যন্তরীণ ও বৈদেশিক নীতির মৌলিক প্রশ্নে এই দুজনের মধ্যে কোনও গুণগত পার্থক্য নেই। তা থাকার সম্ভাবনাও নেই— কেন না, দুজনেই ওঁরা দুজনেই আমেরিকার শাসক শ্রেণীর বিশ্বস্ত প্রতিনিধি, আমেরিকা-তথা-বিশ্ব পুঁজিবাদের সেবক ও রক্ষক। আমেরিকার প্রতিরক্ষার প্রশ্নে, সারা দুনিয়ায় আমেরিকার আধিপত্যের প্রশ্নে বুশের মতোই কেরি 'স্বাদেশিক' ও 'দেশপ্রেমিক', একই 'দেশপ্রেমিক আইন'-এর কড়া সমর্থক। কেরি-শিবিরের পক্ষে ইরাক থেকে সেনা প্রত্যাহারের, ইরাকে মার্কিন দখলদারির অবসানের কোনও প্রস্তাব তো নেই-ই, বরং আছে ইরাকে সৈন্যসংখ্যা বৃদ্ধির কার্যকরী প্রস্তাব। গত বছর জন কেরি প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশের সঙ্গে গলা মিলিয়েছিলেন— 'এই নিউক্লিয়ার অস্ত্রহীনয়, ইরাকের হাতে এমন সব মারণাস্ত্র মজুত আছে, যা আমেরিকার ভয়ঙ্কর বিপদ ডেকে আনতে পারে। বুর্জোয়া শিবিরের অন্যতম মুখপাত্র ফাইন্যান্সিয়াল টাইমস-এর ভাষ্যকারের মতে, কেরির সঙ্গে বুশের পার্থক্য বিষয়বস্তু নিয়ে নয়, ভঙ্গি নিয়ে। 'চমৎকার বা... ভয়ঙ্কর' আড়ালে কেরির প্রচারভিমান মার্কিন সামরিক শক্তি ব্যবহারের সেই একইরকম (বুশের মতো) কড়া মনোভাব। অন্যভাবে বলা যায়, মার্কিন সাম্রাজ্যবাদী আগ্রাসন প্রসঙ্গে এই মুহূর্তে বুশ প্রশাসনের অভ্যন্তরে কলিন পাওয়েলের সঙ্গে ডিক চেনির যে মতপার্থক্য রয়েছে, বুশ-কেরির পার্থক্য তার চেয়ে কোনও আলাদা রকমের নয়। এই প্রায়-পার্থক্যহীনতার কারণে বুশ যদি কেরিকে প্রশ্ন করেন, তাহলে সেনাপতি পাল্টানোর কথা হচ্ছে কেন? তাহলে কেরির একটাই সম্ভাব্য জবাব— 'আরও ভালভাবে যুদ্ধটা চালানোর জন্য।' এই প্রশ্নে খেয়াল রাখতে হবে, কেরি নিজেকে ভিয়েতনাম যুদ্ধের বীর হিসেবে পরিচয় দিতে ভালবাসেন এবং এবারের নির্বাচনী প্রচারণে এই পরিচয়টা তিনি মার্কিন জাত্যাভিমান ও উগ্র জাতীয়তাবাদকে নিজের স্বপক্ষে কাজে লাগানোর চেষ্টা করেছেন। বাস্তব ঘটনা হল, তিনি ভিয়েতনাম যুদ্ধের অন্যতম সফল খুনি বীর, যিনি ততক্ষণ ভিয়েতনামে যুদ্ধে সক্রিয় ছিলেন, যতক্ষণ না তিনি যথেষ্ট 'মেডেল' সংগ্রহ করতে পেরেছিলেন। এখানে উল্লেখ করা যেতে পারে, আমেরিকার সাধারণ জনগণের বেকারি, কাজে অনিশ্চয়তা, চিকিৎসার সুযোগ থেকে বঞ্চিত হওয়া, সামাজিক সুবক্ষায় ভুক্তিকি, ছাঁটাই, কারখানা বন্ধ ও শ্রমিক ছাঁটাই ইত্যাদি প্রশ্নে কেরির কোনও সদর্থক কর্মসূচি নেই। নির্বাচনের শেষ মুহূর্তে সদ্য-বাইপাসের ধকল কাটিয়ে প্রাক্তন প্রেসিডেন্ট ক্লিনটনকে আমরা 'যুদ্ধবাজ' বুশের বিরুদ্ধে জন কেরির সমর্থনে প্রচারে নামতে দেখলাম। অথচ তথাকথিত এই শান্তিদূত ক্লিনটন জমানাতের রাষ্ট্রসংস্কার তোয়াক্ক না করেই ন্যাটো যুগ্মশক্তিভিত্তিক যথেষ্ট বোমা নিক্ষেপ করে এবং স্বদেশে উদারনৈতিক, অর্থনৈতিক সংস্কার চালু করে শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্যের মতো সেবামূলক ক্ষেত্রে অর্থ বরাদ্দের ব্যাপক ছাঁটাই শুরু হয়। এখানে উল্লেখ করা যেতে পারে, ইজরায়েলে সবরকমের অর্থনৈতিক, নৈতিক নিঃশর্ত সমর্থন প্রদানে ক্লিনটন-বুশের ধারাবাহিকতা রক্ষা করে জন

১৯৩২ সাল। প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনে নাৎসি দলের প্রার্থী ছিলেন হিটলার। প্রধান বুর্জোয়া দলের প্রার্থী ছিলেন হিডেনবার্গ। বামপন্থী অর্থাৎ সোস্যাল ডেমোক্রেটরা 'কম ক্ষতিকর' প্রার্থী হিডেনবার্গকে সমর্থন করলেন। নির্বাচনে হিডেনবার্গ জয়ী হলেন। রাষ্ট্রপতি হিডেনবার্গ চ্যাম্পেলার হিসেবে মনোনীত করলেন হিডেনবার্গকে। বামপন্থীর স্বাধীন স্বতন্ত্র উদ্যোগের পথে হিটলেন না, 'দুই ক্ষতিকর'-এর বিরুদ্ধে ব্যাপক জনগণকে সমষ্টিগত করার উদ্যোগ নিলেন না, সম্ভাব্য বিপদের বিরুদ্ধে প্রস্তুতি গ্রহণ করলেন না, বরং কোনও এক বুর্জোয়াপক্ষের লেজুডবৃত্তির পথ গ্রহণ করে শ্রমিকশ্রেণী ও জনগণকে হত্যাডায়িত্ব ও হীনবল করে তুললেন। বামপন্থী মনোভাবাপন্ন মানুষ ভরসা করে 'কম ক্ষতিকর' প্রার্থীকে ভোট দিলেন, পেলেন 'কম' ও 'বেশি' দুই ক্ষতিকরকেই। জার্মানির ঘটনাটির ছব্ব একইভাবে পুনরাবৃত্তি হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা কম। কিন্তু মনে রাখতে হবে, তখন সম্ভাব্য ফ্যাসিবাদী উত্থানের বিপদ থেকে বাঁচবার উপায় হিসেবে 'কম ক্ষতিকর' তত্ত্ব প্রয়োগের 'আলাদা' পরিস্থিতি ছিল। তবু, সেই পথ সেদিন জার্মানিকে ফ্যাসিবাদী উত্থান থেকে বাঁচাতে তো পারেইনি, বরং তার আগমনপথকে মসৃণ করে তুলেছিল।

আসলে, এই 'কম ক্ষতিকর' বুর্জোয়া প্রার্থী সন্ধানের মধ্যেই রয়েছে বামপন্থীর নৈতিক পরাজয় ও পশ্চাদপসরণ। এই বামপন্থীরা ভুলে যান, এক্ষেত্রে যে-ই জিতুক, বুর্জোয়াপক্ষই জেতে, 'বামপন্থী' এবং ব্যাপক জনগণ হারে। যদি তর্কের খাতিরে ধরেও নেওয়া যায়, আশু ফলাফলের বিচারে কম-বেশি ক্ষতির সম্ভাবনা আছে, তাহলেও 'এক ধাপ কম'কে সমর্থন করে 'এক ধাপ বেশি'র বিরুদ্ধে লড়াই করা যায় না। 'বেশি'কে পরাজিত করার বদলে এই কৌশল আসলে নিজেদের পরাজয় ডেকে আনে, ত্বরান্বিত করে নিজেদের অধঃপতন ও পতনকে। সহজতর করে তোলে সমগ্র দক্ষিণপন্থীর উত্থানকে। তা ছাড়া, শোষিত-অত্যাচারিত শিবিরে আর-একটা ক্ষতি ডেকে আনে। 'কম ক্ষতিকর' পক্ষ ধরে নেয়, বামপন্থীদের সমর্থন তো মজুত আছেই, দক্ষিণপন্থীর সমর্থন পেতে অন্যায়সে আরও দক্ষিণপন্থীর দিকে ঝোঁকা যায়। নির্বাচনে 'কম ক্ষতিকর' পক্ষ জয়ী হয়ে সরকার গড়লে 'বামপন্থী'দের 'বেশি ক্ষতিকর' জুজুর ভয় দেখানো হয়, এমন কিছু করো না যাতে 'কম ক্ষতিকর' সরকার ব্যতিব্যস্ত হয়, 'বেশি ক্ষতিকর' পক্ষ সরকার গড়তে সমর্থ হয়। 'কম ক্ষতিকর' প্রার্থীকে সমর্থনের ধারাবাহিকতাতে এই 'বামপন্থী'রা কেমন যেন ভয়ে কঁকড়ে থাকেন। স্বভাবতই এ সবের যোগফলে সমগ্র সমাজে দক্ষিণপন্থীর আধিপত্য কায়ম সহজতর হয়।

তাই আজ আমেরিকার চলতি সাম্রাজ্যবাদী ও জনবিরোধী নীতির কড়া সমালোচকরা কখনও পরোক্ষভাবে 'বুশ ছাড়া অন্য যে কেউ' কিংবা সরাসরি কেরিকে সমর্থনের যে-পথ গ্রহণ করেছেন, তা সর্বনাশা ও আত্মঘাতী। আশার কথা, আমেরিকার প্রতিবাদী জনগণের একটা অংশ সোস্যালিস্ট প্রার্থী কিংবা নির্দল বামপন্থী প্রার্থী নাদেরকে ভোট দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ করে কিংবা 'কাউকে ভোট না দেওয়ার' পথ গ্রহণ করে এই 'কম ক্ষতিকর' তত্ত্বের বিরুদ্ধে বিদ্রোহের পতাকা তুলে ধরেছেন, বুর্জোয়া শিবিরের সমস্ত পক্ষের সঙ্গে নিজেদের বিচ্ছিন্নতার কথা ঘোষণা করেছেন।

বুশ জিতলে আমাদের হতাশ বা হত্যাডায়িত্ব হওয়ার কোনও কারণ নেই। কেরি জিতলে আমাদের উল্লসিত বা হতাশ হওয়ার কোনও কারণ নেই। বুশ অথবা কেরি যে-ই জিতুক, বুর্জোয়া পক্ষ জিতবে, আমরা হারব। জিততে গেলে আমাদের ভাবতে হবে এই সীমানার বাইরে, এই সীমানা পেরিয়ে।

We're going to win, says Bush

Dallas: President Bush came home to Texas on Monday night after a last blitz through battleground states, declaring to thousands of spirited supporters, "We're going to win" over Democrat John Kerry on Election Day.

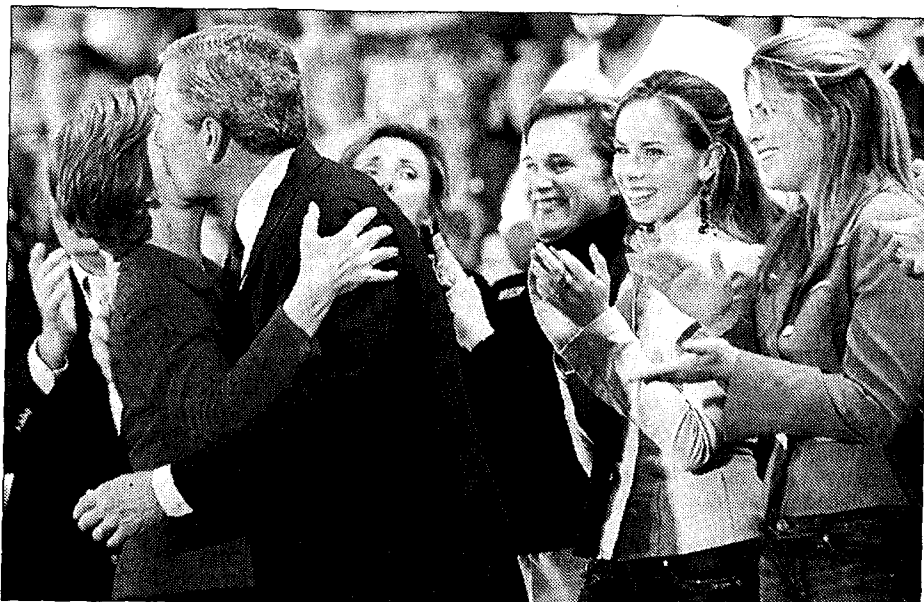
After travelling more than 2,000 miles across five states that could hold the key to victory, Bush said: "It's great to be back where it all started."

His voice raspy after a day of stump speeches, Bush told the sign-waving crowd, which included many long-time supporters, that when he first ran for Texas governor 10 years ago he ended his campaign with a rally in Dallas.

As he completes his run for a second presidential term, he said: "I'm having my last campaign rally in Dallas, and we're going to win."

"We had to do this again for good luck," said his wife, first lady Laura Bush. Bush said he and Kerry have some big differences: "He's from Massachusetts, and I'm from Texas. He is a committed liberal, and I am a compassionate conservative."

Air Force One sped the president from Ohio to Pennsylvania, on to Wisconsin and Iowa and to New Mexico, and he exhorted large crowds to turn out the vote and fend off De-



First lady Laura Bush surprises her husband with a hug and a kiss as family members look on at a rally in Iowa on Monday

mocratic Senator John Kerry. "Tomorrow is voting day, and I'm asking you to get your friends and neighbours to go to the polls. Turn out our fellow Republicans, wise independents and discerning Democrats," Bush told thousands of supporters.

Throughout the day, he argued he should be returned to the White House to pursue the war on terrorism, protect

America, see Iraq stabilise, keep taxes low and improve social programs. He said Kerry could not be trusted to be the commander-in-chief and that he would raise taxes.

He and his Republican allies were counting on a massive get-out-the-vote drive in swing states on Tuesday to carry him to victory in a race that polls show is essentially deadlocked.

Looking for any way to give himself an edge in the race, Bush planned a stop in Columbus, Ohio, on Election Day to issue a final reminder to voters to head to the polls. First he and his wife, Laura, will vote at the fire station near his Crawford, Texas, ranch.

He will await the judgement of voters from the White House. Reuters

Michigan voters get misleading phone calls

Michigan: Some Michigan voters have received phone calls falsely claiming that senator John Kerry will make gay marriages legal. In New Jersey, some voters have heard a man claiming to be former US army general Norman Schwarzkopf backing the Democrat.

Elderly voters in Pennsylvania have also been called and told they are ineligible to vote.

Republicans and Democrats were furious on Monday about the blatantly false, 11th-hour political calls to voters and demanded an end to the messages.

Schwarzkopf has endorsed President Bush. He dismissed the calls claiming that he had endorsed Kerry as false. Agencies



Indian American Congressional candidate from 1st district of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, along with his wife and children and US Senate candidate David Vitter, at the final phase of the election campaign in New Orleans on Monday

On E-Day, Kerry vows 'fundamental change'

Toledo (Ohio): Democratic challenger John Kerry urged Americans to go to the polls on Tuesday and hold President George W. Bush accountable for the last four years by voting for fundamental change. "The hopes of our country are on the line," the Massachusetts Senator told an airport rally in Toledo shortly after midnight where he was met with a chorus of "No more days!"

Kerry sprinted through a swathe of battleground states in a final pre-election dash bidding to break the deadlocked race with the Republican incumbent. "It's great to be here in Toledo, the first stop on Election Day," Kerry said. "I think George Bush is back home in bed in Crawford, but I'm here fighting for every single vote that we can get."

Bush travelled more than 2,000 miles through five states on Monday before heading to his ranch in Crawford, Texas. Kerry left Toledo for La Crosse, Wisconsin, where he was spending the night before returning to Boston to vote and mark an Election Day tradition—lunch at the Union Oyster House.

"This campaign is coming to an end today," he said. "Today is decision day. You have an opportunity now, this day, to make a fundamental change in America. The hopes of the country are on the line."

Kerry set out from Florida on one of the longest days of his general election campaign—six stops in four states. Singers Jon Bon Jovi, Stevie Wonder and Bruce Springsteen provided star power for his last-minute push for votes at rallies in Milwaukee, Detroit and Cleveland.

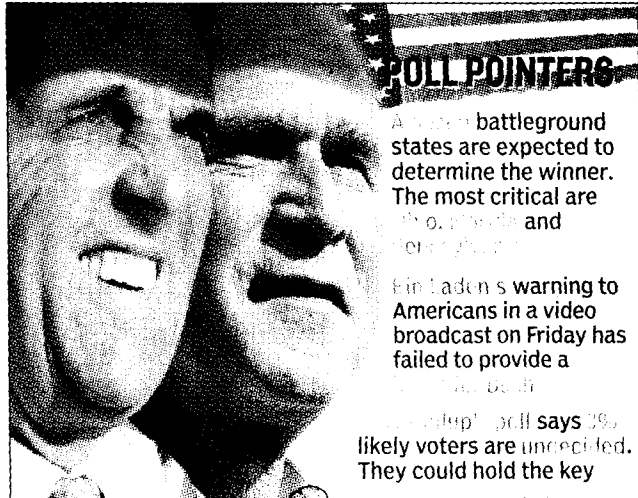
In each battleground state—Florida, Wisconsin, Ohio and Michigan, he urged Americans to go to the polls—especially the thousands of newly registered voters. At each stop, Kerry framed the choice voters face: Four

more years of the same "failed" economic and foreign policies or a fresh start. "Take away the clutter. Take away all the labels—Democrat, Republican, independent," Kerry said. "This is your chance to hold George Bush accountable for the last four years."

Trying to convince Americans he could handle the job of commander-in-chief, Kerry slammed Bush and vice-president Dick Cheney in a television interview for portraying him as weak-kneed and not tough enough to fight an aggressive war on terror. Reuters



The Kerrys embrace after the presidential candidate addressed his supporters at the City Hall in Cleveland on Monday



Swing states lean towards Kerry

Susan Page
Washington, November 1

SENATOR JOHN Kerry has erased President Bush's modest lead and the two candidates head into Election Day tied at 49 per cent each, a nationwide *USA Today*/CNN/Gallup Poll shows.

Across the dozen battleground states expected to determine the winner, Kerry holds a 5-percentage-point edge — including small leads among likely voters in the critical states of Ohio and Florida. He trails by a similar margin in the third big battleground, Pennsylvania.

But *USA Today* polls nationwide and in six competitive states show a contest that either candidate could win. The battle between mammoth get-out-the-vote operations and the prospect of a flood of new voters are the key to who will win this election.

A week earlier, Bush had led Kerry on who would better

handle the situation in Iraq by 11 percentage points; that edge shrank to 4 points. The 22-point advantage Bush had held in handling terrorism was cut in half.

Last week, Bush led Kerry 51 per cent to 46 per cent. The new survey of 1,573 likely voters, taken Friday through Sunday, has a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points.

Matthew Dowd, chief strategist for the Bush campaign, disputes Gallup's assumptions about the 3 per cent of likely voters who said they were undecided. Gallup's formula assumes that 9 of 10 of those voters would support Kerry, based on analyses of previous presidential races involving an incumbent.

Without allocating those voters, Bush led Kerry 49 per cent to 47 per cent among likely voters. Among the larger group of registered voters, Kerry led Bush 48 per cent to 46 per cent. **USA Today**

* See also Page 13

2 NOV 2004 THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

'States that don't tamper with our security ensure their own'

Excerpts From Bin Laden's Video To Americans

Oh American people, my talk to you is about the best way to avoid another Manhattan, about the war, its causes, and results.

Security is an important pillar of human life. Free people do not relinquish their security. This is contrary to Bush's claim that we hate freedom.

Let him tell us why we did not strike Sweden, for example. It is known that those who hate freedom do not have proud souls, like the souls of the 19 people killed while perpetrating the 11 September 2001 attacks may God have mercy on them. We fought you because we are free and do not accept injustice. We want to restore freedom to our nation. Just as you waste our security, we will waste your security.

Striking the towers'

I am amazed at you. Although almost four years have passed since the 11 September incidents, Bush is still practising distortion and confusion. He also continues to conceal from you the real reason (for the 11 September attacks).

Thus, the motives still exist for repeating what happened. I will speak to you about the reasons behind these incidents. I will honestly tell you about the minutes in which the decision was made so that you will consider. I say to you that God knows that the idea of striking the towers never occurred to us. Your security is in your own hands. But, after things had gone too far and we saw the injustice of the US-Israeli alliance against our people in Palestine and Lebanon, I started thinking of that.

The events that influenced me directly trace back to 1982 and subsequent events when the United States gave permission to the Israelis to invade Lebanon, with the aid of the sixth

US fleet. At those difficult moments, many meanings that are hard to describe went on in my mind. However, these meanings produced an overwhelming feeling to reject injustice and generated a strong determination



to punish the unjust ones.

While I was looking at those destroyed towers in Lebanon, it occurred to me to punish the unjust one in a similar manner by destroying towers in the United States so that it would feel some of what we felt and to be deterred from killing our children and women... We did not find it difficult to deal with Bush and his administration, because it is similar to regimes in our countries, half of which are governed by the military and the other half of which are governed by the sons of kings and presidents; and we have a long experience with them. In both categories, you find many who are characterised by hubris, arrogance, greed, and unlawful acquisition of money.

This similarity transpired since

Bush Senior's visit to the region,

Election rigging

While some of our people were dazzled by the United States and hoped that these visits would affect our countries, he, instead, was affected by these royal and military regimes, envying them for remaining in their posts for scores of years, embezzling public money without being held accountable or monitored. Accordingly, he transferred dictatorship and the repression of freedoms to his son by introducing the Patriot Act under the pretext of fighting terrorism. Bush Senior deemed it appropriate to assign his sons to states. He also did not forget to convey the (election) rigging experience from the leaders of the Arab region to Florida to benefit from it at critical times... We had agreed with the chief amir of the 11 September hijackers (Mohammed Atta) that he should accomplish all the operations within 20 minutes before Bush and his administration could take notice.

It never occurred to us that the supreme commander of the US armed forces would leave 50,000 of his citizens in the two towers to face those great horrors alone, at a time when they needed him badly. This is because it seemed to him that being preoccupied with the little child's talk about her goat and its butting was more important than being preoccupied with the planes and their ramming into the skyscrapers. This gave us three times the period required for carrying out the operations, praise be to God.

Your security does not lie in the hands of Kerry, Bush, or Al Qaida. Your security is in your own hands. Each and every state that does not tamper with our security will have automatically assured its own security.

2 NOV 2006 THE TIMES OF INDIA

জালিয়াতির আশঙ্কা নিয়েই আজ ভোট

সীমা সিরোহি • ওয়াশিংটন

১ নভেম্বর: গোটা দুনিয়া তাকিয়ে রয়েছে যে দেশের ভোটপর্বের দিকে, সেই আমেরিকায় প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনের কয়েক ঘণ্টা আগে ভোটারদের ভাবিয়ে তুলেছে ভোটের বৈধতার প্রশ্ন। আমেরিকার ৫৯ শতাংশেরও বেশি মানুষ মনে করছেন, তাঁদের ভোট বৈধ হিসাবে গ্রাহ্য হবে না। গোনা হবে না। বা হারিয়ে যাবে। চার বছর আগের নির্বাচনে ফ্লোরিডায় ৫৩৭ ভোটে জিতেছিলেন জর্জ বুশ। অভিযোগ ছিল কারচুপি। আশঙ্কা, এ বার অনেক রাজ্যেই ফ্লোরিডার ঘটনার পুনরাবৃত্তি হতে পারে।

নির্বাচনী সহায়ক কমিশন জানাচ্ছে, ৫০টি রাজ্যে অন্তত ৫ লক্ষ ভোটকর্মীর ঘাটতি রয়েছে। তার মানে, বহু ভোটারকে দীর্ঘ লাইনে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকতে হবে, স্বেচ্ছাসেবকদের খামখেয়ালিপনা সহ্য করতে হবে। সরকারি ও বেসরকারি সংস্থাগুলির কাছে লোক চেয়ে আর্জি জানিয়েছে কমিশন। শহুরে এলাকায় ঝামেলা আরও বেশি, কারণ সেখানে একাধিক ভাষা-বলিয়ে কর্মী দরকার। প্রসঙ্গত, আমেরিকায় ভোটকর্মীদের গড় বয়স ৭২ বছর। অধিকাংশই স্বেচ্ছাসেবক এবং অবসরপ্রাপ্ত।

বুশ-কেরি দ্বৈরথকে ঘিরে আরও একটা আশঙ্কা মাথা চাড়া দিচ্ছে। প্রেসিডেন্ট রিচার্ড নিম্নন, রোনাল্ড রেগন ও বিল ক্লিন্টনের উপদেষ্টা হিসাবে কাজ করে আসা ডেভিড গেগর্গনি মনে করছেন, ভোটের পরে প্রচুর মামলা চোঁকা হবে।



রিপাবলিকান নিম্নন যে বার প্রথম ভোটে নেমে জন এফ কেনেডির বিরুদ্ধে লড়লেন, সে বার তাঁর সহযোগীরা পরামর্শ দিয়েছিলেন ভোটের ফল মেনে না-নিয়ে মামলা করার জন্য। কিন্তু নিম্নন আগেভাগে ডেমোক্র্যাট কেনেডির কাছে হার স্বীকার করে নেন। ইলিনয়ে বহু মৃত ব্যক্তির 'ভোট' কেনেডির জয় নিশ্চিত করেছিল বলে অভিযোগ রয়েছে।

প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনকে সামনে রেখে নির্বাচনী সংস্কারের জন্য সরব হয়েছিল ডেমোক্র্যাটেরা। সি এন এনের নামকরা ভাষ্যকার বিল স্কেনেইডার ভারতের দুঃস্থের কথা শুনিয়েছেন। বলেছেন, মে মাসে লক্ষ লক্ষ নিরক্ষর মানুষও ভোট দিয়েছেন ভারতের নির্বাচনে। কিন্তু ভোটপর্ব মসৃণ ভাবেই মিটেছে। প্রযুক্তিগত ক্ষেত্রে পৃথিবীর এক নম্বর দেশের কাছে

স্বভাবতই এটা যথেষ্ট বিব্রত হওয়ার কারণ।

তদন্তমূলক সাংবাদিকতায় প্রতিভাশালী গ্রেগ পালাস্ট বলেছেন, ফ্লোরিডায় ৪ হাজারেরও বেশি ভোটারকে নিয়ে কারচুপি হয়েছে, কোনও ব্যবস্থাই নেওয়া হয়নি। হাজার চারেকেরও বেশি ছাত্রছাত্রীকে এমন একটা ফর্ম সই করিয়ে নেওয়া হয়েছে, যার ফলে তাঁরা ভোটার হিসাবে দু'জায়গায় নথিভুক্ত হবেন। ফ্লোরিডার আইন দফতর বলেছে, তারা এখন এত ব্যস্ত যে, এই অভিযোগের তদন্ত করতে পারবে না। কলোরাডোয় দণ্ডপ্রাপ্ত ৬ হাজার লোকের নাম ভোটার তালিকা থেকে

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

আশঙ্কা নিয়েই আজ ভোট

প্রথম পাতার পর

বাদ দেওয়ার চেষ্টা হচ্ছে বলে অভিযোগ করেছেন ডেমোক্র্যাটেরা। আমেরিকার যুক্তরাষ্ট্রীয় আইন অনুসারে ভোটের অন্তত ৯০ দিন আগে ভোটার লিস্ট থেকে নাম বাদ দেওয়ার কাজ সেরে নিতে হয়, যাতে সংশ্লিষ্ট ব্যক্তি প্রতিবাদ জানানোর সময় পান। ওহাইয়োয় জাল ভোটারদের নিয়ে রিপাবলিকান অভিযোগের শুনানি হবে কি না, তা এখনও ঠিক হয়নি।

আইনি লড়াই আর কারচুপির ভুরিভুরি অভিযোগ নিয়ে মার্কিন জনতা যখন ভাবিত, দুই প্রার্থী তখন শেষ বেলার প্রচারে ঘুরেছেন গির্জাগুলোয়। প্রোটেষ্ট্যান্ট বুশ ক্যাথলিক সমর্থন আদায়ের চেষ্টায় আছেন, কারণ গর্ভপাত বা স্টেম সেল নিয়ে গবেষণার মতো বিষয়ে ক্যাথলিক গির্জা ও বুশ একই রকম বিরোধী। কেরি ঘুরেছেন আফ্রো-মার্কিন গির্জায়, ডেমোক্র্যাট

সমর্থকদের মধ্যেই।

ভোটের ছোঁয়া এখন লেগেছে আপাতনিরীহ বিষয়েও। যেমন, হ্যালোউইন (ভূত-পেঙ্গি-দত্যা-দানো সেজে ছোটদের পরব) উৎসবেও বিক্রি হচ্ছে বুশ আর কেরির মুখোশ। এবং বুশের মুখোশের কাটতি যে হেতু একটু বেশি, ধরে নেওয়া হচ্ছে তিনিই 'ফেভারিট'। ওয়েবসাইটে বেটিং চলছে, বাজির দর বুশের পক্ষে।

শেষ বিচারে কত লোক ভোট দিতে বেরোবেন এবং নতুন ভোটারেরা কার দিকে ঝুঁকবেন, তার উপরেই নির্ভর করবে কে হোয়াইট হাউসে যাবেন। তার আগে আজকের রাতটা প্রবল উদ্বেগে কাটাবেন কেরি। তুলনায় বুশ খানিকটা নিশ্চিত। যুদ্ধ, সম্ভ্রাসবাদ, নিখোঁজ গণবিধ্বংসী অস্ত্র— কোনও কিছুই তাঁকে তেমন ভাবাচ্ছে বলে মনে হয় না। জর্জ বুশ বিশ্বাস করেন, ঈশ্বর তাঁকে এ যাত্রায় পার করে দেবেন।

2 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Shows of farce

In absence of an effective opposition, the Bush administration managed to prettily package propoganda so that Americans went on killing and dying for nothing, write KURT JACOBSEN and SAYEED HASAN KHAN ^{2/11} ^{WSO} ^{SI-9}

WHY is it so hard for politicians to behave with honesty or dignity in public forums? Television viewers in late September were treated to the sight of the US Congress rapturously applauding former CIA contact and interim Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi who told them that "we are succeeding in Iraq" and that the "overwhelming majority of Iraqis are grateful" to the USA. He must have meant an "overwhelming majority" minus one hundred thousand Iraqis, mostly women and children, who a new Lancet study estimates have died as a result of the utterly unnecessary invasion.

It's one thing for members of Congress to be diplomatic and quite another to fawn unashamedly over a pawn. The fawning, to be sure, was not for Allawi alone but for his puppet masters in the Bush White House. Given the ovations interspersing Allawi's speech, one might imagine he descended from the clouds and, with a wave of his hand, had brought peace and harmony to Iraq. Yet, a quick check back to planet Earth revealed that US casualties were mounting, innocent Iraqis were being slaughtered by car bombs and helicopter gun ships, hostages were being grabbed and beheaded, Shia and Sunni insurgents were battling implacably on, and that the whole grisly situation was out of control. Contrary to Allawi's happy talk, Iraq had not rolled over and asked the US neocons to tickle its belly. Still, the US Congress applauded Allawi.

The televised spectacle was nauseating because most Democrats, and a good few Republicans, in attendance knew full well that the Iraq invasion was a wildly misconceived catastrophe and that there is no graceful way out except to leave as fast as possible. These same congressmen and women had been deceived into war by a Bush administration that treated them with bemused contempt. All's fair and no holds barred. Indeed in the televised October debates, Bush and Vice-President Cheney doggedly told the same old lies about WMD and Al-Qaida connections in the same folksy tones, occasionally throwing in a new whopper. No person with a smidgen of self-respect who knows the realities of the war could have hailed Allawi, and thereby approved the slimy administration who concocted him.

While it's not hard to see why Republicans want to whistle past the new graveyards they are creating every day in Iraq, why did many Democrats play along? The sad reason is that US legislators were snared in a simple-minded yet powerful ideological trap. American politicians do not dare to appear to do anything that



A participant in the annual Halloween parade in New York dressed as George Bush being led on a leash by another dressed as Dick Cheney, and (below) a kiosk owner in Baghdad arranges his magazines showing images of the presidential candidates. — AFP

remotely can be construed as undermining "the war effort", as defined in stringent Right-wing terms: "Our country - right or wrong." That is why John Kerry trumpeted his military credentials ahead of any progressive policies on health, jobs, and welfare that he may (or may not) harbour. No matter how unjust or crazy or counterproductive a war may be, it is somehow a betrayal of "our" troops to point out disturbing facts. Never mind that especially today neither the leaders themselves nor their privileged offspring have any combat experience. Never mind that the Bush administration has tried to cut combat pay, slash support payments to military families, and cut health access to veterans. Never mind that self-styled patriots such as these are usually the very people who most betray the troops.

During the Vietnam war, the sentiment that Right-wing ideologues whipped up about "supporting our troops" enabled them to prolong that hideous war - which Navy veteran John Kerry bravely denounced in 1971 - for several years beyond the clearest evidence of its total futility. In so doing, these truculent patriots, who sought to stamp out dissent through government repression and private harassment, were full accomplices in the deaths of many more American troops, and all for nothing but their precious pride. But that is a hard truth that you

will never ever encounter in the corporate controlled American media. No matter how stupid or ill-conceived the reason, once troops are on the ground, there is nothing to do but more of the same. The key exception to this numb-skull rule is Republican Presidents like Reagan, who pulled American forces out of Lebanon in 1981 after a car bomb



killed 256 marines, or the Bush senior administration which skedaddled out of Somalia in 1992 after 18 soldiers died in street fighting. Right-wingers are extremely good at forgiving and forgetting their own sins and errors, but never those of others.

Perhaps one quarter to a third of the US population is hopelessly Right-wing. Hence, there is great deal of reliance on media control and pseudo-patriotic messages to rope in enough voters to form an electoral majority. Over many decades, half the American electorate, the poorer half, have been systematically discouraged from voting which leaves the electoral field to the more affluent half and

plays entirely to Republican advantage. The Republican campaign is geared to voter suppression for they have nothing but empty promises and scams to offer to the far from wealthy majority.

An imperial leadership, of course, lauds its troops only so long as they are useful. The flap over the missing arms from the Al-Qa Qaa dump stirred Republicans like Rudolph Giuliani and Richard Armitage to blame the problem on the troops while Bush nonetheless blithely claimed that it was Kerry blaming the soldiers. In the latter years of the Vietnam war many Americans, the very sort who today believe that Saddam caused 9/11, imagined the USA was fighting to get its prisoners of war back, as if those prisoners had been snatched off the streets of the USA by the Viet Cong.

The same US Congress in July last year welcomed Tony Blair just after the "mission" in Iraq was supposedly "accomplished". You can't blame the Republicans for cherishing a sucker. Again, why did Democrats do so? You would think that the USA (and UK) military was minding its own business on a convoy of tour buses in Iraq when they suddenly found themselves surrounded and under attack. Speaking of Blair, the British parliament demonstrated that it had the courage to save foxes from posh hunters but they

could not earlier muster the nerve to save the Iraqis from ambitious American neo-imperialists. The British Labour Party, unlike the Democrats, was deeply split over the wisdom of following Bush, and had the slightly saving grace of offering some dissent - though it did the Iraqis little good. And British troops today are moving into the Baghdad region to enable US troops to carry on their point-less slaughter elsewhere.

Let us, by contrast, recall a television tape of Saddam Hussein in July 1979 slithering into the Iraqi Ba'athist Assembly and relishing the sight of his henchmen dragging one politician after another to execution. In the midst of this ghastliness, frightened legislators leaped up to scream their undying (they hoped) devotion to Saddam, with terrifyingly sincere tears in their eyes and lumps in the throats they hoped he wouldn't cut. They at least had an excellent excuse we can all understand. What were the other politicians afraid of?

Any remark that a US Right-wing media motor mouth can portray as designed to demoralise "our boys" out in the Gulf still must be avoided at all costs. That is why in November 2001 many Senators who knew better, including John Kerry and Hilary Clinton, voted to award George W Bush power to intervene whenever this utterly unfit leader saw fit. Yet, this craven collapse of good sense was nothing new. In August 1964, only two Senators dissented from the Tonkin Gulf resolution that gave Lyndon Johnson permission to do whatever he pleased in Vietnam. LBJ was himself driven into stupid excesses by fear of the Right: "Don't pay attention to what those little shits on the campuses do," he told an associate in the mid-1960s. "The great beast is the reactionary elements in the country. Those are the people we have to fear."

So John Kerry cannot say out loud that oil or military bases or control of West Asia have anything to do with the activities of American foreign policy. John F Kennedy in 1960 played to the Right of Nixon in order to win. Kerry cannot say - as we suspect - that he really wants to pull out. The Right would go crazy. With a complicit media, no one need tell the truth anyway. Lacking a courageous Opposition, devious motives are prettily packaged in propaganda words like "freedom". Americans go on killing and dying for nothing. And we wind up in increasingly authoritarian societies: whether run by a uniformed general like Musharaff, or run by a general without uniform, as strutting George W Bush so clearly fancies himself.

(The authors are freelance contributors.)

ভারত চায় কেরির জয়



কেরি ও বুশ। মুখোমুখি বিতর্কে। ছবি: এ এফ পি

চাণক্য সেন

২ নভেম্বর মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচন হবে, তার ফলাফল ভারতে দাঁড়াবে ৩ নভেম্বর অর্থাৎ বুধবার। যাঁরা মঙ্গলবারের রাত দুটো- আড়াইটে পর্যন্ত জেগে থেকে সি এন এন-এর সামনে বসে থাকবেন তাঁরা অবশ্য মঙ্গলবারই জানতে পারবেন। সব তথাকথিত পণ্ডিতের মতে জর্জ বুশ ও জন কেরির মধ্যে চুলোচুলি লড়াই চলছে। শেষতম রাজনৈতিক ওপিনিয়ন পোলগুলিতে দেখা যাচ্ছে সামগ্রিকভাবে হাওয়া এখন জন কেরির দিকে। কিন্তু ভারতের অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে ওপিনিয়ন পোল, এমনকি এক্সিট পোলও সম্পূর্ণ বিশ্বাসযোগ্য নয়।

নিঃসন্দেহে বলা যায়, বুশ প্রশাসন চার বছরে আমেরিকার সমাজকে দুটি ভাগে ভাগ করে দিয়েছে। ডেমোক্রেটিক পার্টির ভাইস প্রেসিডেন্ট পদের প্রার্থী জন এডওয়ার্ডস তিন মাস আগেই বলে দিয়েছিলেন বুশ প্রশাসন মার্কিন সমাজকে ধনী ও অ-ধনী এই দু'ভাগে ভাগ করে দিয়েছে। অ-ধনীদের সংখ্যা ধনীদের চেয়ে অনেক বেশি। অ-ধনীরা যদি মনে করেন তাঁদের স্বার্থকে বড় রকমের আঘাত করেছেন জর্জ বুশ, তা হলে জন কেরির জয় অনিবার্য। কিন্তু অ-ধনীদের মধ্যেও

এরপর ৪ পাতায়

ভারত চায় কেরির জয়

১ পাতার পর

একটা মোটা অংশ জর্জ বুশকে ভোট দেবে। তাই লড়াই হয়ে তীব্র। নির্বাচন সমীক্ষকরা এক বাক্যে বলছেন মার্কিন ইতিহাসে পঞ্চাশ বছর কোনও প্রেসিডেন্সিয়াল নির্বাচন এত নোংরা হয়নি। ২০০৩ সালের মার্চ মাসে জর্জ বুশ ইরাক আক্রমণ করেন। সেই থেকে এখন পর্যন্ত এক লক্ষেরও বেশি সাধারণ ইরাকি মানুষ মার্কিন আক্রমণের ফলে নিহত হয়েছে। সারা মুসলমান জগৎ ক্ষুব্ধকায় শাসকবর্গ বাদে, এখন তীব্র মার্কিন বিরোধী। দুনিয়ার কোনও দেশে আমেরিকা এখন সম্মানিত শক্তি নয়। প্রিস্টন ইউনিভার্সিটির স্বখ্যাত অর্থনীতিবিদ ক্রুগম্যান নিউইয়র্ক টাইমসে তাঁর কলামে লিখে আসছেন, আরও চার বছর ক্ষমতায় থাকলে জর্জ বুশ ও তাঁর ঘনিষ্ঠ রিপাবলিকানরা মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রকে আধা-ফ্যাসিস্ট রাষ্ট্রে পরিণত করবেন। নতুন এক জিঘাংসু সাম্রাজ্যবাদের পতাকা উড়বে হোয়াইট হাউসের মাথায়। ভারতের স্বার্থ কোন দিকে আঙুল দেখাচ্ছে? কিছু কিছু ভারতীয় মনে করছেন জর্জ বুশ ইসলামিক সন্ত্রাসবাদের বিরুদ্ধে জবরদস্ত লড়াই করে পাকিস্তানের মৌলবাদীদের ওপর ও আফগানিস্তানের তালিবানদের ওপর যে বিপুল চাপ সৃষ্টি করেছেন তাতে ভারতের স্বার্থ রক্ষিত হয়েছে। জর্জ বুশ হোয়াইট হাউসে আরও চার বছর থাকলে পাকিস্তানের সামরিক জেনারেল পরভেজ মুশারফকে অনবরত চাপ দিয়ে ভারতের স্বার্থ সুরক্ষিত করবেন, এমনকি কাশ্মীর সমস্যার এমন সমাধানেও মুশারফকে সংযুক্ত করবেন যা ভারতের স্বার্থকে সুরক্ষিত রাখবে। তা ছাড়া রিপাবলিকান পার্টি সাধারণত মুক্ত বাণিজ্যে বিশ্বাসী। জর্জ বুশ পুনর্নির্বাচিত হলে মার্কিন আউট সোর্সিং কমবে না, বরং বাড়বে।

এই স্বস্তি-বাণীতে মস্ত এক ফাঁক রয়েছে। জিঘাংসুক মার্কিন সাম্রাজ্যবাদ যদি তৃতীয় বিশ্বের চারদিকে ছড়িয়ে পড়ে, ভারতের স্বার্থও বিপন্ন হবে যদি ভারত সাম্রাজ্যবাদী আমেরিকার বশব্দ মিত্র না হয়। যেমন হয়েছে টনি ব্ল্যায়ারের নেতৃত্বে ক্ষীণবল ইংল্যান্ড। জর্জ বুশও বাধ্য হবেন মার্কিন দেশে কর্মসংস্থান বাড়াতে অর্থাৎ আউট সোর্সিংকে সঙ্কুচিত করতে। পেট্রলের দাম আরও বাড়বে বই কমবে না। তা ছাড়া মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে আধাফ্যাসিস্ট রাষ্ট্র নির্মিত হলে সারা দুনিয়ার ভারসাম্য বিপন্ন হবে। সেই দুনিয়ায় ভারত তার স্বাভাবিক ও আত্মসম্মান নিয়ে মাথা তুলে দাঁড়াতে পারবে না। পৃথিবীতে একচ্ছত্র ক্ষমতা প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্য বুশ শাসিত আমেরিকা তাইওয়ানকে স্বাধীনতা ঘোষণার জন্য উস্কে দিয়ে চীনের সঙ্গে যুদ্ধের পথ তৈরি করবে। আমেরিকার অন্যতম প্রধান প্রচেষ্টা হবে ভারতকে চীনের প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী করে তোলা। জন কেরি নেতা হিসেবে বিশেষ আকর্ষক নন। কিন্তু তাঁর নির্বাচন প্রচেষ্টার পিছনে রয়েছে লক্ষ লক্ষ সাধারণ মার্কিন যুবক-যুবতী, মহিলা সমাজের বৃহত্তম অংশ, প্রায় সমস্ত কৃষকায় মার্কিন সমাজ এবং শত শত প্রগতিশীল মার্কিন লেখক, সাংবাদিক, অভিনেতা- অভিনেত্রী ও সমাজসেবী। বস্তুতপক্ষে ভিয়েতনাম যুদ্ধের পরে বৃহত্তম সামাজিক প্রতিবাদ মুখর ও সক্রিয় হয়ে উঠেছে জন কেরির নির্বাচনকে বাস্তব করতে। এই প্রগতিবাদী মানবিক প্রবাহ ছড়িয়ে পড়েছে অন্তত ৪৫টি মার্কিন রাজ্যে। সমস্ত মানব সমাজের পক্ষে এই প্রগতিবাদী প্রবাহ উন্নততর ভবিষ্যতের প্রতিশ্রুতি বহন করছে। ভারতের তথা সমগ্র উন্নয়নশীল পৃথিবীর, এমনকি পশ্চিম ইউরোপের প্রধান শক্তিগুলির পক্ষেও কেরির বিজয় হবে প্রগতির সম্ভাবনাবহ। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে ৫ লক্ষ ভারতীয় ভোটারের বৃহত্তম অংশ ভোট দেবে জন কেরি ও জন এডওয়ার্ডসকে। ভারতীয় রাজনৈতিক মানসিকতাও জন কেরির বিজয় প্রার্থী।

01 NOV 2004 AAJKAL

No change in terror alert: USA

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Oct. 31. — The Bush administration left the terror threat level unchanged yesterday, despite warning state and local officials that a videotape message from Osama bin Laden may portend a new terrorist attack.

"We don't have to go to (code level) orange to take action in response either to these tapes or just general action to improve security around the country," homeland security secretary Mr Tom Ridge said.

Mr Ridge urged Americans to go ahead with plans to vote on Tuesday without undue concern. Mr Ridge's department and the FBI issued a memo late Friday to local and state officials, hours after a new videotape of Bin Laden surfaced.

"We remain concerned about Al-Qaida's interest in attacking the American homeland, and we cannot discount the possibility that the video may be intended to promote violence or serve as a signal for an attack," it said. Most of the United States has been at code yellow, the midpoint of a five-point colour-coded warning scale, for much of the year.

Since August, the terror alert for the financial section in New York, Washington and Newark, New Jersey, has stood at orange, or high. At that time, administration officials disclosed Al-Qaida had conducted surveillance of four buildings.

Injecting himself into the

Al-Qaida plots UK attacks

London, Oct. 31. — Al-Qaida terrorists are planning attacks against British military bases, a media report quoting a classified British intelligence document said.

There is a "substantial" threat against military bases from international terrorists organisations, said the *Sunday Telegraph*, which claimed to have obtained the document, entitled Security Update September 2004.

Horse Guards Parade, Wellington Barracks, and the Royal Guard Rooms in Buckingham Palace — all in central London — face a "severe" threat, the second highest danger level, it said.

The document, marked "restricted", has been distributed to all military garrisons in Britain, it said. — PTI

election, Osama said USA must stop threatening the security of Muslims if it wants to avoid "another Manhattan."

Voters unmoved

American voters say the re-appearance of Osama has not influenced them about the upcoming election, a leading US daily reported today, PTI adds from New York. Supporters of Mr Bush have said the tape had strengthened their resolve to vote for him reminding them of the threats faced by the country, while Mr Kerry's supporters said the tape was yet another reminder that the Bush administration had failed to catch the Al-Qaida leader.

0 1 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Osama's threat won't sway us, say US voters

S. Rajagopalan and Agencies
Washington/New York, Oct 31

US VOTERS say the sudden re-appearance of Osama bin Laden will not influence their vote in the presidential election, *The New York Times* reported today. This seems to be borne out by the latest opinion polls, most of which show the candidates still virtually tied and headed for a photo finish in Tuesday's vote.

Supporters of President George Bush say the Osama tape has strengthened their resolve to vote Republican by reminding them of the grave threats still faced by the country; while John Kerry's supporters say the tape is yet another reminder that the Bush administration has failed to catch the al-Qaida leader.

Even the undecided say the tape would not influence their decision, the newspaper reported on the basis of dozens of interviews in five key states after the broadcast of Osama's new message. Some think the terrorist leader was trying to tip the election towards Kerry while others say he was angling for four more years for Bush.

"It (the tape) doesn't have anything to do with the election," Paul Christene, a Bush supporter, told the newspaper. "I will stick with Bush."

Kerry supporters were equally unfazed. "We're dug in," Jan Hill said. "People I know are so polarised, it doesn't make any difference."

Her husband added that having been subjected to a constant barrage of commercials from the candidates and a flood of news reports about the election, the



Kerry in Ohio on Saturday.

Head-to-head

Newsweek Bush 50-44

Washington Post Bush 49-48

Fox News Bush 47-45

Reuters/Zogby Kerry 47-46

Key states Florida, Ohio & Pennsylvania, which have 68 seats in the 538-member electoral college

Osama tape was just another note in the cacophony. "I don't think people are really responding any more," he said. "We're shellshocked."

Pundits believe the race is set for a possible replay of Election 2000 that was mired in recounts and lawsuits for 36 days before a vertically-divided Supreme Court narrowly decided in favour of Bush. Analysts say the race is so difficult to predict this time because of the extraordinary voter interest, as reflected by the big surge in registration of new voters.

■ See also Page 13

শেষ সমীক্ষায় এগিয়ে গেলেন বুশ, উত্তেজনায় টানটান দু'পক্ষই

সীমা সিরোহি • ওয়াশিংটন

৩১ অক্টোবর: প্রচারপর্বের বাগযুদ্ধ পৌঁছেছে তার তুঙ্গ মুহূর্তে। সরাসরি লড়াই দু'দিন বাদে, ভোটের বাজ্রে। এত দিন দাঁড়িপাল্লা কখনও ঝুঁকিয়ে বুশের দিকে, কখনও কেরির দিকে। তবে, একেবারে অন্তিম পর্বের একটি জনমতসমীক্ষা কিন্তু এক ধাক্কাই ছয় পয়েন্টে এগিয়ে রাখল বুশকেই। গোটা প্রচারপর্ব জুড়ে বুশ গা থেকে নামাননি তাঁর হলুদ রঙের 'পমা' জ্যাকেট। শেষ সমীক্ষা জ্যাকেটের মান রেখেছে। ফলে, স্বভাবতই কেরি-শিবিরের শিরদাঁড়ায় এখন ঠান্ডা শ্রোত।

ভোটের হাওয়া বেশ কিছুটা ঘুরিয়ে দিয়েছে লাদেনের হঠাৎ উদয় হওয়া ভিডিওটেপ। ডেমোক্রেটরা আশঙ্কা করছেন, এই টেপ সম্ভবত বুশেরই সুবিধা করবে। কারণ, মূলত জাতীয় নিরাপত্তার প্রশ্নেই এ বার ভোট

লড়ছেন বুশ। বুশের রাজনৈতিক উপদেষ্টা কার্ল রোড ইতিমধ্যেই কেরিকে সতর্ক করে বলেছেন, লাদেনের টেপকে রাজনৈতিক ফায়দা তোলার কাজে ব্যবহার করলে ভাল হবে না। বুশ তাঁর প্রচারের প্রথম পর্বেই মিশিগানে ভোটারদের মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন, “এই প্রথম আমেরিকা একাধারে যুদ্ধ আর লাগাতার আক্রমণের ছমকি মাথায় নিয়ে ভোটে নামছে। এমনটি এর আগে আর কখনও হয়নি।” এখন অনেকে এও মনে করছেন, জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা এবং ইরাকে বুশের ব্যর্থতার প্রসঙ্গকে হাতিয়ার করে কেরি একটা কৌশলগত ভুল করে ফেলেছেন। তাঁর উচিত ছিল, পুরোপুরি অভ্যন্তরীণ বিষয়গুলির প্রতি মন দেওয়া। কেরি জিতলে প্রশাসনে পদ পেতেই পারেন এমন এক জনের কথায়, “গত সপ্তাহেও নিশ্চিত ছিলাম, জিতছি। কিন্তু আজ আর সেটা জোর

দিয়ে বলতে পারছি না।”

লাদেনের পাশাপাশি আর একটি ঘটনাও অবশ্য মার্কিন মনকে ভাবাচ্ছে। সেটা হল, ফালুজায় নতুন করে নয় জন মেরিনের মৃত্যু। ইরাকের অধিকাংশ বড় সংঘর্ষের খবরই মার্কিনদের পক্ষে নেতিবাচক। ডেমোক্রেটরা বলার চেষ্টা করছেন, বুশ ইরাকের পরিস্থিতি সামাল দিতে পুরোপুরি ব্যর্থ। আর রিপাবলিকানরা বলছেন, বুশই পারবেন ইরাকের হাল ফেরাতে। কেরির প্রধান ভরসা, মার্কিন নাগরিকদের যুদ্ধবিরোধী অংশটিই। পাশাপাশি, রিপাবলিকান বা ডেমোক্রেট নির্দিষ্ট ভাবে কোনও শিবিরভুক্তই নন, এমন ভোটারদের কথাও ভাবতে হচ্ছে তাঁকে। নিরাপত্তার পূর্ণ আশ্বাস দিয়ে ভিয়েতনাম-যুদ্ধের প্রাক্তন সেনানীকে বলতে হচ্ছে, “লাদেন-সহ সব জঙ্গি নেতাকে ধ্বংস করা হবে, হত্যা করা হবে।”

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

বুশ এগিয়ে

প্রথম পাতার পর

বস্তুত, 'আনডিসাইডেড'

ভোটাররাই যে ভাগ্যনির্ধারক হয়ে উঠতে পারেন, দু'দলই তা অনুভব করেছে। বুশ এবং কেরি উভয়েই তাই শেষ মুহূর্তে ঝাঁপিয়েছেন এই অংশটিকে কাছে টানবার চেষ্টায়। যাবতীয় পূর্বানুমান-সমীক্ষা এ যাবৎ দু'জনের হাড্ডাহাড্ডি লড়াইয়েরই ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছে। কোনও বার বুশ এগিয়েছেন দু'পয়েন্ট, কোনও বার এক পয়েন্টে কেরি। নিউজউইকের শেষ সমীক্ষা বুশকে এগিয়ে দিলেও নিশ্চিত করেনি তাঁকে। ডেমোক্রেটরাও বলতে ছাড়েননি, সমীক্ষায় পুরো ছবি ধরা পড়ে না। হাজার হাজার নতুন ভোটার আছেন, আছেন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ক্যাম্পাসের ছাত্রছাত্রীরা। যে কোনও মুহূর্তে হাওয়া ঘুরিয়ে দেওয়ার ক্ষমতা এঁরা রাখেন।

এখনও পর্যন্ত ৪০টি রাজ্য বুশ বা কেরিপন্থী বলে চিহ্নিত হয়ে গিয়েছে। বাকি রয়েছে ফ্লোরিডা, পেনসিলভানিয়া এবং ওহায়ো। মঙ্গলবারের যুদ্ধে যে যেখানকার জমি ছিনিয়ে নিতে পারবেন, মসনদ তাঁর। ওহায়োয় বহু বাড়ির টেলিফোন অকেজো করে দেওয়া হয়েছে বলে অভিযোগ। পেনসিলভানিয়ায় অনেকে রেজিস্ট্রেশনের কাগজই পাননি। ফ্লোরিডার গভর্নর পদে রয়েছেন বুশের ভাই, জেব। ২০০০ সালের ভোটে তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে জালিয়াতির অভিযোগ ছিল।

0 1 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Bush, Kerry rock at F-O-P show

By Chidanand Rajghatta/TNN

Washington: The US presidential election is boiling down to the F-O-P show. A clutch of analyses suggest that a trifecta of battleground states Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania may determine the winner.

