

UK cops shoot man in anti-terror raid

London: British anti-terrorist police, backed up by the bomb squad and officers wearing protective suits, shot a man during a dawn raid on a house in east London on Friday.

Scotland Yard said the man had been wounded after more than 250 officers, acting on intelligence, carried out the raid, one of the biggest since last July's London suicide bombings.

"During the operation, a man was shot by police and has been taken to a nearby hospital," a statement said.

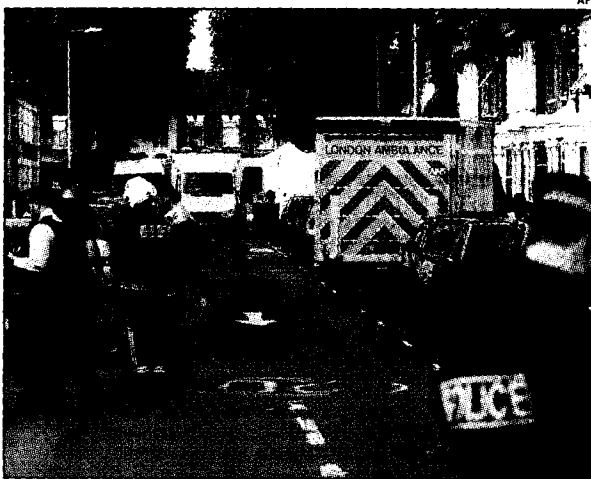
No details about the shot man or what had provoked the raid were given. A 23-year-old man was arrested at the scene and has been taken to a central London police station for questioning.

The shooting incident has been routinely referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission, who said the man's injuries were not life-threatening.

Police said the operation followed close liaison between security services and the Health Protection Agency, a body charged with guarding against infectious diseases.

Sky News, citing unnamed sources, said the raided house had been a suspected bomb factory. Police only confirmed that the raid was not linked to last July's attacks on London's transport system which killed 52 commuters.

Officers wearing chemical, biological and radiological protective clothing were sent to the scene in the ethnically mixed Forest Gate area of the capital while nearby roads



British policemen and medical staff at the site of the incident

were cordoned off.

The bomb disposal unit and riot police were also dispatched to the house in a row of Victorian properties around the corner from a road of shops. "Loads of police came along and broke the windows to get inside the house," said neighbour Nimesh Patel, 14.

"One guy came out with a shot to his shoulder. He was moving and he was dizzy. They gave him some gas and took him away." He said the family who lived at the house with two sons and a daughter were friendly and described them as "very religious".

Student Dimple Hirani, 21, who lives a few doors down from the raided house said: "My parents heard loud bangs which we presumed were gunshots." She said she thought the family were Bangladeshi immigrants. One, whom she had gone to school with, had

recently grown a beard and adopted a more conservative style of dress.

"A lot of lads are doing that now. They are getting more into their religion," she added.

Britain has been on high alert since the attacks last July 7 when four British Islamists blew themselves up on three underground trains and a double decker bus. Two weeks later police said they foiled an identical plot.

London police Commissioner Ian Blair, Britain's most senior officer, has said three terrorism plots have been thwarted since the July bombings and that groups were planning further attacks.

The shooting is the first during an anti-terrorism operation since police shot dead Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes last July as he boarded an underground train in south London. REUTERS

Blair threatens to keep Brown out

VIJAY DUTT
London, May 15

TONY BLAIR has reportedly warned Gordon Brown that he will not endorse him as his successor if he is "deposed" as prime minister before he is ready to stand down.

This latest rumour, in the ongoing effort by rebels in the Labour Party to force Blair to quit at the earliest, coincides with the speculation that John Reid, the new home secretary and a close ally of Blair, is sounding ministers and MPs for his own candidature against Brown.

Blair is said to have issued the threat last week after Brown recalled the way Margaret Thatcher was forced out by her party in 1990, reported *The Independent*. Brown had told GMTV, "Remember that when Margaret Thatcher left, it was unstable, it was disorderly and it was undignified." Blair is said to have viewed Brown's remarks as a "naked threat" to force him out of office.

If this is even half true, Brown will have much to worry about. Despite his falling popularity ratings, Blair still has control over a large number of MPs, estimated to be over 60, who owe him

their privileges and perks as heads of various committees.

Former senior minister Claire Short, a severe critic of Blair, admitted on BBC that it might not be easy to get 72 Labour MPs, the number required for demanding election of a new leader, to raise the banner of revolt. This shows clearly that even now there is no immediate danger to Blair from within the party.

Blairites, however, deny they plan to put up a rival candidate against Brown. Even friends of Reid dismissed reports that he was canvassing support for a leadership bid. But this does not contradict the report about the threat.

One Downing Street insider is reported to have said, "Tony is not going to run a candidate against Gordon."

But if he is deposed, he will not support him." If Blair carried out such a threat, it would make it harder for Brown to win votes in Middle Britain. The latest speculation doing the rounds is that Blair will stand down in the summer of next year, allowing Brown to become Labour leader and Prime Minister at the Labour Party's annual conference in September.



Tony Blair (above) and Gordon Brown
No love lost



AFP

London mayor blasted for hosting Chavez

LONDON MAYOR Ken Livingstone's decision to host Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez at a City Hall lunch on Monday was branded "disgraceful" by the leader of the city's conservative opposition, Bob Neill. "I believe this

man (Chavez) should be shunned by every moderate regime, not wined and dined like a legitimate world leader," Neill said. Radical Left-winger Chavez (seen addressing a gathering at London's City Hall in the picture) has angered

Reuters, London

Bush, Blair admit to mistakes

U.S. President regrets Abu Ghraib abuse, tough comments on Iraqi militants

WASHINGTON: U.S. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair admitted that "mistakes" and "missteps" had been made in Iraq, but insisted the world must support the new Baghdad government.