With less than 48 hours to go for polling, Bush and Kerry are both expending the most time and money to win the 68 crucial electoral votes in these three tightly-contested states. Most polls show Bush marginally ahead in Florida, and Kerry ahead by a whisker in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

About 110 million people are expected to vote. The popular vote does not matter i.e if Bush gets 56 million votes to Kerry's 54 million, it still does not make Bush the President. The winner has to get 270 Electoral votes (a majority) out of a total of 540.

Electoral votes are allotted to states based on population so the biggest states have more (California— 55, Texas— 34, New York— 31 etc). The winner of the popular vote in each state gets all its Electoral votes in a winner-take-all system (except in two states where it is propor-



tionately split). In other words, if Kerry wins Florida by even 200 popular votes he gets all its 27 Electoral votes. Polls show 26 states are solidly behind Bush or lean his way for 222 electoral votes. Kerry has 16 states plus the District of Columbia secured or leaning his direction for 211 electoral votes. So the race boils down to the eight battleground states and their remaining 105 Electoral votes.

The eight most competitive states with their electoral votes are: Florida (27), Ohio (20),



WIKI ON P 15

Pennsylvania (21), Wisconsin (10), Iowa (7), Minnesota (10), New Mexico (5) and Nevada (5). Of the eight, the first three are the biggest and tightest and could determine who will be President. If either candidate wins these remaining three big states (F-O-P), he's home. But it's all going down to the wire.

Some analysts have spoken about a gridlock (in case of a tie or legal challenges) and the possibility of the US not knowing the outcome for several weeks after polling day.

'Bin Spin' bowls Kerry

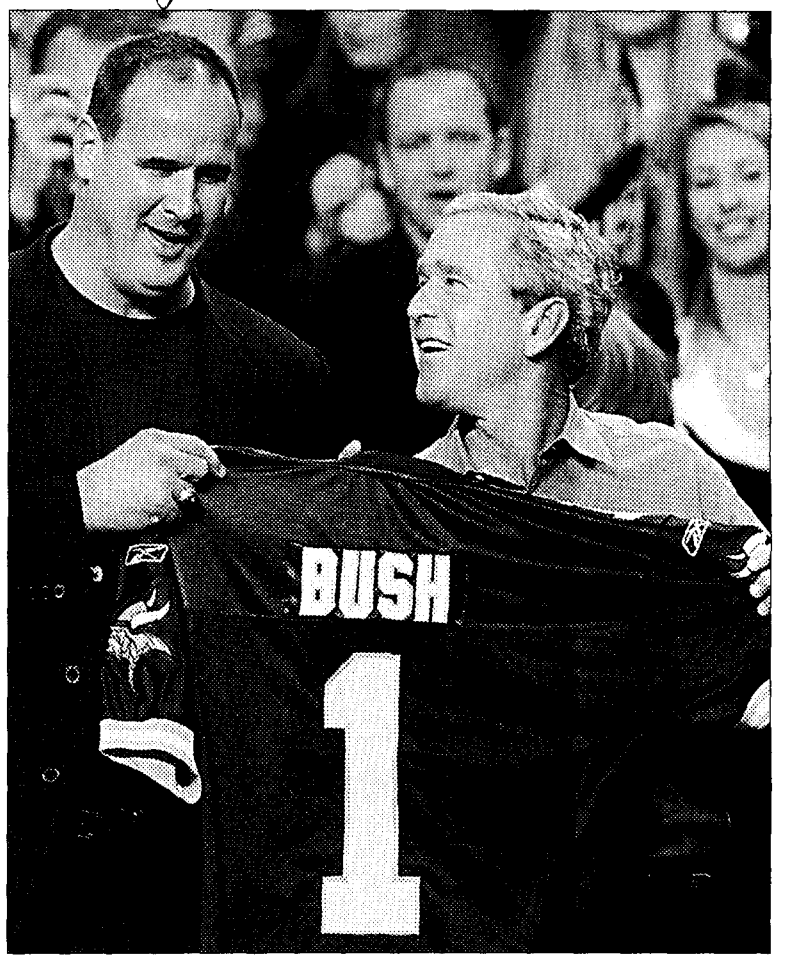
Washington: Osama bin Laden may have advertently or unwittingly spun the presidential election George



Bush's way. The Al Qaida chief's videotaped message to Americans appears to sent many undecided voters scurrying to the Bush camp. The Newsweek survey shows Bush leading Kerry by six points 50-44 in a three-day poll taken partly after the release of the tape.

Political pundits are starting to look at the tape as a "Vote for Kerry" ad. Laden might as well have endorsed Kerry in his taped rant, one pro-Bush paper crowed. The general reading of the situation: Anything that scares the people helps Bush because he is the tough guy. TNN

WS (1)



WORK AND PLAY Sen John Kerry reacts to the cheering crowd after giving a speech in Warren, Ohio, on Saturday. (Right) President Bush is presented a Minnesota Vikings jersey by Vikings head coach Mike Tice (left) at a campaign rally in Minneapolis on Saturday. AP

Bush, Kerry spar over Laden

Associated Press
Appleton, October 31

WITH THE 2004 presidential race still a tossup, President Bush and challenger Democrat John Kerry charged into the final two days of the contest trying to turn to their advantage an October surprise appearance by America's most hated enemy.

"The terrorists who killed thousands of innocent people are still dangerous and they are determined," Bush told supporters at a campaign rally a day after a new videotape message from terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden was broadcast.

On the stump just 25 miles from the President in eastern Wisconsin, Kerry responded to bin Laden's re-emergence with his months-old criticism of Bush's post-September 11 tactics in Afghanistan, bin Laden's once and perhaps current home.

"As I have said for two years now, when Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida were cornered in the mountains of Tora Bora, it was wrong to outsource the job of capturing them to Afghan warlords," Kerry said on Saturday. "It was wrong to divert our forces from Afghanistan so we could rush to war with Iraq without a plan to win the peace." The men were campaigning on Sunday in tightly contested battleground states. Both had appearances scheduled in Florida and Ohio; Kerry was also speaking in New Hampshire.

A new poll showed the president moving ahead of

Pak hiding Osama: UK sleuths

OSAMA BIN Laden is reportedly being given safe haven with the help of Pakistani officials. The indications from recent intelligence reports coming from tribal areas of Pakistan have made the British security officials believe that the al-Qaida leader is being given refuge by senior people in the regional government. He is believed to be hiding along the mountainous 1500-mile frontier dividing Pakistan and Afghanistan. People in this region are said to be hostile to America. Meanwhile, Ir-



an's foreign ministry today denied US media reports that it has given shelter to bin Laden, saying the charge was nothing more than pre-election hysteria.

HTC, London

Kerry in the popular vote, and Democrats said their private surveys hinted at momentum for Bush.

The two candidates responded to the bin Laden tape in ways reflecting their long-held campaign strategies. The President — who throughout the campaign has sought to deflect voter concerns about the war in Iraq, his handling of the economy and his job performance overall by fuelling fears about terrorism — continued that theme.

At his first stop in GOP-leaning western Michigan, he reminded supporters of the 2001 attacks. "Americans go to the polls at a time of war and ongoing threats unlike any we have faced before," Bush said.

In response to the videotape, the Bush administration warned state and local officials that the tape may be intended to promote or signal an attack.

Kerry has tried to tap anti-war sentiment within the ranks of the Democratic Party while assuring swing voters that he would keep them safe. The decorated Vietnam War veteran pledged anew to "destroy, capture, kill Osama bin Laden and all of the terrorists".

West Asia a major issue

When Bush and Kerry talk about West Asia policy, they say little except to commit themselves to Israel's security. The rivals seem likely to say little more until one

of them occupies the White House next year. Unless, of course, circumstances force the issue.

The deteriorating health of Yasser Arafat, the 75-year-old Palestinian leader viewed as a pariah by both Bush and Kerry, brought the West Asia crisis once again into focus in an election that has largely bypassed the issue and focused instead on Iraq.

This week's approval by the Israeli Parliament of a pullout from Gaza and part of the West Bank also raised the question of whether that might inspire a renewal of US diplomatic efforts in the region.

If Bush made anything clear in nearly four years as president, it is that Arafat is not welcome in the White House and that Bush will not pressure Israel to negotiate with him.

Moreover, Bush agrees with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that attacks inside Israel as well as in the territories must be stopped by Palestinian security forces before peacemaking can resume.

Kerry has not tipped his hand on whether negotiations — and US pressure to resume talks — should wait until terror attacks subside. Last week, the Democrat told Jewish voters in West Palm Beach, Florida, that he would do a better job than Bush in "holding those Arab countries accountable for funding terrorism."

"We'll do a better job of protecting the state of Israel," he said.

Cherie Blair hits out at Prez over human rights

CHERIE BLAIR, wife of the British Prime Minister, has criticised the policies of US President George W. Bush, attacking his stance on terrorist prisoners and gay rights, according to media reports here on Sunday.

Blair, a lawyer on a lecture tour of the United States, was condemned by supporters of the US President after a speech to Harvard law students in Massachusetts which contained a stinging rebuke to Bush, the Scotland on Sunday newspaper reported on its website. "She attacked the manner in which the White House has dealt with the human rights of UK citizens detained at the US-run Camp X-Ray prison at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba," according to the report.

She was also quoted as calling the US legal code an "outdated grandfather clock".

AFP, London



Cherie with Bush
Love's labour lost?

New Osama threat may help Bush

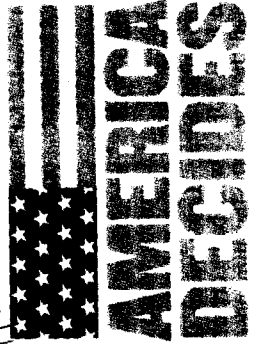
H-T 8/10

S. Rajagopalan
Washington, October 30

FOUR DAYS before the US presidential election, a new videotape of Osama bin Laden surfaced yesterday, with the al-Qaida leader admitting responsibility for the 9/11 attacks and threatening new strikes against America.

But though the tape, broadcast by al-Jazeera, has Osama criticising President George Bush's policies and indirectly endorsing his rival John Kerry, many analysts think this could just be the boost the President's campaign needs.

Bush supporters are delighted that the development will revert the spotlight on the war on terror, an area where Bush has been



stead of Bin Laden," said Ed Sarpolus, a Michigan pollster.

The tape told Americans: "Your security is not in the hands of Kerry, Bush or al-Qaida. Your security is in your own hands. Any (presidential) mandate which does not play havoc with our security would automatically ensure its own security."

But the candidates refused to rise to Osama's bait of seeming to endorse Kerry. "Americans will not be intimidated or influenced by an enemy of our country," Bush said. Kerry declared: "I will stop at absolutely nothing to hunt down and kill the terrorists. Whatever it takes, wherever they are. Period."

■ See also Pages 10 and 13

said: "We want people to think 'terrorism' for the last four days."

But Kerry supporters say the public can now choose between Bush's glaring failure to catch Osama and Kerry's promise to fight a "smarter" war against terror. "Kerry can remind people that Bush has the wrong priorities by going after Saddam in-

widely preferred over Kerry in most polls. They also believe that it will shift the focus from embarrassing issues like the disappearance of tons of explosives from an Iraqi site under US watch.

"It's bound to help Bush," said Larry Sabato, director of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia. A Bush campaign aide

Osama hands Bush advantage

NSD 9-1 8/10

K.P. NAYAR

Washington, Oct. 30: Osama bin Laden parachuted onto the centrestage of the US presidential campaign last evening and injected a fresh dose of uncertainty to the results of Tuesday's voting that even the rash-est of political pundits are now unwilling to predict.

Bin Laden's injection into the heart of the year-long campaign was expected; but what was long expected — and feared by John Kerry and other Democrats — was that the head of al Qaeda would be produced in the second half of October in chains, humiliated like Saddam Hussein after his capture from an underground hole in Iraq.

Instead, the Saudi billionaire-turned-terrorist swagged into the drawing rooms of shocked Americans as they were preparing dinner on Friday evening, calmly addressing them from behind what looked like a lectern, apparently healthy and clad in traditional golden robes worn by the royalty and tribal leaders in the Arabian Gulf.

As every television channel here scrambled to get clips of bin Laden's video message from the Qatar-based al Jazeera TV, Americans were reminded by the al Qaeda chief of what many of them consider to be one of the most shameful moments in their public persona: images of George W. Bush sitting in a Florida school, looking confused and then reading aloud a children's story about "The Pet Goat" even after he was told that the World Trade Center in

WILL AMERICA'S ENEMY DECIDE WHO GOES TO WHITE HOUSE?



President George W. Bush embraces California's governor Arnold Schwarzenegger at a campaign rally in Columbus, Ohio. John Kerry with actor Kirsten Dunst at a rally in West Palm Beach, Florida. (AFP, Reuters) See Page 2

ning existence.

Kerry talked to reporters before boarding his campaign jet at a Florida airport shortly after the video was aired. "In response to this tape of Osama bin Laden, let me just make it clear, crystal clear, as Americans we are united in our determination to hunt down and destroy Osama bin Laden and the terrorists," he said.

"They are barbarians, I will stop at absolutely nothing to hunt down, capture or kill the terrorists wherever they are, whatever it takes," he added.

Bush, too, said in a statement at an airport tarmac in Ohio: "Let me make this very clear: Americans will not be intimidated or influenced by an enemy of our country. I am sure Senator Kerry agrees with this. I also want to say to the American people that we are at war with these terrorists and I am confident that we will prevail."

But within hours, the facade of unity fell victim to the heat of the campaign.

Renewing his attacks on the President, Kerry said: "I regret that when George W. Bush had the opportunity in Afghanistan at Tora Bora, he did not use our forces to hunt down and kill Osama bin Laden. He outsourced to the warlords."

Responding to the attack, Bush said: "Unfortunately my opponent tonight continued to say things he knows are not true, accusing our military of passing up a chance to get Osama bin Laden at Tora Bora."

"It is simply not the case. It is especially shameful in the light of a new tape from America's enemy."

majority of Americans believe Bush is better placed to deal with the twin issues.

The overall effect of bin Laden's on-screen appearance will be to heighten threat perceptions on polling day.

If that happens, many undecided voters may cast their ballots for Bush ensuring his victory.

The conventional wisdom worldwide is that bin Laden prefers Bush to be re-elected against bin Laden's conti-

American taxpayers' money for the war even as the US economy was in trouble.

But the bin Laden tape, his first video in two years, may yet result in Bush nudging past Kerry to victory on Tuesday.

While Bush and Kerry are tied overall in opinion polls, the President still enjoys a huge advantage over his challenger on issues of national security and terrorism. A clear

their way in the last few days. Bush had been battered all of this week by revelations that 380 tonnes of explosives in Iraq, secured by the International Atomic Energy Agency, had disappeared, fresh evidence that Halliburton, Vice-President Dick Cheney's former employer, may have got unfair advantage in Iraqi contracts and signals that Iraq was becoming a bottomless pit in swallowing

THE TELEGRAPH 31 OCT 2004

Florida ballot papers go missing

Agencies
Washington, October 28

TENS OF thousands of postal ballots have gone missing in the US state of Florida, sparking fresh concern over irregularities in the poll campaign.

Some 60,000 absentee ballots were despatched by authorities in Broward County, north of Miami, this month. But only 2,000 of them have been delivered. Florida was the centre of controversies which delayed the result in 2000, with George W. Bush eventually declared the winner in the state by 537 votes.

Electoral officials have been overwhelmed by calls from anxious would-be voters who are not going to be able to get to the polls next Tuesday and fear that their votes have been stolen.

The missing ballots have fuelled an atmosphere of intense suspicion in Florida, with Democrats already backing nine separate law suits in the state.

If the outcome is close and decides the result in the presidential race — and both of those eventualities are perfectly possible — it seems virtually certain that protracted legal battles will follow, our correspondent says.

A police investigation into the missing ballots has not uncovered any indication of criminal wrongdoing. The US postal service inspectorate said it was highly unlikely that 58,000 pieces of mail had just disappeared.

A spokesman said inspectors were trying to establish whether the ballots were ever delivered to the postal service.

Broward County election official Gisela Salas said the situation was "something beyond our control". "We really have no idea what's going on," she told said. Campaigners are working to ensure that no one loses their vote because of the missing ballots.

Democratic Party legislators have called on the electoral authorities to publish newspaper ads telling people of other options for voting.

They also accused the Republican-dominated state government of dirty tricks.



REUTERS

Two young Bush supporters at a campaign rally in Pontiac, Michigan, on Thursday.

New vote scandal feared 'Bush, stop invoking JFK'

A SECRET document obtained from inside the Bush campaign HQ in Florida suggests a plan — possibly in violation of US law — to disrupt voting in the state's African-American voting districts, a BBC *Newsnight* investigation reveals. Two e-mails, prepared for the executive director of the Bush campaign in Florida and the campaign's national research director in Washington DC, contain a 15-page so-called "caging list". It lists 1,886 names and addresses of voters in predominantly black and traditionally Democrat areas of Jacksonville, Florida. An elections supervisor in Tallahassee said: "The only possible reason why they would keep such a thing is to challenge voters on election day." Ion Sancho, a Democrat, noted that Florida law allows political party operatives inside polling stations to stop voters from obtaining a ballot. They may then only vote "provisionally" after signing an affidavit attesting to their legal voting status. When asked for an explanation of the list, Republican spokespersons claim the list merely records returned mail from either fundraising solicitations or returned letters sent to newly registered voters to verify their addresses.

Agencies, Washington

CAROLINE KENNEDY Schlossberg, daughter of the late Democratic President John Kennedy, urged Republican President George W. Bush not to invoke her father's name in his campaigning against Democratic rival John Kerry. "It's hard for me to listen to Bush invoking my father's memory to attack John Kerry. Kerry has demonstrated his courage and commitment to a stronger America throughout his entire career," she said.

AFF, Washington

Prez voted villain No. 1

READERS OF a British magazine have rated him the year's top screen villain. Bush won the dubious accolade for his appearance in Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Bush beat out a shortlist of fictional film bad guys, including the nefarious Doctor Octopus in *Spider-Man 2*.

AP, London



THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 OCT 2004

Florida focus of furore... yet again

Lawsuits, protests mark early voting; ministers send folks from church to polls

Kathy Kiely
Jacksonville, October 22

MINISTERS ARE sending their flocks straight from church to the polls on Sunday and the presidential campaigns are sending in their biggest guns as early voting continues through the weekend.

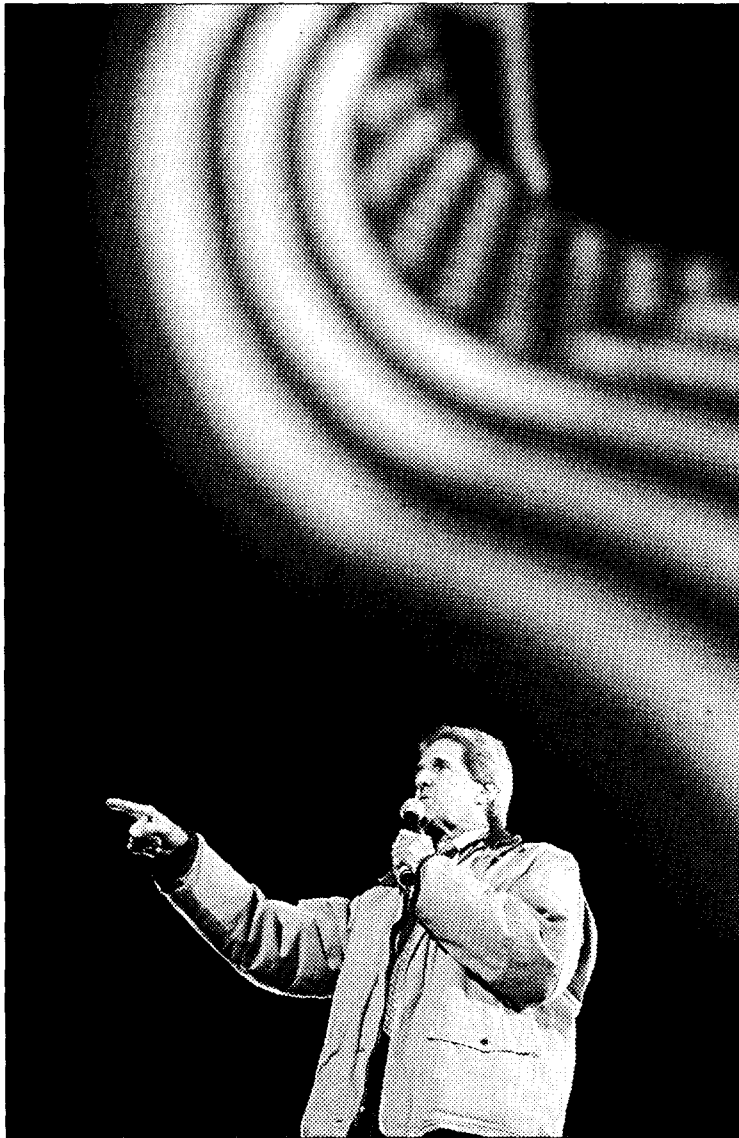
Florida, which decided the 2000 election after a six-week recount, is again a centre of political controversy. At the end of the first week of early voting:

- Two federal lawsuits are pending. One, brought by Rep. Robert Wexler, a Democrat from Boca Raton, demands paper documentation of votes cast on computerised machines. Another suit here in Duval County seeks more early voting sites and longer hours.

- Republicans are preparing to file a complaint with the Federal Election Commission about Democratic get-out-the-vote efforts here. President Bush's campaign on Thursday accused Democrats of coordinating with unions and other special-interest groups, a violation of federal campaign-finance laws.

- In Duval County, a scene of bitter disputes in 2000, the county elections supervisor was replaced this week after local ministers alleged an effort to discourage turnout by blacks, a quarter of the county's registered voters. Outside the county's polling place, a "private investigator" who wouldn't identify his employer videotaped voters until a sheriff intervened.

The political manoeuvring underscores the high stakes in Florida, one of a dozen states that could decide the November 2 election. In Ohio, another swing state, the candidates are in a virtual tie, a new USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll finds. Polls and campaign schedules indicate the same is true here. Democrats hold a 48,000-registra-



REUTERS

Kerry speaks to supporters in a parking lot in Minneapolis on Thursday.

tion edge in Duval County, where Bush won in 2000 by 44,000 votes. About 27,000 ballots, mostly from

African-American precincts, were thrown out because officials said they were marked for multiple pres-

idential candidates. Black leaders have pushed for more early voting sites in Duval. The county had just one; four more open Saturday. "Still not sufficient," says Sen. Bob Graham, D-Fla. In the first four days of early voting, 4,461 Duval residents cast ballots. Another 67,000 requested absentee ballots — twice the number four years ago. Officials estimate one-fourth of Florida's votes could be cast early. Many here believe it's safer. Says Marcia Winnard, a Bush supporter: "I'm paranoid about this election."

USA Today

One flew East & one flew West...

DEMOCRAT JOHN Kerry on Friday takes his quest for votes to the western states of Nevada and Colorado that polls show could be up for grabs in the presidential contest, as rival George W. Bush stumps in three eastern battleground states.

After addressing supporters here in the morning, Kerry was to fly to Reno, Nevada, and Pueblo, Colorado, in the hope of energising minority voters — his core support base — ahead of the November 2 ballot. Bush will campaign for a second day in Pennsylvania before moving on to Canton, Ohio and Saint Petersburg, Florida.

Kerry literally went hunting for the support of gun-lovers Thursday, then tapped the power of comic book and movie hero "Superman" to trade shots with the Republican President on health as the two scouted votes that could tilt a race still too close to call.

AFP, Wisconsin

In final stretch, Bush gets lead

DAVID RENNIE

Washington, Oct. 19: With just a fortnight to go until polling day, President George W. Bush has suddenly opened up a significant lead over Senator John Kerry, new opinion polls showed yesterday.

The latest Gallup poll showed Bush leading Kerry by 52 per cent to 44 among likely voters, who appeared to be heeding the drumbeat of Republican attacks on Kerry's ability to protect America from terrorism.

Other polls, by *Newsweek* magazine, ABC television and *Time* magazine, gave Bush leads of between two and six per cent. The swing among voters erased a brief advantage the Democratic senator gained by "winning" a series of three televised presidential debates, in which Bush too often came across as flustered and defensive. A note of caution was sounded by pollsters of all persuasions, who noted that such national "horse-race" numbers are of less and less use in predicting an election. With America sharply divided on partisan lines, the election results in most states are increasingly a foregone conclusion.

Barring a major surge by either candidate, which could place up to 20 states in play, the real fight currently centres on fewer than a dozen states: New Hampshire, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Nevada, Iowa and New Mexico.

Of those, the large states of Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania are viewed as the holy of holies, with the candidate who wins two of the three viewed as all but unbeatable. Florida is currently looking better for Bush, and Ohio stronger for Kerry. Pennsylvania is too close to call. With Bush showing signs of pulling ahead, the presidential race promptly headed into the rhetorical gutter, as Kerry began hurling a series of emotive charges at Bush. Kerry warned young people that a Republican win offered "great potential" for the return of military conscription. He has also blamed Bush for a catastrophic shortage of flu vaccines in America this winter.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

THE TELEGRAPH

20 OCT 2004

A literary coup for 9/11 report

THE TIMES, LONDON

WASHINGTON, Oct. 16. — It is a literary first: the 567-page government report on the 11 September attacks has become a runaway bestseller and been nominated for one of America's most prestigious book prizes.

Written by a staff of 91 people over a 20-month period, The 9/11 Commission Report has sold more than a million copies since late July and reached the shortlist of five for the National Book Award's dollars 10,000 (pounds 5,500) non-fiction prize.

Mr Thomas Kean, former New Jersey governor who served as the commission's republican head

said, "We're gratified, we're surprised, obviously very happy, we hope this will give us added momentum to get the Congress to adopt our recommendations to make the country safer." From the opening sentence about a day that "dawned temperate and nearly cloudless", to the moment when "a jet fuel fireball" took out World Trade Centre lifts, the report stands out for its readability in a town that produces incomprehensible jargon. It offers a unique insight into the inner workings of the government.

Mr Philip Zelikow, an historian and the commission's executive director said: "We tried very, very

hard to 'write up' to our readers because we believed there is an audience out there for books that are nuanced, avoid caricature and melodrama."

Mr Lee Hamilton, the commission's democratic vice-chairman, demanded crisp prose. "Everyone was up until all hours of the night. It was crazy." The result? A report that Americans were reading on the beach during their summer holidays. The only other government report to ever be shortlisted for the national book awards was a 1973 report on a deadly riot at the state prison in Attica, New York. The national book awards will be presented on 17 November.

THE TELEGRAPH

17 OCT 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

Kerry 52, Bush only 39

Domestic issues rule final debate

USA Today
Tempe (Arizona), October 14

PRESIDENT BUSH and John Kerry clashed on health care, taxes and the role of government in their third and final debate on Wednesday, with each claiming repeatedly that his opponent's record did not match his rhetoric.

A majority of voters thought Kerry did a better job than Bush in the debate, according to a USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup poll taken immediately after the session. Fifty-two per cent of voters surveyed said Kerry did the better job, compared to 39 per cent who felt Bush did the better job and 8 per cent who felt both performed equally.

Facing enormous pressure in their last face-to-face opportunity to change the dynamic of a close race, the two also touched on domestic security and discussed the role of religious faith in their lives in the 90-minute session in Tempe, Arizona.

On health care, Bush said litigation abuse and a lack of consumer choice was at the centre of increasing costs. Kerry pledged to offer health insurance to all Americans — which Bush said would balloon the federal deficit.

"A plan is not to lay out a litany of complaints" about the current health care system, Bush said. He called Kerry's proposals "an empty promise. It's called bait and switch". "We are not giving this away for nothing," Kerry said, noting his proposal would require health-insurance payments from users. He accused Bush of "turning his back on the wellness of America".

On domestic safety, Bush

said, "We can be safe and secure if we stay on the offensive against terrorists and if we spread freedom and liberty around the world," Bush said. Kerry said he "can do a better job of waging the war on terror".

And on government spending, both candidates had quotes at the ready. Bush said Kerry's "pay as you go" proposals would be abused. "Pay-go means you pay and he goes ahead and spends," Bush said. "Being lectured by the President about fiscal responsibility is a little bit like Tony Soprano lecturing me about law and order in this country," said Kerry.

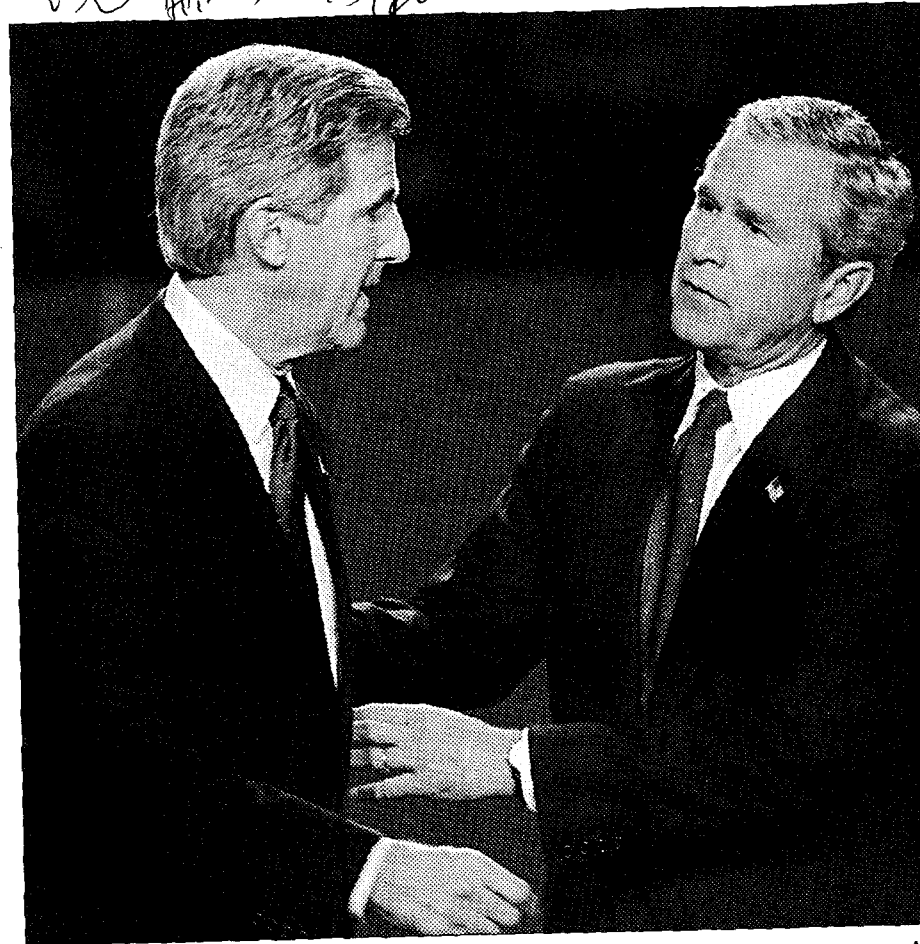
"My opponent talks about fiscal responsibility. His record in the US Senate does not match his rhetoric," Bush said. He repeatedly portrayed Kerry as too liberal for the country, saying, "Your record is such that Ted Kennedy, your colleague, is the conservative senator from Massachusetts."

Kerry said Bush was "the only President in 72 years to lose jobs — 1.6 million jobs lost. He's the only President to have incomes of families go down for the last three years, the only President to see exports go down, the only president to see the lowest level of business investment in our country as it is today".

Kerry said 1 per cent of Americans got \$89 billion in tax cuts last year and said the minimum wage should be raised. "The President has denied 9.2 million women \$3,800 a year, but he doesn't hesitate to fight for \$136,000 to a millionaire," he said.

And the two men disagreed over abortion. Kerry said the choice should be "between a woman, God and

This President rushed us into a war, decided about foreign policy, pushed alliances away. As a result, our America is now bearing this burden where we are not as safe as we ought to be



FACE TO FACE President George W. Bush with Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry after their final televised debate at Arizona State University in Tempe on Wednesday.

her doctor," and the president said he wants to promote a "culture of life".

Asked about the Catholic bishops who have advised parishioners it would be a sin to vote for a candidate who supports abortion rights, Kerry evoked the name of John F. Kennedy, another Massachusetts senator and the first Catholic elected president. He quoted Kennedy's famous 1960 campaign statement in which he said he wasn't running to become a Catholic president, but the first president who happens to be a Catholic. "My faith affects everything I do, in truth," Kerry said.

Bush also mentioned his

faith. "Prayer and religion sustains me," he said. "I receive calmness in the storms of the presidency."

On appointing judges, both men said they would not apply any "litmus test" in picking candidates. "I will pick judges who will interpret the Constitution," said Bush. "I'm not going to appoint a judge to the court who's going to undo a constitutional right, whether it's the First Amendment, or the Fifth Amendment, or some other right that's given under our courts today under the Constitution," said Kerry.

Kerry said that the recent expiration of a ban on certain semiautomatic weapons

was a "failure of presidential leadership" and that because of it, terrorists can purchase weapons at gun shows in the US. Bush said there weren't enough votes in Congress to extend the ban.

Each repeatedly accused the other of hyperbole and dishonesty. When Bush said Kerry has voted 98 times against tax cuts, Kerry shot back, "Anybody can play with these votes. Everybody knows that." "One of those exaggerations," Bush said when Kerry charged that he had said he wasn't worried about capturing Osama bin Laden. Kerry's campaign quickly e-mailed reporters a comment Bush made in 2003: "I truly am

not that concerned about him. I know he is on the run."

The third presidential debate followed a similar format to the first, with the candidates standing behind lecturns and facing questions from a moderator — in this case, Bob Schieffer of CBS. But unlike the first, which was dominated by Iraq, this one dove into the fine details of domestic policy, with lengthy discussions about government authorisations, spending rules, Social Security funding and budget projections.

That Wednesday night's debate would turn out to be a crucial evening for Bush as an ironic turn of events

My opponent just this weekend talked about how terrorism could be reduced to a nuisance, comparing it with illegal gambling & prostitution. I think that attitude and that point of view is dangerous

Anti-Kerry film to be aired just before vote

Guardian News Service
Washington, October 14

ONE OF America's biggest television companies has announced plans to air a film days before the presidential election that portrays the Democratic candidate John Kerry as betraying his fellow soldiers in Vietnam.

The conservative Sinclair Broadcast Group will reportedly present the film as news on the 62 local channels it owns nationwide. The film will replace normal prime-time programmes supplied by the national networks and reach up to a quarter of the electorate, many in critical battleground states, about a week before the election on November 2.

In the film, *Stolen Honour: Wounds That Never Heal*, former US prisoners of war claim that their North Vietnamese interrogators used anti-war statements by Kerry to undermine morale and persuade them to admit war crimes.

A press release for the film, made by a conservative journalist and ex-marine, Carlton Sherwood, accused Kerry of "lies, false testimony and distortions" for his remarks to Congress in 1971, saying US troops had been responsible for atrocities.

The press release alleges that "in mere moments in 1971, Kerry willingly gave the North Vietnamese what the brave PoWs had endured torture and solitary confinement to avoid saying". Kerry has been dogged by such attacks for more than two months, mostly in the form of advertisements paid for by a group calling itself Swift Boat Veterans for Truth.

OCT 2004

Bush, Kerry vie for final say on domestic divide

DAN BALZ AND JIM VANDEHEI
TEMPE, OCTOBER 14

PRESIDENT Bush and John Kerry battled over domestic issues Wednesday night in the final debate of the 2004 campaign, with the latter charging the president with a record of failure on the economy and health care, and Bush accusing Kerry of a Senate record that is both out of the mainstream and lacking in accomplishment.

Kerry said Bush has allowed the economy to go backward, has turned budget surpluses into deficits and has stood by as millions of Americans have lost their health insurance and jobs. The president tried to parry those attacks by challenging Kerry's record during his 20 years in the Senate, accusing him of repeatedly voting to raise taxes, of failing to do anything significant to reform health care and of favoring health care changes that would greatly enhance the federal government's power. Amid the exchange of charges and countercharges, Bush and Kerry spoke personally about the role of faith and religion in their lives and how that animates their view of governing. They also played fast and loose with facts and each repeatedly charged the other with distortions and inaccuracies at the debate, held at Arizona State University and moderated by Bob Schieffer of CBS News.

Kerry accused Bush of favouring the wealthy over the middle class with tax cuts and the president warned middle-class voters that a Kerry administration would mean higher taxes not only on the wealthy but on average Americans as well, describing Kerry's talk as "bait and switch" politics.

"You know, there's a mainstream in American politics and you sit right on



ON THE ROAD TO WHITE HOUSE

BUSH: There's a mainstream in American politics and you sit right on the far left bank

KERRY: Being lectured by the president on fiscal responsibility is a little bit like Tony Soprano talking to me about law and order

the far left bank," Bush said. "As a matter of fact, your record is such that Ted Kennedy, your colleague, is the conservative senator from Massachusetts."

Kerry's reply was that "Being lectured by the president on fiscal responsibility is a little bit like Tony Soprano talking to me about law and order in this country," he said.

In one of the sharpest exchanges, Kerry warned that Bush's plan to allow workers to put a small percentage of their Social Security taxes into private investment accounts is "an invitation to disaster" that would cost too much and be too risky. On health care, Bush said

an independent study showed that Kerry's plan would cost more than \$1 trillion, add 20 million Americans to government health care rolls and lead to lower-quality care. Kerry called Bush's claims inaccurate and said that his health care plan people the choice of opting of a plan.

The candidates greatly disagree on cultural issues, including same-sex marriage, abortion and, to a lesser extent, gun control. In the clearest terms to date, Kerry said he would impose a litmus test on judicial selections to protect abortion rights, which Bush said he would not. On same-sex marriage, Bush defended his support for a constitutional amendment banning the practice and warned that judges were trying to redefine marriage.

Bush said he is unsure whether people are born gay. Kerry said he thinks they are. "I think if you were to talk to Dick Cheney's daughter, who is a lesbian, she would tell you that she's being who she was, she's being who she was born as," he said.

The candidates shared details about their religious faith and how it influences their political views. Kerry, a Catholic, talked more about God and faith than he has in some time, even quoting Scripture twice. Bush was perhaps most passionate and articulate when he talked about faith and family. "My faith is a very — it's very personal. I pray for strength. I pray for wisdom. I pray for our troops in harm's way. I pray for my family. I pray for my little girls," he said.

On several occasions when Kerry attacked Bush, including over the administration's failure to support a big increase in the minimum wage, Bush turned the discussion to education and his No Child Left Behind Act.

—LATWP

15 OCT 2004

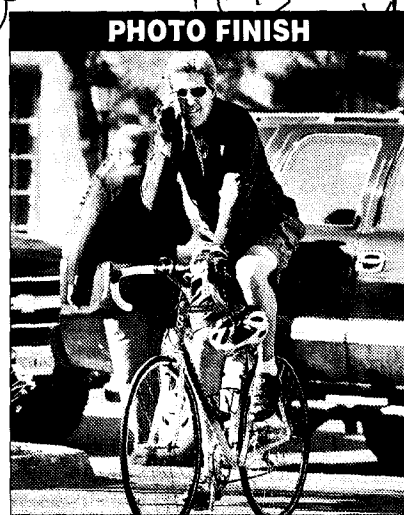
Bush, Kerry set for final face-off

By Chidanand Rajghatta/TNN

Washington: US President George Bush and Democratic challenger John Kerry go into their third and final presidential debate on Wednesday night with polls showing their race in a dead heat but pundits suggesting it is beginning to lean Kerry's way.

The two sides are tied with around 47 per cent support each, mostly from their hardcore constituency. They will be aiming to sway the remaining five or six per cent undecided voters in a debate expected to be watched by some 50 million viewers. Some 62 million viewers watched the first debate and 47 million tuned into the second. The nationally televised event, being held at the Arizona State University campus in Tempe, Arizona, will centre mainly round domestic and economic issues.

Senator Kerry is widely thought to have the edge given Bush's dodgy record in areas such as job loss and decline in health care. The analyst community is citing another reason to give Kerry the edge: The Democrats have done a better job of registering new voters, especially in the



dozen or so battleground states such as Ohio and Florida (winning electoral votes in these states, more than the overall popular votes, will determine the outcome.)

There is also a sense that more undecided voters will break for Kerry going into Election Day. The Democrats also ap-

pear more energised and organised, although within the party flock, Bush is more liked among Republicans than Kerry is among Democrats.

Although Kerry clearly won the first debate, the President fought him to a draw in the second. His supporters are expecting him to hold his own again by attacking Kerry as a tax-and-spend liberal.

This would ordinarily be a winning epithet in American politics, but Bush's own economic record is so dismal that the President's men are digging deep to find chinks in the Kerry voting record on economic policy. Polls show that Kerry leads Bush on nine domestic issues such as education and health care, with the President ahead only in terrorism and taxation.

Ahead of the debate, Kerry relaxed in neighbouring New Mexico, going out on a cycling ride and watching a football game in the evening. Bush prepared for the debate over the weekend at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, where a local publication called Lone Star Iconoclast caused a stir by endorsing Kerry.

There may be plenty more such surprises before November 2.

Bush-Kerry close race gets closer

XFC 17 16/10

Reuters
Washington, October 12

PRESIDENT BUSH bounced back into a tie with Democratic challenger John Kerry one day before their final debate, according to a Reuters/Zogby poll released on Tuesday.

Bush gained three points on the Massachusetts senator to move into a 45-45 per cent dead heat in the latest three-day tracking poll of the White House campaign.

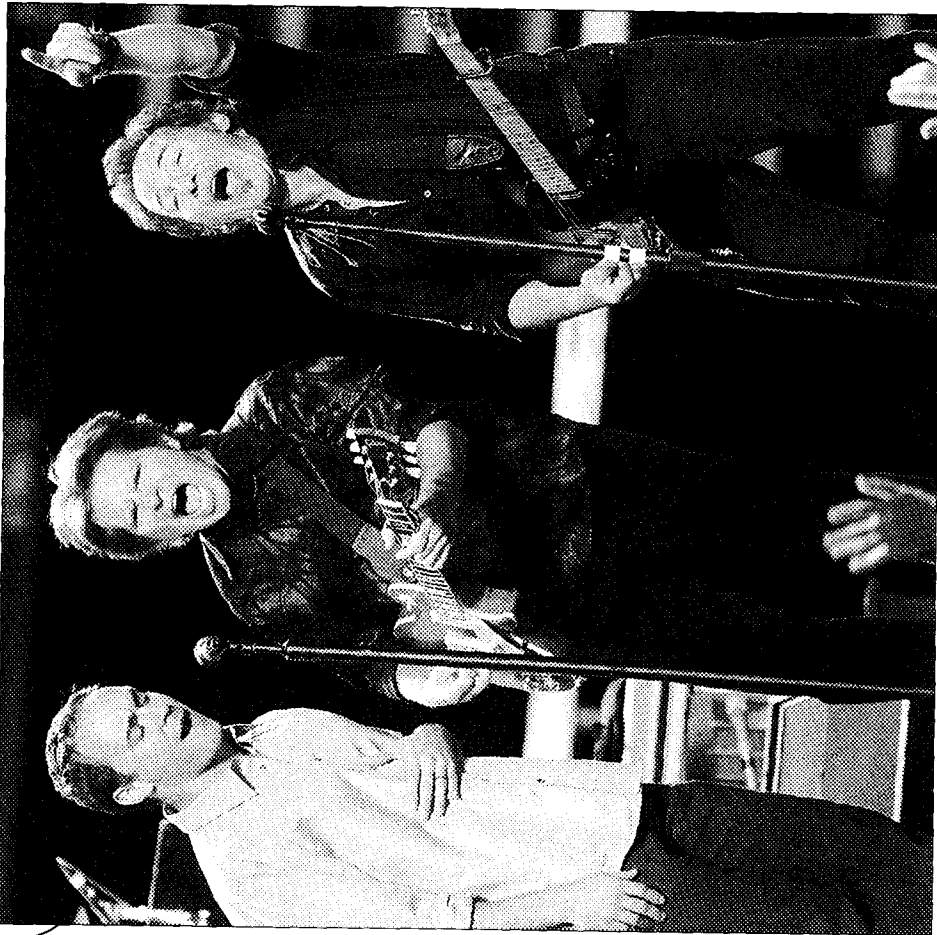
The focus of the tight race now turns to Wednesday's pivotal final debate in Tempe, Arizona, with both candidates hoping to take advantage of their last chance to court a national television audience of likely voters.

"A close race got closer," pollster John Zogby said. "I am not expecting anyone to pull away in this one — at least not yet."

Seven per cent of likely voters are still undecided three weeks before the November 2 election. Only 35 per cent of undecided voters give Bush a positive job rating, and 50 per cent give him a negative rating.

Bush holds solid leads among married voters, military families, investors and those living in states he won in the 2000 race against Democrat Al Gore. Kerry holds leads over Bush among single voters, moderate voters, union voters and those living in states won by Gore.

Newly registered voters lean toward Kerry by 49-42 per cent, while those who have already voted give a



AP
SONGS OF CHANGE Bruce Springsteen (right), John Fogerty (centre) and Dave Matthews at the Vote for Change concert in Washington on Monday.

slight edge to Bush by 48-43 per cent. The poll of 1,223 likely voters was taken on Saturday through Monday and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.9 percentage points. The rolling poll will continue through November 1.

Boss urges fans to vote against Prez

ROCK STAR Bruce Springsteen has urged fans to support "change" by voting for Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry as he wrapped up a marathon five-hour concert that brought to the US capital more than a dozen performers.

The concert at the MCI Center in Washington concluded an 11-state tour by a group of rock music idols, including REM, Pearl Jam, Jackson Browne, Dave Matthews, the Dixie Chicks and others determined to bring about President George W. Bush's defeat in the November 2 election.

The musicians, who started their unusual mission in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on October 2, have performed in states where the battle between Bush and Kerry is seen as closest.

In a declaration issued at the beginning of the tour, the group described itself as "a loose coalition of musicians" brought together by what they saw as the need "to make a change in the direction of our country." After firing up the audience with his all-time hit *Born in the USA*, Springsteen switched to a more serious subject by shouting into the crowd: "Raise your voice for change!"

AFP, Washington

ইরাক নিয়ে ফের বুশকে আক্রমণ কোরির

ওয়াশিংটন, ৯ অক্টোবর: মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনের আগে দ্বিতীয় বার মুখোমুখি বিতর্কে নামলেন দুই প্রার্থী! কিন্তু তার মধ্যেই জনপ্রিয়তার নিরিখে রিপাবলিকান প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ বুশের থেকে খানিকটা এগিয়েই গেলেন ডেমোক্র্যাট জন কেরি। এ বারের বিতর্কেও ইরাক যুদ্ধ নিয়ে বুশকে ফের আক্রমণ করলেন ভোটযুদ্ধে তাঁর প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী।

প্রথম বিতর্কে কেরির আক্রমণাত্মক মেজাজের সামনে হান হয়ে গিয়েছিলেন বুশ। কালও একই মেজাজে বুশকে ইরাক নিয়ে আক্রমণ শুরু করেন কেরি। তিনি অভিযোগ করেন, আমেরিকার প্রধান শত্রু লাদেনকে আফগানিস্তানে না ধরেই বুশ ইরাকের বিরুদ্ধে যুদ্ধ ঘোষণা করে বসলেন।

পরে তাঁর সিদ্ধান্ত যে ভুল ছিল তা বোঝা গেল, ডুয়েলফারের রিপোর্টে ইরাকে গণবিক্ষবৎসী অস্ত্র না থাকার খবর পাওয়ার পরেই।

কেরি আরও অভিযোগ করেন, “বিশ্ব আজ আরও বিপজ্জনক হয়ে উঠেছে প্রেসিডেন্টের ভুল সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার ফলেই। প্রেসিডেন্ট ইরাকে গণবিক্ষবৎসী অস্ত্র খুঁজে না পেয়ে এখন জনগণের মধ্যে গণবিক্রান্তির অস্ত্র ছড়িয়ে বেড়াচ্ছেন।”

কেরির এই অভিযোগের জবাবে বুশ বলেন, ইরাকে গণবিক্ষবৎসী অস্ত্র না পেয়ে তিনিও খুব খুশি হননি। তবে সাদ্দামকে ক্ষমতা থেকে সরিয়ে বিশ্ব অনেক নিশ্চিত হয়েছে। তিনি এও বলেন, “অবশ্য আমার বিরোধীরা বলতে চান, সাদ্দামের এখনও ক্ষমতায় রেখে বিশ্বের আরও বিপজ্জনক থাকাই উচিত ছিল।”

ইরাক আক্রমণের পরে দেশের এই বেসামাল অবস্থার সুযোগ নিয়েই ইরান আর উত্তর কোরিয়াও আগের থেকে বেশি আমেরিকাকে চোখ রাজানোর সাহস দেখাচ্ছে অভিযোগ করেন কেরি।

তিনি বলেন, ইরাক আক্রমণের ফলে প্রেসিডেন্ট মূল লক্ষ্য ওসামা বিন লাদেন থেকে বিচ্যুত হয়েছেন।

যদিও বুশ এর উত্তরে বলেন, “আমরা এখনও ওসামাকে খুঁজে বের করার চেষ্টা করছি। ইতিমধ্যেই আল কায়দার ৭৫ শতাংশ নেতাই আমাদের হাতে বন্দি।” — রয়টার্স, পি টি আই

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2004

10-10 9/10 **DEMOCRATS BOUNCE BACK** WSO

WITH LESS THAN a month to go before the presidential election in the United States, Democratic candidate John Kerry at last got his act together and demonstrated that he can be a strong and credible alternative to the incumbent George W. Bush. Public opinion polls over the past several months consistently showed that a majority of Americans had formed a negative assessment of Mr. Bush's performance in office. However, the challenger was unable to turn this factor to his advantage until recently. While Mr. Kerry did display a sensitivity to the nuances of international and domestic issues, his habit of dwelling on details left him vulnerable to the charge that he was a person of shallow convictions who could not formulate clear policies and implement them in a firm and consistent manner. During the campaign, the Democratic candidate was so often pushed on to the defensive that he was unable to develop his arguments into a coherent and comprehensive critique of the Bush administration's abysmal record. The Republicans appeared to be getting away with a campaign centred mainly on the theme that the incumbent should be re-elected so that he could carry on with the war in Iraq as an integral part of the global campaign against terror. Mr. Kerry and his running mate John Edwards were given a final opportunity to resurrect their floundering campaign when they separately debated Mr. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney. Kerry & Edwards responded spectacularly by deconstructing the Republican propaganda and exposing their opponents as people out of touch with reality.

Mr. Kerry appears to have succeeded in ensuring that he did not come across as being soft on terror even as he demolished the myth that the war in Iraq was just and necessary. While promising to pursue terrorists relent-

lessly, the challenger shrewdly argued that the war against the regime of Saddam Hussein was a diversion since it was Osama bin Laden and not the Iraqi strongman who had masterminded the terror strikes of September 11, 2001. With the issue so clarified, the Democrats proceeded to criticise all aspects of the Bush administration's disastrous Iraq policy. They contended that while the Saddam regime was despicable it did not pose an imminent threat to the U.S.; that United Nations inspectors could have rid Iraq of its non-conventional weapon capability if they had been given time; that Mr. Bush failed to put together a strong alliance and go to war as a last resort although he had promised to do this; that the President in his haste to invade ignored sound military advice; and that the administration failed to plan for the post-invasion situation. Mr. Kerry also provided explanations for the apparent contradictions in his approach. For instance, the Democratic Senator argued plausibly that his vote authorising the President to wage war was based on the belief that the administration had sound intelligence and would resort to military operations only after it had exhausted all other options. An alternative Iraq policy presented by the Democrats might not be flawless but it offered a stark contrast to the Bush approach that essentially amounted to "more of the same".

Most of those who watched the televised debates formed the opinion that the Democrats had outclassed their Republican counterparts. Victory in the debates need not automatically translate into triumph in the elections but Kerry & Edwards were able to erase the lead that the Bush-Cheney ticket enjoyed in recent opinion polls. With domestic issues likely to come into focus in the remaining presidential debates, the Democrats have a chance to take the lead.

THE HINDU

9 OCT 2004

Post debate, Kerry draws up with Bush

USA Today
Washington, October 4

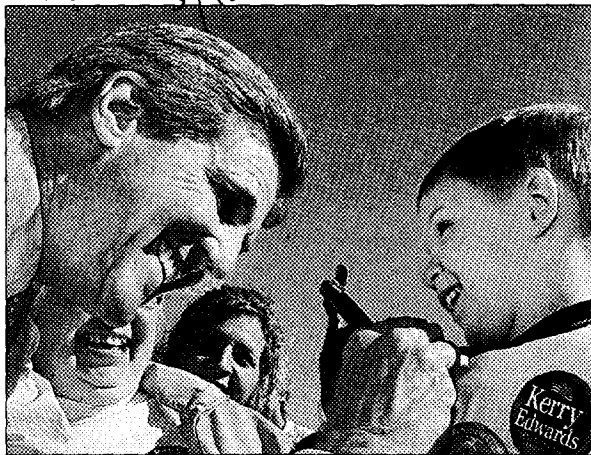
FAVORABLE PUBLIC reaction to his performance in the first presidential debate has boosted Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry and narrowed the contest with President Bush to a tie, according to a new USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll.

Bush's lead of 8 percentage points before Thursday's debate evaporated in a survey taken on Friday through Sunday. Among likely voters, Bush and Kerry are at 49 per cent each. Independent candidate Ralph Nader is at 1 per cent.

As it enters its final month, the presidential campaign is essentially where it began: too close to call. "This is an even-up race that's going to be decided by everything that happens in the next 30 days," says Mark Mellman, Kerry's pollster. Matthew Dowd, chief strategist for the Bush campaign, calls the dead heat no surprise. "We always said this race would be tight — when we were up and when we were down," he says.

In the poll, Kerry:

- Reclaimed an advantage on the economy. Voters by 7 points say Kerry would handle the economy better than Bush.
- Bush's 14-point advantage on handling Iraq was cut in half, to 7 points. He



BUDDING SUPPORT Sen. John Kerry signs the shirt of a young supporter in Austintown, Ohio, on Sunday.

Fox scribe apologises to Senator

FOX NEWS, the influential rightwing US television network, said on Sunday it had "reprimanded" its chief political correspondent after its website carried fabricated quotes attributed to John Kerry, in which he called himself a "metrosexual" who enjoys getting manicures. The network, owned by Rupert Murdoch, apologised for

the article in which the Democratic challenger was quoted telling a rally in Florida: "Didn't my nails and cuticles look great?" Comparing himself to Bush, Kerry was supposed to have said: "I'm metrosexual — he's a cowboy." Women voters, he purportedly added, "should like me! I do manicures."

GNS, New York

continues to hold a big advantage on handling terrorism, of 17 points.

■ Improved his standing as a potential commander in chief, though Bush is still preferred. By 5 points, vot-

ers say they trust Bush more to handle the responsibilities of commander in chief.

■ Convinced more voters that he has a clear plan for Iraq, though still not a majority.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 OCT 2004

Gameplan for Kerry

Democrats should concentrate

on economic diplomacy

Most commentators agree that in the first of the televised presidential debates, Kerry scored points over Bush. While not a knockdown victory for the Democratic side, the verbal skirmish could well have narrowed the slim margin of popularity that Bush currently enjoys over his rival. What seemed to work for Kerry was what he should have done all along: Come up with a credible strategy to help get America out of the murderous Iraq imbroglio. For the first time, the Democratic candidate did, in fact, sketch out a tentative gameplan by suggesting that the US woo back its core allies to help out in Iraq and simultaneously plan a phased withdrawal of American troops. This could indeed be a viable halfway house to going contritely to the UN whose secretary-general has already described the Iraq exercise as an illegal operation. By getting its partners back into the act, the US could counter the perception that it is going it alone in Iraq thus reinforcing increasing fears of America as an unchallenged and unchallengeable globocop. Though Kerry has not yet spelt out exactly how he would go about roping in others to lend a helping hand in Iraq, the obvious answer would be to more equitably share in the spoils of reconstruction in the war-ravaged country. Don't give all the plum contracts to Halliburton and other US firms; throw a few choice tidbits to others as well.

Kerry should remember that today, more than ever, economic diplomacy is the key. In the next round of debate, he is likely to attack the Republicans' other weak flank — the US economy. The Democrats' track record shows that Kerry will assail the Republican policy of outsourcing. In fact, in a reference to Afghanistan, Kerry had already used the O word having called the operation an 'outsourced' war. It would be a grave mistake on Kerry's part to attack the more conventional type of outsourcing. A ban on outsourcing could make a lot of US corporates economically unviable and, therefore, lead to far more American job losses than are now being sourced out of the country. Equally importantly, outsourcing would win Washington diplomatic brownie points by making others indirect stakeholders in the American economy. This would be in keeping with the Democratic philosophy of inclusiveness as against the patrician exclusiveness that supposedly typifies the Republicans. The Democrats have always projected themselves as being pro-marginalised minorities and the disadvantaged. This is an opportunity to extend this participatory ideology on a global basis. Go for it, Kerry.

WAR OF WORDS

BUSH AND KERRY SLUG IT OUT ON IRAQ CAMPAIGN

WASHINGTON, Oct. 1. — In their first face-to-face debate, President George W Bush and his Democratic presidential rival Senator John F Kerry sparred on a range of issues including Iraq, war on terror and non-proliferation, with the latter saying he “can do a better job”.

In the nationally-televised debate held at the University of Miami in Coral Gables (Florida) last night, both vigorously presented their respective viewpoints, agreeing on some issues and sharply differing on others.

Accusing Mr Bush of diverting resources from the hunt for terror mastermind Osama bin Laden to the war in Iraq, Mr Kerry said; “This President has made, I regret to say, a colossal error of judgment. And judgment is what we look for in the President... I can do a better job (in Iraq).”

Mr Bush countered: “We have capability of doing both... To say that there’s only one focus in the war on terror doesn’t really understand the nature of war on terror.”

Mr Bush added: “The

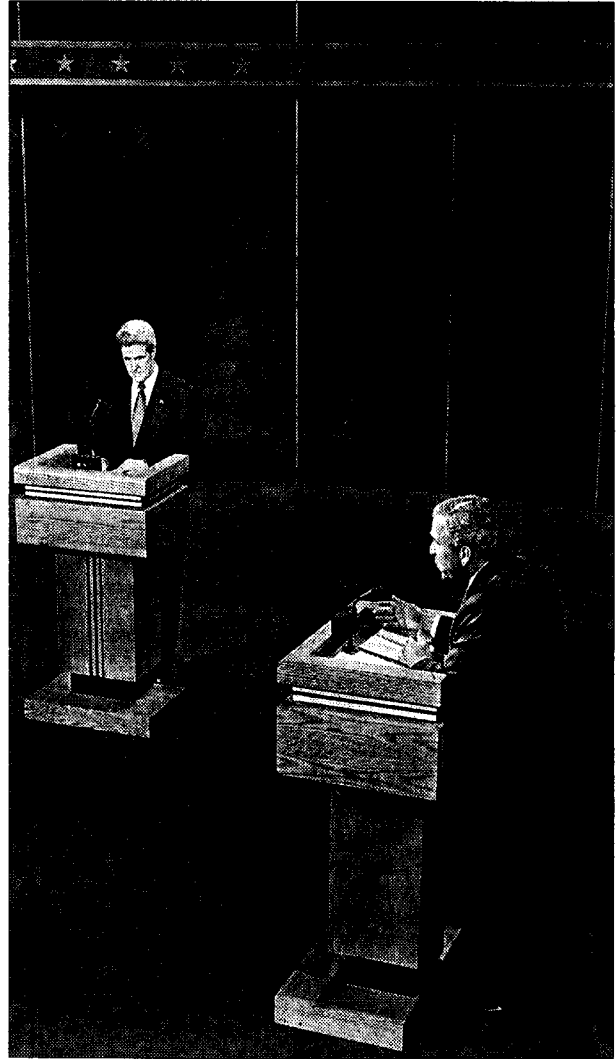
world is better off without Saddam Hussein.” He insisted he had to act quickly on Iraq, while Mr Kerry reminded him that the USA and Britain were enforcing a no-fly zone over Iraq before the war and there was no way Saddam could have become stronger.

Mr Bush reiterated his position that even though no weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq, Saddam had the capacity to build them.

Both agreed in principle that America must reserve the right to conduct a preventive war if necessary for American security, with allies if possible and without if unavoidable.

Both agreed that nuclear proliferation is the greatest threat to America and the world but, to deal with the North Korean nuclear weapons and infrastructure, Mr Kerry said he would hold early bilateral talks.

Mr Kerry charged that North Korea and Iran both have advanced their nuclear weapons programmes during the Bush administration. “As President I’ll never take my eye off that ball.” — PTI



FACE-OFF: Mr Bush counters Mr Kerry during the first televised presidential debate in Coral Gables, Florida, on Thursday. — AFP

Kerry wins Round One

Press Trust of India

NEW YORK, Oct. 1. — Democratic challenger Mr John Kerry prevailed over President Bush in the first debate, according to initial polls among the likely voters by leading American TV networks.

ABC television reported from a random sampling among 531 voters who watched last night’s debate that 45 per cent called Mr Kerry a winner, 36 per cent favoured Mr Bush and 17 per cent called it a tie.

A CNN Gallup poll gave Mr Kerry a 46 per cent to 37 per cent win over the President. Now, 46 per cent of those asked have a better opinion of Mr Kerry against 21 per cent for Mr Bush. The CBS network, based on poll of 200 voters, said 44 per cent gave victory to Mr Kerry against 26

Head to head

CORAL GABLES (Florida), Oct. 1. — The testosterone all but fizzed off the screen into America’s living rooms as President Bush and Senator John Kerry refused to cede an inch in a beefy presidential debate.

Mr Bush, schooled through addresses to Americans in times of grave national peril, peered straight into the camera as he gave his answers literally looking the nation in the eye. Mr Kerry, however, spent most of his time pleading his case to debate moderator Mr Jim Lehrer, and not directly into the lens, with a slight side-on posture as he answered.

Their stands on various issues:

- Nuclear proliferation: The two candidates agreed that the spread of nuclear weapons was the biggest threat facing the USA but disagreed over how to combat it.
- North Korea: President Bush said North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il wants to end six-nation talks on the Korean nuclear crisis and that the USA must not start bilateral negotiations. But the Democratic challenger said the USA should open direct talks with North Korea and take a stronger role in countering Iran’s nuclear programme.
- Russian ties: Mr Bush and Mr Kerry both said they would stand up for democracy in Russia while maintaining a good relationship with the government of President Putin. — AFP

per cent for Mr Bush.

Thirty per cent said neither candidate won.

A significant finding by ABC was that Mr Kerry led by 20 points among the

independents which could give Democratic an advantage in a tight race with both Republicans and Democratic committed to vote for their own candidates.

While 70 per cent of Mr Bush’s supporters said he is the winner, 89 per cent of Mr Kerry’s supporters thought that their man had won, according to the ABC poll.

But not many voters changed their mind to vote for the other candidate after the debate. Analysts said this was customary and it would take a few days before the effect of the debate become visible in support for each candidate.

ABC poll found that 50 per cent supported Mr Bush before and 51 per cent after the debate. Similarly, 46 per cent favoured Mr Kerry before and 47 per cent after the debate.

Round 1: Kerry turns the tables on Bush

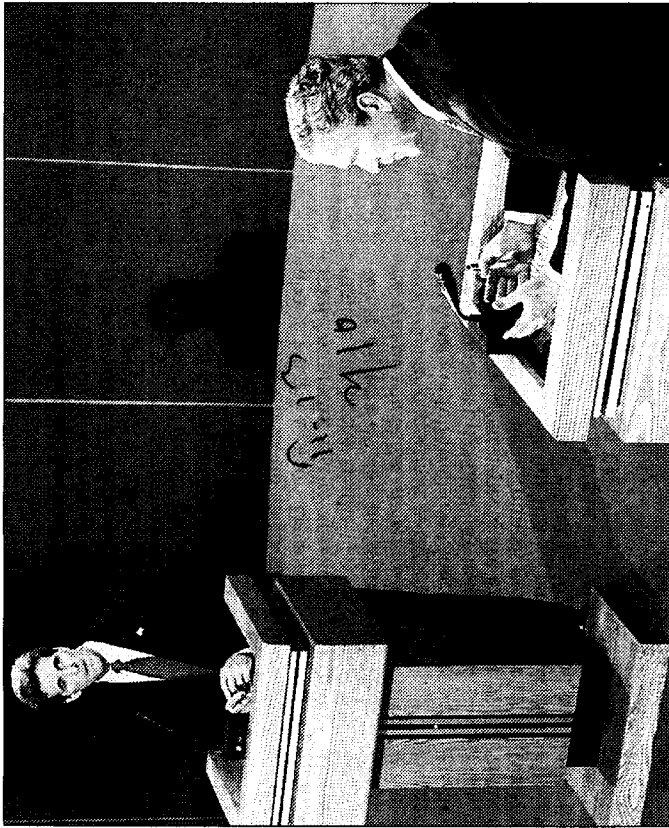
Says Iraq War A Colossal Error, But Prez Claims He Neutralised Potential Threat

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: Almost written off after trailing in several opinion polls, Democratic challenger John Kerry showed great élan in outmanoeuvring President George Bush in the first of three presidential debates on Thursday, throwing the November 2 election wide open.

In a composed performance watched by a prime time television audience of some 30 million, Kerry attacked Bush over a range of foreign policy choices, including the "colossal error" of judgment in Iraq. He also defended himself skillfully against Bush's charge that he was an indecisive flip-flopper. Most political pundits and media mavens called the debate in favour of Kerry. Several instant polls also showed Kerry to be the winner by comfortable margins. While a CNN-Gallup poll gave Kerry a 46-37 win (rest said they were tied or were undecided), an ABC poll called it 45-36, and a CBS poll put it at 43-29.

The two men exchanged policy sallies, differing significantly on their approach to the war on terrorism, the exit strategy in Iraq and on how to deal with North Korea. Kerry attacked Bush for shifting the focus from Afghanistan, where the real perpetrators of 9/11 were hiding, and diverting it to Saddam Hussain and Iraq, who had nothing to do with the attack. He said when US troops had cornered Osama bin Laden in Tora Bora, the job of finishing him was "outsourced" to Afghan warlords, leaving no doubt



John Kerry watches as US President George Bush makes a point during the face-off

as to what the President can expect in the next debate on the economy.

Bush did not care to differentiate between Bin Laden and Saddam, and suggested that he had done right to act preemptively to neutralise a potential threat to America. "We can change tactics when we need to, but we never change our beliefs," Bush said at one point. Underlining their fundamental difference, Kerry told the President, "It's one thing to be certain, but you can be certain and

you can be wrong. Certainty sometimes gets you into trouble."

Kerry, however, offered a better-defined exit strategy for Iraq, saying he would call a summit of US allies (and implying that a discredited Bush would not be able to do that) expand the alliance and start recalling US troops as early as six months from now. However, Bush repeatedly attacked Kerry for sending out the wrong message to American troops and enemies with his criticism of the war and talk of

pulling out. He said he would bring back the troops only when the job was done.

With the President on the defensive most of the time and often repetitive, the arguments on the war took up more than an hour of the 90-minute debate held in an auditorium at the University of Miami, where a packed house was forbidden from participating actively.

It didn't seem like either candidate managed to vastly sway voters of the opposite persuasion, although it would require further post-debate polls to confirm that. While Democrats thought Kerry did a good job, Republicans felt Bush held his own, and the undecided voters were either split or still undecided. Some 20 per cent of voters said the debate could change their voting preference, while 80 per cent said it would not. Among the 20 per cent, there were more

Bush followers—63 per cent.

The first debate, centering on foreign policy, was thought to be Kerry's weak spot because of his initial support for the Iraq war. But he now goes into the next two debates on turf that should favour him more—the economy and health care. According to some pundits, in terms of atmosphere, Kerry seemed more calm and benign and he looked more presidential than Bush. In fact, the President often looked annoyed and agitated when Kerry was speaking.

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Kerry certificate to Bush before debate

Coral Gables (Florida), Sept. 30 (Reuters): President George W. Bush and Democratic rival John Kerry made final preparations for their nationally televised debate, as Kerry praised his foe as "a very clever debater" and Bush made another tour of Florida storm damage.

The 90-minute session on the University of Miami campus will give voters their first chance to compare the candidates directly and could play a big role in tipping a White House race that most polls show is close but leaning toward Bush.

Polls indicate as many as one-quarter of American voters could be swayed by the debates, which often provide insights into not only the candidates' views but their demeanour and personalities.

The session will focus on the war in Iraq, where the US death toll now stands at 1,055, and the war on terror. A series of car bombs across Iraq today killed more than 40 people, many of them children, as instability mounted there. Both issues have dominated the campaign for months, and Kerry promised to confront Bush.



Technicians work on the debate floor at the University of Miami convocation centre in Coral Gables, Florida. (AFP)

"George Bush is scaring America. He's talking terror every day and people see terrible images of what's happening in the world, and they're real — people being beheaded, the acts of terror in that school in Russia," Kerry said in an interview with ABC's *Good Morning America*.

"I know how to fight a more effective war on terror, and by the end of this campaign, America will make that decision, and that's why I'm going

to win," Kerry said, adding he was looking forward to the encounter.

"He's a very clever debater. He's won all his debates," Kerry said of Bush. "The President has been, as they say down in Texas, all hat and no cattle and I'm going to show it."

Bush, on a morning trip to Stuart, Florida, for a survey of recent hurricane damage, gave a thumbs up and a smile when asked about the debate

by a reporter, but did not reply.

"People in Florida and many other states are coming through a trying time," Bush said as he stopped by a Red Cross relief center. He promised the federal government would work with state and local authorities to provide disaster relief.

Bush is expected to hammer Kerry for shifting his views on the war, while Kerry has condemned Bush for making America less safe with his rush to invade Iraq without international support and his failure to plan adequately for the war's aftermath.

Bush campaign communications director Nicolle Devenish said Kerry's toughest challenge would be making a direct connection with voters.

Dan Bartlett, White House communications director, said Bush's debate preparations were "long and steady instead of a crash course." Bush, he said, "knows his positions. You don't have to memorise something you believe in."

With many polls showing voters still trust Bush more to handle key issues, including Iraq, the debate could be Kerry's last chance to turn around his image.

Words may fall short in the big debate

USA Today
Miami, September 30

WHEN PRESIDENT Bush and rival John Kerry meet on Thursday night in Coral Gables, Florida, for their first debate, their most daunting opponent may be the English language, not each other.

Words — the wrong ones, garbled ones or too many — have often been the bane of these men. Presidential debates have tripped up many a candidate before them, even those with smoother command of grammar and diction.

With millions of voters watching on TV, the 90-minute foreign policy face-off could be a defining event in the presidential campaign. Kerry likely will try for brevity and clarity. Bush likely will aim to avoid mangled syntax and phrases he'll regret.

The debate puts Bush and Kerry on the same stage together

Soros pays up to defeat Bush

BILLIONAIRE US philanthropist George Soros has launched a nationwide speaking tour and advertising blitz in an attempt to deliver the Bush defeat he said would be "the greatest good deed I could do for the world". Soros, America's 24th richest person, is expected to spend up to \$3m de-

GNS, Los Angeles

■ Ask questions other than rhetorical ones.

A system of verbal and colored-light warnings will keep the pair within time limits, a strict jacket some analysts say will help Kerry curb his tendency to run on. But only Kerry can guard against remarks like, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion (for

for the first time. Their past contact has been limited to a few handshakes and brief chats. And the rules of the debate virtually prohibit interaction. They are not allowed to:

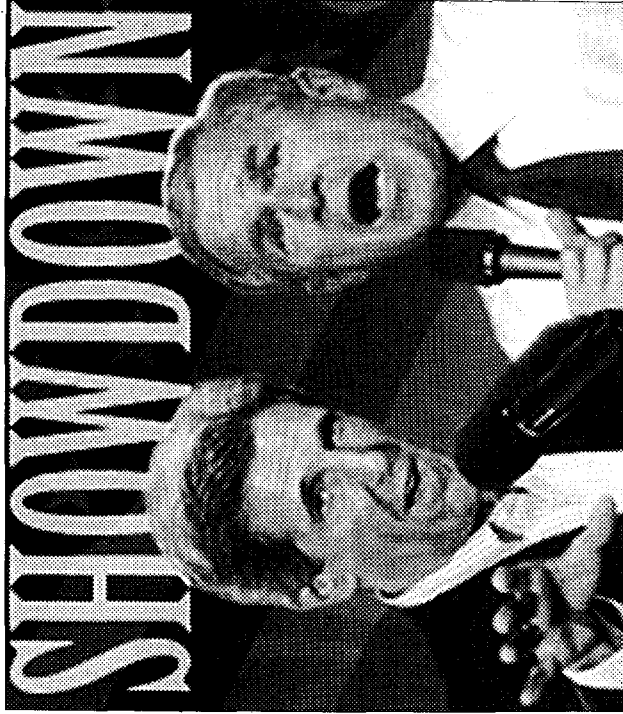
- Challenge each other to make any kind of pledge.
- Move from behind their lecterns to invade each other's space.

Iraq) before I voted against it." Bush instantly turned the statement into an attack ad.

Briefer is better, Kerry is hearing from media coaches. Slate writer William Saletan says Kerry's contention that Bush is "living in a fantasy world of spin" is "almost perfect". But just plain "fantasy world", Saletan adds, is shorter and better.

Bush's malapropisms have spawned several books, and the President pokes fun at his own lingual lapses. At appearances with California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bush often jokes that "some accuse both of us of not being able to speak the language". He said this month in Erie that he had asked Congress for money to buy armour and "body parts".

Tom Rath, who advises the Bush campaign, says the occasional gaffes may make Bush seem endearing.



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Bush's lead over Kerry widening: polls

New York: US President George W Bush's lead over Democratic rival John Kerry widened slightly over the last week, according to a CBS/New York Times poll released on Saturday.

Bush now leads Kerry 50-41%, a nine point margin, up from last week's seven point margin of 49-42%, the poll said.

Independent candidate Ralph Nader's support stood at 3%, up from 1% last week. Nader, who contributed to Democrat Al Gore's defeat in Florida four years ago, won a court battle on Saturday to gain a place on the presidential ballot in that state.

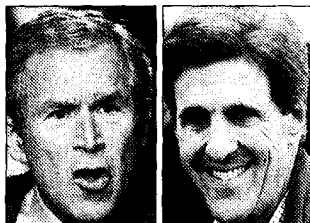
Up to 7% of Republicans plan to cross party lines to support Kerry, the poll said, while 20% of self-identified liberals said they planned to support Bush. Support for

Kerry is softening even among his own supporters. Just 40% say they strongly favour him, down from 45% last week. By contrast, 63% of Bush supporters said they strongly favour him, the same number as last week.

Voters seemed to be gaining confidence in Bush's national security abilities, and losing faith in Kerry's.

About 50% had "a lot" of confidence that Bush could protect the country from terrorism, up from 43% last month. Just 26% expressed such confidence in Kerry, down from 32% in August.

Approximately 32% said they were confident Kerry could handle an international crisis, down from 35% last week, while confidence that Bush could do so remained constant at 51%. AP



'FULL DISCLOSURE'

189

US JUDGE ORDERS RELEASE OF FILES ON BUSH'S WAR RECORDS

WASHINGTON, Sept. 17. — A US federal judge has ordered the Defence Department to find and make public any unreleased files about President Bush's Vietnam-era Air National Guard service by next week to resolve a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit filed by the Associated Press.

US district judge Mr Harold Baer Jr. handed down the order late on Wednesday in New York. The AP lawsuit already has led to the disclosure of previously unreleased flight logs from Mr Bush's days piloting F-102A fighters and other jets.

Pentagon officials told the judge that they plan to have their search complete by Monday. Mr Baer ordered the Pentagon to hand over the records to the AP by 24 September and provide a written statement by 29 September detailing the search for more records.

"We're hopeful the Defence Department will provide a full accounting of the steps it has taken, as the judge ordered, so the public can have some assurance that there are no documents being withheld," said AP lawyer Mr David Schulz.

White House officials have said the President ordered the Pentagon earlier this year to conduct a thorough search for the Mr Bush's records, and officials allowed reporters to review everything that was gathered back in February.

Through a series of requests



BUSH'S TWIN SUPPORT: Brighton mayor Ms Kate Lawrence meets Jenna (centre) and Barbara Bush during an election campaign in Michigan. — PTI

First Lady's rally disrupted

HAMILTON (New Jersey), Sept. 17. — A woman wearing a shirt with the words "President Bush You Killed My Son" and a picture of a soldier killed in Iraq was detained after she interrupted a campaign speech by US First Lady Mrs Laura Bush.

Police escorted Ms Sue Niederer of Hopewell, New Jersey, from a rally at a firehouse after she demanded to know why her son, 1st Lt Seth Dvorin (24) was killed in Iraq. Dvorin died in February while trying to disarm a bomb. As shouts of "Four More Years" subsided, Ms Niederer, standing in the middle of a crowd of some 700, continued to shout about the killing of her son. Local police escorted her out of the event, handcuffed her and placed her in the back of a police van. She was later charged with defiant trespass and released. — AP

under the federal open records law and a subsequent suit, the AP uncovered the flight logs, which were not part of the records the White House released earlier this year. — AP

The Times, London

DENVER, Sept. 17. — Bathed in the glow of a glorious early morning Colorado sun, sleeves rolled up, shirt open, and utterly relaxed, President Bush leans toward his audience. With a Texas twang as rugged as the Rocky Mountains on the horizon, he declares: "It's nice to be out West, where the cowboy hats outnumber the ties."

Mr Bush has been speaking for just three seconds but already he has connected with his huge crowd. Before them stands not an aloof President but a friend, a straight-shooter, one of them, and as he continues in his easy, conversational style, his sentences short, deliberately lacking in polish but always packing a punch, one learns the secret of his success as a campaigner.

Mr Bush is one of the political world's most underestimated orators. He does not have the lyrical brevity of Abraham Lincoln or the screen-tested skills of Ronald Reagan. But he uses a folksy, unsophisticated style and short, declarative sentences that hide his patrician roots and make his message brutally clear and reassuringly easy to understand.

A shot of charm...

Botched campaign

W.D. 5/16 Kerry must change tactics to win 15/9

When John Kerry failed to get a bounce in his popularity ratings after the Democratic convention in Boston, it was put down by his campaign managers to this year's presidential contest being unusually polarised, and most voters having already made up their minds. President Bush, has managed however, to get a bounce out of the recently held Republican convention, and is currently six to nine percentage points ahead of Kerry. Why is Kerry losing ground? Perhaps he ought to take lessons from the successful campaign Bill Clinton ran in 1992, when he was able to portray the differences between himself and then president George Bush the elder very sharply. Clinton had a slogan for the campaign since made famous — "it's the economy, stupid" — pinpointing the biggest issue Americans faced at the time, the economic recession that gutted jobs and living standards through the senior Bush's presidency; and relentlessly orienting his campaign around it. A good slogan for the Kerry campaign might be "it's Iraq, stupid". But the campaign has no coherent theme. It is ironic that Bush has correctly identified the biggest issue facing Americans since 9/11 — the terror threat and the actions undertaken by Washington in the name of countering it. He is campaigning hard on it, even though his record here is eminently vulnerable to attack. Kerry, on the other hand, is guided by the hackneyed wisdom that the economy is the only thing Americans care about, and has been launching mealy-mouthedly populist assaults on that inevitable accompaniment of globalisation — the outsourcing of jobs.

In that context it is doubtful that even the latest revelations, about how Bush failed to meet the standards of the Texas Air National Guard and was suspended from flying fighter jets during the Vietnam era, will make much of a difference to the contest. The Vietnam war ended 30 years back and memories have faded — much more pressing is what is happening now with regard to the Iraq war, on which Kerry is unable to define his position, thus letting Bush get away with what everyone knows has been a disaster. Kerry has been suggesting, rather weakly, that Bush "misled" people on Iraq, and truly put his foot in mouth when he answered "yes" to the question whether he would have gone to war against Iraq if he had been in charge and knew then what he knows now. It would appear that Democrats are mortally scared to sound pacifist, so much so that even if Kerry has a clear shot into Bush's goal he will pass up the opportunity. Not just Iraq, but Bush's poor record on terror, with Al Qaeda attacks a dime a dozen since 9/11, offers plenty of targets of opportunity. With two months left to go for the elections, there's still time for a change of tactics on Kerry's part.

Beslan lessons: Bush wants school siege plan

Associated Press
Washington, September 10

FEDERAL LAW enforcers are taking a new look at hostage-taking responses to make sure the US is prepared for an attack like the recent terrorist takeover of a Russian school.

"The president said to all of us: Just make sure you know what you are going to do, who is going to be doing it, where we are going to be doing it, what resources we are going to apply," Homeland Security secretary Tom Ridge said in an interview on Thursday.

In a recent briefing, Ridge said President Bush had asked his top advisers — including homeland security, FBI and justice officials — to review their strategies for dealing with hostage situations.

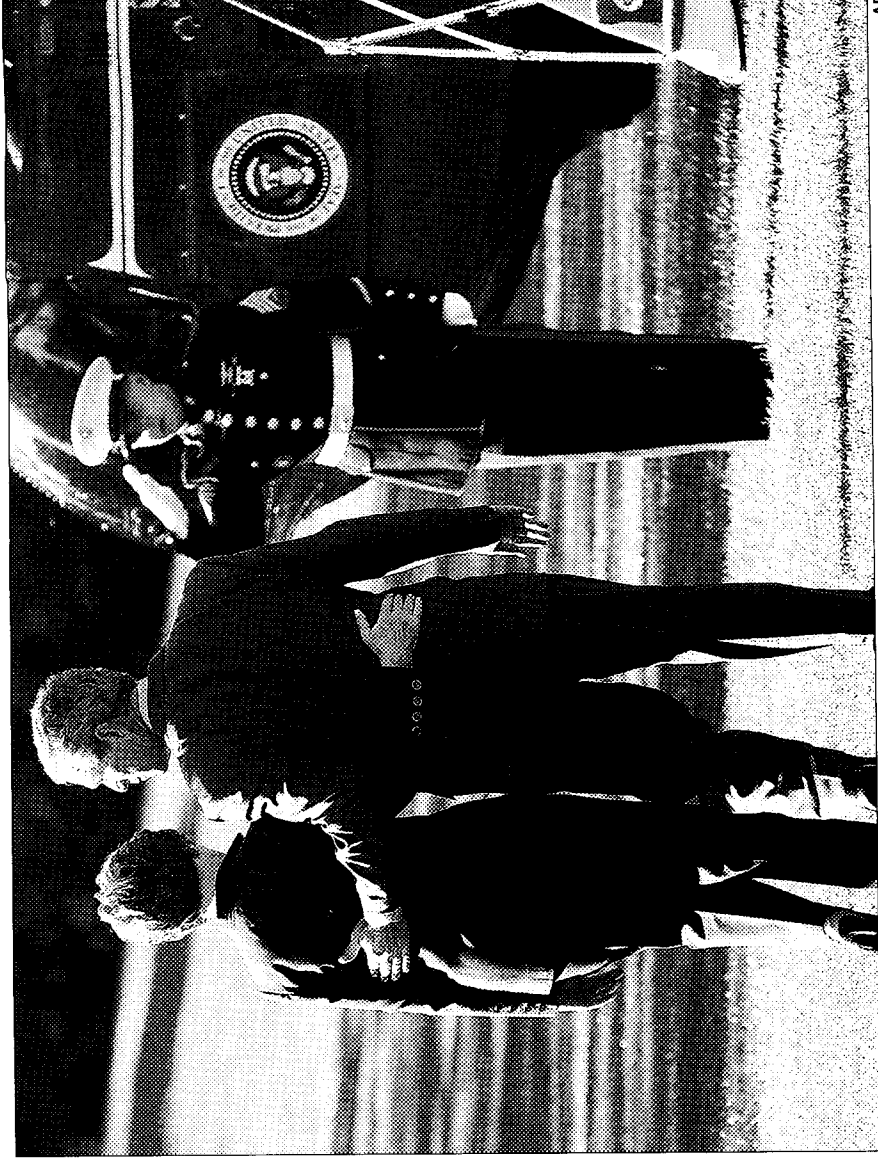
Ridge said the US government was still trying to find out key details of how last week's attack in Russia was planned and carried out. He indicated the US government was still relying on press reports and is hoping to learn more from Russian officials.

At the same time, Ridge was somewhat critical of the Russians, saying it appeared that authorities there may have had a disjointed response to the hostage crisis blamed on Chechen rebels. More than 300 people died.

"Preliminary reports suggest there wasn't the kind of coordination and leadership and direction and somebody being in charge," Ridge said.

Later, Justice Department spokesman Mark Corallo said the FBI and other agencies "are constantly training and refining their techniques based on current threats. They always have and they always will."

On the three-year anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terror attacks, attention has focused on a pre-election threat. However, echoing a remark made at an April



President George Bush and Laura Bush leave White House on Friday for a day of campaigning in Ohio and West Virginia. AP

speech in Nevada, Ridge extended the amount of time the US should be extra vigilant against a possible al-Qaida attack designed to disrupt the democratic process — from the November 2 Election Day to the presidential inauguration scheduled for January 20.

Ridge also acknowledged that US authorities have "a couple different sources" believed to be sharing credible information about the threat.

"You can translate that into any time between now and the election, now and the inaugural — or any

"I'm going to let the voters determine" which campaign can best fight terror.

A National Research Council report released on Thursday concluded that openly sharing data on dangerous germs to aid research on vaccines and treatments outweighs the danger that terrorists may exploit it. Ridge said he wants to see the entire report, but the country must decide whether to put the recipe for a weapon of mass destruction on the Internet. "Personally, I don't think that's a very good idea," he said.

Pressed on whether that meant he agreed with Cheney, Ridge said:

Putin okays Parliament probe into carnage

Press Trust of India
Moscow, September 10

FACED WITH intense public pressure, Russian President Vladimir Putin today agreed for an independent parliamentary probe into the Beslan school carnage that left hundreds of people, including children, dead.

Putin, who had insisted on an "in-house" probe by the security agencies, agreed to provide a special commission of the Federation Council (Upper House) blanket access to sensitive materials.

During his meeting with Putin, the Upper House chairman Sergei Mironov informed him about the plans to summon an emergency session of the House on September 20 to debate on the bills further tightening anti-terror efforts and constitute a special house commission to probe into how the Beslan school raid by terrorists could ever take place and in bloodbath of so many children.

"We all are interested in establishing the truth. I will direct the agencies and the Prosecutor General Ustinov to provide all the necessary documents and information to the commission," Putin said at his televised meeting with Mironov.

At his Monday's meeting with a select group of journalists and academics, Putin, while ruling out a public investigation, had said he was not averse to the idea of a parliamentary probe as long as it does not turn into what he called "a political show".

Meanwhile, prominent Russian experts informally advising Putin, have strongly advocated the upgradation of parliament in the country, which under the constitution adopted during Boris

Yeltsin's rule, has finally become a rubberstamp for the Kremlin. In his address to the nation after the Beslan carnage, Putin had also conceded that the political system of the country does not comment on the economic and social changes in the post-Soviet era.

On September 13, Putin has summoned the leadership of the country at the joint session of the cabinet and government of all the 89 subjects (regions) of the Russian Federation to discuss the crisis of power in emergency situations and draft the course for political reforms. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* daily reported.



REUTERS
Relatives of hostages killed in the Beslan siege visit the school.

Kerry, Bush spar over Iraq

Sept. 7: (Reuters): Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry launched one of his harshest broadsides against the Iraq war yesterday, sparking an angry response from US President George W. Bush, as the war overshadowed their attempts to focus on the economy.

Marking Labor Day, the traditional kick-off for what has become a marathon presidential campaign season, the two candidates held rallies in the battleground states of Missouri, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio with Kerry now trailing by double digits in national polls.

Kerry tried to focus on domestic issues at a neighbourhood meeting in Canonsburg, but members of the audience raised Iraq. After months of off-and-on criticism of the war, Kerry seized the opening, calling the invasion "the wrong war in the wrong place



John Kerry holds a shotgun presented to him in Racine, West Virginia.

(Reuters)

at the wrong time," and said his goal was to withdraw US troops in a first White House term. In a statement issued later, Kerry called Iraq a "quagmire" created by Bush's "wrongheaded, go-it-alone" policy.

Bush turned from his tax reform proposals to shoot

back at Kerry during a rally in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, accusing the Massachusetts senator of vacillating on Iraq after bringing in new advisers.

"After voting for the war but against funding it, after saying he would have voted for the war even knowing everything we know today, my opponent woke up this morning with new campaign advisers and yet another new position," Bush said.

"No matter how many times Senator Kerry changes his mind, it was right for America then and it's right for America now," he told the crowd, which chanted back, "flip-flop, flip flop." Some senior Democrats have advised Kerry to focus on jobs and the economy as he tries to reinvigorate his campaign. Polls show Bush's popularity with voters is particularly strong on Iraq and issues of national security.

Dubya slip

Poplar Bluff (Montana), Sept. 7 (Reuters): US President George W. Bush offered an unexpected reason yesterday for cracking down on frivolous medical lawsuits: "Too many OB-GYNs aren't able to practise their love with women all across this country."

The Republican President, long known for verbal and grammatical lapses, included the anecdote about obstetrician gynaecologists in his stump speech attacking Senator John Kerry.

At a rally of cheering supporters in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, Bush said: "We've got an issue in America. Too many good docs are getting out of business. Too many OB-GYNs aren't able to practice their love with women all across this country."

HD-10 7/11

FEAR AND SMEAR

WST(1) ✓

UNITED STATES PRESIDENT George W. Bush has apparently decided that he can secure a second term only through a campaign based on fear and smear. The speeches delivered at the Republican Party's convention last week were devoted either to the vilification of the Democratic candidate, John Kerry, or to the fostering of the myth that the foremost issue before American voters was the challenge posed by terrorism. While convention theatrics did galvanise the party faithful, it is far from certain that a campaign of this sort will win over uncommitted voters who hold the balance in a highly polarised electorate. The most recent opinion polls show that only four per cent of the electorate thinks that terrorism is the most important issue; in comparison, 32 per cent put the state of the economy at the top of the list while 28 per cent gave priority to the war in Iraq. The Bush campaign overlooked these figures. Instead it focussed its efforts on highlighting the President's performance since September 11, 2001 for two reasons. First, the Republican Party appears to be caught up in an intense bout of "group think" that makes it believe the concerns of its rank and file are shared by all Americans in equal measure. Secondly, Mr. Bush's performance in office has been so abysmal in every area of significance that his supporters have few other talking points. Undecided voters who have over the past three years been bombarded with 9/11 rhetoric might not be impressed. With no major attacks taking place over this period, they have reason to believe that the terrorism threat has receded. They also know that the President deviated from the campaign against terror by launching a brutal and costly war against Iraq. Discerning voters will also be aware that Mr. Bush has not formulated any serious plans to tackle problems cre-

ated by the deeply flawed policies of his first term. Among these problems are the marked increase in poverty and unemployment, sharp decrease in the number of people with access to healthcare, burgeoning budget deficits, and the precipitous decline in the country's standing in the international community.

Since the Democratic candidate enjoys a sizable lead on social and economic issues, the Republicans desperately tried to project the issue at stake in this election as one of choosing a wartime President. To this end, Mr. Bush and his supporters repeatedly asserted that the challenger was unfit to serve as commander-in-chief. Mr. Kerry had drawn level with his opponent in this contest as well; he showcased his military record before the Democratic convention, which was held a month earlier. The Republican attacks did push the challenger on to the backfoot for a while. Mr. Kerry hit back by asserting that those (such as Mr. Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney) who did not serve in the military as they should have during the Vietnam war and have now misled the country into a conflict in West Asia have no right to question his credentials to command the nation's forces. If the Democrat can sustain the counter-attack and take on the ruthless political campaign of his opponent, he will prove that he has the heart of a fighter.

The Republicans confirmed through their campaign rhetoric that they have no intention of abandoning a unilateralist approach to international affairs, particularly the doctrine of preemptive war. The Bush administration's chief achievement is making the world a far more dangerous place than it found it four years ago. While people outside the U.S. cannot of course determine the result of the election, they do most definitely have a big stake in the outcome.

7 SEP 2004

ILL EX-PRESIDENT CHALKS OUT PLAN

Clinton heart surgery successful

Trailing Kerry seeks advice

ADAM NAGOURNEY AND DAVID M. HALBFINGER

New York, Sept. 6 (Reuters): Former US President Bill Clinton was recovering today after successful heart bypass surgery at a New York hospital, his office said.

"The surgery was successful. The president is now resting comfortably," Clinton's office said in a statement after the five-hour operation at New York-Presbyterian Hospital. The procedure was led by Dr Craig Smith, chief of cardiothoracic surgery and started at about 7 am today. "He is fine, he came through it OK," a hospital source said.

Clinton, 58, who was known for his love of fast food, was admitted to the hospital on Friday after complaining of chest pains and shortness of breath.

Clinton's wife, US Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, and daughter, Chelsea, 24, were with him in New York. The family issued a statement yesterday on Clinton's website saying: "While bypass surgery certainly isn't something to look forward to, we are very lucky that the condition was detected in time," the statement said.

The family thanked thousands of well-wishers for cards received since Clinton was hospitalised.

New York, Sept. 6: Former President Bill Clinton, in a 90-minute telephone conversation from his hospital room, offered John Kerry detailed advice on Saturday night on how to reinvigorate his candidacy, as Kerry enlisted more Clinton advisers to help shape his strategy and message for the remainder of the campaign.

In an expansive conversation, Clinton told Kerry that he should move away from talking about Vietnam, which had been the central theme of his candidacy, and focus instead on drawing contrasts with President Bush on job creation and health care policies, officials with knowledge of the conversation said.

The conversation and the recruitment of old Clinton hands came amid rising concern among Democrats about the state of Kerry's campaign and criticism that he had been too slow to respond to attacks on his military record or to engage Bush on domestic policy. Among the better-known former Clinton aides who are expected to play an increasingly prominent role are James Carville, Paul Begala and Stanley Greenberg, campaign aides said.

Kerry's aides emphasised that this was an expansion of the staff for the autumn campaign and did not represent another upheaval of the Kerry campaign. Still, several Democrats outside the campaign said the influence of Clinton and his advisers could be seen over the past few days in Kerry's attacks on Bush's domestic policies. They said the Clinton team had been pressing Kerry to turn up the intensity of his attacks on those policies after a month spent largely avoiding engaging the President.

The installation of former Clinton lieutenants is creating two distinct camps at Kerry's campaign headquarters on McPherson Square in downtown Washington. The first is the existing Kerry high command, which includes Mary Beth Cahill, the campaign manager; Bob Shrum, a senior adviser; Tad Devine, a senior adviser; and Stephanie Cutter, the communications director. The second is the Clinton camp, which includes Joe Lockhart, a former White House press secretary; Joel Johnson, a former senior White House aide; and Doug Sosnik, a former Clinton political director.

Members of both camps played down any suggestion of a Clinton takeover of a troubled campaign and insisted there was no tension between the two groups.

Cheney leads Republican attack



US Vice-President Mr Dick Cheney waves at delegates at the Republican National Convention in New York. —AFP

Agencies

NEW YORK, Sept. 2. — Unleashing a stinging Republican assault on Democratic presidential candidate Mr John Kerry, Vice-President Mr Dick Cheney has questioned his foreign, security and economic policy credentials and portrayed him as "indecisive".

The attacks on Mr Kerry were coupled with strong defence of President George W Bush's policies during his first term on the anti-terror and economic fronts which, Mr Cheney said, had started bearing fruits. Mr Cheney, who accepted his nomination for Vice-President for the second term on the third day of the convention yesterday, lashed out at Mr Kerry for having made the "wrong call" on national security and for being indecisive as a dozen

demonstrators, who managed to reach the Republican Convention floor by breaching security, were arrested. Mr George W Bush, who was formally nominated last night, is due to accept it formally tonight and lay down his agenda for the second term in his acceptance speech.

Presenting Mr Bush as a President with proven record of strength and resoluteness, his running mate asked voters to keep in mind that the security of the country was at stake.

Painting Mr Kerry as unfit to be a President and a Commander-in-Chief of a free nation, Mr Cheney said he often made "wrong calls" in voting as a Senator. "His back and forth reflects a habit of indecision and sends a message of confusion," claimed the Vice-President.

Mr Bush on the other hand, unlike Mr Kerry, would not seek the UN's or other countries permission in taking action when the country's security is involved, Mr Cheney said and added: "History has shown, a strong and purposeful America is vital to preserving freedom and keeping us safe — yet time and again Senator Kerry has made the wrong call on national security."

Bush touts NYC firefighters endorsement

COLUMBUS (Ohio), Sept. 2. — Mr George W Bush has drawn the endorsement of a New York City firefighters union, a reminder to voters of the September 11 attacks that he has made the centrepiece of his reelection campaign.

After a quick stop for a campaign rally in Ohio, Mr Bush was headed for New York City where he will accept the Republican presidential nomination tonight. First, he was collecting the endorsement of the Uniformed Firefighters Association of Greater New York last night. At a community centre for Italian-Americans, he planned to visit some of the firefighters who became symbols of the heroism of September 11, 2001. — AP

Terrible twins terminate Arnie's feel-good factor



The Bush twins: Jenna (left) and Barbara

The Times, London

NEW YORK, Sept. 2. — It takes a lot to reduce 5,000 pumped up Republican delegates, still feasting on the rhetorical red meat just hurled at them by California governor Mr Arnold Schwarzenegger, into a mass of intaken breath and collective cringes. But President Bush's 23-year-old twin daughters managed just that on Tuesday night. Ms Jenna and Ms Barbara Bush took to the Madison Square Garden stage to introduce their mother.

What followed was a stand-up routine that must have left White House strategists feeling queasy. Jenna, not one of life's shrinking violets, immediately looked up to her grandparents, the first President Bush and former First Lady Barbara, whom she teased for being out of touch with pop culture. "She thinks *Sex and the City* is something married people do, but never talk about," Jenna said. There was an audible gasp, then nervous laughter, as the former President grinned fixedly and wagged his finger. His wife looked slightly startled.

Deathly pale Democrat!
NEW YORK, Sept. 2. — Talking of awkward moments, watching Mr Schwarzenegger's wife, Maria Shriver, a registered Democrat and John F Kennedy's niece, sitting next to the first President Bush, was a master class in the body language of suffering. Ms Shriver has had to endure much during her marriage to the former Hollywood star-turned-Republican politician, but she looked almost in agony during her husband's barnstorming convention speech.

Not only did he praise Mr Bush and accuse Mr John Kerry and Mr John Edwards of being economic "girlie men" — but he eulogised perhaps the biggest bogeyman in Democrat circles: Richard Nixon. When he recalled his arrival in America as an immigrant in 1968, saying Mr Nixon "sounded like a breath of fresh air", it looked almost too much for his wife. She looked briefly up to the skies. Perhaps she was asking to be beamed up. — **The Times**



Ms Maria Shriver: Out of place

And that was before Barbara revealed vice-presidential ambitions. "Who is this man they call Dick Cheney?" she asked. Mr Cheney sat stony faced. Maybe the girls know something about his political future he doesn't.

Terminator steals Bush thunder

K.P. NAYAR

New York, Sept. 1: The Republicans have a new hero: Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The actor-turned California governor and son-in-law of the Kennedys took the floor of the Republican National Convention here last night, his first prime time appearance on the national stage, and immediately replaced — at least for now — George W. Bush as the incumbent icon for the party faithful.

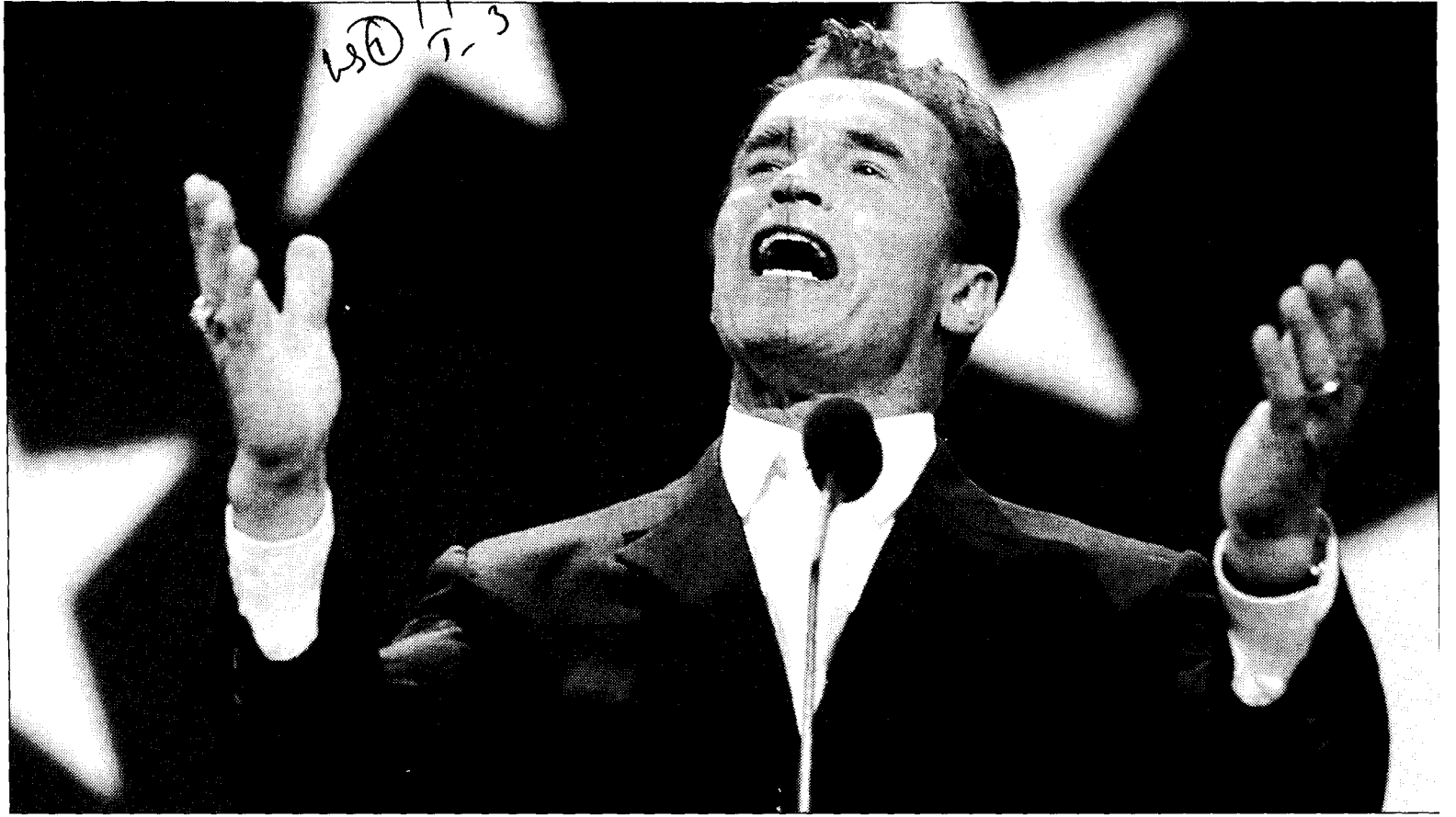
When Bush spoke to the delegates via satellite from Pennsylvania shortly after Schwarzenegger's 30-minute address to the convention, no one listened. They were still in a trance holding blue and white placards that read "Arnold" or "People of Compassion".

When the President's twin daughters took the stage at the Madison Square Garden to introduce their mother, who was billed as the star speaker last night, they looked ridiculous after Schwarzenegger's sway over the audience.

Worse, First Lady Laura Bush was like a pricked balloon after the week-long media build-up that had been launched in preparation for her prime time speech.

This was just what the Bush strategists had feared. That Schwarzenegger would outshine the President at the convention, whose main purpose is to give a boost for the Bush re-election campaign in the run-up to the November 2 election.

Indeed, he did. America's morning papers today gushed about Schwarzenegger's debut on the national stage last night. "Arnold the warm-up act became Arnold the main event", wrote the *New York Post*. "The Terminator doesn't understand being No. 2, so he took the crowd last night and killed 'em. He turned his act into the main event getting more applause, more adulation, more laughs



Arnold Schwarzenegger at the Republican convention in New York. (Reuters)

than all the main event Bush women put together", a reference to the First Lady and her twin daughters.

The *Christian Science Monitor* acknowledged that "long lampooned by late-night comedians, the governor is now lauded even by critics as an intelligent detail man. His efforts to bridge partisan gaps have scored major successes".

Which is why the Bush strategists gave him the prime slot at the podium last night. Along with former New York mayor and September 11 hero Rudy Giuliani — the prime time speaker on Monday — Schwarzenegger has an appeal among undecided voters. Schwarzenegger's speech is the only address to the convention that America's broadcast

networks have covered live so far.

The paper acknowledged tension between Schwarzenegger and Bush, who fears that like Ronald Reagan — another actor-turned-politician — Schwarzenegger can outshine the President. "Because of that tension, the Bush-Schwarzenegger relationship has been cordial, but largely arm's length. Bush did not endorse Schwarzenegger during the effort to oust (former California) governor Gray Davis by recall vote, and the couple's public meetings have not brought them any closer.

"Still, Republicans are understandably eager to showcase the governor of America's largest state. With his Hol-

lywood background, business experience and muscle-building youth, he remains an iconoclast from outside the usual mould. It is a rare, and potentially powerful, blend of charisma and authenticity."

Despite all the popularity Schwarzenegger is garnering, America's top political job will elude him. He was born in Austria and cannot, therefore, become President although Schwarzenegger last night spoke in riddles about a constitution change. That, for now, is unlikely.

Schwarzenegger spoke at length last night about how he emigrated to America a quarter century ago and about how he decided to become a Republican after watching Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon

debate during his very first week as an immigrant. "Listening to Nixon speak sounded more like a breath of fresh air."

"One thing I learned about America is that if you work hard and play by the rules, this country is truly open to you. You can achieve anything," he said.

Television commentators said later that the debate Schwarzenegger referred to never took place. But for his thousands of Republican fans, facts did not matter. Only the presence of the Terminator did. "He's turned out to be better than I thought he would," said Texas delegate Lucie Weaver. "I didn't think he'd get treated with respect. I think he's earned it."

Kerrys had a hamster tale, so do the Bushes

New York, Sept. 1 (Reuters): In an American presidential election where image counts more than ever before, if one candidate has a hamster story, the other one does too.

Last month in Boston, President George W. Bush's opponent, Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, showed his extended family to the assembled Democrats at his nominating convention.

Kerry's daughter told delegates how the lanky politician once leaped into the water to rescue her drowning hamster, plucked it out and tried to resuscitate the tiny beast.

Last night, the Bush fami-

ly took the stage at the Republican convention to soften the image of a man branded by opponents as a leader who took the nation unnecessarily to war. They had a hamster tale as well.

"We had a hamster too," Bush's daughter Barbara said. "Let's just say ours didn't make it."

Like the Kerrys in Boston, Bush's family worked together to soften the image of the President and show him as an everyday American dad at the head of a lively family.

Barbara's twin, Jenna, who made tabloid headlines early in Bush's White House term after being arrested for under-age drinking, joked:

"We spent the last four years trying to stay out of the spotlight. Sometimes we did a little better job than others."

With former President George Bush and his wife, Barbara, in the hall, the younger Barbara joked about her grandmother's famous prudishness.

"She thinks *Sex in the City* is something married people do but never talk about," she said, referring to the popular television show.

The Bush twins introduced their father, who spoke via a satellite video link from Pennsylvania with people playing softball behind him.

The President introduced his wife, Laura, calling her "a wonderful mother" and "a voice of calm and reason in difficult times."

The First Lady, wearing a sky blue dress suit, countered criticisms that her husband took the nation to war in Iraq over weapons of mass destruction that were never found.

"My husband didn't want to go to war, but he knew the safety and security of America and the world depended on it," she told delegates at Madison Square Garden, telling them Bush agonised over the decision. Experts describe Laura Bush as a traditional First Lady.

Laura Bush peppered her speech with references to the Bush family's day-to-day life, their daughters going to college and graduating, mourning the loss of their dog Spoty and enjoying the antics of their other dog Barney.

But she shed no more light on the details of how the Bush hamster perished.

2004

Republicans accused of exploiting 9/11

By Gary Younge

War, Mr Giuliani said: "In times of danger, as we are now in, Americans should put leadership at the core of their decision. George W. Bush sees world terrorism for the evil that it is."

But in the *New York Times* poll of victims' relatives, half of them said they believed the Republicans should not have held their convention in New York, and a quarter accused the party of choosing the city "to capitalize on September 11". A quarter said they believed the party chose New York in order "to support the city".

"I'm not shocked that they would do this," said Don Johnson, who lost his brother-in-law, Bill Kelly, in the terrorist attacks. "But I think it's wrong. I don't think Bush showed good leader-

ship after 9/11. I think he used it to curtail civil liberties and make families elsewhere in the world, as well as us, less safe."

Shift of focus

The focus of last night's speeches represented an attempt to shift the public's focus to Mr Bush's finest hour, said Jennifer Donahue, a political scientist at New Hampshire Political Institute.

"The Bush administration is trying to take the Americans back to the days after September 11 because they believe it is the best example of Bush's leadership," she said. "They want to change the subject away from the war and international relations and back towards the steadiness under fire that Bush

executed during that time and in the public mind. That's why they chose New York and that's what Giuliani represents."

The convention is being held late in order to take place as close as possible to the third anniversary of the attacks.

The Vice-President, Dick Cheney, set the tone for the week on Sunday evening with a speech on Ellis Island during which he invoked Mr Bush's conduct after the attacks. "[People] saw a man calm in a crisis, comfortable with responsibility and determined to do everything necessary to protect our people," he said.

Mr Giuliani said it was natural to dwell on the President's performance at such a critical time. "It's impossible to conduct this

presidential election without talking about September 11," he said in an interview with *USA Today*.

"It would be like conducting the re-election of Abraham Lincoln and not talking about the Civil War."

Decision defended

And the decision seemed to go down well with delegates. "We absolutely need to invoke September 11 in the convention," Richard Aguilar, a delegate from Minnesota, said.

"This election will determine how we fight a war on terror that began right here in this city." But using the attacks to bolster his image could backfire, said Ms Donahue. "There's always a risk in using a crisis for political

situation that it could be perceived as opportunistic. They have some cover in Giuliani because there is a direct link between him and the events. If they used a member of the administration it would look more overt." New York State's Republican Governor had tried to arrange for the new building at Ground Zero to be laid during this year's convention, but brought it forward to July 4 after it became clear it would not be well received.

"If you were to do something overtly political around Ground Zero, you'd get hammered for it, and rightly so," Michael McKee, a Republican strategist told the *New York Observer* recently. — © *Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004*

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THE HINDU

1 SEP 2004

9/11 on Bush camp's lips

New York, Aug. 31 (Reuters): John McCain and Rudolph Giuliani kicked off the Republican convention yesterday with an impassioned tribute to President George W. Bush's wartime leadership and said his response to the September 11, 2001, attacks proved his strength as commander-in-chief.

At the convention's opening session, Republicans repeatedly invoked the memory of the attacks and described them as the proving ground where Bush grew to meet, in McCain's words, "the test of our generation."

"He has been tested and has risen to the most important challenge of our time, and I salute him," the Arizona Senator said, describing the war on terror as "a fight between right and wrong, good and evil."

"For his determination to undertake it, and for his unflagging resolve to see it through to a just end, President Bush deserves not only our support but our admiration," said McCain, Bush's bitter rival in the 2000 Republican presidential race but now a strong supporter.

Giuliani, the former New York mayor whose leadership after the attacks elevated him to a national figure, compared Bush's fight against terror to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's battle with Nazi Germany and US President Ronald Reagan's opposition to the Soviet Union.

"Like President Bush, they were optimists; leaders must be optimists," Giuliani said. "Some call it stubbornness. I call it principled leadership."

Republicans are holding their convention to nominate Bush for a second term in New York, less than 7 km from the gaping hole where the World Trade Center once stood, to showcase the President's leadership after the attacks.

Three survivors of attack victims gave emotional testimonials to delegates and Giuliani vividly described the day, calling the inferno at the World Trade Center "the flames of hell." He said the attacks had forced Americans to confront the reality of terror that had grown unchecked over recent decades.

Terrorists, he said, had learned over the years "they could intimidate the world community and too often the response, particularly in Europe, was accommodation, appeasement and compromise."

Republicans led by Giuliani also took swipes at Bush's Democratic challenger, Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, drawing a contrast with the President and accusing Kerry of taking both sides of issues like the war on Iraq.

"President Bush sees world terrorism for the evil that it is," Giuliani said. "John Kerry has no such clear, precise and consistent vision."

McCain, a friend of Kerry and a fellow Vietnam War veteran, refused to join the Kerry

bashing and said he was "fortunate" to call many Democrats his friends.

But he defended the war in Iraq, saying that even if Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein did not have weapons of mass destruction, the stated reason for going to war, "he would have acquired them again."

"Our choice wasn't between a benign status quo and the bloodshed of war. It was between war and a graver threat," he said. "Only the most deluded of us could doubt the necessity of this war." The delegates opened the convention in an upbeat mood, with a flurry of new polls showed Bush gaining ground and slightly leading Kerry nationally.

Bush, on a week-long tour of key swing states on his way to his arrival in New York tomorrow, told a rally in New Hampshire he was filled with "absolute determination and resolve" to defend the US. "You know where I stand: I believe that we must never yield," Bush said at an event in Nashua.

On the streets outside, the pace of protests slowed dramatically after hundreds of thousands of demonstrators marched through the city's streets on Sunday. The homeless and people living with the HIV virus or AIDS protested against Bush's economic policies. At a rally outside UN headquarters, about 1,000 people held up signs saying: "The Poor Will Be Heard".



Michael Moore at the Republican convention in New York. (AFP)

Republican short shrift for Delhi

S. Rajagopalan

Washington, August 31

NOTWITHSTANDING

THE dramatic turnaround in Indo-American ties in recent years, the Republican manifesto studiously avoids projecting India either as an "ally" or as a "long-standing friend" of the US. The document, however, describes India as a growing power with which the US has "common security interests and a shared fundamental commitment to political freedom and representative government".

The 93-page platform (manifesto) reserves the "ally" label in Asia to a handful of countries: Japan, Republic of Korea, Thailand and the Philippines. And countries like Indonesia, Taiwan and Singapore have been described as "long-standing friends".

New Delhi, however, can have a sigh of relief that the document is almost equally tentative about Pakistan, despite it securing the "major non-Nato ally" (MNA) status from the Bush administration a few months ago. It may have been Bill Clinton who took the initiative in 2000 by being the first US President to visit India in 22 years, but

the Republican document gives President George W. Bush the credit for the "historic transformation" in Indo-US relations.

Acknowledging that India is "emerging as one of the great democracies of the twenty-first century", the party speaks of the need for the US to engage India "respecting its multi-cultural achievements". It reckons that India, set to become the world's most populous state soon, is "redefining its identity and future strategy".

As for the US's role in South Asia, it notes: "Mindful of its longstanding relationship with Pakistan, the US will place a priority on the secure, stable development of this volatile region where adversaries now face each other with nuclear arsenals."

Significantly, the GOP agenda has some cheery news for Indian techies. The party says it is in favour of raising the number of H-1B visas, which was drastically slashed from 195,000 per annum to just 65,000 last year. "To meet immediate needs, we support increasing the number of H-1B visas to ensure high-tech workers in specialised positions," it says.



Michael Moore (right) is surrounded by Secret Service agents as he sits in the journalists' area at the Republican Convention at Madison Square Garden in New York on Monday. The anti-Bush filmmaker was denied access to the floor of the convention.

AFP

Bush defeatism on terror war draws flak

Press Trust of India
New York, August 31

AS THE Republican Party's national convention got underway here, its nominee US President George W. Bush drew sharp criticism from Democrats for his statement that the war on terror was unwinnable.

Stepping up his attack against Bush, Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee John Edwards on Tuesday said "the war on terrorism is absolutely winnable" and this is no time to declare defeat.

"After months of listening to the Republicans base their campaign on their singular ability to win the war on terror, the President now says we can't win the war on terrorism," he said. "There is no time to declare defeat," he said.

Bush on Monday said that an all out victory against terrorism might not be possible, but vowed to stay on course. "Can we win? I don't think you can win it. But I think you can create conditions so that those who use terror as a tool are less acceptable in parts of the world," he had said in an interview on Monday.

Bush's leadership after the September 11, 2001, attacks and his aggressive response in Afghanistan and Iraq. "He has not wavered, he has not flinched from the hard choices. He will not yield, and neither will we," McCain said of Bush, his bitter rival in the 2000 Republican presidential primary. He will join Bush on the campaign trail on Tuesday.

Bid to show a human face

ps into his biggest national spotlight since taking on his new role as a substantive political leader last year.

Both speeches, and most of the night's "People of Compassion" theme, are part of a Republican push to appeal to swing voters by featuring their most moderate voices at the convention.

The opening night featured former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Arizona Senator John McCain, who both have

strong appeal for moderates and swing voters, leading an impassioned salute to Bush's leadership after the September 11, 2001, attacks and his aggressive response in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"He has not wavered, he has not flinched from the hard choices. He will not yield, and neither will we," McCain said of Bush, his bitter rival in the 2000 Republican presidential primary. He will join Bush on the campaign trail on Tuesday.

1501

Convention opens with tribute to 9/11 victims

Associated Press

NEW YORK, Aug. 30. — Republicans gathered amid tight security today to bolster US President George W Bush's image as a strong leader in treacherous times as they opened their national convention by paying tribute to the victims of the 9/11 terror attacks.

"We've shown the world New York can never be defeated," the mayor, Mr Michael Bloomberg, said in welcoming delegates.

The four-day Republican National Convention opened a day after more than 100,000 people protesting Bush's Iraq and domestic policies swarmed past Madison Square Garden, where the President will accept the party's nomination for a second term on Thursday.

Republican National Committee chairman Mr Ed Gillespie promised a positive agenda that he said would expand Republican control of Congress and governorships.

"We will leave here with momentum that will carry us to victory in November," Mr Gillespie said to a roar of approval from delegates.

Polls show Mr Bush and his Democratic Party challenger, Mr John Kerry, in a virtual tie. The election is 2 November.

Thousands of police kept the city under tight wraps for the opening of the convention. Normally bustling Penn Station, located underneath Madison Square Garden, was extraordinarily empty, except for the police officers posted every few metres.

Some 10,000 police officers patrolled the area around the convention site, and an 18-square-block area around the site was off-limits to most vehicles.

Protesters, who numbered at least 120,000 during loud but peaceful demonstrations yesterday, generally gave back the streets of Manhattan to commuters. One group of protesters in oversize

Gen. Powell's no-show

NEW YORK, Aug. 30. — General Colin Powell looks set to be notably absent from the convention.

The absence of the Secretary of State, one of the nation's most popular politicians, and perhaps the most high-profile moderate in an administration dominated by hawks, represents a surprising no-show for one of the war cabinet's two African Americans.

The White House says Gen. Powell is staying away at Mr Bush's insistence, citing a "tradition" of not wanting prominent members of the national security team at a partisan gathering. But many Republicans suspect that Gen. Powell, who battled long and hard with his hawkish colleagues over Iraq, is staying away in a fit of pique.

Gen. Powell denies this, but history does not support his or Mr Bush's explanation that national security officials do not attend party conventions — **The Times, London**

Bush masks and wild costumes heckled convention-goers as they left their hotels this morning.

Republicans sharpened their attacks of Mr Kerry as the convention opened. Senator Mr John McCain — a Vietnam veteran like Mr Kerry — said television ads accusing Mr Kerry of lying about his military service were "dishonest and dishonourable." But Mr McCain did suggest that it was fair game to criticise the Kerry's anti-war protests three decades ago, when he was a leader of Vietnam veterans who opposed the war.

"What John Kerry did after the war is very legitimate political discussion," Mr McCain told CBS's "The Early Show" today.

While seeking to energize the party's conservative base, Republicans also were reaching out to moderates who remain undecided. Mr Zell Miller, a Democratic Senator from Georgia, gives the keynote address on Wednesday.



TWIN TIMES: Jenna (left) and Barbara Bush attend a bash at Roseland, New York City, on Sunday. — AFP

'Iraq campaign a catastrophic success'

NEW YORK, Aug. 30. — Mr George W Bush has accepted that his calculations regarding the Iraq war went wrong, but claimed the campaign was a "catastrophic success" despite the escalating violence in the war-torn nation.

The US President, who is under immense domestic pressure over his failure to find the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, said the "war on terror" was a long-lasting ideological struggle against a totalitarian point of view that advocates terrorism as a tool to intimidate free people.

"Had we had to do it over again, we would look at the consequences of a catastrophic success, being so successful so fast that an enemy that should have surrendered or been done in escaped and lived to fight another day," he told the *Time* magazine in an interview. He was referring to his action in Iraq to oust President Saddam Hussein.

He said it was not a failure of imagination that everybody thought Saddam has weapons of mass destruction.

"I have made it very clear that we thought we would find stockpiles. I remind the people that he had the capability of making those weapons. And therefore that was not a failure of imagination to think that," he said.

Mr Bush said it was really hard to put people into combat as the consequences of war are death. "I realise that the decisions I have made have put people in harm's way. It's just a hard part of the job, even when you know you're right. It hits you all the time."

On the intelligence failure regarding the WMDs in Iraq, Mr Bush agreed that he now finds himself asking a second set of questions on the intelligence that he might not have asked before. "Yes, obviously, all of us that now look at intelligence say, let's make sure that the analyst who came up with that information has gotten additional input. We have just got to make sure that as we connect the dots, everybody's voice are heard," he said. — PTI

War on terror cannot be won, admits Bush

Agencies
Washington, August 30

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush acknowledged on Monday that he didn't think the war on terror could be won, but said it would make it less acceptable for groups to use terrorism as a tool.

Early on Monday, NBC-TV's *Today* programme was broadcasting an interview with Bush that included a discussion of his goals for a second administration. Bush, who has said he expects the war on terror to be a long-drawn-out battle, was asked by interviewer Matt Lauer, "Can we win it?"

"I don't think you can win it", Bush replied, according to excerpts NBC provided in advance. "But I think you can create conditions so that those who use terror as a tool are less acceptable in parts of the world".

With the Republican National Convention opening on Monday in New York, Bush is campaigning on Republican turf in New Hampshire, a tiny bellwether swing state where a victory is not a sure bet. It's his eighth trip to the state as President.

Four years ago, Bush won New Hampshire by 7,211 votes, or just a little more than 1 percentage point. While Republicans outnumber Democrats among the state's registered voters, more than a third of those registered have yet to declare for one party or the other. Bush was stumping on Monday with conservative Republican Gov. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts, who also will be a speaker at the Republican convention.

As the Republican convention begins in New York, Bush was speaking at an *Ask President Bush* event at a high school in North Nashua, New Hampshire. Later in the day, he was flying to Michigan and a campaign rally at Heritage Park in Taylor, Michigan. Jennifer Donahue, an adviser at the New Hampshire Institute of Politics, said Bush appears to have the edge because New Hampshire's economy is improving and many of the newcomers to the state are people who have sought refuge from Kerry's home state of Massachusetts because of high taxes and housing prices. But she said the state also has a significant number of reservists and Bush may be hurt by the large number of them who have been called up since 9/11, in the war on terror.



Anti-Bush demonstrators run after starting a fire during a protest march near Madison Square Garden in New York City on Monday.

AFF

NRI delegates back US Prez

S. Rajagopalan
Washington, August 30

FOR THE first time, as many as 10 Indian American delegates have been invited to attend the Republican convention that opened in New York on Monday. They are mostly well-heeled physicians and long-time Republican supporters in a country where Indian Americans have traditionally rooted for the Democrats.

The growing community support for the Republicans in recent years prompted this highly-motivated group to form the Indian American Republican Council (IARC) some time ago. Dr Zach Zachariah and Dr Raghavendra Vijayanagar, both from Florida, lead the Indian pack at the convention.

The group is making out the case that another term for President George W. Bush is the best bet for India and Indian Americans. It speaks of a "sea change" in Indo-US relations under Bush and the weighty representation he has provided for the Indian community in his administration.

The group points out that there are at least 12 Indian Americans now holding influential positions in the administration. They include Assistant Secretary of Commerce Karan Bhatia and Senior Assistant to Vice-President Cheney, Neil Patel.

Members of the group do not miss the opportunity to run down Democratic challenger John Kerry by turning the spotlight on the latter's "rigid stance" on such prickly issues as outsourcing, H-1B visas and nuclear non-proliferation.

"There is no question he



President Bush's daughters, Jenna (left) and Barbara, at the 'R' party opening bash in New York City on Monday.

AFF

(Bush) will be better for the Indian American community and US-India relations than Kerry," Vijayanagar claimed in interviews to the ethnic India media.

Besides Zachariah and Vijayanagar, the Indian American delegates to the convention include two other Florida physicians Dr Akshay Desai and Dr George Thomas, realtor Narendra Reddy from Georgia, attorney Rhadda Chandraj from California, legal counsellor Pakkiri Rajagopal from Ohio, and attorney Shyam Menon from Virginia, Dr Sampat Shivangi from Mississippi, and Dr Shambu Banik from Maryland.

On Sunday, some 100-odd members of the IARC assembled in an Indian restaurant in Manhattan in a bid to make the group's presence felt at the convention. The Republicans, anxious to scoop up every ounce of support in what promises to be a close race, responded by sending some leading lights of the party to join forces with the group.

Manual vote recount verdict

A STATE rule barring the 15 Florida counties with touch-screen voting from conducting manual recounts is at odds with state law, which requires hand recounts in some close elections, a judge has ruled recently. A coalition, including government watchdogs and other interest groups sued the state, arguing the law requires provisions for hand recounts in every county, no matter what voting technology is used.

Administrative Law Judge Susan Kirkland agreed, writing that state law clearly contemplates

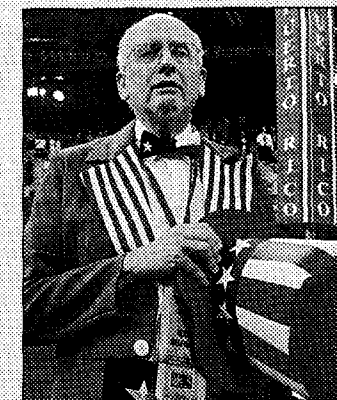
"that manual recounts will be done on each certified voting system, including the touch-screen voting systems". With a primary election on Tuesday and more than half the state's voters in counties that use touch-screens, it isn't clear what those counties will do.

Secretary of State Glenda Hood, who issued the ruling preventing manual recounts in touch-screen counties in April, was considering appealing to the decision, a spokeswoman said. An appeal would keep Hood's rule in place. Election supervisors in

some of the 15 counties with touch-screens had asked the state what they should do about a law requiring manual recounts when elections are particularly close, because the machines the counties use are not programmed to create a paper record of each vote.

Florida's voting system has been under scrutiny since 2000, when it took five weeks of legal manoeuvring and some recounting before Republican George W. Bush was declared President over Democrat Al Gore.

AP, Tallahassee



A delegate, dressed as Uncle Sam, at the Republican National Convention on Monday.

REUTERS

Anti-Bush stir spills onto streets

WSJ

S. Rajagopalan & Agencies
Washington, August 29

AS TENS of thousands of protesters gathered in New York on Sunday for one of the biggest anti-Bush shows of strength, Republicans began pouring into the city for their national convention — an event which, they reckon, will give a decisive push to President George W. Bush's re-election bid.

Despite the protests, the Republican delegates seemed upbeat, clearly buoyed by the findings of some half a dozen national polls in recent days; all indicating a slight edge for Bush in what is otherwise seen as a close race.

New York is an overwhelmingly Democratic city, where Republicans are estimated to be outnumbered by something like five to one. Yet, the party decided to hold its first-ever convention there for two reasons: To demonstrate its soli-

arity with the city over 9/11 and, secondly, to showcase in its wake Bush's leadership in the war against terror.

Bush campaigned deliberately through battleground states en route to New York. Thousands of abortion-rights activists marched across the Brooklyn Bridge, 10 abreast in a protest a half-mile long.

The night before, 264 people were arrested for disorderly conduct in a bicycle protest past Madison Square Garden. New York police said 25 people were arrested on Saturday for various convention-related incidents, bringing the three-day total to 311. Campaign officials, however, said their boss would use the nomination spotlight to defend his hawkish foreign policies and offer a second-term agenda for health care, education and job training.

"He believes it's important for a candidate to talk about what he's done and, most im-

REPUBLICAN CONVENTION



AP
A protester, dressed as US President Bush, carries a globe with bloodied hands during a protest rally in New York on Sunday.

portant, where he wants to lead," said adviser Karen Hughes, aboard Bush's campaign bus in Ohio. "The speech is very forward-looking. It talks about what another four years of a Bush presidency would look like."

Democrat rival in 'fighting mood'

SEN JOHN Kerry has said, "I'm in a fighting mood," as a campaign ally chided Bush for serving stateside in the Texas Air National Guard while others fought in Vietnam. Kerry said most voters won't look kindly on another term for the Republican. "For the last four years, we've had a dark cloud over Washington," Kerry told supporters in Washington. "We're going to get rid of it on November 2."

AP, Washington

The running theme at the four-day convention that begins at the Madison Square Garden on Monday will be

that Bush remains America's best bet to ensure homeland security at a time when intelligence reports suggest that al-Qaida may be regrouping for a new wave of attacks.

He'll spend one night in New York before bolting for the battlegrounds of Pennsylvania, Ohio and beyond shortly after accepting the GOP nomination. Hughes said Bush will argue that the world and the nation are changing rapidly in the new century, forcing US leaders to adapt. While a desire for stability guided foreign policy for decades, "now we recognise that only when our values and beliefs in freedom are able to take hold will we see our security improve."

Interestingly, the keynote address to the convention will be delivered not by a Republican, but a Democrat — Senator Zell Miller, a Bush admirer who has fallen out with his party rank and file.

10 AUG 2004

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Bush's slender lead over Kerry in popularity poll

USA Today
Washington, August 27

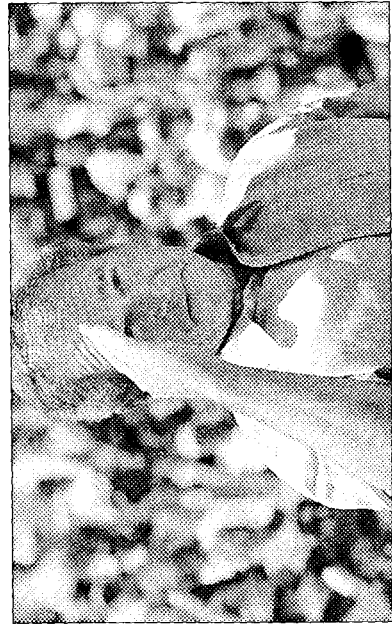
PRESIDENT BUSH enters his convention week holding a slight lead over Democrat John Kerry and regaining ground he lost after Kerry's convention on the key issues of handling terrorism and Iraq, a new USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll shows.

In a head-to-head matchup, Bush led Kerry 50 per cent-47 per cent among likely voters, while Kerry led Bush 48 per cent-47 per cent among registered voters. With independent Ralph Nader included, Bush leads Kerry, 48 per cent-46 per cent, among likely voters.

Nader gets 4 per cent. The poll of 1,004 adults, conducted Monday through Wednesday, had a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points. The margin was +/- 4 points for the subgroups of registered and likely voters.

Bush's favourable rating of 54 per cent was his highest since April. By contrast, Kerry's 52 per cent was his lowest since January.

Bush dominated on personal traits such as "honest and trustworthy" and "stands up for what he believes in." But Kerry continued to lead Bush when people were asked who would better handle taxes, education, Medicare and the economy.



AP
President Bush returns a salute to the audience at a rally at Ricketts Park, Farmington, on Thursday.

The encouraging signs for Bush came as Kerry's Vietnam War record was under attack by Swift Boat

Veterans for Truth. The attacks, though most have not been substantiated, appear to have contributed to the slippage in Kerry's status on national security issues. At the same time, the poll found that most people, 63 per cent, say they think Kerry is definitely or probably telling the truth about his military service. Half say Bush is very or somewhat responsible for the ads the group is running, although Bush and his campaign have denied any involvement. And 56 per cent say Bush should denounce the ads.

The Democratic convention focused on Kerry's heroics in Vietnam and his support among veterans and retired military brass. Even as the overall race remained static, the poll showed Kerry declines across the board. Among them:

- Bush leads Kerry 49 per cent-43 per cent on who would handle Iraq better. Kerry was ahead 48 per cent-47 per cent in a poll August 1 right after the convention.
- Bush leads Kerry 54 per cent-37 per cent on who would handle terrorism better. Kerry was at 41 per cent on August 1.
- Bush leads Kerry 54 per cent-34 per cent on who is "a strong and decisive leader". Kerry had halved that lead to 10 points on August 1.

Plan to give CIA more teeth

AMID A heated election-year debate on intelligence reform, President Bush prepared to sign executive orders on Friday strengthening the powers of the CIA director and establishing a new national counterterrorism center. The moves will "improve our ability to find, track and stop terrorists," White House press secretary Scott McClellan said. The orders would:

- Enhance the powers of the government's intelligence chief and create a national intelligence director.
- Form a national counterterrorism center, putting that office under the new intelligence director and giving the director the power to decide who runs it.
- Provide directions aimed at facilitating the exchange of information among intelligence agencies.

AP, Washington

THE HIGHEST TIMES

28 AUG 2004

SATURDAY, AUGUST 28, 2004

A SMEAR CAMPAIGN

THE WAR IMPOSED on Vietnam by the United States was evil because horrendous suffering was inflicted on the people of South East Asia by a superpower for neo-colonial reasons. Apart from the death and destruction caused by the random nature of warfare, American soldiers who treated their enemies as sub-human committed many atrocities. However, even with this broad picture as the backdrop, it is difficult to deny the valour and integrity of the young men who fought honourably and did not lose their humanity. The Democratic candidate in this year's presidential election, John Kerry, can rightly claim to be one among them. In a relatively short but extremely intense stint as commander of a patrol craft in the Mekong Delta, Lieutenant Kerry was wounded three times and twice awarded medals for gallantry. On returning to life as a civilian, Mr. Kerry threw himself into the popular movement against an unjust and unwinnable war with as much vigour as he had once fulfilled his martial duties. While some of those who fought still believe that their cause was just and denounce the anti-war campaigners as traitors, most Americans appear to have put the war behind them. However, closure was achieved only after a Congressional committee accounted for the missing prisoners of war and the Clinton administration restored diplomatic relations with Vietnam. It is to his great credit that as a Senator and member of the P.O.W. committee, Mr. Kerry was deeply involved in these efforts at reconciliation. In short, the man who would be President played a significant role in almost every phase of a national experience that left an indelible mark on his generation. Mr. Kerry is certainly far from perfect but his patriotism, courage and ability to distinguish right from wrong cannot be questioned by men such as President George W. Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney who did everything they could to stay away from the dangerous battleground even

though they did not oppose the war.

The Bush campaign claims it is not associated with a group of Vietnam veterans who launched a scurrilous attack on the Democratic candidate's war record. Only one of those who joined the group called the 'Swift Boat Veterans for Truth' served with Mr. Kerry. Several of those who were there had testified to his exemplary conduct as a combat leader when their memories were still fresh; they know that military authorities do not hand out gallantry awards without independent and rigorous investigation; and they are aware that he showed uncommon courage and grace under pressure. Mr. Bush, whose campaign was responsible for the dirty tricks in the first place, belatedly acknowledged the truth when he expressed his admiration for his rival's war record and called for an end to negative advertising by advocacy groups. These groups can promote issues on the agenda of either party but are barred from coordinating with the electoral campaigns they sympathise with. It is clear that Mr. Bush had refused to rein in the Swift Boat Veterans, a group that shares several links with his campaign team. In contrast, Mr. Kerry had implored a pro-Democrat group to refrain from highlighting his rival's unexplained absences from duty with the Texas Air National Guard at a time when less-privileged Americans were dying in Vietnam.

Mr. Bush apparently calculated that the attacks on his rival's combat record could only work to his own advantage. The Republicans have built their campaign on the theme that their candidate should be re-elected since he would provide stronger leadership at a time of war. This campaign was shaken up once Mr. Kerry showcased his credentials as a warrior. In letting surrogates malign the Democratic candidate, the Bush team hoped that it would not be accused of launching a dirty tricks campaign. However, with most voters seeing through this subterfuge, Mr. Bush might have to contend with a backlash.

Vietnam row poses threat to Kerry candidacy

By Paul Harris

NEW YORK, AUG. 22. Senator John Kerry's tour of duty in Vietnam has defined his bid for the White House. He is the warrior candidate who heroically led men into battle but who came home to almost as bravely question the very war for which his comrades gave so much blood.

But now Mr. Kerry's time in Vietnam, during which he was wounded three times, has become the backdrop of the most bitter row of the electioneering during one of America's dirtiest presidential campaigns.

Record under fire

His war record is under fire like never before and, instead of defining his campaign, his time as captain of a Swift Boat is now threatening to derail his bid for the presidency.

How this turnaround has come about is a tale as murky and muddied as the brown waters of the Mekong on which Mr. Kerry used to guide his craft. It is a tale of low politics, indirect funding and negative campaigning with a 'nod and a wink'.

A political row that has erupted across the election and is already headed for the courts. But, perhaps more than that, it is also a stark portrayal of how the terrible conflict in Vietnam still divides America 29 years after the war ended.

Mr. Kerry's tour of duty in Vietnam lasted a little over five months. During that time he cap-

tained two Swift Boats, which plied the waters of the Mekong Delta. It was dangerous work and firefights were common. After being wounded three times, Mr. Kerry was discharged early. He left as a changed man. Gone was the bright, highly-educated youth of his college days. In its place was the serious man who immediately joined the anti-war movement and flung himself into politics.

Shadowy group in picture

But now, as that career reaches its zenith, the American media have cast a new focus on Mr. Kerry's Vietnam experiences. Pushing the issue is a shadowy group called Swift Boat Veterans for Truth (SBVFT) which is running a highly negative and personal campaign attacking Mr. Kerry's experience in Vietnam. They have single-handedly turned Mr. Kerry's strongest card into a devastating political row.

Mr. Kerry's campaign is so outraged that it has launched a legal suit against the SBVFT group claiming it has illegal ties to the Republican campaign to re-elect the President, George W. Bush. It is a claim the Bush team has vigorously denied.

On the face of it, SBVFT is a collection of Vietnam veterans with a grudge against Mr. Kerry, especially over his anti-war activities when he threw away his battle ribbons. Mr. Kerry has been accused of lying about being wounded, fabricating stories of crossing into Cambodia and making up details of firefights. The accusations have

been fiercely denied. None of the members of SWVFT served on Mr. Kerry's boats and many of Mr. Kerry's own boat comrades have refuted the claims. But the group's charges have stuck. Criticism of Mr. Kerry's record is now the talk of America.

Support drops

A recent poll showed that the attack advertisements questioning whether Mr. Kerry deserved his medals had been seen by half the voters questioned.

It also revealed that 44 per cent of the voters found the advert somewhat believable. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004

Bush aide sacked

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, AUG. 22. The Bush campaign has said that it has dismissed an adviser on Veterans' issues after coming to know that he was involved with an independent group running attack advertisements against the Democratic nominee, Senator John Kerry.

Retired Air Force Colonel, Ken Cordier, has been dropped from the Veterans steering committee after it was apparently learnt that he was a part of a group of former prisoners-of-war in an ad criticising Mr. Kerry's testimony before Congress.

Kerry challenges Bush over role in Vietnam War

Reuters
Boston, August 20

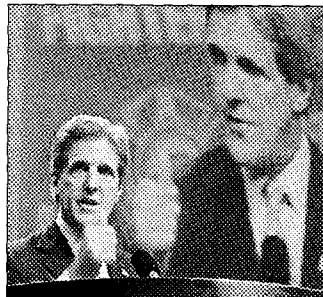
21/8 WFO + RFB

JOHN KERRY has accused US President George W. Bush of using surrogates to "do his dirty work", as the Democratic presidential challenger hits back at a Republican assault on his Vietnam War record.

In his toughest response yet to questions of whether he deserved the honours he won in war, Kerry said if the president wanted to debate the issue of their respective battle records then "Bring it on".

Kerry said a group called the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, which has attacked his war record in television advertisements, was funded by hundreds of thousands of dollars from a Republican contributor in Texas, Bush's home state. "They're a front for the Bush campaign. And the fact that the President won't denounce what they're up to tells you everything you need to know: he wants them to do his dirty work," Kerry told a convention of the International Association of Fire Fighters, which supports him.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan said, "We will never raise questions about his service. We haven't, we won't."



REUTERS

Sen John Kerry campaigns in Boston on Thursday.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 AUG 2004

Terror battle, not BPO, in focus

PRANAB DHAL SAMANTA
WASHINGTON, AUGUST 19

10 42 2008

IRAQ, terror and the economy is how Washington's political observers pick their top three issues for the forthcoming US presidential elections. Outsourcing, they say, is something that has not quite come to dominate the agenda compared to security and foreign policy issues but could be of some importance in what are the "battleground states".

According to noted political analyst Lee Edwards of The Heritage Foundation, it would be wrong to identify outsourcing, an issue which worries many Indians, as a major campaign issue. "But the media has picked it up and this is more because outsourcing could be an issue in some of battleground states like Ohio and Pennsylvania which outsource a lot of work. There are 17 such states."

And going by Edwards, a political historian, the race will get close and candidates will try and stir up issues to gain the extra vote. Despite the thrust being given by the Democrats to the outsourcing issue, Christine Bershers, a Washington-based analyst following Kerry's campaign, says much of the talk around

US POLLS

outsourcing is rhetoric and is not likely to be transformed into policy if Kerry were to win.

"The American people are in general, bothered about the health of the economy, its growth rate, GDP etc. Of course, creation of more jobs is an issue and the media too has picked it up. One of the channels has been doing a series called exporting America. But still it is one of those issues somewhere there in the middle rung," she said.

As of now, Edwards who claims to have got it right in every election so far, says not much seems to separate the two candidates — President George W. Bush and Democrat Senator John Kerry — at the moment. However, a lot would depend on the impact the Republican convention at New York makes on August 30. The Republicans, Edwards says, have apparently lined up one million workers for this election and this will be visible at the convention. "I think one million would, perhaps, be the biggest ever team of dedicated workers put together by a candidate ever in the history of US presidential elections."

James Phillips, who has been watching at the Heritage Foundation on how Bush's policies on combating terror have been playing out in the elections, feels issues like outsourcing will recede to the background. According to him, Iraq and the war on terror are two issues which will have a defining influence. "Kerry is yet to come out with what policy he would like to follow in Iraq and that would be more important."

The war against terror, Phillips says, has provided a whole new matrix to US worldview and in that context US ties with both India and Pakistan will be vital. "Kerry is unlikely to reverse that."

INDIAN EXPRESS

9/11 convict appears for retrial

Associated Press

HAMBURG, Aug. 10. — US authorities have pledged to provide evidence at the retrial of the only 9/11 terror suspect ever convicted, a sign of progress compared to his first trial, a judge has said.

The US State Department letter was read out in court today as the retrial began of Mounir el Motassadeq, a 30-year-old Moroccan charged with aiding the three Hamburg-based suicide hijackers.

Replying to the Hamburg state court's request for testimony by key Al-Qaida operatives in US custody, the State Department said the USA would provide unclassified summaries, apparently of interrogations.

El Motassadeq won a new trial in March after a German appeals court ruled his first one unfair because the US-held witnesses did not testify. "This is a bit of progress," trial judge Mr Ernst-Rainer Schudt said in court.

Testimony in person would not be possible, the US letter said. But in El Motassadeq's first trial, the US Department of Justice refused to



Mounir el Motassadeq has been charged with aiding three Hamburg-based 9/11 suicide hijackers. — AFP

allow even transcripts of two key operatives' interrogations to be admitted as evidence.

El Motassadeq was released from prison in April when the Hamburg court decided there was no longer sufficient suspicion that he was guilty of more than 3,000 counts of accessory to murder.

His conviction on those charges and for membership in a terrorist

Videotape arrest

CHARLOTTE (North Carolina), Aug. 10. — US federal officials have detained a Pakistani citizen after he was spotted taking videotapes of skyscrapers here. Officials today said the man has been charged with immigration violations. Mr Kamran Akhtar was arrested on 20 July. According to a federal affidavit unsealed today, a review of the videotape showed video of the downtown Wachovia and Bank of America headquarters buildings. The defendant also possessed videotapes of buildings in other major US cities, including Atlanta; Austin, Houston, Dallas and New Orleans, officials said. — AP

group were overturned by the appeals court, making the quest for testimony from two witnesses critical to Germany's second attempt to convict him.

Opening the retrial today, the judge said the Hamburg state court wouldn't be swayed by political pressure. "For me, this is not about fulfilling the expectations of governments or the public."

U.S. national security politicised

By Sidney Blumenthal

THE FOG of war has descended over the American presidential campaign. Within 72 hours of the end of the Democratic convention, the Department of Homeland Security declared a new terror alert and the colour-coded level was jacked up to orange, verging on red. The reason, the Government reported, was that the computer of an Al-Qaeda operative captured in Pakistan contained precise information about threats to five financial institutions in New York and Washington.

Then additional information was released: the intelligence was mostly three years old, the Al-Qaeda surveillance of U.S. buildings had been mostly conducted through the internet, the computer file had been opened again in January for uncertain reason and with no new surveillance data added to it, and Pakistani officials said that the captured material indicated no new Al-Qaeda planning.

The effect of the alert has been to throw the election campaign into turmoil and momentarily freeze it. John Kerry decided to accept the administration's explanations at face value. His critique of Mr. Bush's war on terrorism must be made with iron discipline, based on the facts, not suspicions. Yet other Democrats claimed the administration was using the situation for political advantage, putting additional pressure on Mr. Kerry, who has to hold fast.

In part, the level of partisanship

increased because of the clumsy performance of Tom Ridge, the Secretary of Homeland Security, who turned the announcement into a political rally. "We must understand that the kind of information available to us today is the result of the President's leadership in the war against terror," he said. Whether planned politically or not, the alert exposed that, for Mr. Bush, it is the irreducible basis of his campaign. And while it

counterterrorism chief, Richard Clarke. The report documents that the administration "was not ready to confront Islamabad" on its support for the Taliban or to "engage actively against Al-Qaeda" and that it "did not develop new diplomatic initiatives on Al-Qaeda with the Saudi Government." Mr. Bush told the commission that the August 6, 2001 presidential daily brief, "Bin Laden Determined To Strike In U.S." was

language before the Congress, as Mr. Bush neglects them. His paltry \$46 million proposal for port security is more than \$1 billion short of what the U.S. Coast Guard says is required. On port security, 10 Democratic amendments have already been defeated while Mr. Bush has slept. He prefers the money to be appropriated for tax cuts for the upper bracket.

Mr. Bush is haunted not only by the ghosts of his own past but the ghosts of other Presidents past. While he attempts to redeem his father's political fall by avoiding his mistakes, his effort at reversal is creating a similar estrangement from the voters.

Elder Bush won his war against Iraq and withdrew without toppling Saddam; his ratings were then at their peak. But his obliviousness to economic circumstances undermined the heroic image. Lyndon Johnson had an ambitious domestic agenda backed by a landslide mandate. But he squandered it in the Vietnam quagmire; his political credibility undermined his party's for a generation. Now, Mr. Bush's faltering credibility is tearing at trust in U.S. national security. Perversely, his campaign must exploit the fears that his failures have helped engender. For him, this is not a war of choice, but necessity. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004

(Sidney Blumenthal is former senior adviser to President Clinton and Washington bureau chief of salon.com)

There is a vacuum at the heart of George W. Bush's second-term programme.

"historical in nature," though it contained current information. The neo-conservatives, such as Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz, are depicted as dismissive — Mr. Wolfowitz opposed retaliation for the Al-Qaeda attack on the USS Cole as "stale" — and obsessed with Iraq as the source of all terrorism.

Mr. Bush's campaign must try to blur memory of his history. When Mr. Kerry seized upon the commission's recommendations, Mr. Bush reacted by endorsing a new national intelligence chief. But he would give this new post no control over budget, no White House office, no power over personnel, and no authority over intelligence operations. Once again, he appeared to be acting only on political motives.

Various bills for homeland security

starkly elevated his profile as the "war president" again, it also revealed indirectly the vacuum of his second-term programme. His hard-right issues are insufficient for a national majority, he is weak on the realities of homeland security, and he is desperate to smudge the history of his inactions leading to 9/11 and his responsibility for the deterioration of the Iraqi situation.

The widespread cynicism about the alerts, which may have no grounding, is a product of Mr. Bush's intense politicisation of national security and his record of misleading statements about almost every aspect of war.

The 9/11 commission report is a devastating record of Mr. Bush's passivity on terrorism, beginning with his first act: the demolition of the

Bush, Kerry converge on Iowa battleground

Associated Press
Davenport (Iowa), Aug 5

PRESIDENT BUSH and Sen. John Kerry clashed at close quarters along the banks of the Mississippi River on Wednesday, the Republican incumbent pledging to "spread ownership and opportunity" if re-elected while his Democratic challenger campaigned as a fiscal conservative able and eager to fix the economy.

Both men reached out to independent and crossover votes in late morning appearances three blocks apart that made one small city ground zero in their close, cross-country campaign for the White House. "Don't overlook discerning Democrats and wise Independents", Bush urged GOP activists attending an outdoor rally and eager to register new voters for the November election. "I think labels are very misleading. You've got to look at what people fight for and what they do", Kerry said.

Downtown Davenport was as close as the two men have been to each other since the beginning of the campaign — and likely the closest they will be until their first nationally televised debate this fall.

And, if it were coincidence that brought them to the same river city of

The Boss takes on the Boss

THE BOSS is going up against the boss. Bruce Springsteen, the US rock icon known as The Boss, will join two dozen other stars in nine "battleground" states for a rock 'n' roll tour aimed at ousting President Bush, organizers said on Wednesday. The "Vote for Change" tour, 34 shows in 28 cities, is scheduled for the first week of October, one month before the US presidential election. "The tour is aimed squarely at the radical right wing policies of Republican ideologues throughout the country", said Eli Pariser, executive director of MoveOn PAC, the online liberal political action committee presenting the tour.

Reuters, New York

98,000 on the same day, there was no mystery about the attraction. Bush lost Iowa to Al Gore by 4,144 votes in 2000 — and Scott County around Davenport narrowly as well — and wants the state in his column come November.

\$25bn more for wars

Associated Press
Washington, August 5

PRESIDENT BUSH signed a \$417.5 billion wartime defence Bill on Thursday, providing an additional \$25 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan, body armour for troops and reinforced Humvee vehicles.

"With this legislation, America's military will know their country stands behind them as they fight for our freedom and as they spread the peace", Bush said. "No enemy or friend can doubt that America has the resources to prevail", he said. "And we will".

Overwhelmingly approved by a Congress eager to show election-year support for the military, the measure includes money for 39 more Army Black Hawk helicopters, a Virginia-class attack submarine, three guided-missile destroyers and a 3.5 per cent pay increase for troops. "This money is well-earned, well-deserved and well-spent", he said. The defence Bill could help, he said, with \$95 million in famine relief and humanitarian assistance.

65(1)

Bush's war gives Kerry poll fodder



UP IN ARMS AGAINST PRESIDENT BUSH: Mr John Kerry (left) and his running mate, Mr John Edwards, clasp hands at the close of the Democratic National Convention in Boston on Thursday. — PTI

Associated Press

BOSTON, July 30. — Mr John Kerry forcefully challenged President Bush over the war in Iraq in the climactic speech of the Democratic National Convention last night and pledged to be a commander-in-chief "who will never mislead us into war".

"Strength is more than tough words," he said. "I will immediately reform the intelligence system so policy is guided by facts, and facts are never distorted by politics, and as pres-

Promises to keep

- Recruit allies to help rebuild Iraq.
- Add 40,000 active duty troops, including a doubling of special forces to fight terrorism.
- Immediately implement the recommendations of the 9/11 commission to improve America's security.
- Will not privatise Social Security or cut benefits.
- Create incentives to revitalise manufacturing and invest in job-creating technology and innovation.

ident, I will bring back this nation's time-honoured tradition: The USA never goes to war because we want to, we only go to war because we have to."

Mr Kerry's decision to question the President over the war in Iraq comes

at a time when Mr Bush is struggling to reverse a decline in support for his policies.

In a speech that launched the general election phase of his quest for the White House, Mr Kerry expanded his criticism far beyond

Iraq as he sought to draw a contrast with the President on the national security issues he has placed at the core of his challenge.

Over and over, he said: "America can do better. And help is on the way", turning the phrase into an all-purpose refrain that marked the beginning of his general poll campaign.

Mr Kerry vowed to reverse policies that he said sends US jobs overseas and promised to expand healthcare, improve education and "fight a smarter, more effective war" against terror.

Kerry reports for duty, to ask questions

Boston, July 30 (Reuters): Saying "America can do better," John Kerry took the reins of the Democratic Party yesterday with a promise to restore US global leadership and ask "hard questions" before taking the country to war.

"We need to be looked up to and not just feared," the Massachusetts Senator said in accepting the Democratic nomination to face President George W. Bush. "In these dangerous days there is a right way and a wrong way to be strong."

In a prime-time, televised address that gave Kerry a national stage to introduce himself and lay out his case for the presidency, he vowed to bridge America's cultural and economic divides and make the November 2 election "a contest of big ideas".

"It is time to reach for the next dream," Kerry told the Democratic National Convention. "It is time to look to the next horizon."

Kerry said he would never hesitate to use force "when it is required," but drew a sharp contrast with Bush's decision to go to war in Iraq based on faulty intelligence about the threat of weapons of mass destruction. "Saying there are weapons of

mass destruction in Iraq doesn't make it so. Saying we can fight a war on the cheap doesn't make it so. And proclaiming mission accomplished certainly doesn't make it so," Kerry said.

"As President, I will ask hard questions and demand hard evidence. I will immediately reform the intelligence system, so policy is guided by facts, and facts are never distorted by politics."

Directly addressing Bush, he challenged the President to build unity in America, not foster angry division, and join him in being "optimists, not just opponents."

Kerry's speech concluded the four-day convention and kicked off a three-month election battle with Bush, who ceded the spotlight to Democrats all week while vacationing at his ranch in Texas. Polls show the two locked in a dead heat ahead of next month's Republican convention in New York.

Kerry entered the convention site through the massed delegates and climbed to the stage to join his waiting navy crew-

mates. "I'm John Kerry and I'm reporting for duty," he said, saluting the crowd as he began his speech. He was joined on stage afterward by running mate John Edwards and their wives and families.

With the refrain: "America can do better, help is on the way," Kerry promised to improve the quality of life for everyday Americans. The speech framed many of the issues Kerry will stress in the campaign, including the war in Iraq, the economy, health care and the war on terror.

"I defended this country as a young man and I will defend it as President. Let there be no mistake — I will never hesitate to use force when it is required," Kerry said. "Any attack will be met with a swift and certain response." As President, he said, he would fight a "smarter, more effective war on terror," bolster the military and lead a global effort against nuclear proliferation. "I will be a commander-in-chief who will never mislead us into war," Kerry said.

Kerry renewed his calls for the quick adoption of the recommendations of the panel that studied the September 11, 2001, attacks, which Bush says need to be studied. "As President I will not evade or equivocate," he said, promising fast action in the war on terror and a strong military that will send the message to terrorists that "you will lose and we will win."

Conventions are often the first time the general public tunes into a presidential race, and polls show many Americans are still unfamiliar with Kerry, a four-term Senator, decorated Vietnam War veteran and former prosecutor.

Kerry, who launched a long autobiography early in his speech, offered no new solutions to end the war in Iraq but said the best way to bring US troops home was to restore American credibility around the world.

Kerry repeated his campaign trail promise to wean the US of dependence on West Asian oil. "I want an America that relies on its ingenuity and innovation — not the Saudi royal family."



Vanessa (left) and Alexandra Kerry during the final night of the Democratic convention in Boston. (Reuters)

Ohio puts Kerry on top, Edwards cheerleads

Associated Press
Boston, July 29

HIS MOMENT at hand, John Kerry claims the Democratic presidential nomination and asks Americans for a chance to build the country "stronger at home and respected in the world". In a curtain raiser, running mate John Edwards praised Kerry as a born leader tested in Vietnam and now ready to protect the country in the age of terrorism. "He wants to serve you — your cause is his cause", Edwards said on Wednesday night as a parade of Democrats tried to focus voters' attention on Kerry's qualifications to be commander-in-chief.

The Massachusetts senator, arriving here on Wednesday in the company of 13 crewmates he fought with in the Mekong Delta, watched Democrats formally nominated him for the Presidency in a boisterous, late-night roll call. Ohio put him over the top, just as he hopes it will on November 2.

"I can't tell you how much I'm looking forward to my opportunity a little more than 24 hours from now to share with you and all of America a vision for how we're going to make this country stronger at home and respected in the world", Kerry told supporters.

In his acceptance speech on Thursday night, Kerry seeks to introduce himself to a larger audience, mostly unaware of who he is, polls show, and somewhat suspicious that his positions are too liberal.

The Democratic Party also is preparing \$6 million in ads for launch this weekend, pitching the Kerry-Edwards ticket in more than a dozen battleground states.

Hours after the final gavel at the convention, Kerry will begin hitting every key state on a two-week cross-country trip by train, bus and boat. Flanked by his family, Edwards, whose Southern charm and oratorical skills are viewed as strengthening Kerry's weaknesses, criticized negative attacks by Re-



Delegates celebrate as John Kerry receives the votes from Ohio that put him over the top to clinch the Democratic Party's nomination as their candidate for President on Wednesday. REUTERS

publicans trying to portray Kerry as a waffling Massachusetts liberal who has failed to support US soldiers in a time of war.

The North Carolina senator urged voters to "reject the

tired, old, hateful, negative politics of the past" and "embrace the politics of hope" instead.

Like dozens of other speakers at the convention, Edwards' script stressed the

overriding national security theme. He recalled Kerry's service in Vietnam a generation ago, saying he ordered his swiftboat turned around despite enemy fire and plucked a fellow American

Bush re-election campaign bid

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush taped new ads for his reelection bid and prepared for an aggressive return to his campaign after a week of staying out of sight at his ranch.

By tradition, each major-party White House contender keeps a low profile during the other's nominating convention, which is why Bush has avoided the limelight while Senator John Kerry basks in Democratic acclaim in Boston. **AFP, Crawford**

answer the Democrats' charges, quickly noted that Kerry had questioned Edwards' experience before choosing him as a running mate.

And in Utah, Vice-President Dick Cheney criticized the Democratic ticket for voting against a bill to pay for the Iraq war. "Terrorist acts are not caused by the use of strength. They're invited by the perception of weakness", Cheney said at a congressional fund-raiser. "President Bush will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of the United States of America".

When Kerry, 60, takes the podium to deliver the closing speech of a unified party convention, he'll aim to tell Americans who he is, what he seeks to do and why he should be President. He is said to be planning to break through his New England reserve to reveal more of himself. Senate colleagues and two of his presidential rivals will testify to his promise of an America that is stronger and more secure.

from the river to safety.

"Decisive. Strong. Is that not what we need in a commander-in-chief?" Edwards asked.

Republicans, who have kept a presence in Boston to

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

৯/১১-র ইতিহাস ঢেলে সাজল রিপোর্ট

ওয়াশিংটন, ২৬ জুলাই: সম্ভ্রাসবাদী হামলা দমনের জন্য গঠিত জাতীয় কমিশন গত বছর যখন ১১ সেপ্টেম্বরের একটি প্রামাণ্য ইতিহাস লেখার কাজ শুরু করে, তখন অনেকেই ভেবেছিলেন, গবেষকদের বিশেষ কষ্ট করতে হবে না। কারণ, ভয়াবহ সেই দিনটিতে ঠিক কী ঘটেছিল, তার বিস্তারিত বিবরণ তো প্রায় সকলেরই জানা। কিন্তু ১৯ মাস পরে, ১১ সেপ্টেম্বরের ইতিহাসকে আবার নতুন করে লিখল জাতীয় কমিশনের ৫৬৭ পাতার এই বিস্তারিত রিপোর্ট।

৯/১১ সম্বন্ধে এত দিন যা যা তথ্য পাওয়া গিয়েছিল তা হল— আল কায়দা জঙ্গিরা নিয়মকানুন মেনেই আমেরিকায় ঢুকেছিল, এবং বিমান ছিনতাইয়ের আগে তারা এমন কিছু করেনি যার জন্য গোয়েন্দা-পুলিশ তাদের সন্দেহ করতে

পারে। হামলার খুঁটিনাটি পরিকল্পনা অন্যদের হলেও লাদেন তাঁর সম্পত্তির একটি বিশাল অংশ এর পিছনে ঢেলেছিলেন। আল কায়দা জঙ্গিরা যে বিমান ছিনতাই করে আত্মঘাতী হানা চালাতে পারে, সে বিষয়ে মার্কিন গোয়েন্দাদের কোনও ধারণাই ছিল না। ১১ সেপ্টেম্বরের কয়েক সপ্তাহ আগেই গোয়েন্দাদের কাছ থেকে প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ আল কায়দা সম্বন্ধে একটি রিপোর্ট পেয়েছিলেন। সেই রিপোর্টে ভবিষ্যতে হামলার আশঙ্কা প্রসঙ্গে কোনও কথা বলা হয়নি, শুধু আগের হামলাগুলির বিবরণই রিপোর্টে লেখা হয়েছিল।

জাতীয় কমিশনের রিপোর্ট থেকে স্পষ্ট, আল কায়দার হামলা সম্বন্ধে এত দিন যা যা ভাবা হয়েছিল, তার প্রায় পুরোটাই ভুল। রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছে, আমেরিকায় ঢোকার

জন্য জঙ্গিরা বার বার নিয়ম লঙ্ঘন করেছিল, হামলার পিছনে বিন লাদেনের হাত থাকলেও তিনি এর জন্য কোনও টাকা ব্যয় করেননি, ও আমেরিকায় যে লাগাতার আল কায়দা হামলার আশঙ্কা রয়েছে, সেই মর্মে একটি রিপোর্ট ২০০১ সালের অগস্ট মাসেই প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশের হাতে এসেছিল।

সদ্য প্রকাশিত রিপোর্টটি সম্বন্ধে কমিশনের চেয়ারম্যান, নিউ জার্সির প্রাক্তন রিপাব্লিকান গভর্নর টমাস এইচ কিন জানান, “আমাদের ধারণা, এটি ১১ সেপ্টেম্বর সম্বন্ধে সব থেকে প্রামাণ্য কাজ।” তবে এই রিপোর্টেও যে সব প্রশ্নের উত্তর পাওয়া গেল না, তা মেনে নিয়েছেন কিন। এখনও এত অমীমাংসিত প্রশ্ন থেকে গেল কেন? কিনের উত্তর, “ঘটনার কেন্দ্রবিন্দুতে যে মানুষেরা, তাঁরা তো সবাই মৃত, তাই।”

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Perfect security a myth, says Bush

Agence France-Presse
Crawford (Texas), July 25

THERE IS no such thing as perfect security, US President George W. Bush warned in his weekly radio address, as he enumerated a long list of advances in the war against terror during his administration.

Bush said the US government had already put into action many of the steps recommended by the bipartisan commission that looked into events leading up to the September 11, 2001, terror attacks in the US.

The commission "produced a serious and comprehensive report, and I welcome their recommendations", Bush said on Saturday. "We've already put into action many of the steps now recommended by the commission, and we'll carefully examine all the commission's ideas on how we can improve our ongoing efforts to protect America and to prevent another attack".

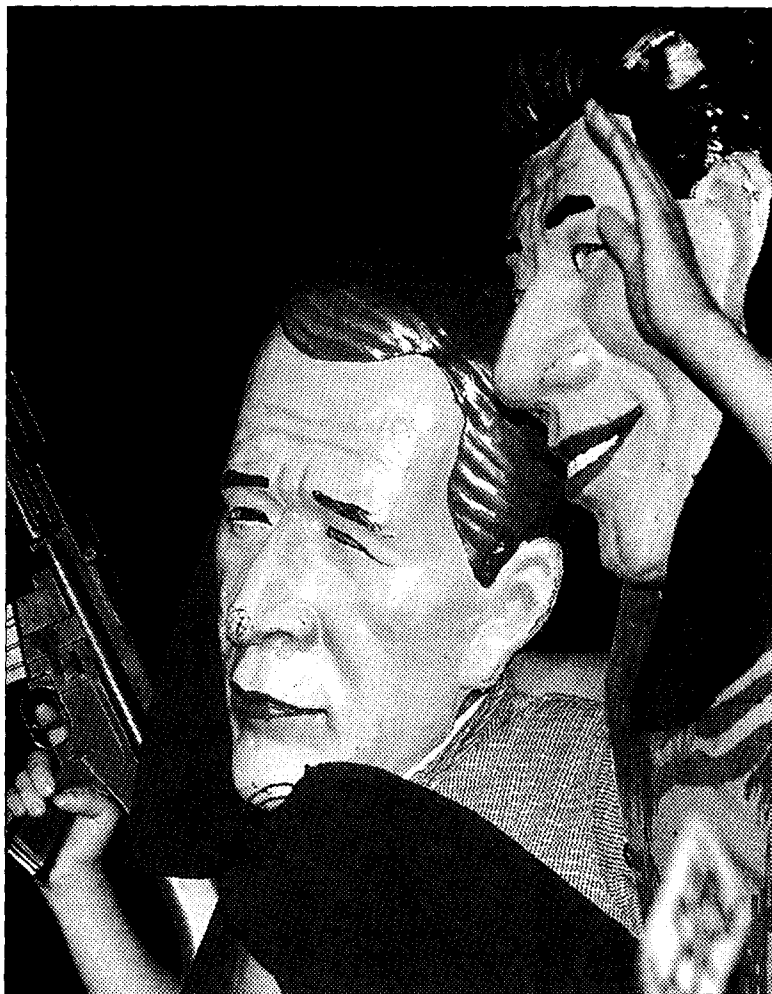
The 10-member bipartisan commission released a 567-page report on its two-year investigation on Thursday. The report was a broad indictment of US intelligence and air defences in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which killed almost 3,000 people.

The September 11 attacks "dramatically demonstrated the threats of a new era", Bush said.

Since the attacks, the US has "waged a steady, relentless, determined war on terrorists. We're fighting them in foreign lands so we don't have to face them here in America, and we're taking unprecedented steps to defend the homeland", Bush said.

Washington and its allies "have captured or killed thousands of terrorists, removed terrorist regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, convinced Libya to give up its weapons of mass destruction, and put the world's most dangerous nuclear trading network out of business", Bush said.

Bush quotes commission chairman Tom Kean, who said the US is safer today than it was on September 11. But, as Kean also noted, "the dan-



AP
South Korean protesters wear masks of US President George W. Bush and South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun during an anti-war rally in Seoul on Saturday.

ger to America has not passed", Bush said. "In a vast, free society such as ours, there's no such thing as perfect security. And, no matter how good our defences are, a determined enemy can still strike us.

Yet, all Americans can be certain our government is using every resource and technological advantage we have to prevent future attacks", he said. Bush touted the creation of the Department of Homeland Security,

transforming the FBI into an agency mainly focussed on stopping terrorism, and increasing airport and seaport security, and instituted better visa screening for foreign visitors.

"There's still more to do", Bush said. The commission's recommendations "will help guide our efforts as we work to protect the homeland. And we can be confident, although the threats of this new century are dangerous, America has the re-

UK's do-it-yourself check on terror

Reuters
London, July 25

THE BRITISH government will issue a public information leaflet on Monday designed to tell people what to do in the event of a terror attack.

Home Secretary David Blunkett said he did not want to raise unnecessary fears but the government wanted people to be "alert not alarmed" about possible threats. "It (the leaflet) is all about helping you to do what you need to do and know what you need to know", he told BBC. "This could be from a terrorism attack all the way through to a major fire, to a flood, to a situation where you're actually trying to help other people".

Blunkett was due to launch the 22-page booklet at a news conference on Monday. He said the government could not guarantee "100 per cent safety" from terror, but Britain's security services were always working to try to prevent attacks. "Obviously, we can pick up the pieces afterwards, but actually stopping them doing it... is absolutely crucial", he said.

sources, the strength, and the resolve to overcome them", he concluded.

The commission's report said it was impossible to determine if any single step or series of steps could have thwarted the September 11 plot but had harsh words for all US agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency, Defence Department, North American Aerospace Defence Command and the Federal Aviation Administration.

Clinton leads Democrats in Bush bashing

Associated Press

BOSTON, July 27. — Energised by Mr Bill and Mrs Hillary Clinton, Democrats castigated Mr George W Bush as a President who mishandled the economy and bungled the war on terror. The former President stirred the opening night of the Democratic National Convention with a summons to send Mr John Kerry to the White House and said Mr Kerry "will rally the world to our side".

Attacking President Bush's for pursuing policies that divide the nation, Mr Clinton said: "Strength and wisdom are not opposing values." On Republicans, he said: "They need a divided America but we don't."

The former President was the cleanup speaker for the night, joining a parade of party elders to the podium for oratory designed to depict Mr Kerry as a war hero — and Mr Bush as a failed President.

"Mr Kerry will lead the world, not alienate it. Lower the deficit, not raise it. Create good jobs, not lose them. Solve a health care crisis, not ignore it," said Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton in her turn at the podium.

The party's 44th national convention, which will officially nominate the Massachusetts senator for the 2 November election, opened yesterday under extraordinarily tight security as Mr Kerry campaigned in Florida. In a battleground state he



Mr Bill Clinton addresses the Democratic National Convention at the Fleet Center in Boston on Monday. — AFP

has visited more than a half-dozen times this year, he urged Republicans and independents to 'stop and think' before casting their votes in November.

Mr Al Gore, who won the popular vote in 2000 but lost the White

As civil as it can get!

BOSTON, July 27. — Bets were flying over how long it would take before Mr Kerry's outspoken wife embarrassed him. All wagers are now off — it took about 30 minutes. Mrs Teresa Heinz Kerry, the ketchup heiress whose unvarnished approach to public life has given her husband's aides 57 varieties of heartburn in recent months, delivered an eve-of-conference speech urging the return of civility to politics. Minutes later, she told a reporter to "shove it". — The Times, London

House, urged Democrats to "fully and completely" channel their anger of the bitter recount and send Mr Kerry to the White House. "When policies are clearly not working, we can change them. If our leaders make mistakes, we can hold them accountable — even if they never admit their mistakes."

Former President Mr Jimmy Carter, elected to the White House in 1976, accused Mr Bush of squandering the international goodwill that flowed to the United States in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks. "Unilateral acts and demands have isolated the USA from the very nations we need to join us in combatting terrorism."

Day two of the Democratic National Convention will focus on what Mr Kerry's campaign describes as his lifetime of service, from a volunteer combat tour in Vietnam to more than two decades in political office.

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Trouble ahead for Bush from 9/11 panel

By Suzanne Goldenberg

WASHINGTON, JULY 25. Members of the U.S. commission investigating the September 11 terror attacks have injected a potentially unsettling element into the U.S. President, George Bush's re-election campaign by deciding not to disband.

Though the bipartisan commission scrupulously avoided apportioning blame to either the Clinton or Bush administrations, the decision ensures that 9/11 and Iraq will remain at the forefront of the election campaign.

The commission's 10 members said they planned to team up in pairs — one Democrat and one Republican — to campaign throughout the U.S. for the adoption of their 41 recommendations to make the country safer.

"All 10 of us have decided to do everything we can, whether it's testimony or lobbying or speaking or whatever's necessary, to let the American people know about these recommendations — know how important they are, our belief that they can save lives," Thomas Kean, the commission's chair, told reporters.

Jamie Gorelick, who served in the Clinton administration, made the point even plainer. "Everyone who is running for office can be asked: Do you support these recommendations?"

New chapter

The strategy would mark the start of a new chapter in the life of a commission which has grown in credibility over the last 20 months. It has also accumulated moral force, thanks in large measure to the support of victims' families. Advocates for the families said they would also press for the adoption of the commission's recommendations.

That could prove an embarrassment to the Bush administration, whose officials have responded cautiously to the commission's call for a sweeping overhaul of the intelligence services.

The Democratic challenger, John Kerry, embraced the recommendations and said he would convene an emergency summit on security if he is elected in November.

The contrast could spell trouble for Mr. Bush, who has made his handling of terrorism the centrepiece of his campaign

and has insisted that he fully understood the threat.

"This is going to underscore the sense that we really have not been prepared. Everyone on the commission seems to say that we are safer, but not safe," said Peter Hart, a Democratic pollster. A poll by Mr. Hart and a Republican pollster in the *Wall Street Journal* has suggested that the Republicans' traditional supremacy on national security issues has fallen sharply.

Response cool

The Bush administration's immediate response to the commission's call for sweeping changes to the Government's intelligence agencies was cool. "People should recognise that we're talking about pretty fundamental changes here," the National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, told reporters. "It only makes sense to try and understand the implications of them before you rush headlong one way." Mr. Kerry has endorsed one of the commission's suggestions — the creation of an intelligence tsar — an idea that met little enthusiasm from the White House when it first surfaced. —©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004

THE HINDU

26 JUL 2004

Unusual Congress hearings in Aug on 9/11 report

Associated Press
Washington, July 25

SENATE AND House committees will hold an unusual round of hearings in August on intelligence reform after leaders of the September 11 commission warned that America remained vulnerable to another deadly terror strike.

"The American people expect us to act", Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, chairwoman of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, said on Friday. "We don't have the luxury of waiting for months". Collins and the committee's top Democrat, Sen. Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, said they would invite the commission's leaders, Republican Thomas Kean and Democratic vice-chairman Lee Hamilton, to testify.

The hearings will focus on two of the commission's key recommendations: creating a national counter-terrorism centre and a new director of intelligence to be confirmed by the Senate and with Cabinet-level authority over budgets and intelligence policies.

Congress began its recess on Friday and was to be out of session until after Labour Day.

"This is a crisis. People died, and more people will unless we get it to-

Bush asks administration to go by report

Associated Press
Crawford (Texas), July 25

his weekly radio address, citing the cautionary note sounded this week by the commission chairman, Thomas Kean. "The 9/11 commission's recommendations will help guide our efforts", said the President.

"We'll carefully examine all the commission's ideas on how we can improve our ongoing efforts to protect America and to prevent another attack".

WITHOUT PROMISING what specific steps he would take, President Bush is committing his administration to relying on the recommendations of the September 11 commission in waging the war on terrorism.

"The danger to America has not passed", Bush said on Saturday in

together", Lieberman said.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., and Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., also urged the committee to introduce legislation by October 1 addressing the intelligence proposals, and the committee said it would do so.

Late on Friday, House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., who has expressed doubt that lawmakers would have time to consider a sweeping intelligence overhaul this year, said he and Majority Leader Tom DeLay, R-Texas, would also

direct House committees to hold hearings next month and make recommendations for legislation in September.

Earlier in the day, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi of California urged Hastert in a letter to reconvene the House in August, and Hastert responded that he would seek hearings "over the next several months".

He later announced the August hearings. "The House plans to immediately assess everything we have done... since 9/11 and everything more we need to

do", Hastert said.

Kean, a former New Jersey governor, and Hamilton, a former congressman from Indiana, told reporters Friday that swift action was critical.

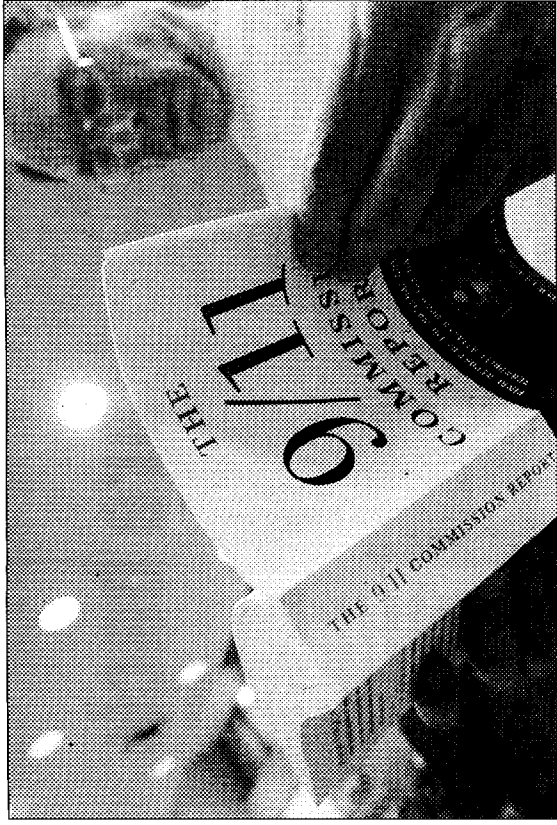
They said Congress should get to work after the summer recess while the next President — either President Bush or Democratic challenger John Kerry — must push for the overhaul soon after taking office in January.

"We're in danger of just letting things slide", Kean said. "Time is not on our side".

In its blistering report on Thursday, the panel of five Republicans and five Democrats cited multiple intelligence failures that contributed to the deadliest terror attack in US history when terrorists used planes as missiles to hit the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon.

The unanimously endorsed report could spell trouble for Bush, who has made his handling of terrorism the centerpiece of his campaign. Bush directed his chief of staff, Andrew Card, to study the recommendations of the September 11 commission, said White House spokeswoman Claire Buchan.

Card will undertake a Cabinet-level review of the proposals, which will be



FLAVOUR OF THE SEASON: A New Yorker browses through a copy of *The 9/11 Commission Report* at a bookstore.

examined at all levels of government, Buchan said. She would offer no timetable for when Card would report back to Bush on the study.

Bush arrived at his Crawford, Texas, ranch on Friday for a weeklong vacation and will discuss the commission's recommendations with national security adviser Condoleezza Rice when she arrives later this weekend.

THE HOUSTON TIMES

Congress raps 'genocide'

Agencies

WASHINGTON, July 23. — The US Congress unanimously passed a resolution declaring the atrocities being committed in Darfur, Sudan, a genocide, and calling on the White House to intervene multilaterally or even unilaterally to stop the violence.

By a vote of 422 to zero, the House of Representatives and "the Senate concurring" passed the resolution introduced a month ago by New Jersey Democrat Mr Donald Payne stressing that in Darfur 30,000 people have been "brutally murdered", 130,000 have fled to Chad and more than one million have been internally displaced by the violence.

Quoting the UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator who said that the violence in the poverty-stricken region "appears to be particularly di-

rected at a specific group based on their ethnic identity," the resolution "declares that the atrocities unfolding in Darfur, Sudan, are genocide". It urges the Bush administration to "call the atrocities... by its rightful name: genocide, and calls on it to lead an international effort to prevent it."

The resolution, adopted yesterday, also calls on the Bush administration "to consider multilateral or even unilateral intervention to prevent genocide".

Disarm militias: Powell
US Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell said Sudan must act quickly to disarm Arab militias in its western Darfur region or face possible UN sanctions. Gen Powell met with UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan yesterday for the second time in three weeks to discuss what he called a "humanitarian catastrophe" in Darfur.

সন্ত্রাস প্রশ্নে পাকিস্তানের বিরুদ্ধে তথ্য পেয়েও নিশ্চুপ ছিল আমেরিকা

সীমা সিরোহি ● ওয়াশিংটন

২৩ জুলাই: পাকিস্তান ও আফগানিস্তান যে সন্ত্রাসবাদের অন্যতম সূতিকাগার, সে সম্পর্কে যথেষ্ট তথ্য হাতে থাকা সত্ত্বেও তা কাজে লাগায়নি মার্কিন প্রশাসন। ৯/১১ তদন্ত কমিশনের রিপোর্টে প্রকাশ, লাদেন এবং তাঁর সন্ত্রাসবাদী যুদ্ধের সাফল্যের পিছনে বড়সড় ভূমিকা রয়েছে পাকিস্তানের। মার্কিন প্রশাসন বারবার বলেও লাদেনকে ধরার ব্যাপারে সাহায্য করার জন্য ইসলামাবাদকে রাজি করাতে পারেনি। অনেকেই চেয়েছিলেন, পাকিস্তানকে 'সন্ত্রাসে মদতদানকারী রাষ্ট্র' হিসেবে ঘোষণা করা হোক। মার্কিন বিদেশ দফতরের আপত্তিতেই তা করা যায়নি।

রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছে, কাশ্মীর নিয়ে ছায়াযুদ্ধে লাদেনের সহায়তা পেতেই তাঁর পৃষ্ঠপোষকের ভূমিকা নেয় পাকিস্তান। সাত বছর সি আই এ-র চোখের আড়ালে রেখে দেয় তাঁকে। পাক গোয়েন্দাদের হাত ধরেই কন্দহরে তালিবান নেতাদের সঙ্গে পরিচিত হয়েছিলেন লাদেন। পাকিস্তানের আশা ছিল, লাদেনের জঙ্গি শিবির থেকে কাশ্মীরি জঙ্গিদের প্রশিক্ষণ দেওয়া সম্ভব হবে। মার্কিন বিদেশ দফতর কেন পাকিস্তানকে আল কায়দা নিয়ে চাপ দেয়নি, তার ব্যাখ্যাও রিপোর্টে রয়েছে। ১৯৯৮-এ পরমাণু অস্ত্র পরীক্ষার পরে ভারত-পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে যুদ্ধ-সম্ভাবনার দিকে নজর রাখতে গিয়েই আফগানিস্তান বা লাদেনের দিকে নজর রাখতে পারেনি আমেরিকা। উপরন্তু পাকিস্তানের ভিতরে দানা বাঁধতে থাকা মৌলবাদ এবং তার সঙ্গে পরমাণু অস্ত্রশক্তির যোগফলকে তখন রীতিমতো ভয়ও পাচ্ছিল তারা। সে সময় তালিবানদের প্রতিও মার্কিন মনোভাব ছিল অনেকটা এই রকম। ৯/১১র পর তাতে আমূল পরিবর্তন আসে।

প্রকৃতপক্ষে তদন্ত রিপোর্টে যা বলা

হয়েছে, তার সমতুল বহু তথ্যই সাম্প্রতিক কালে প্রকাশিত একাধিক বইয়ে বলা হয়েছে। ক্রিস্টনের আত্মজীবনীতেও উল্লেখ আছে যে, আফগানিস্তানে জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপ এবং তার সঙ্গে পাক গোয়েন্দা সংস্থা আই এস আইয়ের ঘনিষ্ঠ সম্পর্কের তথ্যপ্রমাণ প্রশাসনের হাতে ছিল। ভারতও বারবার মার্কিন প্রশাসনকে এ বিষয়ে সতর্ক করেছে। কমিশন স্পষ্ট বলেছে, পাকিস্তানের অনুমোদন ছাড়া আফগানিস্তানে ফেরা লাদেনের পক্ষে সম্ভব ছিল না বলেই মনে হয়। পাক সামরিক গোয়েন্দা বিভাগ অবশ্যই আগাম খবর রেখেছিল এবং তাদের অফিসারেরাই লাদেনের যাতায়াতের ব্যবস্থা করে দিয়েছিলেন। সুদানে থাকার সময়েও পাকিস্তান-আফগানিস্তানে লাদেনের অতিথিশালা এবং প্রশিক্ষণ শিবিরগুলি নিয়মিত চালু ছিল। সর্বোপরি, ১৯৯৩ সালে ওয়ার্ল্ড ট্রেড সেন্টারে প্রথম যে হামলা হয়, সেই সূত্রে ধরা পড়ে এক পাক নাগরিক। নাম রামজি ইউসুফ। ধরা যায়নি তার আত্মীয় খালিদ শেখ মহম্মদকে। পরে দেখা যায়, এই খালিদই ৯/১১-র হামলার ছক তৈরিকাজে প্রধান মাথা।

ইরাক-আল কায়দা যোগের প্রমাণ মিলল না। বুশ প্রশাসন যতই চেষ্টা করুক, সাদ্দাম হুসেনের ইরাকের সঙ্গে আল কায়দা বা ওসামা বিন লাদেনের কোনও প্রত্যক্ষ যোগাযোগ প্রমাণ হল না। ভাইস প্রেসিডেন্ট ডিক চেনি-সহ অনেকে দাবি করেছিলেন, ৯/১১-য় ওয়ার্ল্ড ট্রেড সেন্টারের উপর অন্যতম হানাদার মহম্মদ

আটা সে বছর এপ্রিলে প্রাগে এক ইরাকি গোয়েন্দার সঙ্গে দেখা করেছিলেন। কমিশন তার সপক্ষে সাক্ষ্যপ্রমাণ পায়নি। ১৯৯৮-৯৯ সালে লাদেন আমেরিকার বিরুদ্ধে জেহাদ ঘোষণা করার পর ইরাক তাঁর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করেছিল। কিন্তু এর বেশি কিছু নয়। ১৯৯৭ সালে ইরাককে সাহায্য-প্রস্তাব দিয়েছিলেন লাদেন। সে বার ইরাক কোনও উচ্চবাচ্য করেনি। এরও আগে, ১৯৯৪-৯৫ সালে লাদেন জঙ্গি শিবির চালাবার জন্য ইরাকে জমি চেয়েছিলেন। কিন্তু এ ক্ষেত্রেও ইরাক রাজি হয়েছিল— এই মর্মে কোনও তথ্য নেই। তা ছাড়া, এই কথা আমেরিকা জানতে পারে ২০০৩ এর মে মাসে। তার আগেই বুশের ইরাক-জয় হয়ে গিয়েছে।

আন্তর্জাতিক সন্ত্রাস রুখতে যে সার্বিক প্রয়াসের কথা বলেছে কমিশন, বুশ স্বভাবতই তাতে তাঁর সন্ত্রাসবিরোধী যুদ্ধের বৈধতা খুঁজে পেয়েছেন। বলেছেন, "আমরা আল কায়দার নেতৃবর্গের দুই-তৃতীয়াংশকে খতম বা গ্রেফতার করেছি। দু'দুটো (আফগানিস্তান আর ইরাক) সন্ত্রাসবাদী সরকারকে টেনে নামিয়েছি। আর এক জনকে (লিবিয়া) স্বেচ্ছা-নিরস্ত্রীকরণে রাজি করিয়েছি।" বস্তুত ৯/১১র পর ১৭ সেপ্টেম্বরই বুশ নির্দেশ দেন, ইরাকের তেল ভাণ্ডার দখল করার জন্য প্রস্তুত থাকতে। জেনারেল টমি ফ্রান্সও তখন থেকেই ইরাক আক্রমণের তদ্বির করতে থাকেন। যদিও, দেখা যায়, ২০০২-এর জুলাইয়েই প্রতিরক্ষা দফতরের একটি রিপোর্টের শিরোনাম ছিল, 'বিশেষ সমীক্ষা: ইরাকের সঙ্গে আলকায়দার অ-প্রমাণিত সম্পর্ক।'

ANADIDAZAR

24 JUL 2004

US isn't safe yet: Panel

Associated Press
Washington, July 23

CONGRESS AND the White House must swiftly overhaul the nation's intelligence agencies or America will remain susceptible to another deadly terrorist attack, the two leaders of the September 11 commission said on Friday.

"We're in danger of just letting things slide," said commission chairman Thomas Kean, a former Republican governor of New Jersey. "We believe that, unless we implement these recommendations, we're more vulnerable to another terrorist attack."

Kean and the panel's vice-chairman, former Democratic Rep. Lee Hamilton of Indiana, told reporters that Congress should get to work immediately upon returning in September from its summer recess and that the next president — either President Bush or Democratic challenger John Kerry — must push for the overhaul soon after taking office next year.

"Time is not on our side", Kean said. Almost three years after the attacks Americans are safer because of improvements in homeland security and the war against terrorists, the report said. "But we're not safe."

The panel of five Republicans and five Democrats on Thursday released the findings of its 20-month investigation into the deadliest terror attack in US history. Citing multiple government failures, the report called for a national counter-terrorism centre headed by a Cabinet-level director to centralise intelligence efforts.

"If these reforms are not the best that can be done for the American people, then the Congress and the President need to tell us what's better", Republican commissioner James Thompson, a former Illinois governor, told a news conference.

"But, if there's nothing better, they need to be enacted and enacted speedily, because if something bad happens while these recommendations are sitting there, the American



REUTERS
A relative of a victim of the 9/11 attacks wipes a tear as she listens to a briefing by the commission in Washington on Thursday.

Iran rejects charges over Sept. 11 attacks

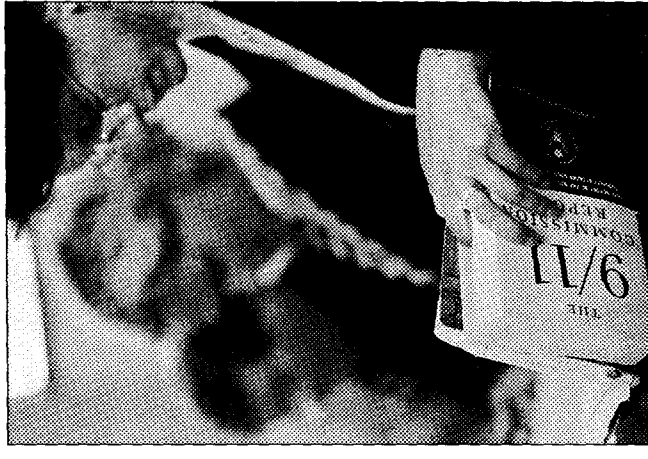
Reuters
Tehran, July 23

IRAN DISMISSED on Friday US accusations that it may have been linked to the September 11, 2001, attacks as part of Washington's cover-up to divert attention from its failures in Iraq and Afghanistan. The September 11 commission's report on Thursday had blamed Iran for its role in facilitating the transit of some of the al-Qaida members out of the country before the 9/11 attacks.

"America has no choice but to blame another country for its failure in fighting terrorism and its failures in Afghanistan and Iraq", former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani told worshippers on Friday.

However, the 567-page final report issued unanimously by the 10-member commission said there was no evidence that the Iranians were aware of the planning for the attack. Rafsanjani, a top adviser to Iran's most powerful figure supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, acknowledged that some al-Qaida members may have crossed Iran's borders with neighbouring Afghanistan unnoticed.

"Suppose it's true that eight of them passed through Iran, but is it a case against Iran? How many other countries have they passed on their way to America?" he asked in a Friday prayers sermon in Tehran broadcast live.



REUTERS
Relatives of 9/11 victims read the panel's report at its official release on Thursday.

IN BLACK AND WHITE

- **George W. Bush latched on to the panel's finding that security lapses were 'institutional' rather than his administration's failure**
- **Saudi ambassador to the US Prince Bandar bin Sultan exulted that the report seemed to exonerate his kingdom of complicity, most of the 9/11 hijackers being of Saudi origin**
- **Democrats insisted that the report underscored Republican intransigence on national security**
- **House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said, "We know plutonium exists out there in the world that makes us vulnerable. Why isn't this a priority for the Republicans? Why isn't this a priority the President of the US?"**

people will quickly fix political responsibility for failure", he said. The idea of a new national intelligence director with budget authority and power to oversee the 15-agency intelligence community already has met with scepticism in Congress, where some key lawmakers are concerned that the pos-

sible intelligence directorship. "Any specific recommendation has to be looked at for both its up sides and its down sides. But this President is going to want to make decisions and to act because we understand the importance of moving forward with intelligence reform", Rice said on NBC's Today show.

House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., expressed doubt that lawmakers would have time to consider a sweeping intelligence overhaul this year. Relatives of September 11 victims said they, too, would lobby "We're going to hold these people's feet to the fire", said Debra Burlingame, whose brother Charles was the pilot of the hijacked plane that struck the Pentagon.

Democratic presidential contender Kerry said Bush administration disputes delayed the panel's work and improvements to the nation's security.

9/11 verdict: Failure of imagination

Panel recommends intelligence revamp



The World Trade Center burns after being hit by planes in New York in this September 11, 2001 file photo.

REUTERS

Associated Press
Washington, July 22

THE SEPTEMBER 11 commission concludes that a "failure of imagination", not government neglect, allowed 19 hijackers to carry out the deadliest terrorist attack in US history. The panel calls for an intelligence overhaul to confront an al-Qaida organisation intent on striking again.

While faulting institutional shortcomings, the bipartisan report being released on Thursday does not blame President Bush or former President Clinton for mistakes contributing to the 2001 terrorist attack, Bush administration officials familiar with the findings said.

The report — which is the culmination of a 20-month investigation into the plot that killed nearly 3,000 people in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania — describes the meticulous planning and determination of hijackers who sought to exploit weaknesses in airline and border procedures by taking test flights.

A surveillance video that surfaced on Wednesday shows four of the hijackers passing through the security gates at Washington Dulles International Airport shortly before boarding the plane they would crash into the Pentagon. In the video, the hijackers can be seen undergoing additional scrutiny after setting off metal-detectors, then being permitted to continue to their gate.

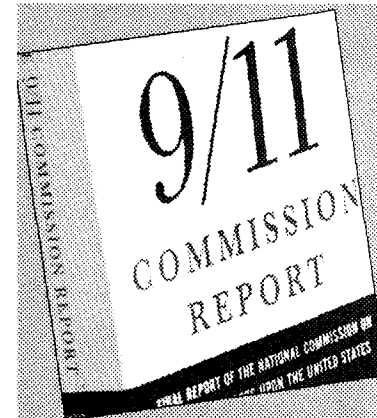
White House officials and congressional leaders were briefed on the panel's findings, and Bush was to receive a copy just before the 11-30 am EDT release on Thursday on the commission's website and in bookstores.

The President, bracing for a report that will be sharply critical of the government's intelligence-gathering, said on Wednesday that he looked forward to reading it. He also said his administration was doing everything possible to combat terrorism, a major theme of his re-election campaign. "Had we had any inkling, whatsoever, that terrorists were about to attack our country, we'd have moved heaven and earth to protect America", Bush said. "I'm confident President Clinton would have done the same thing. Any President would".

One administration official said the 575-page report concludes that Bush and Clinton took the threat of the al-Qaida seriously and were "genuinely concerned about the danger posed by al-Qaida", but didn't do enough to stop the terrorist organization headed by Osama bin Laden.

There was a "failure of imagination" to provide either Bush or Clinton with new options — particularly military approaches — to deal with the al-Qaida, the official said. There also was a failure to adapt to the post-Cold War era, and people just kept trying the same kinds of things that didn't work, the official said.

While administration officials of-



FAULT LINES

Failure of imagination Failure of imagination not government neglect allowed 19 hijackers to carry out the deadliest attack in US history

Intelligence overhaul Panel calls for intelligence overhaul to pre-empt any future al-Qaida terror threats

Airline weakness Panel mentions meticulous planning & determination of hijackers who sought to exploit airline procedures' weaknesses by taking test flights

Report seen by White House officials and Congressional leaders were briefed on the panel's findings

Hijackers had twice set off alarms

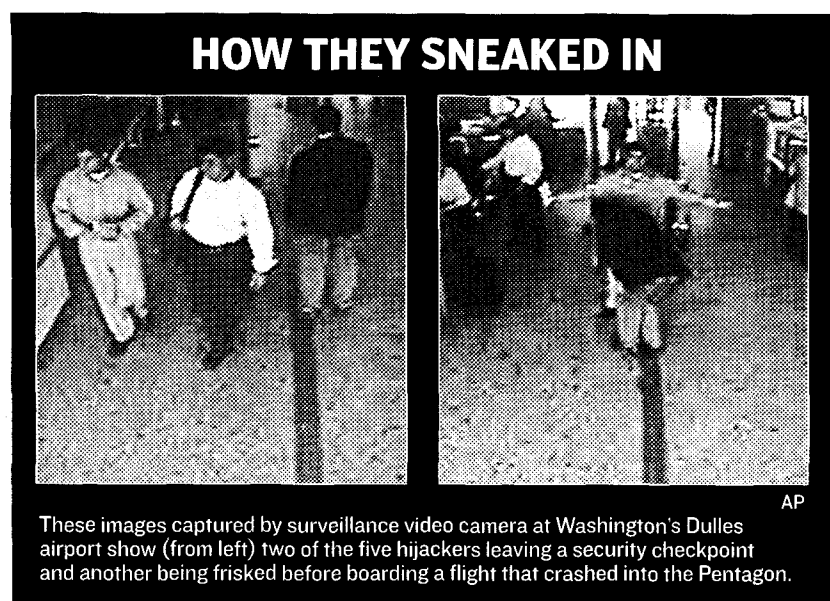
Associated Press
Washington, July 22

SOME OF the hijackers who crashed a jetliner into the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, twice set off alarms as they passed through metal detectors that morning at Washington Dulles International Airport, but security screeners did not appear to question them on utility knives investigators believe they were carrying, according to newly disclosed surveillance video.

The video shows most of the hijackers in Washington were pulled aside to undergo additional scrutiny after alarms went off at metal detectors, but then were permitted to board American Airlines Flight 77.

The video also shows an airport screener hand-checking the baggage of one hijacker, Nawaf al-Hazmi, for traces of explosives before letting him continue onto the plane with his brother, Salem, a fellow hijacker. Al-Hazmi had been added to a US government terrorism watchlist just weeks earlier.

The disclosure of the video late on Wednesday came just before the release of the final report by the September 11 commission. Details in the grainy video are difficult to distinguish. No knives or other sharp objects are visible on the surveillance video. Investigators have said the hijackers at Dulles were believed to be carrying utility knives, which at the time, could legally be carried aboard planes if the blades were less



These images captured by surveillance video camera at Washington's Dulles airport show (from left) two of the five hijackers leaving a security checkpoint and another being frisked before boarding a flight that crashed into the Pentagon.

than 4 inches long and were not considered "menacing."

The video shows hijackers Khalid al-Mihdhar and Majed Moqed, each dressed conservatively in slacks and collared shirts, setting off metal detectors as they pass through security. Moqed set off a second alarm, and a screener manually checked him with a handheld metal detector. The pair were known to have travelled together previously and had paid cash to purchase their tickets aboard

Flight 77 on September 5, 2001, at the American Airlines counter at Baltimore's airport. Al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi were known to be associated with the al-Qaida since early-1999 by the National Security Agency, and were put on a terrorism watchlist on August 24, 2001.

Only Hani Hanjour, believed to have been the hijacker who piloted Flight 77, passed through Dulles security that morning without being subjected to a secondary security check.



Bin Laden kin left US after Sept 11

AT LEAST 13 relatives of Osama bin Laden, accompanied by bodyguards and associates, were allowed to leave the US on a chartered flight eight days after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The passenger manifest was obtained by Senator Frank Lautenberg from Boston's Logan International Airport and was released by him on Wednesday. The plane, owned by DB Air and operated by Ryan International, began its flight in Los Angeles and made stops in Orlando, Dulles International Airport in the Washington area, and Boston before continuing to Gander, Newfoundland, Paris, Geneva and Jeddah.

PTI, Washington

ferred a preview of the report, their summary was far from a complete accounting of the commission's findings. Less than four months before the presidential election, the commission's work already has ignited partisan debate over whether Bush took sufficient steps to deal with terrorism in the first year of his administration.

As expected, the report will propose a national counter-terrorism centre headed by a new Cabinet-level national director of intelligence. The director would have authority over the CIA, FBI and other agencies, while congressional oversight also would be strengthened. The commission described a rapidly changing al-Qaida threat that has become more dispersed and harder to detect. A national intelligence chief would coordinate information-sharing and intelligence analysis to thwart al-Qaida men who are keen to launching a chemical, biological or nuclear attack, commissioners say.

The Bush administration is reserving judgment on that recommendation, and officials doubt it could be approved by Congress this year. Four administration officials briefed reporters on the report's content on condition of anonymity because it has not been publicly released.

Security is key issue in US poll

Gettysburg, July 22

IN THE first presidential election since the September 11 attacks, Americans are paying attention again to a commander in chief's salute.

After a decade when the importance of national-security credentials ebbed in presidential campaigns, the issue of America's defence is challenging the economy as the most important concern on voters' minds. President George Bush's strategists once thought the debate over who would be a better commander in chief would guarantee his reelection. That is no longer certain.

Matthew Dowd, Bush's

chief campaign strategist, says the perception of Bush as a strong leader—particularly in safeguarding the nation's security—is his strongest selling point. History is also on his side: From the War of 1812 to Vietnam, no US president who sought reelection in wartime lost.

But for the first time in a generation, Democrats are trying to turn the Republicans' advantage on national-security issues to their own. The party platform includes more musical language on national security than any in decades.

Bush describes himself as a "war president." He often speaks before military audiences with rows of

soldiers in uniform on stage behind him. For his part, Kerry talks regularly about his service in Vietnam. He touts his years as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He criticizes Bush's handling of the conflict in Iraq, though he has yet to detail big differences in what he would do about the war now.

Both candidates have to make their case, says Walter Russell Mead of the Council on Foreign Relations. "I don't think there's any doubt that if the voters think that one of the candidates can't be commander in chief," Mead says, "he's not going to get elected."

USA Today

94 abuse cases by US confirmed

Associated Press
Washington, July 22

THE US military has found 94 cases of confirmed or alleged abuse of prisoners by US soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan since the fall of 2001, the Army's Inspector General said on Thursday in a long-awaited report made public at a hastily called Senate hearing.

The number is significantly higher than all other previous estimates given by the Pentagon, which had refused until now to give a total number of abuse allegations. The Inspector-General investigation concluded that there were no systemic problems that contributed to the abuse at Abu Ghraib prison.



George Bush (above) and John Kerry

9/11 panel blames govt 'failures'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, July 22. — The US government could not protect its citizens from the 9/11 terror attacks because it failed to appreciate the threat posed by Al-Qaida operatives who exploited those lapses to carry out the deadliest assault ever on American soil, the chairman of the 9/11 commission said today.

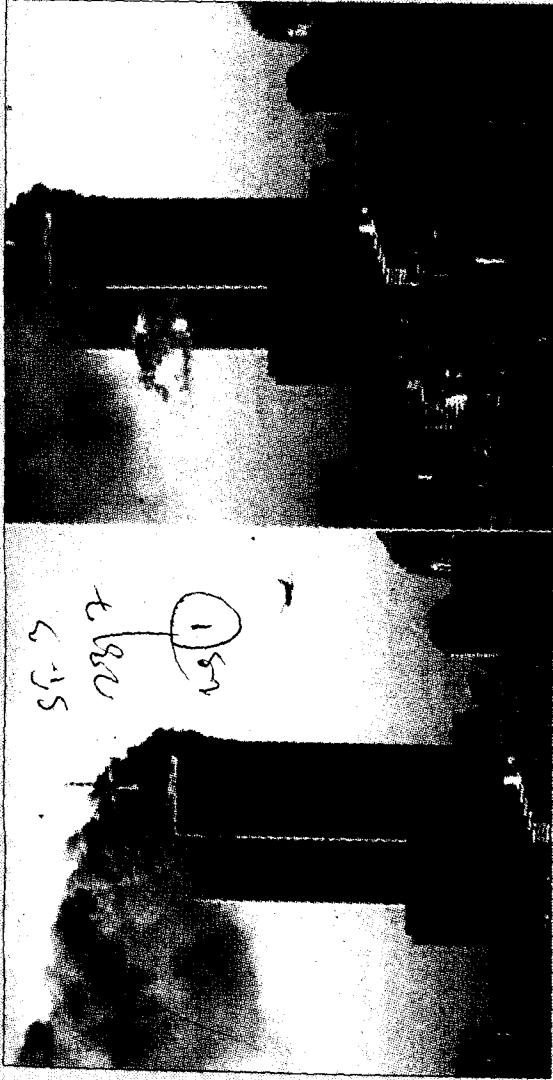
In issuing the panel's 567-page final report, commission chairman Mr Tom Kean said none of the government's efforts to thwart a known threat from the Al-Qaida had "disturbed or even delayed". Osama bin Laden's plot. "(They) penetrated the defences of the most powerful nation in the world... They inflicted unbearable trauma on our people, and at the same time they turned international order upside down."

While faulting institutional shortcomings, the report does not blame President Bush or former President Bill Clinton for mistakes contributing to the attacks.

Mr Kean and commission vice-chairman Mr Lee Hamilton presented Mr Bush with a copy of the report Thursday morning. The President thanked them for a "really good job" and said the panel makes "very solid, sound recommendations about how to move forward". Mr Bush said: "I assured them that where the government needs to act we will."

The panel also determined the "most important failure" leading to the attacks "was one of imagination. We do not believe leaders understood the gravity of the threat". The commission identified nine "specific points of vulnerability" in the 9/11 plot that might have led to its disruption had the government been better organised and more watchful. Yet the report concludes that despite these opportunities, "we cannot know whether any single step or series of steps would have defeated" the 19 hijackers.

Video exposes airport security lapse



WASHINGTON, July 22. — Some of the 9/11 hijackers had twice set off alarms as they passed through metal detectors at Dulles International Airport here, but security screeners did not appear to question them about the utility knives they were carrying as part of the takeover plot, according to newly disclosed surveillance video.

The video represents the only footage known to exist showing any of 9/11 hijackers boarding their final flights that fateful morning. It shows most of the hijackers — who crashed a jetliner into the Pentagon — were pulled aside to undergo additional scrutiny after alarms went off at metal detectors but then were permitted to board American Airlines Flight 77.

The video also shows an airport screener hand-checking the baggage of one hijacker, Nawaf al-Hazmi, for traces of explosives before letting him continue onto the plane with his brother, Salem, a fellow hijacker. Al-

Hazmi had been added to a US government terrorism watch list just weeks earlier.

The disclosure of the video late yesterday came just before the release of the final report by the 9/11 commission, which is expected to include a detailed accounting of the events that day. Details in the grainy video are difficult to distinguish. But an earlier, preliminary report by the commission describing activities at Dulles is consistent with the men's procession through airport security as shown on the video.

No knives or other sharp objects are visible on the video. Investigators said the hijackers at Dulles were believed to be carrying utility knives either personally or in their luggage, which at the time could legally be carried aboard planes if the blades were less than four inches long and were not considered "menacing". There is no indication on the video that security screeners questioned the hijackers about any knives. — AP

Sandy Berger admits to mistake

WASHINGTON, July 22. — Former US national security adviser Mr Sandy Berger says he regrets the way he handled classified terrorism documents, calling the whole thing "an honest mistake".

Republicans say the matter raises questions about whether the former Clinton administration official sought to hide embarrassing materials. "What information could be so embarrassing that a man with decades of experience in handling classified documents would risk being caught pilfering our nation's most sensitive secrets?" House Speaker Mr Dennis Hastert said. "Mr Berger has a lot of explaining to do."

Mr Berger told reporters he was not guilty of criminal wrongdoing. "Last year, when I was in the Archives, I made an honest mistake. It's one that I deeply regret... Everything that I have done all along in this process has been for the purpose of aiding and supporting the work of the 9/11 commission, and any suggestion to the contrary is simply, absolutely wrong." — AP

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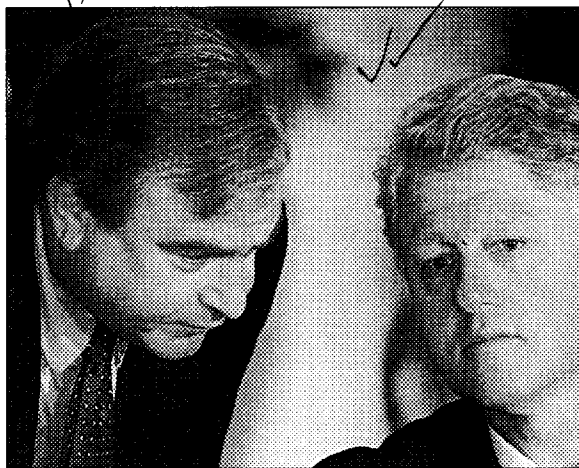
Clinton adviser faces probe over missing terror memos

Associated Press
Washington, July 20

SANDY BERGER, former President Clinton's national security adviser, is under criminal investigation by the Justice Department after highly classified terrorism documents disappeared while he was reviewing what should be turned over to the September 11 commission.

Berger's home and office were searched earlier this year by FBI agents armed with warrants after the former Clinton adviser voluntarily returned some sensitive documents to the National Archives and admitted he had also removed handwritten notes that he made while reviewing the sensitive documents.

However, some drafts of a sensitive after-action report on the Clinton administration's handling of al-Qaida terror threats during the December 1999 millennium celebrations are still missing, officials said. Berger and his lawyer said on Monday he knowingly re-



REUTERS
Samuel Berger, US National Security adviser to former US President Bill Clinton, is under investigation after removing classified documents from the National Archives while preparing to appear before the September 11 commission.

moved the handwritten notes by placing them in his jacket and pants, and also inadvertently took copies of actual classified documents in a portfolio.

"I deeply regret the sloppiness involved, but I had no intention of withholding documents from the commission, and to the

contrary, to my knowledge, every document requested by the commission from the Clinton administration was produced", Berger said. Lanny Breuer, one of Berger's attorneys, said his client has offered to cooperate fully with the investigation but had not yet been interviewed by the FBI or

prosecutors. Berger served as Clinton's national security adviser for all of the President's second term and, most recently, has been informally advising Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry. Clinton asked Berger last year to review and select the administration documents that would be turned over to the commission investigating the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The FBI searches of Berger's home and office occurred after National Archives employees said they believed they witnessed Berger place documents in his clothes while reviewing Clinton administration papers and that some documents were then noticed missing, officials said.

When asked, Berger said he had returned some classified documents that he found in his office and all of the handwritten notes he had taken from the secure room, but could not locate two or three copies of the highly classified millennium terror report.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 JUL 2001

Bush, Blair in hot waters over Iraq reports

Senate account on pre-war intelligence to sidestep White House role ■ Lord Butler's findings to reopen old wounds

Agence France-Presse
Washington, July 8

THE SENATE'S report on pre-war intelligence on Iraq will focus only on misjudgments by the CIA and other US agencies and sidestep the issue of how the White House used the intelligence. *The New York Times* said on Thursday.

The 410-page report is expected to be released on Friday, but will not include a second phase of the year-long investigation that will focus on how the White House used the assessments from its intelligence agencies on Iraq, Congressional officials told the daily. The second phase of the investigation involving the White House will likely not be completed until after the November 2 US presidential election, the officials said.

Republicans and Democrats on the Senate Intelligence Committee reached a deal in February to divide the inquiry in two parts as a compromise between the views of the top Republican on the committee, Senator Pat Robertson, and the top Democrat Senator John Rockefeller. Robertson ar-

Sydney lawyer to defend Saddam

A HIGH-PROFILE Sydney lawyer, best known for defending one of Australia's most notorious serial killers, said on Thursday he would join Saddam Hussein's legal team. John Marsden said he had been invited by Giovanni Di Stefano, a British-based attorney putting together a team to defend the deposed Iraqi dictator.

"He asked me if I would join the defence team as



an Australian contingent", Marsden told Australian Broadcasting Corp. Radio. "And I agreed because I actually accept that every person, whatever you may have personal views on, is entitled to a lawyer".

AP, Sydney

gued that investigating how the White House used the pre-war intelligence on Iraq was beyond the scope of the committee, while Rockefeller insisted that the inquiry delve into whether the US government's statements on Iraq were substantiated by intelligence information.

The effect, *The New York Times* said, may be to provide an opening for Bush and his allies to deflect responsibility for what now appears to be exaggerated pre-war assessments about

the threat posed by Iraq, by portraying them as the fault of the CIA and its departing chief, George J. Tenet.

Still, the paper said, Democrats will try to focus attention on the issue by releasing half a dozen "additional views" to supplement the bipartisan report. "How the administration used the intelligence was very troubling", Senator Ron Wyden, Democrat of Oregon, told the *Times*. "They took a flawed set of intelligence reports and converted it into a



AP
DOUBLE TROUBLE British Prime Minister Tony Blair listens to President George Bush at a news conference in the White House in this July 17, 2003, photograph.

war that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and strong links with the al-Qaida that made it a threat to the US and the world. Since the end of the war, no WMD has been found in Iraq and US investigators have found no credible link between Iraq and the al-Qaida.

The Senate's "Report on Pre-War Intelligence on Iraq" was originally scheduled to be released on Thursday, but was postponed to Friday, following a farewell planned at the Central Intelligence Agency for its director George Tenet, who formally resigns on Saturday.

British PM back in mire

TONY BLAIR, yearning to put behind him a year in which Iraq has wreaked havoc on his ratings, faces a new test of his ability to escape the mire. Former top civil servant Lord Butler will deliver a report on Wednesday on the intelligence the government received about Saddam Hussein's weaponry. British espionage will inevitably face some criticism but so, too, might the government.

The Prime Minister persuaded a reluctant Parliament to back war on Iraq last year on the basis that it had biological and chemical weapons and was ready to use them. A notorious UK dossier from September 2002 said some could have been fired within 45 minutes of an order to do so. Yet, over a year after Saddam was ousted, no such weapons have been found.

Butler's report will reopen those wounds although Blair tried to preempt it this week, admitting for the first time that banned weapons may never be found. The inquiry of Butler and his team has been sifting evidence for the past five months. "These are serious people", said Dame Pauline Neville-Jones, former head of the Joint Intelligence Committee, which assesses intelligence for the government. "I'd trust them to produce a report that actually gave us real insights into what went wrong, and clearly things did go wrong".

Butler's remit was to study the accuracy of intelligence on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and make recommendations for the future gathering, evaluation and use of intelligence.

Reuters, London

Ruling on Guantanamo, a blow to Bush

By Julian Borger and Vikram Dodd

WASHINGTON/LONDON, JUNE 29. Prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay will be able to challenge their detention in the American courts after the U.S. Supreme Court yesterday curbed the Bush administration's power to deny detainees the right to a lawyer.

By a 6-3 majority, the court rejected the administration's argument that Guantanamo Bay lay outside the jurisdiction of U.S. courts — giving the approximately 600 prisoners, including four Britons, being held at the military prison camp the right to take their cases before an American judge.

Defence lawyers said the decision did not guarantee a quick release for any of the detainees — it upheld the Government's right to hold prisoners in the "war on terror" indefinitely. But legal experts argued that the ruling would at least force the U.S. Government to present evidence justifying its detention of each prisoner, and it would allow the inmates

to meet civilian lawyers for the first time since the camp was established more than two years ago.

"The lesson of this decision is that there is no prison beyond the reach of domestic law," Joe Margulies, one of the defence lawyers, said yesterday. "The court holds emphatically that though war powers may give the U.S. the right to seize people, it may not place them beyond the reach of legal process."

There are four British detainees at the camp: Feroz Abbasi, Moazzam Begg, Richard Belmar and Martin Mubanga. Their lawyers said they would bring a writ of habeas corpus, challenging the constitutionality of their imprisonment, to a Federal district court in Washington this month.

It was not immediately clear whether all 600 Guantanamo detainees would present legal challenges to their imprisonment separately, or together as part of a class action.

There was no immediate response to the judgment from the White House. But Justice Antonin Scalia, one of the court's most conservative judges, spoke

for the three dissenters against the decision, arguing: "This is an irresponsible overturning of settled law in a matter of extreme importance to our forces currently in the field."

The Guantanamo decision was not the only reversal for the Bush administration handed out by the Supreme Court yesterday. It also ruled that Yaser Esam Hamdi, an American citizen being held as a terrorist suspect in a South Carolina military jail, could legally challenge the constitutionality of his imprisonment.

Explaining the decision, Sandra Day O'Connor, one of the court's Republican-appointed judges, said it "made clear that a state of war is not a blank cheque for the President when it comes to the rights of the nation's citizens."

However, that decision also upheld the administration's right to hold prisoners without charge or trial, if it could prove they were "enemy combatants". The Hamdi ruling helped dampen hopes for a quick release for the British inmates.

"This is not going to mean

the British citizens get out of Guantanamo Bay in the next year or two years, so the onus is on the British Government to do something more for them," Louise Christian, the solicitor for two of those detained, said. "I do not think it will do anything at all for anybody in the immediate future." Gareth Peirce, Mr. Moazzam Begg's solicitor, said: "This means it is no longer a legal black hole — that every brutal and sadistic practice that has gone on there and is going on there is subject to review by the U.S. courts."

Five Britons were released from Guantanamo Bay in March, alleging they had been beaten by their captors, and saying they had been so desperate they signed false confessions. Two of the four still incarcerated, Mr. Begg and Mr. Abbasi, have been designated by Mr. Bush to face commissions where the military sits as judge and jury. Both men are feared to have suffered mental health problems during their detention. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004

New visa rules to hit Indians most

T.V. PARASURAM
WASHINGTON, JUNE 27

INDIANS will be the largest group affected, following the new US decision for six major categories of working visas that will come into affect from July 16.

According to the new rules, holders of 'E' (traders and investors), 'H' (professionals), 'I' (journalists), 'L' (corporate workers), 'O' (people with particular skills) and 'P' (Entertainers, artists, athletes) categories of visas will no longer be able to renew their papers in US and have to travel to a US embassy abroad to be fingerprinted before their visas are renewed. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Visa Ser-

The situation arose because last year the US issued 50,000 visas, of which 46 pc were given to Indians working primarily in the IT sector

vices, Bureau of Consular Affairs Janice Jacobs has admitted that Indians will be the largest group that will be affected following the US move.

Last year 50,000 visas were issued under these categories and of these 46 per cent were given to Indians, Jacob said. When asked why Indians have been targeted when not a single Indian has so far been linked to hijacking, Jacob said the fact that 46 per cent of the affected

people will be Indians but the rules were not aimed at any particular nationality.

"A lot of these visas that we renew are people working here in the information technology field and there are a lot of Indians doing that and I think that is why it turned out that way," he said. "This is not aimed at any particular nationality. I think the Indians have over the years benefited the most from this programme, but it just

96-7 296
turned out that way.

"Again, this is being done primarily because of a Congressional requirement that we have for collecting biometrics and we are also doing more interviews of applicants now than we did in the past. Again, we don't conduct these interviews here in the US," Jacobs said.

"What we have been told by our Inspector General, what we have been told by Congress and the General Accounting Office is basically what we were doing in the US was not what we are now doing overseas and that we needed to fix that. "But, really, it is because we cannot collect the fingerprints in the US. That is the primary reason why we are having to end this service," he added. —PTI

INDIA

28 JUN 2001

ERODING CREDIBILITY

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2/16

UNITED STATES PRESIDENT George W. Bush faces a credibility crisis with the gap between the reality and his projections of it widening. While Mr. Bush continues to insist that Iraq will become free, democratic and peaceful once sovereignty is nominally transferred to an interim government, the situation is bound to remain chaotic. The movement of national resistance against foreign occupation is not likely to weaken since the interim government is not at all a free or democratic entity as it has been chosen primarily by the American-led forces. The Bush administration also deceives the world when it maintains that soldiers in the lower ranks were solely responsible for the torture and abuse of Iraqi prisoners. There has been mounting evidence that the Pentagon authorised the use of interrogative techniques in which abuse was inherent. Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld signalled that such practices were not unacceptable even if he did not specifically order that these methods be used. While these issues will haunt Mr. Bush, his credibility has already been severely damaged by the findings of a bipartisan commission of enquiry that the regime of deposed Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, was not connected with Al-Qaeda in any manner. With the U.S. President persisting with his claim of a significant linkage, *The New York Times* was led to editorialise that he either "knew he was not telling the truth, or he has a capacity for politically motivated self-deception that is terrifying in the post-9/11 world."

Mr. Bush and senior U.S. officials have tried to argue that the commission only established that the Saddam regime was not involved in the tragic events of September 11, 2001. They insist that the enquiry did not take note of a long association between the secular Ba'athists and the fundamentalist Al-Qaeda because the issue was not

within its mandate. However, this is a blatant attempt at obfuscation since the commission did examine the matter in depth. After all, the Bush administration went all out, in its attempt to justify the lawless invasion of Iraq, to convince Americans that the Ba'ath regime was complicit in the 9/11 attacks. The commission's findings might now induce those who believed in the existence of such a connection to re-examine their pro-war stance. These findings reinforce the opinion, shared by a widening spectrum of the American electorate, that Mr. Bush diverted the focus away from anti-terrorist operations as he pursued a misconceived agenda against the Saddam regime.

A group composed of retired military officers and diplomats, many of them sympathisers of the Republican party, recently castigated the Bush administration for shredding alliances that were cultivated over many years. In accusing the present administration of weakening the security of the U.S., these former public servants delivered a body blow to the Bush campaign's main theme — that the incumbent President is an able commander-in-chief. Recent opinion polls indicate that despite the administration's many lapses Mr. Bush still enjoys as much popular support as his Democratic opponent, John Kerry. However, the Republicans cannot draw much comfort from these findings since their candidate's performance in office is judged as inadequate by more than 50 per cent of likely voters. No recent incumbent with such a poor job approval rating at this point in the campaign season has been re-elected. While early signs of an economic recovery, especially rising employment rates, offer some cheer to the incumbent, the turnaround will have to be rapid if he is to cut into the substantial lead Mr. Kerry has opened up on social and economic issues.



FINAL ADIEU Nancy Reagan is joined by son Ron and daughter Patti Davis as she cries over the coffin of former President Ronald Reagan during the interment on Friday night.

Goodbye, Ronnie!

Associated Press
*Simi Valley (California),
 June 12*

IN A soaring cathedral on the capital's highest hilltop, world leaders past and present came to remember Ronald Reagan as the perpetual optimist who saw his nation as a shining city on a hill, then sent him home to California for the final scene of what President Bush called a "great American story."

The nation bade a lingering goodbye to the late president in Washington under sombre skies and at a hilltop burial ceremony beneath a setting sun in his beloved California. "Ronald Reagan belongs to the ages now," President Bush said in his eulogy, "but we preferred it when he be-

longed to us."

In poignant eulogies at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, the nation's 40th President was remembered by his surviving children as a father, grandfather and husband who finally escaped the grip of Alzheimer's disease. After the service, a tearful Nancy Reagan kissed and stroked her husband's coffin while clutching an American flag—reluctant to leave his side. "I love you," she said quietly.

The former First Lady was surrounded by her crying children, who tried to console her just before the sun disappeared from the gold-tinged hills in the distance.

The flag-draped casket, accompanied by a stoic Mrs Reagan, arrived at the li-

brary after a flight from Washington and a 25-mile motorcade from the airport. Hundreds of well-wishers cheered the former First Lady when she left the plane, and crowds along the motorcade route waved flags as the hearse passed.

Mrs Reagan, 82, slow in step yet keenly alert to every polished move in the week's remembrance, shepherded the casket with quiet intensity.

Reagan's daughter Patti Davis recounted her father's last moments at the burial service. "I know that at his last moment, when he opened his eyes, eyes that had not opened for many, many days, and looked at my mother, he showed us that neither disease nor death can conquer love," she said.

America unites in mourning

Associated Press
Santa Monica, June 7

RONALD REAGAN, who spoke 10 years ago about his final journey, was being mourned by a nation while plans called for the late President's body to travel from California to Washington and back home again for burial.

The funeral, undoubtedly attended by world leaders, will be at Washington National Cathedral and President Bush will be among the speakers. The body will then be returned to Reagan's presidential library in Simi Valley for a private burial service.

Throughout the day on Sunday, mourners milled around the Santa Monica funeral home, many leaving behind American flags, flowers and jars of jelly beans — Reagan's favourite treat. "Thank you for changing the world", said a handwritten note among the tokens of remembrance.

The Reagan family said former First Lady Nancy



REUTERS

Reagan in Los Angeles, January 1992, presents Bill Clinton, then President-elect, with a jar of jelly beans — his favourite.

Reagan was thankful for the thousands of expressions of sympathy and, despite her sadness, relieved that her husband was no longer struggling with Alzheimer's disease that had robbed him of his memory. When Reagan announced in a letter to the public in 1994 that he had

Alzheimer's, he said he was embarking on "the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life".

"I can tell you most certainly that, while it is an extremely sad time for Mrs Reagan, there is definitely a sense of relief that he is no longer suffering," said the

Funeral schedule

Tuesday: Reagan lies in his presidential library in Simi Valley

Wednesday: Reagan's body to be flown to Andrews Air Force Base, Washington. A formal funeral procession to the US Capitol will begin. Reagan will lie at the Capitol Rotunda until Friday morning.

Friday: Funeral at Washington National Cathedral. Private burial will follow at the Reagan library

spokeswoman. Bush, in France to commemorate D-Day, recalled that, 20 years earlier, Reagan had come to Normandy on the anniversary of the June 6, 1944, invasion. "He was a courageous leader himself and today we honour the memory of Ronald Reagan", Bush said.

WS ①
19-10

LOYALTY UNREWARDED

876

UNITED STATES PRESIDENT George W. Bush failed to convince when he asserted that too much should not be read into the departure from office of the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, George Tenet. While Mr. Tenet cited personal reasons for his decision to resign on the day he would complete seven years on the job, attendant circumstances suggest that other considerations were in play. Mr. Bush, whose re-election bid is based on the theme that he is the staunchest protector of national security, could not have casually accepted the resignation of his intelligence chief. Mr. Tenet's exit five months before the presidential election cannot but reflect negatively on an administration in which he has been such a prominent figure. In observing that the CIA chief resigned just before several investigative bodies were to submit reports on debacles encountered by the Bush administration, the American media have come to the broad conclusion that he was made a scapegoat. The Senate Intelligence Committee has already presented what is understood to be a scathing indictment of the CIA's culpability in distorting the truth and stating that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction when it did not. Most members of a bipartisan commission of enquiry into the events of September 11, 2001 pilloried the intelligence services for their performance prior to the tragedy. This tone is likely to be reflected in the commission's summation.

As Director, Central Intelligence, Mr. Tenet was nominally in charge of all the services that gather information pertaining to the security of the U.S. and its citizens and bears much of the responsibility for the lapses that occurred during his watch. However, other officials who quit in disgust at the Bush administration's methods and media investigators have suggested that the CIA chief was not primarily at fault. An unresponsive President had

failed to pay adequate attention to the alarms about an imminent terrorist attack that Mr. Tenet had repeatedly raised before 9/11. While the CIA initially treated with scepticism the allegations about Iraq's non-conventional weapons, it came under political pressure to change its views. The White House issued a grim warning to all officials that no dissent would be tolerated when it disclosed the identity of a secret agent and jeopardised her career; she was punished because her husband exposed the administration's duplicity in claiming that Iraq had bought uranium from Niger when it knew that no such purchase had been made. With these details already available to the public it would be difficult for Mr. Bush to make Mr. Tenet the "fall-guy" for the administration's failures.

The CIA chief's ouster might actually boomerang on Mr. Bush. Until recently his administration was known for its internal discipline and the loyalty that senior officials displayed towards the President. There are signs that the cohesion is getting frayed with the heads of different departments openly advocating divergent agendas. For instance, the State Department and the CIA are known to have worked together to foil the attempt of the Department of Defence to foist its favourite, the notorious Ahmed Chalabi, on the recently constituted interim Iraqi government. (Mr. Tenet's resignation is believed to be not unconnected to this development.) Senior officials of the State Department, on the one hand, and those of the Pentagon and the Vice-President's office, on the other, have traded barbed comments in their separate interactions with the media. While members of the Bush team still profess allegiance to the President, Mr. Tenet's unceremonious departure could have created doubts that loyalty will be reciprocated.

Bush declares national mourning on Friday

PTI & AP

WASHINGTON, June 7. — The USA will observe 11 June (Friday) — the date former President Ronald Reagan is to be buried — as a national day of mourning and flags will be lowered to half-staff for a month in honour of the departed leader.

President Bush has officially declared 11 June as national day of mourning in a proclamation yesterday, calling on Americans "to assemble on that day

in their respective places of worship, there to pay homage to the memory of President Reagan". Mr Bush said: "I invite the people of the world who share our grief to join us in this solemn observance." He also ordered US flags lowered to half-staff for 30 days from the day Reagan died.

The order lowers the US flag at all government buildings and grounds, naval ships, as well as US embassies, military bases and other facilities overseas.

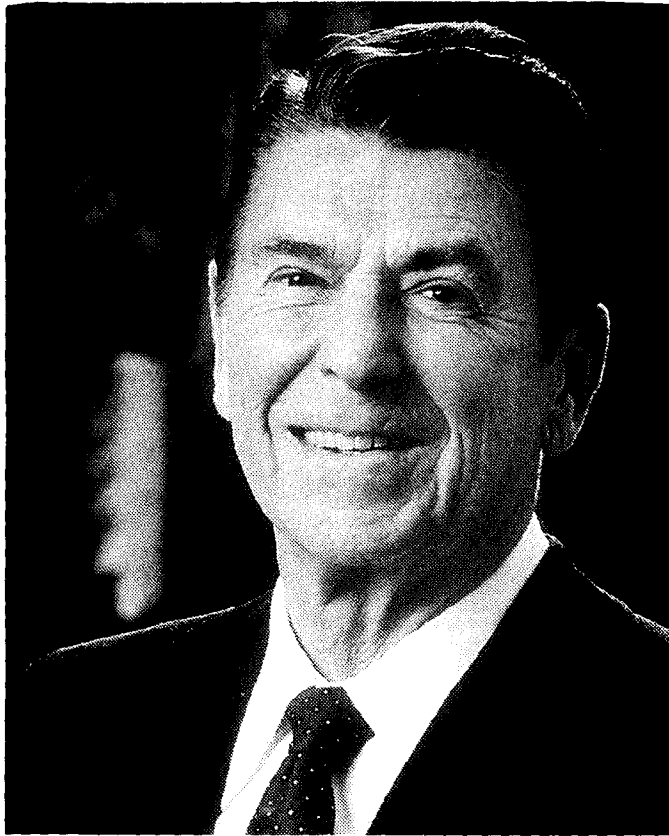
Mr Bush also lavished

praise on the former President: "With an unshakable faith in the values of our country and the character of our people, Ronald Reagan renewed America's confidence and restored our nation. His optimism, strength, and humility epitomized the American spirit. He always told us that for USA the best was yet to come."

Meanwhile, Reagan, who spoke 10 years ago about his final journey, was mourned by a nation while plans called for the late President's body to

travel to the US capital and back home again to California for burial. Today, his body was to be moved from a Santa Monica funeral home to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

Following a private family ceremony, it will lie in repose at the library through Tuesday night, giving Reagan's fellow Californians a chance to pay final respects to the man who was their governor from 1967 to 1975 before becoming President in 1981-89.



The former U.S. President, Ronald Reagan, who died on Saturday.

WSI
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A great President: Gorbachev

MOSCOW, JUNE 6. Paying rich tributes to Mr. Reagan, the former Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev, said today that the departed statesman was a "great president."

Mr. Gorbachev told Ekho Moskvy radio station that he "deemed Ronald Reagan a great President, with whom the Soviet leadership was able to launch a very difficult but important dialogue."

Later, speaking to reporters at the Gorbachev Foundation, a think-tank which he himself heads, Mr. Gorbachev said he was distressed by the death of Mr Reagan.

Mr. Gorbachev, who conducted negotiations with Mr. Reagan in the last years of the Soviet Union, said he had "friendly relations" with him.

"Reagan was a statesman who, despite all disagreements that existed between our coun-

tries at the time, displayed foresight and determination to meet our proposals halfway and change our relations for the better," he added.

The former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, said, "He will be missed not only by those who knew him and not only by the nation that he served so proudly and loved so deeply, but also by millions of men and women who live in freedom today because of the policies he pursued."

The former Libyan leader, Muammar Qadhafi, said, "I express my deep regret because Reagan died before facing justice for his ugly crime that he committed in 1986 against the Libyan children." Mr. Qadhafi, was referring to the 1986 air strikes Mr. Reagan ordered, in which the Libyan leader's adopted daughter and 36 other people were killed. — UNI, AP

Tenet quits under WMD cloud

S.Rajagopalan
Washington, June 3

EMBATTLED CIA director George Tenet, who has been under fire for his agency's intelligence failures over Iraq and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, has resigned. The second-longest serving CIA chief and the first to serve under two administrations, Tenet cited "personal reasons" for his action.

"He's been a strong leader in the war on terror, and I'll miss him", President George W. Bush told reporters just before leaving Europe on Thursday morning. Tenet will be with the agency till mid-July, when his deputy, John McLaughlin, will take over as acting director.

Official sources sought to quell rumours that Tenet had been pressured to quit because of the increasing embarrassment for the Bush administration over the failure to unearth "Saddam's weapons of mass destruction", the *raison d'être* for the invasion of Iraq.

Bush, himself, spoke highly of Tenet, who has headed the agency for seven years. "George Tenet is the kind of CIA director you like to work with. He's strong. He's resolute...He's done a superb job on behalf of the American people".

Speculation on Tenet's resignation has been rife here for the past several months. Apart from the Iraqi WMDs, the CIA chief has drawn renewed flak over the intelligence failures connected with the September 11 attacks. Members of the 9/11 Commission grilled him repeatedly at a public hearing last month.

Last year, Tenet found himself in a spot following President



REUTERS

President George W. Bush with CIA director George J. Tenet at CIA headquarters earlier this year.

Bush's unsubstantiated charge in his State of the Union Address that Iraq sought to buy uranium for nuclear weapons from Africa. It was widely speculated at the time that Tenet would have to go, but he weathered the crisis.

Some experts are convinced that Tenet has been eased out as the WMDs issue and the Iraq conundrum have become explosive issues in the run-up to the November elections. "I think he's been pushed out and made a scapegoat", former CIA director

Admiral Stanfield Turner said.

After taking over from John Deutch, Tenet survived several disputes with Congress and won praise from some quarters for his bid to rehabilitate the CIA after several high-profile spy scandals and morale problems. The CIA chief has considerable experience in navigating Washington's political waters.

He has worked in both the legislative and executive branches, for Democrats and Republicans. Before joining the spy agency, as

it struggled to redefine its role in the post-Cold War world, Tenet also served as special assistant to the President and senior director for intelligence programs at the National Security Council.

He is the son of Greek immigrants who grew up in New York. Some close to Tenet have said the job overseeing more than a dozen agencies that make up the intelligence community has been taxing for him. He suffered heart problems while at the National Security Council.

APR 2004

9/11 hot seat keeps Bush busy for 3 hours

Washington, April 29 (Reuters): President George W. Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney took questions today for more than three hours from the September 11 commission about whether they considered al Qaeda an urgent priority before the catastrophic attacks.

Bush and Cheney, in a historic session with potential electric ramifications, sat down in the Oval Office with the panel of five Republicans and five Democrats.

The session ended after three hours and 10 minutes.

Bush later said he and Cheney answered all questions from the commission, adding it was a cordial meeting that he hoped would help the panel come up with recommendations for how to prevent future attacks.

"If we had something to hide we wouldn't have met them in the first place. We answered all their questions. I came away good about the session because I wanted them to know how I set strategy, how we run the White House, how we deal with threats," Bush said.

Asked if al Qaeda operatives were in the US today, Bush said he could not rule it out but would not get into any details. "We are still vulnerable to attack."

Two Democrats on the panel, vice chairman Lee Hamilton and former US Senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska, left the White House before the meeting was over.

Bush agreed under pressure from victims' families and the

commission to answer questions from all panel members, but only on condition he have Cheney at his side and they meet in private, with no recording of the session. They were not under oath.

The meeting took place in the very heart of presidential power, the Oval Office, rather than in a room that would have provided a traditional table-and-chair setting.

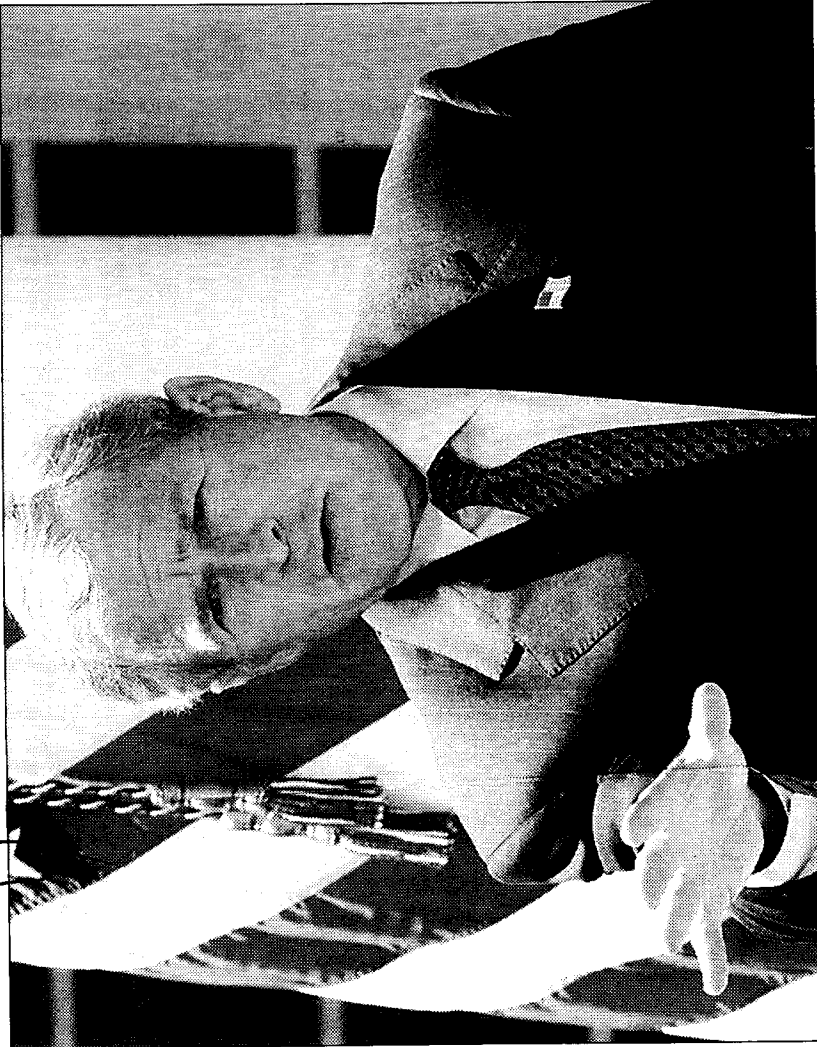
Bush and Cheney took up opposite seats in front of the fireplace, and commission members were clustered in the room on couches and chairs.

Bush was joined by White House legal counsel Alberto Gonzales and two other, unidentified White House lawyers who were there to take notes. The commission was allowed to bring one staffer for note-taking.

Past testimony has established that elements of the US intelligence apparatus were aware of threats to American targets from the militant al Qaeda network, led by Osama bin Laden, before the September 11, 2001, hijacking attacks.

Bush was braced for close questioning about his response to an August 6, 2001, presidential intelligence memo entitled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US." It said al Qaeda members were in the US and that the FBI had detected suspicious patterns of activity "consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks".

Bush was likely to be asked why he did not launch the government into battle stations based



George W. Bush speaks to reporters after meeting the 9/11 commission on Thursday. (Reuters)

on the memo, which he received while on vacation in Texas.

Bush has already said the memo's usefulness was limited because it did not point to a specific target and did not provide "actionable intelligence." He was unlikely to give any ground on that position.

"This is a good opportunity

for the President to sit down with members of the commission and talk to them about the seriousness with which we took the threat from al Qaeda, the steps we were taking to confront it, and how we have been responding to the attacks of September 11," White House spokesperson Scott McClellan

said after the meeting started. Bush's advisers were worried the commission's findings will be critical of the President, who is running for re-election in November, on his record of fighting terrorism.

The panel is working to complete its final report by July 26, well into the campaign season.

Washington, April 29 (Reuters): President George W. Bush's private session with the commission investigating the September 11 attacks was not televised, taped or transcribed.

But the secret proceedings still are providing US cartoonists and comedians with a rich source of material for satirical stabs at the Republican President.

In the US capital, *Washington Post* cartoonist Tom Toles recently depicted commission members asking, "Why do they have to testify together?" To which Cheney replied, "Do you want me to answer that or him?"

Another by Mike Luckovitch of *The Atlanta Constitution* showed Cheney dressed like the character "Dr. Evil" from the *Austin Powers* movies, with Bush as his tiny sidekick, "Mini Me."

Bush and Cheney only agreed to today's highly unusual interview on the grounds they would appear together and behind closed doors. That has only spurred on the lampoons, whose basic theme has been that Cheney will be supplying Bush with the answers.

Cartoonist Etta Hulme of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* showed the two driving in a car marked, "Cheney Q&A School" and a sign above it reading, "Student President."

The night before the two were to appear, *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* host took aim. "Tomorrow President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney are scheduled to testify before the 9/11 commission. Right now they're finalising the seating arrangements. Should Bush sit on Cheney's right knee or left knee?"

Another recent joke: "This week, President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney released their tax returns. Cheney made more money than the President. When asked about it, the President said, 'That's true, but he also made more decisions'."

Jokes breach shield

30 APR 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

✓ 10-10

EVENLY MATCHED

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THE RE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN of the United States President, George W. Bush, has regained momentum after appearing to lose steam. Mr. Bush has closed the gap with the Democratic challenger, John Kerry, that showed in opinion polls conducted earlier this year. This comeback will be particularly gratifying to the incumbent since it occurred after a fortnight in which the policies and record of the administration took a beating. Senior officials failed to convince a bipartisan commission enquiring into the traumatic events of September 11, 2001 that they had done all that was possible to prevent terrorist attacks. The situation in Iraq imploded over the same period with a broad-based national resistance movement taking on the might of the U.S.-led occupation forces. These developments combined to blunt Mr. Bush's claim that he alone could provide leadership of the quality required to steer the country through a time of trial. The surveys done before this period also indicated that a significant majority believed Mr. Kerry would be a better manager of the economy than the incumbent President. While the current trends indicate that public perceptions of the state of the economy will shape the electoral outcome, Mr. Bush has cut into his rival's lead. In addition, despite his recent troubles, he retains the edge he had over his Democratic opponent on issues of "national security."

This surge in Mr. Bush's fortunes might prove ephemeral, especially if the voters come to understand the import of his disastrous defence and foreign policies. Many Americans now realise that the invasion of Iraq had nothing to do with the reasons and justifications advanced. Intense investigations failed to unearth any weapons of mass destruction and the Bush administration cannot even claim that it effectuated a regime change when it has reinstated purged Ba'athists as officers in a quisling army. U.S. military families, a key constituent of the

Republican base, are already disturbed over the ever-mounting casualty rate among the troops and the repeated extensions of their tours of duty. As the electoral debate heats up after the summer recess, voters are likely to pay more attention to the Democratic argument that their safety will be imperilled if the Bush administration is allowed to persist with its West Asian policies. Washington's endorsement of an Israeli plan to annex large chunks of Palestinian territory has further intensified the anger and hatred that Arabs feel towards America on account of the large-scale killing of innocents in the military operations under way in Iraq. The bomb attacks that recently rocked some Arab capitals provided an indication that extremist groups were gathering strength.

A recently launched publicity blitz appears to have contributed significantly to the improvement in Mr. Bush's ratings. However, the Republican hope that the huge war chest at their disposal would help them deny advertisement space to their opponents was not borne out. The Kerry campaign raised much more money than it was expected to and has started to compete fiercely in the 18 States where both parties are evenly matched. Mr. Kerry, who struck a chord with voters disgruntled with the current administration's economic policies, has still not convinced his compatriots that he will provide strong leadership. The Massachusetts Senator made a start in this direction by making public the record of his service in the U.S. military during the Vietnam War. This record shows that his superiors considered him a decisive and competent officer. Mr. Bush is faced with a formidable challenge that will only get tougher if the Democratic candidate stakes out clear positions on issues that matter to America and the world. On the other hand, equivocation and slipperiness on such issues — two Kerry political traits, it appears — are likely to help Mr. Bush regain the initiative.

THE HINDU 28 APR 2004

Powell punch rocks Bush administration



Colin Powell
Spilling the beans?

Press Trust of India
New York, April 19

US SECRETARY of State Colin Powell's apparent decision to cooperate on a new book on the Iraq war has aggravated tension in the Bush Cabinet, a media report said on Monday. For more than a year, Powell and his aides have tacitly acknowledged that he was concerned before the war about what could go wrong once American forces captured Iraq.

But Powell's apparent decision to lay out his misgivings even more explicitly to journalist Bob Woodward for a book has jolted the White House and aggravated long-festering tensions in the Bush Cabinet, the report said. Moreover, some officials told the *New York*

Times the book has created problems for the Secretary inside the Administration just as the situation in Iraq is deteriorating and President Bush is plunging into his re-election drive. Powell, the paper said, has not acknowledged that he cooperated with Woodward, but the book presents the Secretary's reservations in such detail that it leaves little doubt.

Powell's spokesman said he would not comment on the book, *Plan of Attack*. Powell's critics the hawkish wing of the administration said they were startled by what they saw as his self-serving decision to help fill out a portrait that enhances his reputation as a farsighted analyst, perhaps at the expense of Bush.

Several told the *Times* that

TELETYPE GAME

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- Powell hasn't accepted that he cooperated with Woodward, but the book presents his reservations in such detail that it leaves little doubt
- Critics said they were startled by Powell's decision to help fill out a portrait that enhances his reputation as a farsighted analyst, perhaps at the expense of Bush
- The book, however, guarantees what critics expected: That Powell wouldn't stay as Secretary if Bush was re-elected
- Democrats say the book would give them ammunition to criticise the administration for going to war without broad international backing or adequate planning for an occupation

the book guaranteed what they expected, anyway, that Powell would not stay as Secretary if Bush was re-elected. That Bush comes across as sober-minded and res-

immediate difficulties that might grow from seeming to betray his confidential relationship to a President who prizes loyalty, the paper quoted several officials as saying.

"Look, a lot of people have been struck by the degree to which Powell is using this book as an opportunity, to be fair, to clarify his position on the issues," said an Administration official. "But what this book does is muddy the water internally, which is very unfortunate."

Another official accused Powell of having a habit of distancing himself from policies when they went wrong, the report said. "It's such a soap opera with him", this official said.

Democrats, the paper said, seized on Powell's portrayal, saying it would give them

ammunition to criticise the administration for going to war without broad international backing or adequate planning for an occupation.

Throughout Sunday, Senator John Kerry brought up the Woodward book, mentioning it twice in his interview on *Meet the Press* and once at an outdoor rally at the University of Miami. "Here, we have a book by a reputable writer", Kerry told several thousand students. "We learn the President even misled members of his own administration".

Asked if Woodward's book would be grist for his party, Jano Cabrera, Democratic National Committee spokesman, said, "Absolutely. It's one thing for us to assert it, it's another thing for it to be stated by Powell".



George W. Bush
Tension time

Ashcroft blames Clinton govt for 9/11 attacks

Press Trust of India

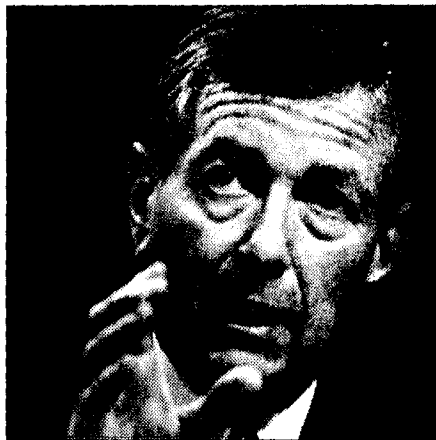
WASHINGTON, April 14. — Testifying before an official inquiry into the 9/11 Al Qaeda strikes on the USA, Attorney General John D Ashcroft laid the blame for the attacks on the Clinton administration and denied accusations that he had not made fighting terrorism a priority.

In his opening statement before the commission yesterday, Mr Ashcroft claimed the Bush administration's tough response to Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network has made the USA safer and that there was no order for American agents during Clinton's tenure to kill Osama bin Laden.

He said the fault lay with the Clinton administration which left office in January 2001. "The simple fact of September 11 is this, we did not know an attack was coming because for nearly a decade, our government had blinded itself to its enemies... the old national intelligence system in place on September 11 was destined to fail."

"My thorough review revealed no covert action programme to kill bin Laden," he said, adding even the order to capture the chief of the terror network "was crippled by a snarled web of requirements, restrictions and regulations that prevented decisive action by our men and women in the field." "Even if they could have penetrated bin Laden's training camps they would have needed a battery of attorneys to approve the capture," he told the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States.

Mr Ashcroft also denied accusations



Mr Ashcroft testifies before the independent commission investigating the 9/11 attacks. — AFP made in a preliminary report by the commission that he had not made fighting terrorism a priority.

Panel blasts US intelligence

A diffusely organised intelligence community, with functions spread among several agencies but overseen by none, hampered the flow of information that might have uncovered the September 11 terrorist plot, an independent inquiry determined, adds AFP. "The community lacked a common information architecture that would help ensure the integration of counterterrorism data," read the report by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. CIA director George Tenet told the official inquiry into the September 11 attacks that US intelligence agencies had "made mistakes" before the devastating strikes, adds another report.

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RICE FAILS TO CONVINC

10-10

AN ATTEMPT BY the United States President, George W. Bush, to prove that his administration could not have prevented the terrorist strikes of September 11, 2001 has flopped, with uncertain political repercussions. The President's National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, was set the task of convincing a commission of enquiry that the administration did not have the information that would have enabled it to pre-empt the perpetrators. She told the commission that structural weaknesses, especially the communication gap between the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, had blocked the generation of data that could have been acted upon. Dr. Rice presented her case with vigour, withstood tough cross examination by members of the bipartisan panel, and was not tricked into making damaging disclosures. However, her arguments could not erase the impression that Mr. Bush and senior officials in charge of national security affairs were insufficiently alert to the threat from Al-Qaeda before 9/11. Some members of the panel were of the opinion that the intelligence-gathering agencies would have pursued stray clues more urgently if they knew that the higher echelons of the administration were taking a keen interest. The administration of President Bill Clinton could overcome the structural weaknesses and foil a terrorist attack during the millennium celebrations precisely because all agencies were kept on high alert.

Dr. Rice did not have a credible answer to the charge that the administration had not paid sufficient heed to repeated alarms about an imminent terrorist attack raised throughout the summer of 2001. While she downplayed the significance of a note prepared for the presidential daily brief of August 6, a member of the commission remarked that the title and contents of this document suggested otherwise. This document, declassified after Dr. Rice gave her testimony,

was titled "Bin Laden Determined to Attack Inside the U.S." It indicated that terrorists had carried out surveillance of government buildings and that they might try to hijack aircraft. Dr. Rice insisted that the briefing note did not clarify that aircraft would be used as missiles. The American public has now been provided the opportunity to form its own judgment on the significance of the document. In splitting hairs over this and other aspects of her testimony, Dr. Rice sought to demonstrate that the Bush administration was as much aware of the looming menace as it could possibly be. However, the record of public statements by senior officials shows that none of them accorded high priority to combating terrorism until it struck calamitously in New York and Washington.

Dr. Rice suggested that the Bush administration had done a better job than its predecessor in both revamping the intelligence-gathering apparatus and drawing up a counter-terrorism strategy. However, the facts belie such an assessment. A panel appointed by the Clinton administration recommended measures for more effective coordination among various intelligence services of the Government. While the panel submitted its report just before Mr. Bush entered office, he apparently did not order the implementation of these measures until the institutional flaws were exposed by the events of 9/11. Similarly, the officials of the Clinton administration responsible for national security and foreign policy proposed a series of diplomatic, financial and military measures to be used against terrorist organisations and governments that supported them. Mr. Bush and his officials disregarded these recommendations for seven and a half months on account of their contempt for the Clinton administration's record on security affairs and also because of their obsession with other objectives such as missile defence and the invasion of Iraq.

THE HINDU 13 APR 2001

Bush was warned of attack before 9/11

ERIC LICHTBLAU AND
DAVID E. SANGER

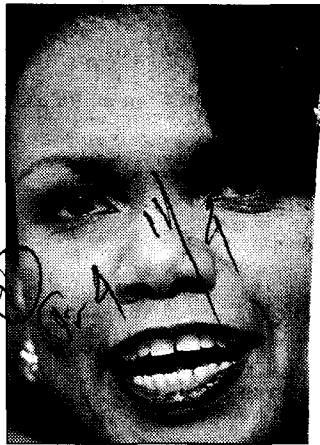
Washington, April 10: President Bush was told more than a month before the attacks of September 11, 2001, that supporters of Osama bin Laden planned an attack within the US with explosives and wanted to hijack airplanes, a government official said yesterday.

The warning came in a secret briefing that Bush received at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, on August 6, 2001. A report by a joint congressional committee last year alluded to a "closely held intelligence report" that month about the threat of an attack by al Qaida, and the official confirmed an account by the Associated Press yesterday saying that the report was in fact part of the President's briefing in Crawford.

The disclosure appears to contradict the White House's repeated assertions that the briefing the President received about the Qaida threat was "historical" in nature and that the White House had little reason to suspect a Qaida attack within American borders.

Members of the independent commission investigating the September 11 attacks have asked the White House to make the August 6 briefing memo public. The Associated Press account of it was attributed to "several people who have seen the memo." The White House has said nothing in it pointed specifically to the kind of attacks that actually took place a month later.

The congressional report last year, citing efforts by al Qaida operatives beginning in 1997 to attack American soil, said operatives appeared to



Condoleezza Rice

have a support structure in the US and that intelligence officials had "uncorroborated information" that bin Laden "wanted to hijack airplanes" to gain the release of imprisoned extremists. It also said that "a group of bin Laden supporters was planning attacks in the US with explosives."

Also yesterday, the White House offered evidence that the FBI received instructions more than two months before the September 11, 2001, attacks to increase its scrutiny of terrorist suspects inside the US. But it is unclear what action, if any, the bureau took in response.

A classified memorandum, sent around July 4, 2001, to Condoleezza Rice, the President's national security adviser, from the counterterrorism group run by Richard A. Clarke, described a series of steps it said the White House had taken to put the nation on heightened terrorist alert. Among the steps, the memo said, "all 56 FBI field offices were also tasked in late June to go to increased surveillance and contact with informants related to known or suspected terrorists in the US."

Portions of the White House memorandum were provided to *The New York Times* yesterday by a White House official seeking to bolster the public account provided a day before by Rice, who portrayed an administration aggressively working to deter a domestic terror attack.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Rice and Clarke: Same facts, different conclusions

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, April 9. — From the same sets of facts, National Security Adviser Ms Condoleezza Rice and former counter-terrorism chief Mr Richard Clarke have offered the 9/11 probe commission conflicting conclusions.

Mr Rice avoided directly criticising Mr Clarke during her appearance yesterday before the panel. However, Ms Rice rebutted many of the conclusions

drawn by Mr Clarke during his time in the witness chair several weeks ago.

A look at how the two presidential aides' testimonies differed: Whether the Bush administration saw Al-Qaida as a threat:

■ Mr Clarke: "My impression was that fighting terrorism in general, and fighting the Al-Qaida in particular, were an extraordinarily high priority in the Clinton administration, certainly no higher a priority. I believe the



Ms Condoleezza Rice

Bush administration in the first eight months considered terrorism an important issue but not an urgent issue... Mr George Tenet (CIA



Mr Richard Clarke

director) and I tried very hard to create a sense of urgency by seeing to it that intelligence reports on the Al-Qaida threat were frequently given to

While Mr Clarke alleged that Mr Bush didn't address the Al-Qaida issue 'urgently', Ms Rice rebutted that President Bush was well aware of the threat posed by the terror outfit

■ Ms Rice: "Because we had watched the rise of the Al-Qaida over many years, we understood that the network posed a serious threat to the USA. We wanted to ensure that there was no respite in the fight against the Al-Qaida. We moved to develop a new strategy to try and eliminate the Al-Qaida. President Bush understood the threat and its importance. He made it clear that he did not want to respond to Al-Qaida one attack at a time."

গোয়েন্দা-ব্যর্থতাতেই ৯/১১: রাইস

সীমা সিরোহি • ওয়াশিংটন

৮ এপ্রিল: জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা কন্ডোলিজা রাইস কার্যত স্বীকার করে নিয়েছেন যে সিআইএ ও এফবিআইয়ের মধ্যে তথ্য আদানপ্রদান সঠিক ভাবে না-হওয়ার ফলেই সেপ্টেম্বর এগারোর বীভৎস হামলা সম্ভব হয়েছিল। ওই ঘটনার তদন্তের ভারপ্রাপ্ত বিশেষ কমিশনের কাছে রাইস আরও জানান, সন্ত্রাসবাদ বিরোধী অভিযানের পাশাপাশি আফগানিস্তান ও পাকিস্তানের জন্য উপযুক্ত আঞ্চলিক নীতি গ্রহণ করাই ছিল বৃশ প্রশাসনের সামনে সব চেয়ে বড় চ্যালেঞ্জ। সে জন্য বৃশ ক্ষমতায় এসেই পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট জেনারেল পারভেজ মুশারফকে কড়া ভাবে জানিয়ে দেন, তালিবান প্রশাসনকে মদত দেওয়া বন্ধ করতে হবে এবং জঙ্গি শিবিরগুলি ধ্বংস করে ফেলতে হবে।

একটি বিবৃতিতে রাইস জানিয়েছেন, “আমি নিজে ২০০১ সালের জুলাই মাসে পাকিস্তানের বিদেশ মন্ত্রিকে খুব কড়া ভাবে সে কথা জানাই। কিন্তু, তাঁদের কাছ থেকে কোনও সদুত্তর পাইনি।” রাইস স্বীকার করেছেন, “আল কায়দার বিরুদ্ধে আমরা কোনও ব্যবস্থা নিতে পারছিলাম না তার কারণ আফগানিস্তান বিষয়ে আমাদের কার্যকর নীতি ছিল না। আর তা না-থাকার কারণ হল পাকিস্তান সম্পর্কে আমাদের পরিকল্পনা সঠিক ছিল না।” তিনি আরও জানিয়েছেন, “এর পরই আমরা পাকিস্তানকে প্রয়োজন মতো সাহায্য করে

ও কড়কে দিয়ে তাদের তালিবান নীতিতে পরিবর্তন আনার চেষ্টা করি। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে আমরা ভারতের বিষয়েও নতুন করে চিন্তা ভাবনা করতে শুরু করি। উপমহাদেশে ভারসাম্য বজায় রাখার জন্য তা প্রয়োজন হয়ে পড়েছিল।”

বৃশ প্রশাসন সন্ত্রাসবাদ রোধ করার থেকে ইরাক আক্রমণ করতেই বেশি আগ্রহী ছিল, এ অভিযোগও খণ্ডন করার চেষ্টা করেছেন রাইস। সন্ত্রাসবাদ বিরোধী লড়াইয়ে মার্কিন প্রধান রিচার্ড ব্লার্ক গত মাসে কমিশনের কাছে অভিযোগ করেছিলেন, এ লড়াইকে বৃশ প্রশাসন ক্রিস্টন প্রশাসনের মতো গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছে না। ইরাক আক্রমণই তাদের কাছে প্রাধান্য পেয়েছে। মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশের নির্বাচনী প্রচারের একটি প্রধান অঙ্গ হল তাঁর সন্ত্রাসবিরোধী কর্মসূচি। ব্লার্কের এ অভিযোগে তা বড় ধাক্কা খেয়েছে। প্রতিবাদে ব্লার্ক পদত্যাগ করায় অভিযোগটিও নতুন মাত্রা পেয়েছে। তবে, রাইস এই অভিযোগও উড়িয়ে দিয়েছেন। তিনি জানান, “বিস্মিন্ন ভাবে আল কায়দার আক্রমণের জবাব দিতে বৃশ চাননি। সে কথা তিনি আমাকে জানিয়ে ছিলেন।”

রাইস জানান, “এক জন ভারপ্রাপ্ত অফিসার হিসাবে আমি সে দিন যে রাগ ও দুঃখ অনুভব করেছিলাম তা ভুলতে পারব না।” সেপ্টেম্বর এগারোর ঘটনা ঠেকাতে না-পারার জন্য যদিও আদৌ ক্ষমাপ্রার্থী নন রাইস। সম্প্রতি ব্লার্ক তাঁর বয়ানে ক্ষমা চেয়েছিলেন।

শপথ দিয়ে রাইস যে স্বীকারোক্তি দেন তা জাতীয় টেলিভিশনে সরাসরি সম্প্রচার করা হয়। এ বিষয়ে যদিও হোয়াইট হাউসের প্রবল আপত্তি ছিল। কিন্তু, জনগণের আবেদনে শেষ পর্যন্ত সাড়া দিলেন বৃশ। কমিশনের সদস্যরা তাঁকে অনুরোধ করেছিলেন। রিপাবলিকানরাও ভিতরে ভিতরে তাঁর উপর যথেষ্ট চাপ সৃষ্টি করেছিলেন। তাঁরা চাইছিলেন ব্লার্কের মারাত্মক অভিযোগের একটা যোগ্য জবাব জন সমক্ষে দেওয়া হোক। কমিশনের সদস্যরা যখন তাঁকে প্রশ্নে প্রশ্নে জর্জরিত করে তুলছিলেন তখন রাইসের খুব একটা ধৈর্যচ্যুতি হতে দেখা যায়নি। তবে, ডেমোক্রেট সদস্য রিচার্ড বেন-ভেনিস্তের একটি প্রশ্নে রাইস অস্থিত্তিতে পড়েন। রিচার্ড জিজ্ঞাসা করেছিলেন, সেপ্টেম্বর এগারোর হামলার ঠিক কী ধরনের আঁচ সরকার পেয়েছিল? এই সময় রিচার্ড ও রাইস বারবার পরস্পরকে মাঝপথে থামিয়ে দিচ্ছিলেন।

রাইস স্বীকার করেন, হামলার পদ্ধতিটি কেউ কেনও ভাবেই আঁচ করতে পারেননি বলে তিনি যে মন্তব্য করেছিলেন তা সম্পূর্ণ ঠিক নয়। কিছু খবর ছিল। তবে, তিনি তা জানতেন না। সিআইএ ও এফবিআই-এর দিকে অভিযোগের আঙুল তুলে তিনি বলেন, “এক জন অফিসারকে তো গোয়েন্দা সংস্থাগুলির সরবরাহ করা তথ্যের ভিত্তিতে কাজ করতে হয়। তাদেরই প্রাসঙ্গিক তথ্য আগে জানানো উচিত ছিল।”

9/11: Rice defence to be unapologetic

DAVID MORGAN

WASHINGTON, APRIL 8

CONDOLLEEZZA Rice will present an unapologetic defence of President George W. Bush before the 9-11 Commission on Thursday in the highest profile national security testimony since the Iran-Contra affair nearly two decades ago, officials and analysts said.

All three major US TV networks planned the unusual step of preempting daytime programming to broadcast the national security adviser's sworn public testimony on how the Bush White House weighed the threat of Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network before the September 11, 2001, attacks.

The moment could hardly be more dramatic: right in the midst of a bitterly contested presidential campaign in which some of Bush's critics are beginning to draw parallels between Iraq and Vietnam, and with headlines dominated by a urge of bloody anti-American violence in Iraq.

Rice's 2-1/2 hours in the spotlight responds to damaging testimony by former White House counter-terrorism Chief Richard Clarke, who told the panel Bush ignored warnings about Al Qaeda before the attacks and focused mistakenly on Iraq afterward. "She will make a strong case that we probably did not appreciate the threat was as serious as it was but it certainly was high on the administration's agenda," said Republican Sen. John

McCain of Arizona. Senior Bush administration officials said Rice would not rebut Clarke point-by-point in her sweeping review, however. They also said they expected her to sympathise with 9/11 victims but stop short of emulating the widely publicised apology Clarke offered for government failings leading up to the attacks.

"The people that ought to apologise for that are the people who attacked us," said an official. Republicans with ties to the White House believe Rice's appearance will quell the controversy that has threatened Bush's campaign image as an effective leader in the US war on terrorism.

Some see it as a possible audition for a possible Cabinet level job for Rice, given Secretary of State Colin Powell's anticipated departure from a second Bush administration. The stakes are high for Bush, who had opposed creation of the Commission and resisted calls for public testimony by Rice until public and political pressures grew too strong. "This is not what the White House expected the American public to be concentrating on in an election year," said Thomas Blanton, director of the National Security Archive at George Washington University. The charged political atmosphere overhanging Rice's appearance has also spawned concern that the Commission of five Democrats and five Republicans could see their proceedings give way to election year partisanship. —Reuters

Powell admits evidence may be wrong

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, APRIL 3. In remarks that could be further damaging to the Bush administration, the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has conceded that the evidence he presented to the United Nations Security Council last February of two trailers in Iraq being used for weapons of mass destruction may be wrong.

Briefing the media on his flight back from Brussels, Gen. Powell said that at the time he had been given solid information on the two trailers being used to make biological weapons. Now, according to him, "it appears not to be the case that it was that solid."

Gen. Powell has said that at the time of his presentation to the United Nations there were assurances from the intelligence community that the information on the mobile laboratories was solid and multi-sourced, the intelligence assessment based on four sources.

"I looked at the four elements they gave me for that one and they stood behind them. Now, it appears not to be the case that it



Colin Powell

was that solid," he remarked, adding that the Presidential Commission should probe the subject and see if there was a 'basis' for the confidence that was placed on intelligence at the time.

"If the sources fall apart, we need to find out how we got ourselves into that position and I have had discussions with the CIA about that," Gen. Powell said. The Presidential Commission headed by a retired federal judge, Lawrence Silberman, and the former Senator, Charles

Robb, will be presenting its report in the spring of 2005, or much after the November presidential election.

The comments of Gen. Powell are the first acknowledged by the administration that the presentation in New York last February was based in part on erroneous information. Even last year, there were persistent questions about the quality of the intelligence material being presented by Gen. Powell, but the Bush administration insisted that it had made the 'case' against Iraq in a comprehensive manner.

Bremer hands over second Ministry

BAGHDAD, APRIL 3. The U.S. administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, turned over control of Iraq's Education Ministry to interim Iraqi leaders today as part of plans by the U.S.-led coalition to restore national sovereignty by June 30.

The Ministry became the second Government department to gain its independence from the Coalition Provisional Authority. On March 28, Mr. Bremer gave the interim Health Minister, Khidir Abbas, the key to his Ministry, one of the 25 that will make up the transitional Iraqi Government set to take power in less than three months.

Meanwhile, gunmen fired on a vehicle carrying a town's police chief south of Baghdad today, killing both him and his driver, police said. A separate attack on the police nearby left another two people dead. The shooting occurred as Col. Wisam Hussein, police chief of Mahmoudiya town, 30 km south of Baghdad, was returning home from a trip to the capital. Later in the day, six unidentified assailants attacked a police patrol in the town, killing one officer and wounding three others, one seriously. — AP

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DAMAGING DISCLOSURES

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THE HEARINGS BEFORE a bipartisan commission that is trying to determine whether the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 could have been prevented are turning awkward for United States President George W. Bush during his re-election campaign. Interim reports by the commission's staff and testimony from officials show that the Bush administration did not possess information that could have led to the interdiction of the perpetrators before they hijacked the aircraft that they later crashed into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. However, the enquiry does indicate that such information might have been picked up if the systemic weaknesses, especially the lack of communication between departments of the government, had been addressed. Mr. Bush cannot take comfort from testimony that the administration of his predecessor, Bill Clinton, was as much at fault for these lapses. The Clinton administration at least gave a high priority to its counter-terror campaign. In contrast, Mr. Bush and his officials wasted time and energy in examining whether they should switch to an approach different from that followed by the previous administration in dealing with the threat from the Al-Qaeda-Taliban combine. The policies implemented after the events of 9-11 were on the lines that the Clinton team had drawn but could not act upon mainly because of the reluctance of the U.S. military and the lack of support from the international community. Mr. Bush cannot really claim that his decisive leadership made the material difference to the war against terror when the record suggests that America's armed forces and its allies were brought round by the shock and horror produced by the outrageous attacks more than anything else.

Mr. Bush's problems were compounded by the allegation levelled by a former head of the National Security Council's counter-terrorism

group, Richard Clarke, that the administration did not heed officials who repeatedly raised alarms about an imminent attack because it was otherwise preoccupied. In testifying before the commission, Mr. Clarke reiterated the charge he made in a book and in media interviews that Mr. Bush and senior officials were so obsessed with their animosity towards Iraq that they overlooked threats from other quarters. Other members of the counter-terrorism group backed their former chief's claim that the President had, post-9-11, prodded them to submit a report that the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein had instigated the attacks. The administration could not also dismiss out of hand the expert assessment that it had not only weakened the efforts to curb terrorism but had also spawned more extremism by waging a needless war against Iraq. While the Bush administration and campaign team tried to discredit Mr. Clarke, he was not the first dissident to accuse the President and senior officials of pursuing the 'Iraqi bogey' even as they ignored real threats.

The commission's proceedings and the Clarke allegations could deprive Mr. Bush of an advantage he might have otherwise enjoyed in the presidential race this year. Having projected his leadership in the war against terror as the main theme of his re-election campaign, Mr. Bush will now be forced to explain the lapses brought to light. The evidence overall suggests that Mr. Bush did not perform significantly better in the period before 9-11 than his predecessor who was portrayed by the Republicans as being weak on matters of security. The Democratic challenger, John F. Kerry — a leader with an impressive record as a soldier, who turned against the Vietnam war — will also be able to argue that any President would have taken strong action against Al-Qaeda given the national mood after the terrorist strikes.

THE HINDU | 3 APR 2004

Missiles terrorised Bush govt more than terror

Press Trust of India



WASHINGTON, April 1. — US National Security Advisor Ms Condoleezza Rice, who is to testify to a panel reviewing the 9/11 attacks, was to deliver a speech on the ill-fated day focussing on the threat of long-range missiles and mentioning terrorism as only one of the dangers from rogue nations rather than from terrorist groups.

Ms Rice was to give a speech designed to promote missile defence as the cornerstone of a new national strategy and contained no mention of the Al-Qaida or other terrorist groups, a daily said quoting

US National Security Advisor Ms Condoleezza Rice

Philippines, Pakistan join hands

MANILA, April 1. — The Philippines and Pakistan have agreed to strengthen cooperation in counter-terrorism intelligence, the department of foreign affairs here said today after talks between the two countries.

Philippine foreign undersecretary Ms Sonia Brady said in a statement that she and Pakistani foreign affairs secretary Mr Rizal Khokhar "agreed on the need to rejuvenate the relations between our two countries and to encourage Pakistan's closer engagement with Asean". She said: "South Asia and Southeast Asia must coordinate our counter-terrorism efforts because of the transnational networks of terrorists that straddle our two regions." — AFP

ing former US officials who worry about the suitcase bomb, the car bomb and the

It also criticised the former Clinton administration for not doing enough about the real threat of long-range missiles, the *Washington Post* reported. The text said: "We need to open?"

The White House did confirm the accuracy of the excerpts given to the daily.

The speech was postponed in the chaos of the day, part of which Ms Rice spent in a bunker, the paper said.

The daily also reviewed the major public pronouncements in the first eight months of 2001 and found relatively few statements by Mr Bush, Vice-President Mr Dick Cheney or Ms Rice about the Al-Qaida or other terrorist groups.

In his first address to Congress on 27 February 2001, Mr Bush acknowledged the danger of bomb-wielding terrorists but also promoted missile defence as the priority in protecting the USA.

Tamil rebels likely to emerge kingmakers

Press Trust of India

COLOMBO, April 1. — Sri Lanka going to polls tomorrow is likely to return a hung parliament to the detriment of an already faltering peace process and see the emergence of the LTTE as the king-makers, poll analysts here said.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga called for elections, the third in four years, after she disagreed with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe over his managing the peace process with the LTTE backed by Norwegians.

Though the LTTE is not in

the running, it had fielded proxies in the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). They could even emerge as kingmakers with experts predicting a hung parliament.

Most opinion polls have placed Ms Kumaratunga's Freedom Alliance and Mr Wickremesinghe's United National Party neck-to-neck and expected to garner about 100 seats each. But neither is expected to cross the magic number of 113 required to have a simple majority in the 225-member assembly.

The LTTE proxies with their 15 to 18 seats could tip the scales.

"The biggest danger of this election is that the Tigers will get political power without a political settlement to the

Though the LTTE is not in the running, it has fielded proxies in the Tamil National Alliance... The rebels could even emerge as kingmakers with experts predicting a hung parliament

country's drawn out ethnic problem," an Asian diplomat said.

Sri Lanka's Buddhist cler-

gy entered the fray mainly to take away the LTTE's kingmaker status, but the monks with about three to four seats are not expected to make a big impact although they are expected to attract a lot of the protest vote. India has been pressing Ms Kumaratunga and Mr Wickremesinghe to salvage their cohabitation arrangement and work together without risking the peace efforts.

However, the President's alliance with the Marxist JVP has raised doubts about a coherent policy towards the peace process. While she is committed to devolving polit-

ical power to minorities in exchange for ethnic peace, the JVP is only interested in decentralisation of the administration.

The JVP's leader Mr Somawansa Amarasinghe said they were totally against "federalism" as a solution although Ms Kumaratunga and Mr Wickremesinghe have agreed on such a formula to solve the long running conflict. The economic policies of the alliance are also contradictory. While Ms Kumaratunga favours privatisation, the JVP is against any form of sellout of state enterprises.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES 1 APR 2004

9/11 panel to question Rice publicly

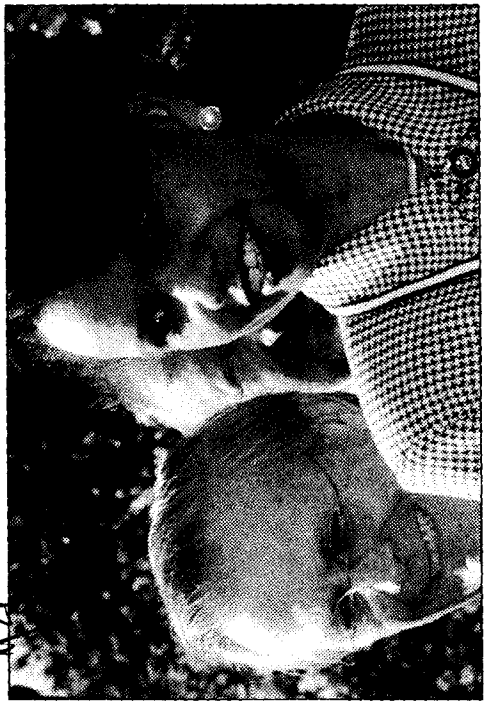
Associated Press
Washington, March 31

WHEN SHE testifies publicly before the September 11 commission, Condoleezza Rice will be making an election-year defence of the Bush administration's anti-terrorism policy prior to the 2001 attacks.

"We want to understand the nature of the decision-making in the highest levels of government," commission chairman Thomas Kean said after the White House reversed course Tuesday and agreed to let Rice testify publicly.

Presented with differing accounts of how the government approached terrorism pre-September 11, the commission will be exploring in the midst of a presidential campaign who is more believable, the Bush administration or its critics.

Administration officials said it was likely that Rice's appearance would come at the end of next week. Bush's former count-



AP
US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice with Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (left) at the White House on Tuesday.

er-terrorism chief, Richard Clarke, contends the president had been slow to act against al-Qaida before the attacks.

Turning aggressively public, Rice fired back in a series of interviews such as the one on Sunday in which she declared, "I don't know what a sense of urgency — any greater than the one that we had — would have caused us to do differently."

Commission asks Clinton for records

FEDERAL COMMISSIONERS investigating the 2001 terrorist attacks have been poring over some 6,000 documents from former President Bill Clinton's presidential archive.

Archivists for Clinton's presidential library spent three months gathering papers requested by the commission and recently finished sending the information to Washington, said David Alsobrook, director of materials collection.

"Part of our job is to provide access to presidential records for special commissions, to American attorneys and Congress. All of these fall under the category of special access requests," said Alsobrook, a former archivist for former Presidents Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush.

AP, Little Rock

9/11 panel chief sees 'systematic failure' in dealing with threats

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON MARCH 25. The Chairman of the National Commission looking into the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, and the terror threat perceptions prior to that day, has taken the position that there has been a "systematic failure" and that neither the Bush nor the Clinton administration had a "systematic approach" to dealing with terrorist threats.

"There was poor communication between law enforcement and intelligence and there was poor communication within the FBI", Thomas Kean remarked at a press briefing, pointing to what the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, George Tenet, said: "We raced from threat to threat to threat."

The assessment of Mr. Kean, a Republican, was straightforward: "There was not a system in place to close the seams. We did not develop a systematic approach".

For his part, the Democratic Co-Chair, Lee Hamilton, said the bi-partisan panel had learned a number of things from the two days of high profile hearings on Capitol Hill that saw several prominent personalities of the current and past administrations testify under oath. Among the things that the Commission 'learned', Mr. Hamilton listed the reluctance of policy makers to use force; senior officials wanting to use force only when intelligence was good enough and actionable; and that the "clarity of a single policy choice for Pakistan — you are with us or against us in the war against terrorism — did not emerge until after 9/11."

One of the things stressed by Mr. Hamilton was that the departments of State and Defence in the Bush and Clinton administrations took many actions to address terrorism; but that the Commission is also "left with the impression that the national security priorities of both administrations were to a large extent focussed elsewhere."

On Wednesday, the Commission heard from Richard Clarke,

the counter-terrorism czar, whose service included the Clinton and the Bush administrations. Mr. Clarke set off an uproar last week in the political establishment when he publicly took the position that this Republican administration had not done enough to address the issue of terrorism in the first months after it took office in January 2001. Mr. Clarke asserted that in the aftermath of 9/11, senior Cabinet officials were desperately looking for Iraq and Saddam Hussein connections even as everything pointed to the Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden.

Mr. Clarke told the panel that the Bush administration toned down the intensity on the Al-Qaeda and even rejected suggestions of retaliation for the bombing of the USS Cole, saying that the incident happened "on the Clinton administration's watch". The top counter-terrorism official maintained that the Clinton administration had "no higher priority" than taking on terrorists; but that the Bush administration, while keeping it as an "important issue", had not made it into an "urgent issue".

The White House, which has been leading the attack on Mr. Clarke over the last few days, kept up the pace yesterday as well with senior officials taking the unusual step of saying that it was Mr. Clarke who had showered praise on the anti-terrorism efforts of President, George W. Bush, in an anonymous briefing for the media one year after the attacks. "He needs to get his story straight", remarked the President's National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice.

One of the things that Mr. Clarke told panel members was that early on in the Bush administration, he had tried to impress upon officials the need for a policy of eliminating the Al-Qaeda only to be told that this was overly ambitious and that the language should be "significantly erode". But after the attacks of 9/11 "we were to go back to my language of eliminate, rather than significantly erode", Mr. Clarke said.

THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2004

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A NON-EXISTENT LINKAGE

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A UNITED STATES Secretary of State can be expected to be more diplomatic than a U.S. Trade Representative, one of whom in the 1980s quite infamously said that she would wield a crowbar to pry open export markets. So it is not surprising that Colin L. Powell was careful with his words when speaking in New Delhi about the controversial subject of business process outsourcing (BPO). Where the USTR, Robert E. Zoellick, said last month during his visit that trade between the two countries was "a two-way street," Mr. Powell has denied that there is any *quid pro quo* between the U.S. keeping offshore contracts free from controls, and India opening its market further to imports. However, shorn of the niceties of language, the message from both senior officials of the Bush administration has been the same: If India bought more U.S. products, the administration would find it easier to sell the concept of outsourcing to the electorate, as new jobs would be created in export-oriented manufacture and services. Comments from the White House on Mr. Powell's visit, that Washington is focussed on opening the Indian market, confirm that the two issues are not unrelated.

The current Republican administration has sought to finesse its position after BPO became an election issue. There is no unqualified defence, as there was earlier, of the right of companies to outsource some of their activities to foreign suppliers, nor is there a move to impose restrictions, as demanded by John Kerry, the presumptive presidential candidate of the Democratic Party. The strategy is instead to argue that placing curbs on outsourcing would be counter-productive for the domestic economy and, at the same time, to stress government efforts at expanding foreign markets. The Secretary of State's remarks in India are consistent

with this position. However, there are two fundamental problems with the linkage between outsourcing and more open markets that is an integral part of this strategy. First, India and the U.S. have been engaged, bilaterally and at the World Trade Organisation, in negotiations about how to lower existing barriers to trade in goods and services. On the other hand, the BPO issue is one where new barriers are being erected. It is indefensible to demand that India lower its customs duties in return for Washington abstaining from introducing fresh controls, where until recently there were none, on BPO contracts.

The second problem with the 'two-way-street' approach is that if Indian regulations on imports are to be brought into the picture, so too must U.S. controls on a number of industrial and agricultural products. The average import tariff may be just a fraction of India's, but averages are, as so often, misleading in this case. It is well-known that U.S. regulations are the most stringent on products where the developing countries have a competitive advantage. There is the over-arching issue of farm subsidies where the level of protection to domestic agriculture gives the lie to claims that it is the country with one of the most open trade regimes in the world. High average duties, widespread prevalence of customs duty peaks and an extreme degree of tariff escalation (higher duties on finished products) are common on imports of textiles, leather and other labour-intensive manufactured products that are of interest to India. In addition, the U.S. is expanding the scope of regulations. One recent example is the proposal to impose anti-dumping duties on shrimps, a move which has already had an adverse impact on aquaculture farmers in India and other developing countries.

SATURDAY, MARCH 6, 2004

THE KERRY JUGGERNAUT

UNITED STATES PRESIDENT George W. Bush is likely to face a tough re-election campaign with Senator John F. Kerry effectively wrapping up the Democratic party's nomination much earlier than expected. Although Democratic primaries are yet to be held in over 20 States and two other contestants, Al Sharpton and Dennis Kucinich, remain nominally in the fray, the intra-party competition is over for all practical purposes. The only other serious contender, John Edwards, withdrew after he failed to win in any of the 10 States where primaries or caucuses were held on "Super Tuesday," March 2. Mr. Kerry won in nine, including States such as California, New York and Ohio that will send large numbers of delegates to the party convention in July and are also likely to be pivotal in the November 2004 presidential election. While State-wise results show that Mr. Kerry's appeal cuts across geographical regions, data from exit polls indicate that he attracts support from diverse segments of American society. The Democratic primaries were also relatively free of acrimony. All this should ensure that the party will line up firmly behind its nominee and provide him with the organisational strength to rally the faithful who are already energised and determined to oust Mr. Bush from the White House.

Mr. Kerry is superbly placed to shift the focus of his political activities from the primaries to the presidential campaign. While he did not altogether ignore his Democratic rivals after emerging as the front-runner at the end of the first phase of primaries, he has targeted Mr. Bush throughout. However, the Massachusetts Senator did blur his position on key issues as he tried to outflank rivals from the liberal wing of the party. He will now need to redefine his message in order to attract independent-minded voters who hold the balance in an electorate that is

more or less equally divided between the two parties. The swift culmination of the nomination process has also created a special problem. With the issue already settled, the public might lose interest in the Democratic campaign and its nominee will have to work hard to be in the limelight with a competitor who holds the most powerful office in the land. Mr. Kerry can utilise the remaining party primaries to put out the message that he will provide a markedly different policy orientation and governing style.

The Democrats know their opponents will run a very negative campaign. Mr. Bush has tried to show that he prefers to remain above the fray, but he has not restrained surrogates who have a taste for dirty fighting. With the Kerry campaign warning that it will give as good as it gets, this year's presidential election is likely to be acrimoniously contested. However, the Democrats will do themselves a favour if they keep the debate focussed on issues rather than personalities. They appear to have struck a chord with a large section of the electorate that is alarmed by the Bush administration's disastrous Iraq policy, disgruntled with its pro-rich economic programme, and disturbed by its divisive agenda on social issues. The man this potential majority can turn towards has built up formidable expertise in the fields of foreign policy and national security during the course of a Congressional career spanning close to two decades. That should enable the challenger to take on an opponent who has crafted his campaign around the theme that he is a "War President". With the Democrats sharpening their critique of the Republican approach to economic, social and international affairs, the American public can look forward at the least to a serious contest on issues that matter and, if Mr. Kerry continues to be in flow, to a far-going political change.

THE HINDU

MAR 2004

Bush campaign accused of exploiting 9/11 images

The Times, London 6/3

WASHINGTON, March 5. — Relatives of those killed in the September 11 terrorist attacks and New York firefighters have reacted with anger to the broadcast of the first Bush re-election campaign advertisements, which feature graphic images of Ground Zero.

Senior members of President Bush's campaign team had to take to the airwaves yesterday to defend Mr Bush against accusations that he was exploiting the tragedy to win re-election. Mr Bush is to make his leadership following the attacks the central focus of his campaign, but he was given stark warning yesterday that the strategy is risky.

Beginning what is expected to be the most expensive advertising campaign in a presidential election, the



The campaign's first commercials include three highlighting images of the charred shell of the WTC, and one showing firefighters emerging from the wreckage carrying a victim's remains draped in a flag

Bush campaign aired its first commercials. Three highlighted images of the charred shell of the World Trade Center, and one showed firefighters emerging from the wreckage carrying a victim's remains

draped in a flag.

The advertisements, which portray Mr Bush as a steady leader "in times of change", come the day after Mr John Kerry, the Massachusetts Senator, triumphed in the race for the Democratic nomination. It indicated Mr Bush's eagerness to move swiftly into full campaign mode after months of criticisms from Democrats.

Instead, Mr Bush ran into accusations that he was

exploiting the 9/11 victims for political advantage. The Republican National Convention will be held in New York, close to the site of the destroyed twin towers, the week before the third anniversary of the tragedy — plans that have evoked similar accusations.

Mrs Monica Gabrielle, whose husband died in the twin towers, said of the advertising campaign: "It's a slap in the face of the murders of 3,000 people."

WS 1 SF 2
US SENATE PASSES BILL BY 70-26

Bar on outsourcing

613
Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, March 5. — Ahead of Presidential and legislative elections, the US Senate voted to bar federal contractors from using taxpayers' money to move American jobs offshore.

The measure, aimed at preventing outsourcing of American jobs to countries like India and corporations using tax havens, was approved yesterday by a strong majority of 70 to 26.

Democratic Senator Mr Christopher Dodd, who sponsored the Bill said: "You may be able to do that (outsource) with your own money. The question is, should you be able to do that with taxpayers' money?" He also noted that there was a net loss of three million manufacturing jobs since 2001.

If signed into law, the ban would bar contractors

Help to anti-terror allies

WASHINGTON, March 5. — A trade Bill approved by the US Senate would help rugmakers in Pakistan and Afghanistan, two crucial allies in the war on terrorism, and erect barriers to the import of looted Iraqi antiquities. Those provisions were part of a miscellaneous tariff Bill, passed on a voice vote yesterday, that would suspend duties on hundreds of items, principally goods from poorer countries that do not directly compete with US-made products. The House passed a similar bill a year ago and the two chambers must now work out differences. Senate Finance Committee chairman Mr Charles Grassley said the duty-free treatment for hand-knotted and hand-woven carpets, while benefiting numerous countries, was designed primarily to help Pakistan and Afghanistan, partners in the fight against global terrorism. — AP

from moving work offshore in cases where the government privatises work once done by federal employees, when the federal government contracts for goods and services and when the state governments contract work using federal funds.

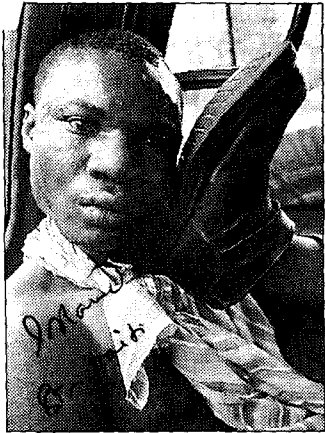
Several Republicans criticised the idea as a step away from friendly world trade and they warned that

the ban might result in a backlash.

Republican Senator Mr Orrin Hatch of Utah, said: "Sometimes I think we don't think it through when we do these broad, over-sweeping things like preventing government outsourcing. I think we should be wary of retaliation against US companies who get awarded foreign government contracts."

THE STATESMAN

6 MAR 2004



An Aristide supporter is detained in Petit Goave, 50 km south of Port-au-Prince. (Reuters)

Govt gains grip on Haiti, rebels to leave capital

Port-au-Prince, March 4 (Reuters): The government and foreign military forces gained a tentative grip on chaotic Haiti today as US and French troops stepped up patrols and armed rebels who helped oust the President prepared to leave the capital.

Banks reopened after two weeks of gun battles, looting and barricades in the capital forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile. The government says a month-long rebel uprising cost Haiti about \$300 million, roughly equivalent to its yearly budget.

But many city slums, strongholds of feared pro-Aristide supporters known as chimeres who are armed with automatic weapons and machetes, were still too dangerous to enter. Many feared reprisals and there were reports of several lynchings of Aristide supporters.

Gun battles erupted yesterday after police and some rebels hunted for Aristide supporters in La Saline shantytown. Local radio reported three people were killed. Prime Minister Yvon Neptune has declared a state of emergency, allowing the government to suspend certain constitutional rights such as press freedoms and the right to demonstrate.

Under US pressure, rebel leader Guy Philippe said he would disarm his army and return to Cap Haitien today or tomorrow. Haiti's second biggest city was one of his rebel strongholds.

Many residents, terrorised by an uprising that left at least 100 people dead, said the new law and order was too little too late.

"They should have sent the (US) military before Aristide fled. Now (looters) have burned everything," Walter St Fort, a 31-year-old auto parts dealer, said standing by the smouldering ruins of a government building.

Nearby, French military jeeps mounted with machine guns patrolled downtown, where streets were ankle deep in sewage and garbage in places. US light-armoured vehicles guarded the National Palace. For a second day, US forces patrolled in Humvees equipped with machine guns and rocket launch-

Bush fires first salvo at Kerry

Los Angeles, March 4 (Reuters): US President George W. Bush jump-started the 2004 campaign yesterday with his first direct attack on rival John Kerry by name, challenging his record on national security and the economy just 24 hours after congratulating him on locking up the Democratic nomination.

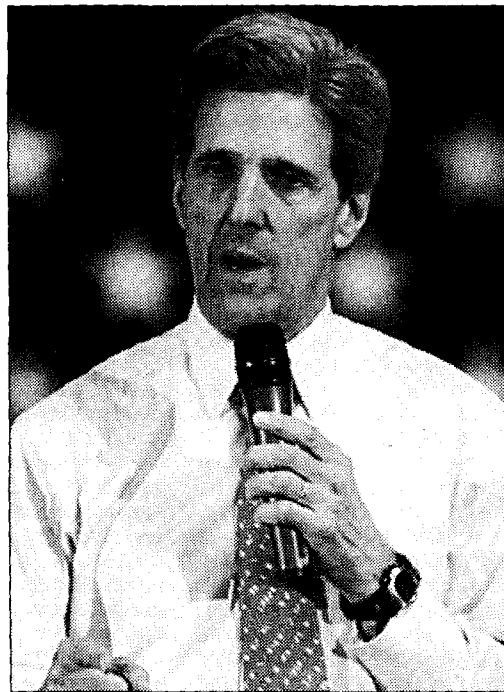
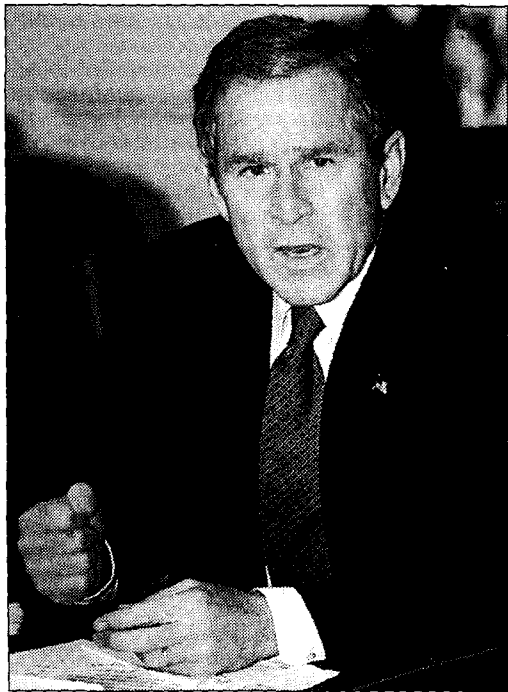
Barnstorming California one day after Kerry won its Democratic primary, Bush unleashed his most blistering attack to date on the Massachusetts Senator, accusing him of waffling on important issues during two decades in Congress, and warning that he would roll back tax cuts critical to economic growth.

"I've got news for the Washington crowd: America has gone beyond that way of thinking and we're not going back," Bush told a Los Angeles fund-raiser. In 24 hours, Bush's tone has shifted dramatically.

Whereas Kerry received a call of congratulations from the Republican President on Tuesday after scoring coast-to-coast primary victories, Bush yesterday kicked off what promises to be a heated eight-month election battle with his Democratic rival, whom the Bush team considers a formidable candidate.

"He (Kerry) spent two decades in Congress, built up quite a record. In fact, Senator Kerry has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue," Bush said derisively.

"I'm ready for this cam-



President George W. Bush (left) and Senator John Kerry

paign," Bush declared. "We stand ready to lead this nation for four more years."

Stepping up the attacks, the first television commercials of his re-election campaign — casting Bush as a tried and tested leader in challenging times — will begin airing today in at least 16 important battleground states.

Reaching out to conservatives in the election's most prized state, Bush yesterday touted his efforts to funnel feder-

al funds to religious charities that provide social services. "There's been a big debate about this because we want to make sure there's a separation between church and state," said Bush, a devout Christian.

"There are some rules. You can't use federal money to proselytise, but you can use federal money to help a person quit drinking (and) you can use federal money to help a person find housing," Bush added.

Bush hoped to shore up his

conservative base during his two-day swing through the state, which is at the epicentre of an election-year debate over gay marriage.

Bush addressed the thorny issue indirectly yesterday by saying:

"We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture of America by court order."

Bush cited the flurry of same-sex weddings in San Fran-

cisco in deciding to seek a constitutional amendment barring gay marriage.

California is also the nation's single biggest electoral prize. Democrat Al Gore won the state handily in 2000, but Bush made clear he would not cede the state to Kerry. "No party can take this state for granted," Bush said.

After months on the defensive over Iraq, job growth and his military record, Bush has plunged wholeheartedly into the campaign fray. The President has already raised approximately \$150 million for his re-election campaign, and at a Los Angeles fund-raiser yesterday, he raised \$800,000 more.

Bush's goal is to raise \$170 million to saturate the airwaves with commercials designed to both bolster his image and try to create doubts about Kerry.

"John Kerry will be a formidable candidate. He's successfully run for re-election many times. He's a skilled debater and with a closely divided electorate, we can't take anything for granted," said a senior Bush campaign official.

Today, Bush will turn his focus to the economy in the agricultural and oil-producing city of Bakersfield, California. Slow job growth has emerged as a major political problem for Bush. He will then attend in fund-raiser in Santa Clara, near San Francisco.

From California, Bush will travel to his Crawford, Texas ranch for weekend talks with Mexican President Vicente Fox.

THE TELEGRAPH

7 9 MAR 2004

পরস্পরকে আক্রমণ করে প্রেসিডেন্ট পদের জন্য লড়াই শুরু বুশ-কেরির

ওয়াশিংটন, ৪ মার্চ— নভেম্বরের প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনে জন কেরিই জর্জ বুশের মুখোমুখি হচ্ছেন, কাল এটা চূড়ান্ত হয়ে যাওয়ার পরেই পরস্পরের বিরুদ্ধে তীব্র আক্রমণ শানাতে শুরু করলেন আমেরিকার সর্বোচ্চ পদের দুই দাবিদার। কেরির নাম করে জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা ও অর্থনীতি সম্পর্কে তাঁর দ্বিধাজড়িত অবস্থান নিয়ে প্রশ্ন তুলেছেন বুশ। অন্য দিকে, মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্টের বিরুদ্ধে জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা এবং ইরাক যুদ্ধ নিয়ে প্রতিশ্রুতি ভঙ্গের অভিযোগ এনেছেন কেরি।

এখনও পর্যন্ত সমীক্ষা রিপোর্ট বলছে পরবর্তী প্রেসিডেন্ট হওয়ার দৌড়ে বুশের তুলনায় এগিয়ে আছেন কেরি। আজই ভোট হলে বুশ নির্যাত হারবেন। এই অবস্থায় নিজের পালে হাওয়া টানতে আট মাসের প্রচার পর্ব শুরু করেছেন বুশ। কেরিও বসে নেই। প্রার্থীপদ পাওয়ার পর দিন থেকেই তিনি নেমে পড়েছেন ব্যবধান আরও বাড়ানোর লক্ষ্যে। তাঁর মূল অসুবিধা অবশ্য আর্থিক। প্রচার খাতে মোটামুটি কুড়ি কোটি ডলার খরচ করবেন বুশ। তাঁর সঙ্গে পাঞ্জা দিতে কেরি রীতিমতো হিমসিম খাচ্ছেন। নির্বাচনী তহবিলে মুক্ত হস্তে দান করার জন্য সমর্থকদের অনুরোধ জানিয়েছেন তিনি।

এ দিকে, আজ থেকেই বুশের সমর্থনে

দেশ জুড়ে বিজ্ঞাপন দিতে শুরু করেছে রিপাবলিকান পার্টি। কমপক্ষে ১৬ টি রাজ্যের চারটি কেবল নেটওয়ার্কে দেখানো হবে সেই বিজ্ঞাপন। এই খাতে খরচ ধরা হয়েছে ৪৫ লক্ষ ডলার। রিপাবলিকানদের প্রচারের মূল বিষয়ই হল, ১১ সেপ্টেম্বরের জঙ্গি হানা ও সেই সঙ্কটের মুহূর্তে বুশের সুদক্ষ নেতৃত্ব। একটি বিজ্ঞাপনে মার্কিন জাতীয় পতাকার পিছনে বিশ্বস্ত ওয়ার্ল্ড ট্রেড সেন্টারের ছবি দেখানো হয়েছে। অন্য একটি বিজ্ঞাপনে জঙ্গি হানা ও শেয়ারসূচক পতনের ছবির প্রেক্ষাপটে দেখানো হয়েছে আশুন নেভাতে ব্যস্ত দমকল কর্মীদের। অন্তর্নিহিত বার্তাটা সহজবোধ্য। বিজ্ঞাপনের ভাষ্যকার আরও স্পষ্ট করে বলেছেন, “আমেরিকা চ্যালেঞ্জের মোকাবিলা করেছে। পরিবর্তনের কালে দৃঢ়তার সঙ্গে নেতৃত্ব দিয়েছেন প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ।’ বুশ নিজেও বলেছেন, “আমি জানি ঠিক কোথায় আমি দেশকে নিয়ে যেতে চাই। জানি, বিশ্বকে আরও স্বাধীন, আরও নিরাপদ করতে গেলে আমাদের কী করতে হবে।”

বুশের নেতৃত্বের দৃঢ়তার দাবিকে নস্যাত করে দিচ্ছে জন কেরির প্রচার। ডেমোক্রেটরা বলছেন, বুশের নেতৃত্বে আমেরিকাকে যে মূল্য চোকাতে হচ্ছে তা অভাবনীয়। তাঁর আমলেই তিন লক্ষ মার্কিন কর্মহীন হয়েছেন, ঘাটতি বেড়েছে

কয়েকগুণ। এমনকী, যে দমকলকর্মীদের দেখিয়ে ভোট চাইছেন বুশ, তাঁদের বাজেটও ছাঁটাই করা হয়েছে। ইরাক যুদ্ধের প্রক্ষে অবশ্য বুশের প্রতি সমালোচনার সুর একটু নরম করেছেন কেরি। কাল অরল্যান্ডোর টাউন হলে তিনি বলেছেন, “এই ঘরে এমন এক জনও নেই যিনি বিশ্বাস করেন যে বুশ শেষ অস্ত্র হিসাবে ইরাকের বিরুদ্ধে যুদ্ধ ঘোষণা করেছিলেন। এ বিষয়ে প্রতিশ্রুতি ভঙ্গ করেছেন তিনি।” তবে, একই সঙ্গে তিনি বলেছেন, ইরাকের ব্যাপারে দায়িত্ব স্বীকার করে নিয়ে বুশের উচিত সে দেশের পুনর্গঠনের কাজে আন্তর্জাতিক মহলের সাহায্যলাভের চেষ্টা করা। কেরির প্রচার মুখপাত্র স্টেফনি কার্টার বলেছেন, বুশ নিশ্চিত ভাবেই দেশকে ভুল পথে নিয়ে যাচ্ছেন।

কেরির পাঁচটা সমালোচনায় মুখর হয়েছেন বুশ। ডেমোক্রেট প্রার্থীপদ লাভের জন্য শুভেচ্ছা জানানোর ২৪ ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই তাঁকে আক্রমণ করে বুশ বলেছেন, কোনও বিষয়ে সুনিশ্চিত অবস্থান নিতে কেরি বরাবরই ব্যর্থ। মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট বলেছেন, “উনি (কেরি) দু’দশক ধরে কংগ্রেসে আছেন, রেকর্ডও গড়ে ফেলেছেন। তবে মুশকিল হল, সেনেটর কেরি একই সঙ্গে যাবতীয় বিষয়ের পক্ষে ও বিপক্ষে মত প্রকাশ করেন।”—রয়টার্স, এপি

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

AN

5 MAR 2001

More easy wins for Kerry

Reuters
Washington, February 25

DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL front-runner John Kerry scored easy wins in largely ignored contests in Idaho and Utah on Tuesday, expanding his lead in the party's nomination fight as he looked ahead to next week's 10-state showdown with rival John Edwards.

The two wins give Kerry 17 victories in the first 19 contests in the race to find a Democratic challenger to President George W. Bush. He hoped to pick up one more win later on Tuesday in Hawaii.

There were 61 delegates to July's Democratic nominating convention at stake in Hawaii, Utah and Idaho, but the three states had been ignored by Kerry and Edwards as they focused on next week's potentially decisive "Super Tuesday" showdown.

The 10 states voting on that day will include big

prizes like California, New York, Ohio and Georgia, with more than half of the 2,162 delegates needed to win the nomination at stake.

In incomplete returns in Idaho and Utah, Kerry won more than half of the votes. Edwards won about 20 per cent of the vote in Idaho and 30 per cent of the vote in Utah. The three contests on Tuesday came a day after Bush launched his re-election drive with a strong defence of his administration and a direct attack on Kerry. Edwards took pains to remind Bush and Democrats that the nomination race was far from over.

"Not so fast, George Bush, you don't get to decide who our nominee is," Edwards said in Atlanta, reprising a line he used against Kerry last week in a Wisconsin debate.

Edwards and Kerry both spent Tuesday campaigning in states that will vote next week.

Bush backs gay marriage ban

PRESIDENT GEORGE Bush has favoured a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages, an issue on which the United States is split.

The move is necessary to stop judges from changing the definition of the "most enduring human institution", he said on Tuesday.

"After more than two centuries of American jurisprudence, a few judges and authorities are presuming to change the most fundamental institution of civilisation," the President said. "Their action has created confusion on an issue that requires clarity. Marriage cannot be severed from its cultural, religious and natural roots."

PTI, Washington

26 FEB 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 FEB 2004

Godsend for trailing Bush: Nader the challenger

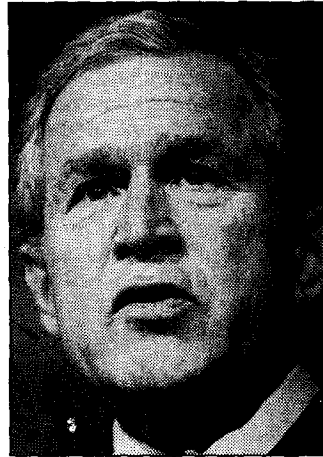
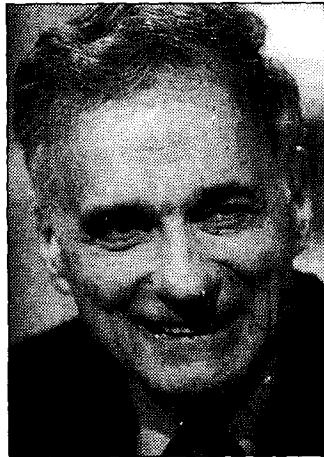
1997
1-9
98
K.P. NAYAR

Washington, Feb. 23: America's presidential election in November may turn out to be a re-run of the cliffhanger in 2000 with consumer activist Ralph Nader declaring his intention to challenge President George W. Bush for the White House as an independent candidate.

"Washington is corporate-occupied territory and the two parties are ferociously competing to see who is going to go to the White House and take orders from their corporate paymasters," Nader said on NBC Television yesterday on the eve of formally announcing his candidature.

Nader polled just short of three million votes in the presidential election in 2000. In Florida, which Bush won by a mere 537 votes and occupied the White House, Nader secured 97,488 votes, effectively depriving Democrat Al Gore the presidency.

The Lebanese American, whose fight for American consumers has been the nightmare of big corporations for decades, entered the presidential race just as the poll prospects for Democrats appeared to be brightening with a slow, but steady decline in the popularity of Bush



Ralph Nader (left) and George W. Bush

in recent opinion polls. Nader's announcement clearly unnerved Democrats. Terry McAuliffe, the party's chairman called Nader's decision "unfortunate."

McAuliffe, who had pleaded with Nader not to be a candidate in November, said on CBS Television that Nader "has had a whole distinguished career, fighting for working families, and I would hate to see part of his legacy being that he got us eight years of George Bush."

But the party's candidates, now in the primaries to choose the eventual challenger to Bush,

put on a brave front. Senator John Kerry, the frontrunner said: "I think my campaign is speaking to a lot of the issues Ralph Nader is concerned about."

Senator John Edwards, who has emerged second in the primaries said Nader "will not impact my campaign" and insisted that his platform would attract voters who might be drawn to the new entrant in the race.

Republicans, for their part, tried utmost to hide their glee that the turn of events would help Bush at a time when he

needs a lot of help. "Regardless of what Ralph Nader does, President Bush is going to be re-elected in November," the party's chairman Ed Gillespie confidently asserted.

Nader rejected complaints from Democrats and liberals that his presence in the fray would help Bush.

"I would go after Bush even more vigorously as we are in the next few months in ways that the Democrats cannot possibly do because they are too cautious and too unimaginative, but they can pick up the vulnerabilities and the failures of the Bush administration that we point out," Nader said on ABC Television.

"We have got to give people more voices and choices. And let me tell you, with 100 million people not voting, we have got to give them more voices, choices, more exciting involvement and participation so they are not just spectators watching candidates parade in front of them with emotional slogans."

A public opinion poll four months ago showed two-thirds of Americans did not want Nader to contest in November: a major reason voters gave was that it was necessary to consolidate anti-Bush votes.

WSA
H-D-11

Labour unions throw their weight behind Kerry

2/2

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 20. In a major boost to Senator John Kerry ahead of the March 2 Super Tuesday primaries and caucuses, the AFL-CIO, the federation of 64 labour unions, has thrown its weight behind him, with the chief of the organised labour stressing that "the time has come to unite behind one man, one leader, one candidate".

The AFL-CIO, representing more than 13 million American workers, is planning one of the biggest mobilisations ever to bring Mr. Kerry to the White House in the November 2004 elections.

The backing of the AFL-CIO for Mr. Kerry means that economy and jobs and with this, the whole issue of outsourcing will be quite high profile in the run-up to this year's election; and the Massachusetts politician wasted no time in spelling out his agenda to the labour one more time.

"Today, we stand united in a common cause and that common cause is not just to defeat George W. Bush but it is to put our country back on track, on the road of prosperity, the road of fairness, the road of jobs", Mr. Kerry said.

The endorsement of the AFL-CIO has come at a time when several questions have been posed about the four-term Senator's track record on trade and labour issues, the predominant ones being his voting in the Senate for the 1993 North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The renewal of the Most Favoured Nation status to China has also figured in the debate. NAFTA is particularly seen as something that has contributed to job losses.

In the Democratic primaries this year, the labour vote has been quite strong in such States as Iowa, Missouri, Delaware and Wisconsin. And heading up to March 2, Mr. Kerry faces such States as Ohio and New York (upstate especially) where job losses have been significant. Mr. Kerry has said that Ohio has lost some 160,000 manufacturing jobs since Mr. Bush came to office in 2001.

The labour base has been a substantial one for the Democrats with union members voting for Al Gore over Mr. Bush by a two-to-one margin in the November 2000 elections.

In the perception of the Teamsters President, James Hoffa, Mr. Kerry has evolved on trade issues and has the "best chance" of beating the Republican President this fall.

"He might not be there yet, but I think the more he campaigns, the more he realises this entire election is going to come down to jobs. I think he is moving towards that. Everybody evolves", he said about the Democratic front-runner, in an interview to the Associated Press.

THE HINDU

21 FEB 2004

Dean quits race to White House

The New York Times
Milwaukee, February 19

HOWARD DEAN'S quest for the US Presidency ended on Wednesday as the Democrat, winless in 17 contests, bowed to political reality and abandoned his bid.

Once the little-known former governor of a small Northeast state, Dean took a summer ride to presidential campaign heights, attracting scores of followers and a Democratic record \$41 million in campaign largely through the Internet.

Dean ended his bid for the presidency leaving John Kerry and John Edwards battling over free trade and jobs as the Democratic presidential contest veered into a more combative two-man struggle.

As Dean announced he was abandoning his campaign, Kerry and Edwards moved aggressively to fill the space. They picked the states they would compete in over the next two weeks and argued over Kerry's support of free trade agreements and his contributions from lobbyists.

"As Senator Kerry himself has pointed out many times during this campaign, records matter," Edwards said in an afternoon conference call with 100 reporters, the number a clear indication of how his status has changed after a strong second-place showing in Wisconsin. "I think there is a significant difference between us on this issue."

Edwards, a first-term senator from North Carolina, noted that Kerry, a four-term senator from Massachusetts, voted in the Senate for the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993. Edwards asserted that he would have voted against

Setback for Bush, again

GEORGE BUSH would lose if US elections were held today, a new public opinion poll said. The CNN/USA Today/Gallup survey released on Thursday showed John Kerry would poll 55 per cent against Bush's 43 per cent.

A similar poll conducted a fortnight back showed Kerry beating Bush by a slimmer margin — 49 per cent to 48 per cent. The poll showed Bush's job approval rating still at 51 per cent.

AFP, Washington

it had he been in the Senate. He said he would, as president, renegotiate the treaty to provide protections for American workers.

In Ohio, Kerry declared that he and Edwards held indistinguishable positions on future trade agreements. "We have the same policy on trade — exactly the same policy," Kerry said from Dayton.

Both Kerry and Edwards spoke to Dean on Wednesday. Edwards said he would welcome Dean's support.

The exchanges between Edwards and Kerry began almost as soon as Dean gave his final speech as a presidential candidate for 2004. The sparring signalled that the contest had entered a new and more competitive stage. Edwards appeared to some extent constrained in his attacks, because he has spent much of this campaign criticising other Democrats for running negative campaigns. He kept many of his challenges to Kerry carefully calibrated.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 FEB 2004

US soldier charged in terror probe

Associated Press

FORT LEWIS, Feb. 19. — A national guardsman accused of attempting to pass military intelligence to the Al-Qaida has been formally charged, an army spokesman has said.

Spc. Ryan G Anderson was charged on 12 February, but the Army did not immediately release that information, Lt. Col. Stephen Barger said yesterday.

The Uniform Military Code says attempts to aid the enemy can be punishable by death. The charges don't allege that Spc. Anderson ever actually passed information to real Al-Qaida members.

In the first count, Anderson, also known as "Amir Abdul Rashid," is alleged to have attempted to provide information about U.S. Army troop strength, movements, equipment, tactics and weapons systems, as well as methods of killing U.S. Army personnel and vulnerabilities of Army weapons systems and equipment.

He is also alleged to have communicated by "oral, written and electronic communication" to the supposed "terrorists" that "I wish to meet with you, I share your cause, I wish to continue



GROUNDNDED: A file photograph of Spc. Ryan G Anderson. He has been of accused of trying to pass military intelligence to the Al-Qaida—AFP

Five Britons to be released soon

LONDON, Feb. 19. — Five Britons being held at Guantanamo Bay will be sent home within a few weeks, and may face arrest here, British foreign secretary Mr Jack Straw said today, discussing about four other British prisoners were continuing to hold a news conference. Mr Straw said the five to be released could be taken into custody when returned. "Once the detainees are back in the UK, I understand that the police will consider whether to arrest them under the Terrorism Act 2006 for questioning in connection with possible terrorist activity." — AP

contact through conversations and personal meetings".

The second charge alleges that he passed sketches of the M1A1 and M1A2 tanks, as well as a computer disc with such personal ID's as his passport photo, weapons card and military ID card.

The last charge alleges he "dishonorably" provided information on troop strength, movements and equipment.

A military defence lawyer has been appointed for the accused, but the spokesman refused to identify the lawyer.

Jobs, outsourcing top US poll agenda

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: Democratic frontrunner for the White House, John Kerry, bagged another prime state in an intra-party face-off on Tuesday even as the issues of economy, jobs and outsourcing moved to the top of the agenda in the US Presidential elections.

Mr Kerry, a four-time Massachusetts Senator, defeated North Carolina Senator John Edwards by a margin that was closer than expected, but their 1-2 finish ahead of Howard Dean at a distant third now appears to have made the Democratic nomination a two-horse race.

"The voters in Wisconsin sent a clear message," Mr Edwards told wildly cheering supporters after a better than expected showing. "Objects in your mirror may be closer than they appear."

Mr Dean, his campaign in total disarray, repaired to his home state Vermont to reflect on whether he should hang in or quit the race. Mr Kerry has won 15 of 17 states so far, and bagged more than 600 delegates, more than a fourth of the 2,162 delegates needed to win the nomination. Mr Edwards has won only one state and has about 200 delegates and Mr Dean with no wins also has around 200 delegates.

The big day is March 2, called Super Tuesday, because primaries will be held in ten delegate rich states across the country. It will virtually decide the winner of the Democratic race.

Meanwhile Kerry, Edwards and Dean have all made jobs, the economy and outsourcing a major campaign issue, even as Bearing Point, PeopleSoft, Bank of America among other companies announced this week they would be hiring thousands of people in India.

(For more, log on to www.timesofindia.com)

19 FEB 2004

The contest has just begun

IS the USA about to enter a time of significant political change? Since the presidential campaign has moved to centre stage, that question hovers in the air.

Last summer, last fall, the most interesting political activity in the nation centred on the insurgent candidacy, for the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party, of Howard Dean, former Vermont governor. Dr Dean captured the imagination of the media, which placed his face on the cover of major newsmagazines and gave him more television time than all other competitors, combined.

Three aspects of Dean's candidacy fascinated reporters covering the early stages. First, he – or, more appropriately his campaign manager, Joe Trippi – initiated a new approach to politicking the general public: dot.com politics. Dean launched a website that attracted potential supporters. In addition to the conventional paraphernalia – stands on issues, a potted biography, photographs – the website featured an enticing “blog”. This recounted the daily, even hourly, activities of the campaign; it also allowed supporters across the country to report on what they were doing. Visitors to the website felt that they were part of the campaign and its inner workings.

Second, the attractive website encouraged supporters and potential supporters to attend local gatherings in which they would talk about the Dean candidacy and plan out local organising efforts on his behalf. It very much seemed like Dean had found a new way to involve a whole strata of disaffected Americans. And, in a nation where a bare majority of eligible voters participate in Presidential polls, and less than a third in Congressional elections, this seemed newsworthy. (My own view was that many of these “new” participants, although angered by the Iraq war and by the President's policies, would likely not have staying power – a view which subsequent events has largely borne out.)

So there were many who were attracted to Dean, at first because he claimed he was the only (actually several other candidates fit this description) candidate who had opposed the US war on Iraq. He presented himself as going against the mainstream of politicians in the country and even his party. He asserted that the record showed he was a man of foresight, able to see what his major opponents didn't: that President Bush was about to engage in a war which would weaken rather than strengthen the USA. With 40 per cent of the electorate opposed to the war, Dean found a ready constituency.

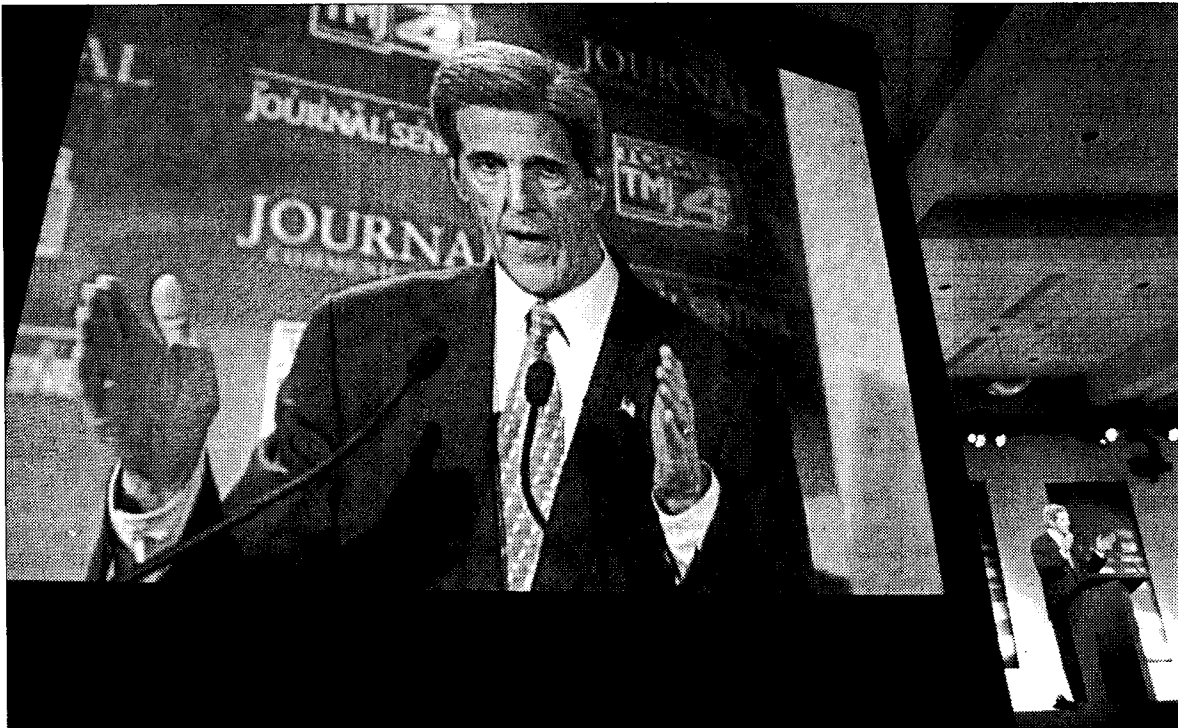
He solidified that constituency by claiming that he was running as the candidate of the “Democratic wing of the Democratic Party.” This was meant to emphasise his difference from many Democrats in Washington who, made timid by the popularity of Bush and afraid of the mantle of patriotism and anti-terrorism with which he so successfully cloaked all his activities, shirked the role of stringently opposing Bush's policies. For time and again some Democrats voted with Bush on tax cuts for the wealthy, restricting civil liberties, eliminating environmental protections, and supplanting aid for education with calls for testable educational “standards”.

Third, money flowed into the Dean campaign, money given – in a coming of age of the computer generation – over the Internet. Dean far outtraised his competitors, and the media, seeing that money fuels campaigns, decided that this made him the man to beat in the race to the Democratic nomination.

Thus, in December, Howard Dean headed into the upcoming early votes with a strong lead in the polls, in fund-raising, and in media attention. Though he had been a conservative governor, he was the favourite of the left-wing of the Democratic party because of his opposition to the Iraq war; though a son of the upper class and a beneficiary of all the right “connections”, he ran as an outsider determined to overthrow those in Washington: not only the President, but the quiescent legislators of this own party.

The first contest was in Iowa, part intensely rural, part urban, with far less minority presence than the country as a whole. Iowa holds “caucuses”, in which groups of citizens in each

The US presidential campaign seems to be taking shape with a Kerry-Bush grand finale on the cards, writes HUCK GUTMAN



Senator John Kerry speaks during the Wisconsin presidential debate in Milwaukee. — AFP

community assemble and elect candidate-committed delegates to a state convention. Meeting voters face to face, rather than solely depending on television interviews, advertisements, and mail promotions, allows those voters to actually become acquainted with each of the candidates. Dean spent much of the previous two years in Iowa, visiting every county, determined to begin his campaign with a major victory.

It was not to be. As the front-runner, he faced questions about his record and his past statements: some came in the form of attacks by his opponents, some raised by the media. (He would later blame the media, failing to recognise that a campaign like his that had depended so heavily on media attention – his had garnered far more coverage than any of his opponents – could not complain if a portion of that attention turned from adulation to questioning.) The questions led to some slippage in his poll standings. Of more consequence was his decision to respond to negative advertising by his main opponent in Iowa, Representative Richard Gephardt of Missouri, with negative advertising of his own.

Dean's anger at Bush's policies was popular, but when it appeared that he was a candidate fuelled by anger, his support slipped substantially. (When, following his third-place finish in the caucuses, Dean neglected to congratulate his successful opponents, and instead rolled up his sleeves and yelled to rally them onward to victory in future states, his red-faced, bulging-necked performance was replayed again and again on the television news in the following days. His imaged morphed from a vocal critic to that of the angry man of US politics, his anger fuelled by what appeared to be an insistent desperation. It was an anger against, not an anger for: not an anger on behalf of the poor and the overworked middle class, but an anger against all that might prevent him from surging toward hoped-for victory.)

Meanwhile, other political activity was occurring. There had been two early favourites for the Democratic nomination. One was Senator Joseph Lieberman, a right-wing, militarist Democrat who had been the Vice-Presidential candidate with Al Gore, who narrowly lost (or maybe won: the election was decided by the courts, not the electorate) to the Bush-Cheney ticket in 2000. But as Dean showed, the majority of Democrats were angry: at Bush and his Iraq war, at the extreme conservative bent of the country under the incumbent administration, at the policies of Bush who rewarded privilege while seeming to ignore the massive financial scandals perpetrated by some of his strongest backers. Lieberman offered not an alternative but a

pale imitation of Bush. He would garner barely any support in the early primaries, and soon dropped out of the contest altogether.

The other early favourite was Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts. What lent him distinction was his history: a wounded veteran of the Vietnam War, he helped lead the activist group, Vietnam Veterans Against the War. But his early campaign efforts foundered: his vote to support giving war-making authority to Bush in the Iraq situation, a vote similar to most Senate Democrats, didn't endear him to a Democratic constituency deeply unhappy with the war. Nor did his early and sometimes confused attempts to explain that he intended to give the President bargaining power, not to approve of going into a “pre-emptive” war with a minimum of international support, resound well with Democratic voters. He was leaden in his self-presentation, ponderous and given to long-winded speeches.

But as Dean's early lead quavered, two signal forces reshaped the Kerry candidacy. One was the candidate himself: suddenly, when he appeared on television or before live audiences, he seemed more casual, more like a person than a political automaton. His positions were often spelled out with more clarity than his rivals'. And, with the Dean example in front of him, he began attacking the President for his failed economic policies (more than 15 per cent of the nation's manufacturing jobs have been lost in the past three years, a budget deficit this year of over \$500 billion), for his neglect of public education, for this callousness towards the preservation of environmental quality.

In the other major event, US veterans responded to the Kerry candidacy. Though labour unions supported Gephardt and Dean, providing campaign workers in every district that had a caucus, veterans suddenly emerged as a political force.

The continuing casualties in the growing quagmire of Iraq seemed purposeless to many military men. There has thus been among veterans and the military a growing discontent with Bush's leadership, a discontent fanned into flames by the single most stupid mistake: while the President was giving billions of dollars in tax breaks to the very wealthiest Americans, he was cutting back funding for on the health services which had been promised to veterans.

Every day of the week before the Iowa caucuses, overnight tracking polls showed an ebbing of Dean's backing and a rising tide of support for Kerry. When the voters went to the caucuses on 19 January, they gave Kerry a sizeable plurality of the delegates; and in a stunning surprise, the southern Senator, John Edwards came in second. Dean registered in a distant third, with 18 per cent of the delegates (to Kerry's 38 per cent and Edwards' 32 per

cent). A week later, first actual vote took place in New Hampshire. Whereas in early January Dean held a lead of 20 percentage points in the polls, he entered the frenzied final week of campaigning considerably behind Kerry in New Hampshire polling. Election night would bear out these numbers, with Kerry winning strongly over Dean once again.

In the weeks following, Kerry won primaries and caucuses in eight of 10 states. At the moment of this writing, it seems an overwhelming likelihood that he will be the Democratic challenger to the current President.

What has this primary season meant for US politics, and for the larger international community? First, owing to the candidacy of Dean, it's clear that there is a large fund of anger in the USA toward the incumbent President. Domestically, there is deep worry that the economy is on its way to free-fall, at least as regards working Americans: the wealthy have seen the value of the stock portfolios rise significantly in the past half year, but it has been a “jobless recovery”, with unemployment and underemployment a continuing problem. There is anger that money is available to “rebuild” Iraq but none to provide health insurance to the 43 million who lack it, or the additional 3 million who have lacked it at some time in the past two years. Bush is widely perceived as a leader committed to the interests of the extremely affluent, and indifferent to the needs of the other 98 per cent of Americans.

That anger at the President extends to foreign policy, normally not a preeminent concern with US voters. The threat of Saddam Hussein's cache of weapons of mass destruction is now widely seen as fiction. The continuing casualty rate among US soldiers, the lack of a reasonable resolution to Iraqi governance, makes Iraq appear a vast swamp in which the USA's military is mired. When things go wrong, the President, as Commander-in-Chief, must accept the blame.

In the most recent polls, Kerry leads Bush, 53 to 46 per cent, in a mythical race for the Presidency. What he has going for him – war hero, opponent of wars – is highlighted by recent charges that Bush, who once served in the domestic National Guard, didn't even fully discharge that obligation: it may be that for a period as long as one year he avoided reporting for military duty he was charged with performing.

Still, the savage undercurrent beneath US elections is money, and the incumbent President has amassed more campaign funding than any candidate in history: \$120 million, an amount that grows weekly as the President holds \$1000-a-plate dinners all over the country. It is very possible – this is the dirty secret of US politics – to buy elections, not by paying voters directly, but by mounting a barrage of expensive television ads attacking one's opponent and boosting one's own media-created persona. No one viewing the current scene expects the President to back away from huge media expenses, or from using the media to exploit wedge issues, which are usually lumped under the heading “defending family values”, a code phrase which refers to mustering attacks on the poor, on people of colour, on immigrants, on women and on homosexuals.

So the campaign for the Presidency is taking shape. It will likely be Senator Kerry versus President Bush. Kerry will run pledging a domestic economic policy that recognises the needs of the middle class and working people, and a sane and multilateral foreign policy. The President will run on the issue of terrorism: “I'm a war president,” he asserted recently. “I make decisions here in the Oval Office in foreign policy matters with war on my mind.” He will use wedge issues – abortion, homosexual partnerships, removing affirmative action policies that guarantee equal participation by all races in education in employment – to undercut the economic consensus Kerry will try to put together. And he will use money, massive amounts of it, to dominate the television airwaves.

The contest has just begun.

(The author was Fulbright Visiting Professor of English at Calcutta University. He is Professor of English at the University of Vermont.)

George Bush has amassed more campaign funding than any candidate in history: \$120 million, an amount that grows weekly as he holds \$1000-a-plate dinners all over the country

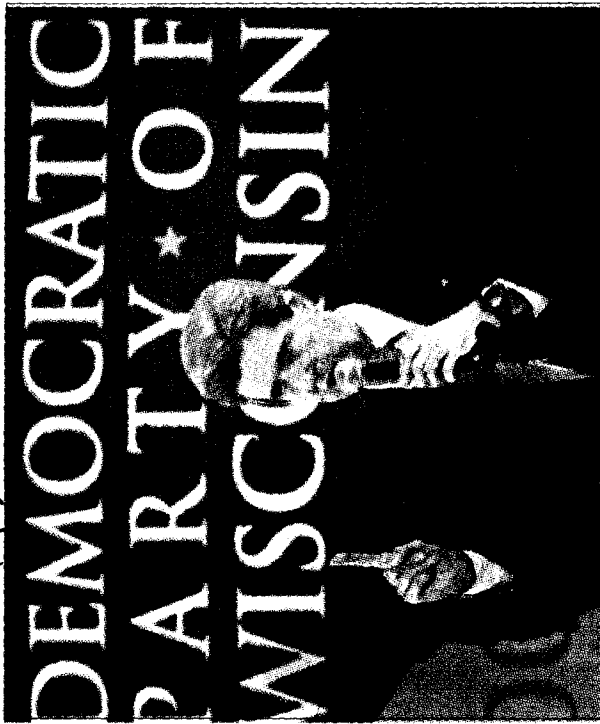
Kerry wins in Nevada, Washington DC

Press Trust of India

NEW YORK, Feb. 15. — Senator John Kerry continued his winning spree in Democratic Party Presidential caucuses, registering an easy victory in the state of Nevada and the US capital, Washington DC, for the right to challenge President George W Bush in the November elections.

The 60-year-old, four-term senator from Massachusetts, won Nevada by an outsized margin yesterday, getting 62 per cent votes against his nearest rival, Mr Howard Dean's 16 per cent.

In Washington D.C., Sen. Kerry scored 46 per cent with his nearest rival, civil rights activist Mr AJ Sharpton getting 19 per cent and Mr Dean 17



Sen. John Kerry talks to supporters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on Saturday. — AFP

per cent.

With this, Sen. Kerry has collected 577 delegates against 2,162 required to win the nomination. Mr Dean, former Vermont Governor, has only 188 delegates and Mr John Edwards, North Carolina Senator, 166.

So far, Sen. Kerry has won 14 of the 16 nominating contests held so far.

All eyes are now on Wisconsin state where primaries are due on Tuesday and the result could lead to some of the hopefuls dropping out.

Opinion polls show Sen. Kerry is leading in that state too. "Wisconsin can mark the next chapter in the beginning of the end of the Bush presidency," Sen. Kerry said in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Tough questions await Kerry

Republicans will focus on senator's love of lobbyists

The Guardian
Washington, February 15

JOHN KERRY has taken millions of dollars in financial backing from special interests and lobbyists. Kerry, who has made fighting special interests a key part of his campaign, has also backed legislation favouring some of his donors and written letters on behalf of corporate backers.

Such issues crop up as his campaign has been forced to fight back against sex scandal rumours after a right-wing gossip website alleged the senator had had an affair with a younger intern. After weeks of positive press, Kerry's background is now coming under intense scrutiny.

Kerry — like Bush — has recruited an army of "bundlers" who skip around strict campaign finance laws by gathering \$2,000 cheques from friends and employees into bundles of \$50,000 or \$100,000. Kerry has 32 \$100,000 bundlers and 87 \$50,000 bundlers. They come mainly from powerful law firms, real estate companies, financiers and lobbyists.

Kerry has received more money from lobbyists over the past 15 years than any other serving senator. Some of Kerry's close links with lobbyists have raised eye-

brows even among supporters.

Kerry has strong ties to lobbyists for the telecommunications industry. Between 1999 and 2002 Kerry sponsored two law bills and co-sponsored six that were seen as advantageous to the interests of a telecom firm that had provided him huge sums. "We are beyond the point of whether he takes money from special interests, but rather what, if anything, has been done in response to the funds," said Steve Weiss, spokesman for the Centre for Responsive Politics watchdog.

Kerry and his wife are also personally linked to the fortunes of the telecommunications industry. Official records show the couple have at least \$17 million invested in firms with a stake in the industry. Tracing the actual effect that donations have on politicians' decisions is virtually impossible. A Kerry spokesman has denied he has ever acted in response to donations.

But Paul Davis, co-founder of internet firm Predictive Networks, has seen the process of how fundraising and legislation mix. Kerry met a top Predictive executive in July 2000. A day later Kerry introduced a Senate bill that would allow internet firms to monitor what their con-

gal donations to the campaigns of Kerry and Bill Clinton.

All of this punches a hole in the key aspect of Kerry's dramatic rise to the front of the Democratic race: his "electability". The first Republican attack ad of the presidential campaign was emailed to six million people last week. It concentrated solely on Kerry's links to special interests.

Republicans think Kerry cannot be stopped by his rivals and they now know their opponent. Many Democrats believe that is why allegations over Kerry's sex life have now been made on the *Drudge Report*, a gossip website that broke the Lewinsky scandal. The woman at the heart of the alleged affair, a former journalist, is believed to be hiding in Kenya. Despite worldwide coverage, major US papers and TV networks have been slow to cover the story.

So far Kerry has used his aura as a Vietnam War hero to shrug off attacks, but Democratic strategists remember the Republican campaign run against Democratic Senator Max Cleland in 2002.

Despite Cleland losing two legs and one arm in Vietnam, Republicans portrayed him as weak on security. They ran TV ads against Cleland with pictures of Saddam and bin Laden. Cleland lost.



AP
John Kerry yells for his football while enjoying a break during the Las Vegas campaign on Saturday.

sumers were viewing and that Predictive had been lobbying for. In 2002 Predictive chief Devin Hosea threw a fundraiser for Kerry in Boston. Hosea threw a second fundraiser that summer. In 1996 Kerry accepted money raised by controversial Taiwanese entrepreneur Johnny Chung after writing a letter to help a friend of Chung's. Chung later pleaded guilty to funnelling ille-

Kerry sweeps to double victory

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: Massachusetts Senator John Kerry won primaries in two more states on Saturday in his march towards the Democratic nomination, even as an opinion poll showed that he would beat George Bush by a 50-45 margin if an election was held today.

The *Newsweek* poll showed Mr Bush's approval rating has now slipped to 48 per cent, the lowest since February 2001. Fifty per cent of registered voters say they would not like to see Mr Bush re-elected to a second term (45 per cent say they would). While revealing that Mr Kerry could beat Mr Bush today, the poll also showed Mr Bush would overcome all other Democratic contenders.

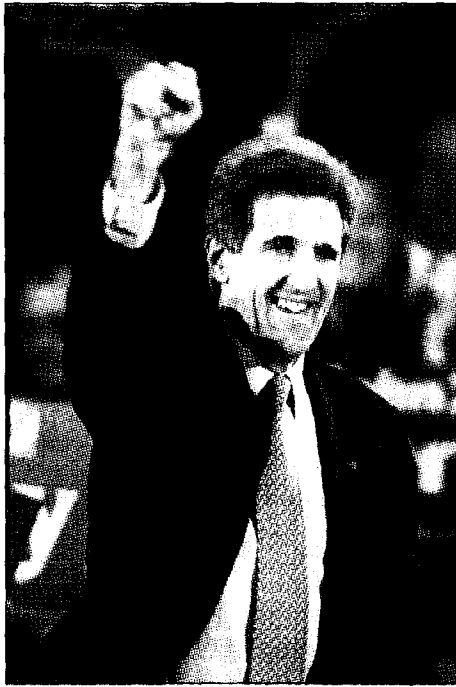
However, the poll showed Mr Kerry ahead of other Democrats by a large margin for the party nomination. The sentiment showed up in Michigan and Washington, the two states Mr Kerry picked up while overwhelming his principal opponent Howard Dean. The four-term senator has now won nine out of 11 states and

more than 350 delegates of the 2,162 delegates he needs to win the party nomination. Mr Kerry lost no time in publicly setting his

sights on the White House. "In Michigan and Washington, a message is being sent—and it's the same message that was sent from

AP Iowa, New Hampshire, to Missouri, to North Dakota, to New Mexico to Arizona," he said after the latest wins. "And it is the message that I am carrying to Virginia and to Tennessee, and the message is: George Bush's days are numbered."

Virginia and Tennessee vote on Tuesday, after Maine on Sunday. A Kerry win in the two southern states will virtually end the hopes of the two southern contenders, Senator John Edwards of North Carolina and Gen Wesley Clark of Arkansas. Mr Dean has promised to hang on till the primary Wisconsin, but his campaign appears to be running out of steam as Mr Kerry has gone ahead of the pack. Interest groups and the international community are beginning to look at Mr Kerry's politics and policy pronouncements amid signs of a Mr Bush vs Kerry election in November.



KERRYSMATIC: Democratic presidential hopeful Senator John Kerry reacts to the crowd as he is introduced at a rally in Richmond, Virginia, on Saturday

'GEORGE W BUSH'S DAYS ARE NUMBERED'

Kerry wins Washington, Michigan caucuses

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8. — Senator John Kerry won crushing caucus victories in Michigan and Washington yesterday, trouncing his Democratic presidential rivals and predicting: "Mr George W Bush's days are numbered."

The Democratic front-runner by far, Mr Kerry fashioned his latest wins by outsized margins. The Massachusetts Senator's share of the vote in a multi-candidate field hovered at 50 per cent in Washington and Michigan.

In classic front-runner's style, Mr Kerry paid rivals Mr Howard Dean, Mr John Edwards and Mr Wesley Clark little mind in victory, focusing instead on the Republican in the White House. "This week Mr George Bush and the Republican smear machine have begun trotting out the same old tired lines of attack that they've used before to divide this nation and to evade the real issues before us," he told a Democratic Party dinner in Richmond, Virginia. "They're the ones who are



President Bush is expected to base his bid for re-election on his national security and economic track records.



Mr John Kerry promises to keep America "safe from foreign threats" and end tax cuts for the rich.

SLUMP IN RATINGS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8. — US opinion polls have indicated that President George W Bush was lagging behind Democrat Mr John Kerry, who is ahead of other Democratic presidential hopefuls, by five points. A survey released by *Newsweek* magazine found Mr Kerry would beat Mr Bush 50 per cent to 45 per cent among registered voters, if the US elections were held today. Separately, the poll found Mr Bush's rating slipping to 48 per cent, the lowest level since February 2001. — PTI

extreme. We're the ones who are mainstream."

Mr Kerry added: "Mr George Bush's days are numbered — and change is coming to America."

Aides said the speech was designed to reassure the party faithful he would fight far harder against Republican attacks than

Mr Michael Dukakis, the former Massachusetts Governor who lost the 1988 polls to Mr Bush's father, Mr George HW Bush.

Mr Dean, the fallen Democratic front-runner, had his best showing of the campaign season. He finished second in Washington with 30 per

cent of the vote and was a distant runner-up in Michigan. But that was cold comfort for the former Vermont Governor, whose once promising campaign unraveled further when the head of a major union withdrew his support. Democratic officials said Mr Gerald McEntee, head of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, delivered the news in a meeting in Burlington, Vermont.

Like Mr Dean, Mr Edwards and Mr Clark signaled in advance they had scant hopes for success in yesterday's contests. They aimed their efforts at Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin, states still ahead on the campaign calendar.

Maine, with 24 delegates at stake, was holding caucuses today.

Returns from 97 per cent of Washington's precincts showed Mr Kerry with 49 per cent and Mr Dean with 30 per cent. Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio had eight per cent; Mr Edwards had seven per cent and Mr Clark had three per cent.

WSO
13
8/2

Bush names panel to probe WMD intelligence bungle

Washington: President George W. Bush has named a seven-member independent, bipartisan commission to investigate pre-war intelligence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction over which the US went to war and related 21st century threats.

Co-chaired by Governor and former Democratic senator Chuck Robb and retired judge Laurence Silberman, the commission will "compare what the Iraq survey group learns with the information we had prior to our Operation Iraqi Freedom," Mr Bush said. "Some prewar intelligence assessments by America and other nations about Iraq's weapon stockpiles have not been confirmed. We are determined to figure out why," Mr Bush said in a brief statement at the White House on Friday. "We are also determined to make sure that American intelligence is as accurate as

possible for every challenge in the future." "It will examine intelligence on weapons of mass destruction and related 21st century threats and issue specific recommendations to ensure that American capabilities are strong," Mr Bush said adding that it would review US intelligence on weapons programs in North Korea and Iran.

"It will also examine our intelligence on the threats posed by Libya and Afghanistan before recent changes in those countries," the US President said. The commission is to submit its report by March 31, 2005 —well after the November presidential elections.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair has also set up an independent inquiry to examine pre-war intelligence under former cabinet secretary Lord Butler.

Democrats' thumbdown:

Congressional Democrats have however said that Mr Bush's appointment of a commission falls short of their demands for an independent probe of why prewar claims about Saddam Hussein's weapons programmes now appear to have been wrong.

Although a former Democratic senator and governor, Charles Robb of Virginia, will serve as the panel's co-chairman, the Democrats say the panel cannot be truly independent if all nine members were selected by Mr Bush, a Republican. Retired Gen. Wesley Clark, a presidential candidate, said Mr Bush was using the panel to affix blame to the intelligence community instead of the policy-makers,

including the President, who used the information to make decisions.

'White-collar' killings:

A media report on Saturday said that hundreds of intellectuals and midlevel administrators have been killed in Iraq since May 2003 in a widening campaign against the country's professional class.

'White-collar' killings are separate from and in some ways more insidious than settling of scores with former Baath party officials, or the singling-out of police officers and others thought to be collaborating with the occupation, the *New York Times* quoted American and Iraqi officials as saying. By silencing urban professionals, an army spokesperson said the guerrillas are waging war on Iraq's fledgling institutions and progress itself. The dead include doctors, lawyers and judges. Agencies

IRAQ
UPDATE

Bush justifies Iraq war

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6. — Defending the war in Iraq as “an act of justice”, US President Mr George W Bush has said he had no regrets despite the failure to find weapons of mass destruction there.

“Knowing what I knew then, and knowing what I know today, America did the right thing in Iraq,” he told a hand-picked crowd on the dock of Charleston Harbour yesterday.

Without citing new evidence, Mr Bush renewed his assertion that Iraq posed a direct threat to the USA, even though nine months of looking for weapons of mass destruction has turned up no nuclear, chemical or biological stockpiles.

“When you’re the commander-in-

Rumsfeld rebuttal

MUNICH, Feb. 6. — US defence secretary Mr Donald Rumsfeld has said there was no discrepancy between CIA director Mr George Tenet’s views on Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and those of his chief weapons inspector.

“The only difference, if someone is looking for daylight, the question is: is the glass half full or half empty?” he said.

Mr Tenet defended the US intelligence community’s performance in a speech to students at Georgetown University only a week after his chief weapons inspector Mr David Kay stunned the administration by declaring before a Senate committee hearing, “We were all wrong.” — AFP

chief, you have to be willing to make the tough calls and to see your deci-

sions through,” he said, adding, “America is safer when our commitments are clear, our word is good, and our will is strong. And that is the only way I know how to lead.”

Mr Bush’s speech was his most detailed defence of his decision since Mr David Kay, who resigned last month as chief of the Iraq Survey Group, declared that the intelligence was wrong and Iraq had no stockpiles of unconventional weapons on the eve of war. Mr Bush, however, repeated that the ousted Iraqi dictator has posed “a gathering threat”.

“The facts are becoming clearer,” he pointed out. “As the chief weapons inspector remarked, we have not yet found the stockpiles of weapons that we thought were there. Yet, the Survey Group has uncovered some of what the dictator was up to.”

CIA chief hits out at President

The Times, London

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6. — The CIA never claimed that Saddam Hussein posed an imminent threat to America in the run-up to the Iraq war, its director, Mr George Tenet, said yesterday.

The agency has been widely blamed for feeding President Bush wrong intelligence about Iraq’s weapons programmes. But Mr Tenet’s fierce defence of the role played by US intelligence immediately threw the spotlight back on the White House.

Before the invasion, Mr Bush and senior members of his war Cabinet frequently cited the CIA’s October 2002 report on Iraq’s weapons capability



Mr George Tenet

to make the case for war. The President used it to claim the threat posed by Saddam and his weapons of mass destruction was “urgent”. Mr Dick Cheney, Vice-President, called it “mortal”. Mr Donald Rumsfeld described it as “immediate”. Mr Ari Flei-

scher, Mr Bush’s former spokesman, when asked before the war if the threat was “imminent”, replied: “Absolutely”.

Mr Tenet and the CIA are expected to be blamed in a forthcoming Senate report for a spectacular failure in pre-war intelligence gathering, which will effectively absolve the White House for the subsequent failure to find any illegal weapons in Iraq. It will be similar in tone to the assessment delivered to Congress last week by Mr David Kay, who led the hunt for Saddam’s weapons until he resigned last month. He said stockpiles of illegal weapons almost certainly did not exist at the time of the invasion, but blamed bad Intelli-

gence, not the White House, for claiming otherwise.

Yesterday, Mr Tenet hit back hard. “Let me be clear,” he said. “Analysts differed on several important aspects of these programmes, and those debates were spelled out in the (October 2002) estimate. They never said there was an imminent threat.”

His analysts actually “painted an objective assessment for our policy makers of a brutal dictator who was continuing his efforts to deceive and build programmes that might constantly surprise us and threaten our interests.”

As Mr Tenet spoke, Mr Bush was offering his clearest acknowledgement to date that Saddam possessed no illegal weapons.

Outsourcing of jobs becomes a poll issue in U.S.

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 6. Outsourcing of jobs, especially the hi-tech ones to such countries as India, Russia, China and Brazil is becoming a political hot potato in an election year in the United States as Democratic Presidential candidates seem to be vying with one another for media attention and accusing the Bush administration of being soft on the issue. The *San Jose Mercury News* has quoted Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, Democratic front-run-

ner, as denouncing the Bush administration for basically rewarding the "Benedict Arnold CEOs" who move "profit and jobs" overseas. Benedict Arnold is seen as a 'traitor' who defected from the ranks of the revolutionaries to join the British colonialists.

Mr. Kerry has said that while he is not for banning outsourcing *per se*, he is definitely for giving incentives and closing every loophole so as to make businesses stay in the U.S. Last November, the Massachusetts politician introduced a bill that would require

Call Centres to disclose their locations.

The Congress with the Senate recently introduced an amendment that banned federal contract to vendors that use jobs overseas. Basically, the Senate amendment was quite narrow and was put in an omnibus spending bill to prevent federal unions from claiming that their jobs were being sent overseas.

Analysts and diplomats see in all these an attempt by politicians to ratchet up the rhetoric that would sound good in their constituencies.

Law-makers are also seeking to address 'abuses' in such visas as the L-1A and the L-1B. Generally, there seems to be the consensus among Republicans and Democrats that the L visa system needed to be monitored closely. However, it remains to be seen if law-makers are keen to push for numerical caps.

Those pushing for limitations, both inside and outside the political establishment, point to the 'abuses' in at least two areas -- on the kind of interpretation made of "specialised knowledge," and in trying to circumvent the restrictions on the H-1B visa. On outsourcing, there is the realisation that there are no hard statistics or even how much it is that the U.S. stands to lose over the next several years. One estimate is that of the 2.4 million jobs lost since the beginning of the recession in 2001, some 300,000 can be attributed to it; and the *San Jose Mercury News* talks of a University of California (Berkeley) report that has estimated that some 14 million U.S. service jobs are at risk.

More wins for Kerry

Press Trust of India

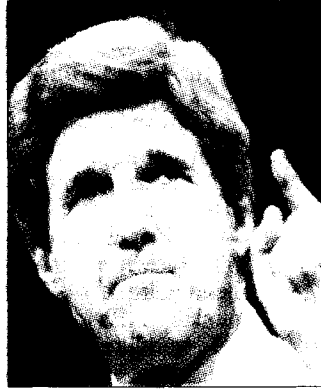
NEW YORK, Feb. 4. — Front-runner Democratic presidential candidate Senator John Kerry moved closer to his dream to challenge President George W Bush in the November polls as he scored major victories in five of the seven states where primaries were held in the latest round.

Sen. Kerry got the boost at a time when opinion polls show that Democrats consider him most capable of beating Mr Bush, a Republican, to wrest the White House and that calculation, analysts say, made him the favourite candidate.

Sen. Kerry's rival, Mr John Edwards, scored a decisive win in his native South Carolina where half of the population is black, and Mr Wesley Clark managed to win neighbouring Oklahoma yesterday to keep their hopes alive. But Mr Joseph Lieberman, who was vice presidential candidate in 2000, bowed out of the race after he failed to win even a single state from among nine states which have held primaries and caucuses so far.

Sen. Kerry, who has won seven of the nine states, is now projecting himself as a national candidate and contending others are just regional ones.

Former Governor of Vermont Mr Howard Dean, who was once considered the front-runner, had miserable showing but he plans to keep his candi-



Sen. John Kerry

dacy alive.

Sen. Kerry, who had earlier won in Iowa and New Hampshire, scored victories in Missouri, Arizona, North Dakota, New Mexico and Delaware. Under the Democratic party rules, each contestant gets delegates according to the percentage of votes received and thus those in second or third place remain in field till towards the end. The delegates formally select the candidate at their convention.

Poll puts Democrat ahead

Mr Bush yesterday suffered some of the worst ratings of his presidency, suggesting that he faces a tougher-than-expected battle for re-election, adds The Times, London.

A Gallup poll shows Mr Bush losing a presidential poll today against Mr Kerry by 46-53 per cent. Mr John Edwards, the North Carolina Senator, also currently leads Mr Bush in a head-to-head by 49-48 per cent.

THE STATESMAN

15 FEB 2004

Kerry wins five more States, Lieberman bows out of race

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 4. Senator John Kerry is keeping up the momentum for the Democratic Presidential nomination. On Tuesday night, the Massachusetts politician picked up five out of the seven States that were holding contests including those with a large number of delegates such as Missouri and Arizona.

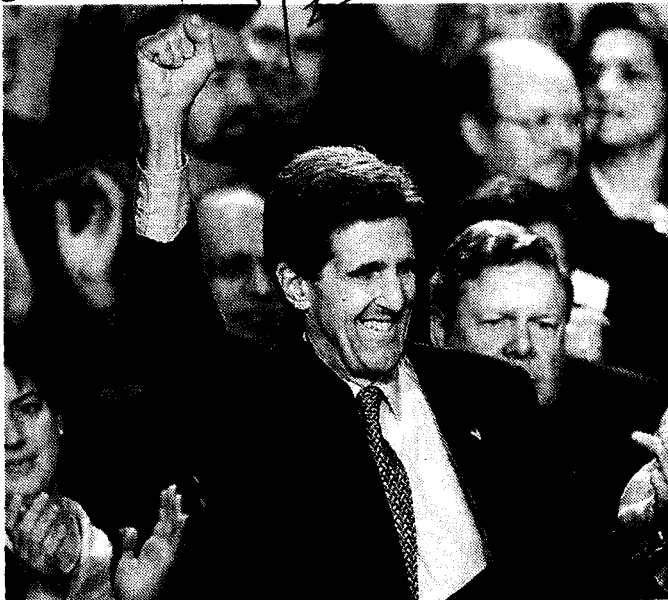
Senator John Edwards is keeping his White House dreams going with a solid win in South Carolina; the political novice by way of the retired General Wesley Clark appears to have won in Oklahoma; the former Governor of Vermont, Howard Dean won nothing other than a handful of delegates; and the Senator from Connecticut, Joseph Lieberman, is gracefully bowing out of the race having failed to win anywhere. "I have decided to-

night to end my quest for the Presidency", Mr. Lieberman told his supporters calling his decision "difficult, but realistic".

That was not to be the case of any others who failed to make it to the top. For instance, Mr. Dean has said that his campaign will continue. "This is all about who gets the most delegates in Boston in July, and it's going to be us", the Vermonter told his backers.

But the night belonged to Mr. Kerry whose strong showing of the day has undoubtedly given a major boost to his campaign as it takes on a tougher and wider road in the days ahead. The campaigns now hit the road to Michigan and the state of Washington this Saturday; and eventually to Tennessee and Virginia that go to the primaries next Tuesday.

The Massachusetts Senator who dubbed himself as "Comeback Kerry" after a stunning win in Iowa which was followed by New Hampshire



The Democratic presidential hopeful, John Kerry, after winning five of the seven States in Tuesday's primaries. — AP

came away with a clear win in Arizona, Delaware, Missouri, North Dakota and New Mexico with the biggest catch being that of Missouri with 74 delegates going to the Democratic Convention in Boston this Summer.

Senator Edwards is obviously making a lot out of his victory in South Carolina which is traditionally seen as the 'gateway' to the South. Further the contests for Tuesday involved states for the first time that had significant minority populations be it African American in South Carolina or the Hispanic voters in Arizona and New Mexico. Of the 269 delegates that were up for grabs Mr. Kerry will end up with about one half; and Mr. Edwards by about 25 per cent.

The rest will go to Gen Clark, Mr. Dean and the only African American in the pack, the Reverend Al Sharpton.

A candidate needs 2161 delegates to win the party nomination this July.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2004

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KERRY AS FAVOURITE

UNITED STATES SENATOR John F. Kerry has emerged as the favourite to win the nomination of the Democratic Party for the 2004 presidential election after back-to-back victories in the Iowa caucus and the New Hampshire primary. It was not just the impressive margins by which Mr. Kerry defeated the second-placed candidates that made him the strongest of the seven contenders in the intra-party polls. In restoring vibrancy to a campaign that was floundering until the eve of the Iowa caucus on January 20, he displayed the political skill and stamina necessary for the long haul. The primary process moves into uncharted territory on Tuesday when party sympathisers in seven States register their preferences. As a Massachusetts politician, Mr. Kerry will have to stake out his positions on issues such as race that were not very salient in the first two phases of the nomination process. Candidates from the southern States, such as General Wesley Clark and Senator John Edwards, can hope to push forward from the third place they currently occupy. Dr. Howard Dean, who managed to hang on to the second place in New Hampshire, retains the support of radicals within the Democratic base while the party's organisational leadership has not as yet wholly endorsed any of the candidates. However, the force is currently with Mr. Kerry and it has helped him garner funds and endorsements from leading figures of the centre-left in American politics.

The Democratic faithful and independents who voted in the primaries have indicated that a candidate's electability in the presidential polls will be a prime consideration when they choose a nominee. These voters appear determined to ensure that President George W. Bush is defeated in the November elections. They are likely to throw their weight behind a candidate who can draw support from a broad spectrum

of the American public even if they do not subscribe to the specifics of the policies he enunciates. The electability factor has also shaped the positions that the Democratic party as a whole takes on major issues. It will try to erase the widely shared perception that it is not a sufficiently staunch defender of national security. However, Democrats have realised that the recklessly unilateral approach the Bush administration has taken towards international affairs has alarmed so many uncommitted voters that an opponent who promises a strong, yet sober foreign policy stands a sporting chance of winning the election. In General Clark and Mr. Kerry, a decorated Vietnam veteran who became a leader of the anti-war movement, the centre-left has two candidates with the right credentials. The pro-rich economic and fiscal policies that Mr. Bush implemented during his term in office can stretch the appeal of a Democratic candidate beyond the party's traditional base.

Mr. Bush, who is assured of the Republican party's nomination, appeared to have launched his campaign with the State of the Union address. In this address Mr. Bush emphasised his performance as the commander-in-chief in the period after September 11, 2001 and tried to revive his image as a "compassionate conservative" by announcing a series of welfare measures. However, the managers of the Bush campaign appear to have misread the political situation. They calculated that Dr. Dean, who defied majority opinion by opposing the Iraq war, would be the Democratic front-runner and that he would not be able to upstage the President on either the national security or domestic issues. Mr. Bush might have to recalibrate his approach as the Democrats lean towards a nominee who does not shun the use of military force, yet promises to conduct the nation's affairs in a mature and even-handed manner.

THE HINDU

2 FEB 2004

Outsourcing and its fallout

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

IT WAS a small paragraph tucked away in a massive and overdue spending bill that had its share of politics and pork barrel projects. But what the United States Senate cleared recently by way of an Omnibus Spending measure, and the White House okayed, has ramifications for countries such as India even if the immediate economic impact is passed off as being marginal or little.

"An activity or function of an executive agency that is converted to contractor performance under Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76 may not be performed by the contractor at a location outside the United States except to the extent that such activity or function was previously performed by Federal Government employees outside the United States" read the relevant portion of the bill.

It is the first Federal Law against outsourcing and the relevant amendment came from two prominent Republican Senators, George Voinovich of Ohio and Craig Thomas of Iowa, and other law-makers who argued that it was necessary to protect unionised government jobs from being moved overseas in the same fashion as private companies have been shifting other jobs such as call centre operations and software developers.

The recently passed legislation targets only U.S. Federal agency contracts that are outsourced; and the law is valid only until September

30, 2004. But what have to be kept in mind are the political and economic implications of a precedent that has now been set. Will the law-makers eventually set their eyes on private sector outsourcing in itself? And is there a definite possibility of the pre-

vention, taking on Congress frontally and being upfront against the amendment would have risked the law becoming India-specific. Hence a strategy of working behind the scenes was devised — talking and

their agenda argue that the U.S. has been quite lax to the loss of technology jobs overseas since the 1990s, and marshal their case with a slew of statistics. One argument being that by 2015, more than three million white collar jobs with a value of about \$136 billion would have shifted out of the U.S. to low-cost countries.

The more sensible economic message does not seem to matter either for the short or the long terms for the simple reason that politicians want to have the cake and eat it too.

For example, an argument has been advanced saying the cash-strapped States in America do not want to lose track of the savings made by way of outsourcing, and, at the same time, do not wish to see jobs moving out.

The "O" word is here to stay. With this being an election year in both India and the United States, it may even become one of the contentious issues in the bilateral agenda.

The Bush administration, for all its talk of free trade and opposition to any moves to curb outsourcing, will be quite wary of taking on the law-makers at a politically sensitive time.

And at least one Democratic presidential aspirant, John Kerry, has strong views on the subject. The Senator from Massachusetts says that he is not for banning outsourcing but has vowed to "close every single loophole that gives companies incentives to move jobs abroad."

The new U.S. legislation targets only the federal agency contracts that are outsourced; but it has larger ramifications for countries such as India.

writing to relevant officials in the Commerce Department, members of Congress, in the Senate and in the House of Representatives, and roping in the industry.

The bottom line message that was being conveyed all along was that while India stood to be affected, the interests of the U.S. would also be hurt in the long run.

In the context of the latest development on outsourcing, the economic impact on a country such as India is said to be "little" in the sense that the ban on federal contract outsourcing could be around a mere two per cent of the country's software exports.

But the larger worry is over the "precedent value." Several States — between eight and 12 — are actually trying their hand at legislation to restrict outsourcing all over again.

Those at the Federal and State levels who have anti-outsourcing as

sent law being renewed beyond September 30, 2004?

In all this, one cannot ignore the election year environment, in which American law-makers place a premium on districts or constituents as opposed to any academic or intellectual debate on the benefits of free trade.

The federal enactment has not come about suddenly. Nor has it caught countries such as India by surprise. In fact, Senator Voinovich and others had their way last October itself with regard to the Treasury and Transportation Bill and if it did not materialise at that time it was on account of difference in the House language over the bill. And last year, several States introduced Outsourcing Bills and all of them failed to become laws.

The writing was there on the wall for all to see. But could official India in Washington have done anything

DEAN SECOND IN NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY

Kerry wins key US vote

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Associated Press

MANCHESTER (New Hampshire), Jan. 28. — Mr John Kerry overpowered Mr Howard Dean to win New Hampshire's primary, scoring a second-straight campaign victory to establish himself as the front-runner in the Democratic race that will decide who will challenge Mr George W Bush for the presidency.

"I ask Democrats everywhere to join us so we can defeat Mr Bush and the economy of privilege," Mr Kerry told supporters cheered by his political revival following his victory in the Iowa vote last week.

He promised to "reduce the poverty of millions rather than reducing the taxes of millionaires."

Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina and former Nato commander Wesley Clark attled for third in Tuesday's vote, but far behind both Mr Kerry at 39 per cent and Mr Dean at 26 per cent. Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, sagging to fifth place, rejected advice from some advisers to abandon his bid.

After trooping through coffee shops, country stores and living rooms of Iowa and New Hampshire, the first two states to hold ballots, the candidates now move to the cold realities of a national campaign — airport rallies and multimillion-dollar ad buys in seven states holding contests next Tuesday.

Mr Kerry, who reshaped the race with his stunning win in Iowa's caucuses on 19 January, pledged to carry his momentum to



Mr John Kerry celebrates his victory in the New Hampshire primary on Tuesday. — AFP

every state.

"It's an enormous victory, a huge turnaround," Mr Kerry said yesterday. "We were written off for months, and plugged on and showed people the determination we have to defeat President Bush."

"Tonight is another step in the winnowing process," said Democratic Party chairman Mr Terry McAuliffe. He has said no candidate can survive without a victory in Iowa, New Hampshire or one of seven states holding contests on 3 February.

THE STATESMAN

27 JAN 2004

USA names new WMD adviser

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24. — The USA has named a new inspector for the search of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction after its veteran investigator expressed scepticism that Saddam Hussein's regime possessed the arms.

CIA director Mr George Tenet has named Mr Charles Duelfer to succeed Mr David Kay to lead the search for WMDs in Iraq. Mr Kay resigned from his position saying there was no evidence to prove that Iraq had any large stockpiles of chemical or biological weapons after the 1991 war.

"I don't think they (WMDs) existed," Mr Kay told reporters. "What everyone was talking about is stockpiles produced after the end of the last (1991) Gulf War, and I don't think there was a large-scale production programme in the nineties," he said.

The CIA announced that Mr Duelfer, who has previously expressed doubts that unconventional weapons would be found, would succeed Mr Kay as Washington's chief arms hunter for the coalition.

Mr Kay said he left the post due to a "complex set of issues. It related in part to a reduction in the resource and a change in focus of the Iraq Survey Group," which is in charge of the weapons hunt which many have already begun to say is a wild goose chase.

3 Iraqis killed in car bomb attack: Three Iraqis were killed and 38 others wounded today when a car bomb exploded in a crowded area outside a courthouse in the northern Iraqi city of Samarra, police said.

The blast occurred just as a two-man UN security team began a mission in Iraq, ending a three-month absence of UN international staff since a spate of deadly attacks last year.

Meanwhile, a roadside bomb exploded today west of Baghdad, killing two American soldiers, the US military command said.

Halliburton repays \$6.3 m

Oil services giant Halliburton has said it had repaid the US government \$6.3 million after a storm erupted over allegations that two of its employees involved in Iraq took kickbacks that resulted in overbilling.

Pr
29/1

First step to US law against outsourcing

WS(1)

Washington, Jan. 23 (PTI): In the first federal law against outsourcing, the US Senate has passed a legislation barring American companies from giving sub-contracts to India and other countries to cut costs.

The measure, originally sponsored by the Republican senator from Ohio, George Voinovich, and others, was included in a \$328-billion spending bill passed by the Senate.

Under the measure, when the federal government awards contracts to an American firm, that company cannot farm out sub-contracts to a source outside the country.

The measure avoids challenging the government's right to give projects to contractors. But it ensures that contracts cannot be further let out to India, China, Russia or other countries to cut costs.

Generally, what is included in such "omnibus" bills adopted in

a hurry when a budget measure is long overdue, as in this case, is not changed later. Nor does the President veto it.

The provision is the first federal legislation to limit companies from performing contracted work outside the country since outsourcing became an emotive political issue in the US a year ago. Voinovich had been working on the bill for some time.

Chambers of commerce and other business groups said the move would undercut the ability of US companies to compete with overseas rivals.

Companies which outsource offshore point out that such action benefits not just countries like India but even domestic industry which needs to compete globally. They say outsourcing helps them as much, if not more than the foreign countries.

Voinovich's bill was adopted by the Senate before it takes a recess, but could not be sent to

President George W. Bush for signature because a companion House bill was slightly different.

Under Congressional rules, a bill to be sent to the President must be identical in both Houses. To avoid having the bill thrown out, Voinovich attached the bill to the Treasury and Transportation Spending Bill.

Analysts believe that if an Indian company starts an outfit in the US, it is equally entitled, as any "American" company, to bid for contracts or take sub-contracts.

Speaking to a four-member delegation of the US-India Political Committee during his visit here earlier this week, external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha said outsourcing helped both the US and India.

At the same time, India would try to ensure it ends its dependence on a few nations, keeping in view the growing US resistance to outsourcing.

শান্তিকল্যাণের স্বপ্ন ও সত্য

মার্কিন কংগ্রেসে বার্ষিক 'স্টেট অব দি ইউনিয়ন' ভাষণ দিতে গিয়া প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ ডবলিউ বুশ একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কথা স্মরণ করাইয়া দিয়াছেন। ১১ সেপ্টেম্বরের ২০০১-এর পর মার্কিন ভূখণ্ডের উপর আর কোনও সন্ত্রাসী হামলা হয় নাই ঠিকই, তাহা বলিয়া সন্ত্রাসের মেঘ কাটিয়া যাইবার স্বপ্ন যাঁহারা দেখিতেছেন, তাঁহারা কিন্তু বাস করিতেছেন নিতান্তই এক মুর্খের স্বর্গে। বিপদের কালো ছায়া প্রচ্ছন্ন হইলেও প্রতি মুহূর্ত আমেরিকার চতুর্দিক ঘিরিয়া আছে, এবং বুশের শপথ, তিনি এই ভয়ঙ্কর ছায়ার তলে এক মুহূর্তও নিশ্চিন্তে তিষ্ঠাইবেন না। স্বভাবতই বুশ নিজের আগ্রাসী 'শান্তি'পথের প্রতি সমর্থন আদায়ের জন্যই এই কথাগুলি বলিয়াছেন, দেশবাসীকে তাঁহার প্রবল বিদেশ নীতির প্রয়োজনীয়তা স্মরণ করাইয়া দিয়াছেন। মনে করাইয়াছেন যে, সন্ত্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে কেবল আইনশৃঙ্খলা জোরদার করিবার প্রসারধীন নীতি প্রণয়নই যথেষ্ট নয়, দরকার দাঁতের বদলে দাঁত, যুদ্ধের বিরুদ্ধে যুদ্ধ। বুশের এই প্রবল নীতি গ্রহণযোগ্য কি না, সে বিষয়ে তর্ক চলিতেও পারে, কিন্তু যে বিষয়ে তর্কের কোনও অবকাশই নাই তাহা হইল আপাত-শান্তির অনিশ্চয়তা সম্পর্কে তাঁহার সম্যক দূরদৃষ্টি। পৃথিবীজোড়া সন্ত্রাস ও উগ্রপন্থার লীলা এত দিনে ইহা নিশ্চিত ভাবে প্রমাণ করিয়াছে যে, হুদের উপরিভাগ শাস্ত দেখিলেই তাঁহার তলদেশের পরিস্থিতি সম্পূর্ণ বোঝা যায় না, ওই শাস্তির ঠিক তলে তলেই কী বিষম হিংসা দানা বাঁধিতেছে, কত ভয়ানক পরিকল্পনা সংঘটিত হইতেছে, তাহা এত দিনে জানা থাকিবার কথা।

আর কেহ না জানুক, ভারত অন্তত এই আপাত-শান্তিকল্যাণের প্রকৃত চরিত্রটি জানে, বারংবার বহুমূল্য খেপারত দিয়া তাহাকে এই সত্য জানিতে হইয়াছে। সুতরাং প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ যখন বলেন যে, পরিস্থিতির রাশ হাতে থাকিতে থাকিতেই পরিস্থিতিকে তিনি নিজহস্তগত করিতে চান, ভারতের কর্তাদেরও এই কূটনীতি হইতে কিছু শিখিবার আছে। এই মুহূর্তে প্যাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে ভারতের প্রীতিপূর্ণ বিশ্রান্তালাপ চলিতেছে, গত সার্ধশতকের রক্তাক্ত ইতিহাস শেষ করিয়া স্বাভাবিক সম্পর্ক প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্য দুই দেশই অন্তত সরকারি ভাবে নিজেদের আগ্রহ প্রকাশ করিতেছে। কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানের বিষয়ে সাদর্থক উৎসাহ দেখাইতেছে। কিন্তু যতই পালে হাওয়া লাগুক, যতই

সুমধুর বাণী বিতরিত হউক, বাস বাণিজ্য সমঝোতা যতই রমরম করিয়া চলুক, সবই আসলে প্রহেলিকা, সত্য কেবল পরিস্থিতির রাশ হাতে পাওয়া। রক্তের দাগ এখনও মিলাই না। অদূর ভবিষ্যতে রক্তধারা আবারও রিত বেগে প্রবাহিত হইল বলিয়া। এই মনে রাখিয়া এখন একমাত্র কত পরিস্থিতির নিয়ন্ত্রণ আদায় প্রহেলিকার মায়ায় যেন সেই প্রকৃৎ কাজটিতে ভাঁটা না পড়ে, তাহাই কেবল আপাতত দেখিবার।

বস্তুত, ভারত প্যাকিস্তানের হাওয়ায় এখন বাসন্তী বন্ধুত্বের ছোঁওয়া এতটাই যে স্বয়ং প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ 'স্টেট অব দি ইউনিয়ন' ভাষণের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ দিনটিতেই অন্য সব কাজ ফেলিয়া ভারতীয় বিদেশমন্ত্রী যশবন্ত সিন্হাকে অভিনন্দন জানাইয়া গিয়াছেন। কলিন পাওয়েল স্বতঃপ্রণোদিত ভাবে জানাইয়াছেন যে, দুই দেশের সমঝোতায় সহযোগিতা করিতে তাঁহার দেশ প্রস্তুত। গত সার্ক সম্মিলন ও তাহার পরবর্তী দিনগুলিতে অভূতপূর্ব কতগুলি বাকি এখন পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট মুশারফকেও উদাত্ত কণ্ঠে সন্ত্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে জেহাদ ঘোষণা করিতে দেখা গিয়াছে। কিন্তু মুশারফ কতটা তাহা পারিবেন, কতটা পারিতে চাহিবেন, এ সবই কিন্তু এখনও অতল জলের গহ্বরে। সাম্প্রতিকতম ভাষণে বুশের আর একটি বচন এই প্রসঙ্গে স্মরণীয় যে, কূটনীতি তখনই বিশ্বাসযোগ্য, আস্থায়োগ্য, যখন 'কথা'র কিছু মূল্য থাকে। মুশারফের 'কথা' কতটা মূল্যবান, তাহা এখনও প্রমাণসাপেক্ষ। বুশের মতে, ইরাকের সঙ্গে যে কূটনীতি খাটিল না, আর লিবিয়ার সঙ্গে কূটনীতি যে আশাতিরিক্ত রকম কার্যকরী হইল, এই দ্বৈতের মূলে সেই 'কথা'র পৃথক দামই রহিয়াছে। সুতরাং, মুশারফের দেশের সঙ্গেও শেষ পর্যন্ত ভারত কোন ভূমিতে গিয়া দাঁড়াইবে, কাশ্মীরের কী গতি হইবে, সবই নির্ভর করিতেছে মুশারফ কথাকে কতটা গুরুত্ব দিতেছেন, এবং কথাকে কার্বে পরিণত করিবার দম ও ক্ষমতা কতটা তাঁহার আছে, এই দুই বিষয়ের উপরেই। কেবল সাবধানতা অবলম্বন নয়, মুশারফকে সদভিমুখে ঠেলিতে এ বিষয়ে ভারতীয় পক্ষে যথেষ্ট প্রত্যাশনমতিত্বও দরকার। বাজপেয়ী সরকারের তাহা আছে তো? এ বিষয়ে দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার দুই প্রতিবেশী বাস্তবোচিত শান্তিপথে অগ্রসর করাইবার সাধ্য ও সাধ্য প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ তথা তাঁহার প্রশাসনের আছে তো? দৃশ্যত, তাঁহারা সে পথেই হাঁটিতেছেন। তবে, ফলেন পরিচায়তে।

US needs no permission for war: Bush

Agencies
Washington, January 21

A DEFIANT US President Bush unapologetically defended his decision to invade Iraq last year, insisting it had made the US safer and vowing never to seek permission to wage war in self-defence.

Taking on critics who argue that George Bush acted alone and in the face of an unproven threat, he said he would not shy from conflict even if, after wooing friends and allies to the cause, he lacked broad support.

"From the beginning, America has sought international support for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and we have gained much support," Bush said in his final State of the Union address before he seeks re-election November 2. He maintained there was no doubt the overthrow of Saddam Hussein had boosted the security of the US, West Asia and the world in general.

He ignored criticism that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction — the threat from which formed the basis for

President meets Iraq leaders

GEORGE W. Bush on Wednesday called in a Shiite leader and also the president of the Iraqi Governing Council in a search for a compromise formula to end the US occupation by July 1. Bush said he still hoped that timetable would hold.

Meanwhile in Baghdad, a missile landed in the sprawling US compound, but caused little damage, a US spokesman said. Unconfirmed reports said one person was injured on the Tuesday night's incident.

Agencies

the decision to go to war against Iraq — have not materialised despite intensive searches by arms inspectors.

Instead, he pointed to discoveries of facilities and equipment in Iraq that may constitute attempts to develop chemical and biological weapons, mass graves and

said the Iraqi people are better off today than they were under Saddam.

In addition, he said the US-led invasion had salvaged the credibility of the UN after Iraq's repeated defiance of more than a decade's worth of Security Council resolutions demanding that he disarm and prove it.

On top of that, he said Saddam's ouster had sent a message to other countries, notably Libya, whose leader, Moamer Kadhafi, renounced weapons of mass destruction in December after nearly a year of secret talks with the US and the UK.

"Nine months of intense negotiations involving the US and Great Britain succeeded with Libya, while 12 years of diplomacy with Iraq did not," Bush said.

"Different threats require different strategies. Along with nations in the region, we are insisting that North Korea eliminate its nuclear programme," he said.

Bush ignored the West Asia peace process in his address, making no mention of the roadmap for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.



AFP

Donald Rumsfeld and Colin Powell greet George W. Bush before the President's State of the Union address on Tuesday.

Kerry wins in Iowa, blow to Dean

Associated Press

DES MOINES (Iowa), Jan. 20. — Senator John Kerry rode an 11th-hour surge to victory in Iowa's kickoff presidential caucuses on Monday, dealing a stunning blow to front-runner Mr Howard Dean in the race to determine the Democratic nominee to run against President George W Bush.

Mr Kerry's comeback blew the contest wide open, setting the stage for a free-for-all in New Hampshire's primary on 27 January.

Sen. John Edwards came in second. Mr Dean, the former Governor of Vermont, finished third, stripped of his front-runner's mantle and humbled — "We're still alive," he said.

Rep. Dick Gephardt finished a weak fourth and planned to end his 33-year political career by pulling out of the race today, which would reduce the field of Democratic candidates to seven.

With 98 per cent of the precincts reporting, Mr Kerry had 38 per cent, Mr Edwards 32 per cent, Mr Dean 18 per cent and Mr Gephardt 11 per cent.

Long-shot candidate Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio was at 1 per cent. His campaign given up for dead just weeks ago, Mr Kerry predicted another comeback in New Hampshire's 27 January primary, where Mr Dean's once-commanding lead in opinion polls has been shrinking.

"As I've said in New Hampshire and here, I'm a fighter," the four-term Mas-



Democratic presidential candidate Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts points to supporters after his victory in the Iowa caucuses in Des Moines, Iowa on Monday. — AFP

sachusetts senator and Vietnam War veteran told The Associated Press. "I've come from behind before and I'm going to take the same fight that I've been making here to New Hampshire."

Mr Edwards, 50, also claimed momentum. "This campaign, this cause, this movement is about bringing real change to America," the North Carolina Senator told supporters.

Caucuses are a series of precinct meetings across the state, held mostly

in public buildings but also in churches and community centres, where local party members choose delegates for the party's national convention this summer. The delegates in turn choose the party's presidential nominee.

When Iowa Democrats stopped counting at the end of the evening, Mr Kerry was with 20 delegates from the state, followed by Mr Edwards with 18 and Mr Dean with seven.

Two other candidates, former Gen.

Wesley Clark and Sen. Joe Lieberman, skipped the Iowa contest to focus on the New Hampshire primary.

Just two weeks ago, before the Iowa race turned testy and tumultuous, Mr Dean and Mr Gephardt sat atop the field in Iowa, with Dean leading in New Hampshire and national polls. Mr Kerry and Me Edwards turned that on its head, closing their campaigns with positive, forward-looking messages while Mr Dean and Mr Gephardt bickered over past votes and quotes.

The stunning result swelled the ranks of candidates with money and momentum, raising the prospect of a nomination fight that will go longer and get nastier than party officials had envisioned. Mr Kerry has plenty of his own money while Mr Dean, Mr Edwards and Gen. Clark have raised millions.

As the race turned to New Hampshire, the Democrats were forced to share the political spotlight with Mr Bush, who planned to lay out his election-year agenda in his State of the Union address today.

Gen. Clark, who rose in New Hampshire polls while Mr Dean slipped in Iowa, turned his sights on Mr Kerry, 60, a decorated Vietnam War veteran.

"He's got military background, but nobody in this race has got the kind of background I've got," the retired four-star general said. "It's one thing to be a hero as a junior officer. He's done that. I respect that ... but I've got the military experience at the top as well as at the bottom."

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WMD debate poses risk to Bush

By David E. Sanger

Washington: The intensifying debate over pre-war American intelligence about Iraq presents President George W. Bush with difficult and risky alternatives as he balances election year politics with calls to overhaul the intelligence apparatus and to restore the nation's credibility around the world.



George Bush

He could order the start of an inquiry about the performance of intelligence agencies, as Democrats and former chief weapons inspector David A. Kay have insisted, but his aides fear that that could prove politically damaging and would almost certainly reopen old wounds with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

He could keep arguing that military action was justified no matter how immediate a threat Saddam Hussein posed, and put off an examination and possible overhaul of America's intelligence operations for another year. But his political team worries that doing so could keep the issue alive through a long campaign.

Or the President and those on his national security team who once described how Mr Hussein could use his stockpiles of weapons to strike at any time could conclude that something went badly wrong during their long march to war.

But the White House does not make a habit of admitting error. And even if Mr Bush vowed to fix what many say is a broken system, his national security aides note, the fix would not be easy.

"They've made a pretty huge mess of it," said one senior Republican who has been talking to Mr Bush's top advisers about what steps to take next. "They wove this giant story, based on intelligence assessments that in hindsight and this is hindsight, remember were wrong."

"It's exposed a huge problem in our intelligence gathering. But who wants to take that on in an election year? Or while you are fighting terrorists?"

White House officials will not talk at length about why they are so deeply hesitant to start an investigation. But they are facing a situation where Democrats are looking for evidence to blame Mr Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney, and some Republicans are looking for evidence to blame George J. Tenet, the director of CIA.

One White House official said on Thursday that there was clearly a risk that an inquiry could spin out of control, exactly what many administration officials fear has happened to the inquiry into the September 11 attacks.

Yet some officials are beginning to argue, in background conversations, that such an investigation is inevitable now that Dr Kay has declared to the Senate that "we were almost all wrong."

The politics of doing what Dr Kay says needs to be done to conduct an inquiry and overhaul the intelligence community before a similar mistake is made over Iran, North Korea or other potential threats that has grown enormously complex.

Many Republicans have a different instinct: To follow Dr Kay's lead and put the blame on the agency's assessments rather than the White House. In their view, that is the best way to insulate Mr Bush from the charge that he cherry-picked the most damaging information. NYT News Service

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