Distress at events

During an extraordinary 50-minute White House press conference on Thursday, the political brothers-in-arms expressed distress at many aspects of the campaign which brought down Saddam Hussein but also undermined their own popularity.

Mr. Bush expressed regret for the Abu Ghraib prison scandal and some of his tough-talking comments. Mr. Blair said the "de-Ba'athification" of Iraq —

the clearing out of Saddam followers — had been badly handled. There was none of the determined bravado that marked earlier press conferences after their regular meetings over the past three years.

"No question that the Iraq war has created a sense of consternation here in America," said Mr. Bush. "I mean, when you turn on your TV screens and see innocent people die day in and day out, it affects the mentality of our country".

"Not everything since liberation has turned out as the way we had expected or hoped. We've learned from our mistakes, adjusted our methods and have built on our successes."

Mr. Bush said he should not



U.S. President George Bush (right) and British Prime Minister Tony Blair in Washington on Thursday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

have made gung-ho comments such as "bring 'em on" when referring to the militants in July 2003 as the attacks on U.S. troops and Iraqi civilians mounted. "I learned some les-

sons about expressing myself maybe in a little more sophisticated manner," he declared.

Both leaders have seen their public standings collapse over the past year, in large part because of the war, but both insist they were right to order the March, 2003 invasion.

"The decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power was controversial. We did not find the weapons of mass destruction that we all believed were there, and that's raised questions about whether the sacrifice in Iraq has been worth it," Mr. Bush said.

"Despite setbacks and missteps, I strongly believe we did and are doing the right thing," he added. — AFP

27 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

Blair changes policy to please Bush

TOBY HARMEN AND
PATRICK HENNESSY

Washington/London, May 28: Tony Blair made significant changes to one of his most important foreign policy speeches after bowing to American objections, *The Daily Telegraph* has learned.

The Prime Minister changed key passages on possible action against Iran, climate change, and a proposed shake-up of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Objections by President George W. Bush's inner circle

played a key role in the alterations, which were made just before Blair delivered his landmark address at Georgetown University in Washington, on Friday. British sources have revealed.

Only three hours before the speech was delivered, Downing Street officials were briefing journalists that Blair would stress that "change should not be imposed" on Iran, reflecting the British view that bombing or invading Iran is not a realistic option.

US officials had insisted, however, that the possibility of military action remained "on



Blair and Bush: King and emperor?

the table", arguing that this helped to exert maximum pressure on Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. By the time he made his speech, Blair had significantly

bowed to the American position, claiming "I am not saying we should impose change" and leaving the door open for a military attack.

He also backed away from a planned demand for a change in the running of the world's biggest financial institutions, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Blair originally intended to spell out a plan for Europe and the US to give up their exclusive rights to install their own nationals as heads of the bank and the IMF respectively.

Instead, his speech glossed over the issues, merely citing a

"powerful case for reform". Another planned section was intended to take a tough line on global warming and the Kyoto Treaty, which Washington still has not signed.

In the event, Blair merely claimed: "We must act on climate change", but did not go into detail. At this point, as a mobile telephone rang in the audience, he even made a joke about American interference. "I hope that isn't the White House telling me they don't agree with that," he said. "They act very quickly, these guys."

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

29 MAY 2006

THE TELEGRAPH

Blair boots, demotes and clips wings

Straw shunted, Clarke sacked, Prescott loses powers

WHO GOES WHERE...



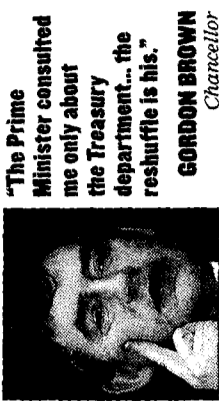
John Reid (right) replaces Charles Clarke as Home Secy



Jack Straw (left) makes way for Margaret Beckett



Dy PM John Prescott (left) loses dept brief to Ruth Kelly



"The Prime Minister consulted me only about the Treasury department... the reshuffle is his."
GORDON BROWN
Chancellor

without a job. Guilty of letting 1,023 foreign convicts go free instead of deporting them, Clarke had been on the way out. He was offered another, possibly more junior, job, but chose to go while swearing loyalty to Blair. Not thinking it "appropriate" to stay in government, Clarke decided to return to the backbenches, where he

him and given to Ruth Kelly, but he remained the Deputy Prime Minister. But no one could fathom why the high-profile Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, handed the faceless job of the leader of the House of Commons. Robin Cook had been shunted to the same post, but that had come after Cook became a virulent Blair critic. There are rumours that Straw's downfall came after Blair got wind that he had told the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice that he disagreed with the Iraq War policy.

Margaret Beckett will become the first female foreign secretary, rewarded for years of loyalty to Blair. The leader of the Commons, Geoff Hoon, is to be made Europe minister, taking over from Douglas Alexander. The Guardian reported that Gordon Brown — Chancellor of the Exchequer and Blair's successor at 10 Downing — was not consulted about the changes, except where the Treasury was involved. The chancellor told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme that he had played no part in the process, saying it was completely "his (Blair's) reshuffle".

Blair's Labour Party, staggering after weeks of headlines about scandals and ministerial incompetence, suffered disastrous results in the local polls, having lost more than 200 councillors and relinquished control of 16 town halls. The party was projected to win 26 per cent of the vote, behind the Tories at 40 per cent and the Liberal Democrats on 27 per cent. The local polls were being seen as a referendum on Blair leadership, and the results prompted Blair to dump his mask of nonchalance and unleash sweeping changes in the Cabinet. At the end of the night of long-knives, the Home Secretary was

POLL DEBACLE AFTERSHOCK

said he would support Blair staying in power for a full term. However, he did add that he "did not agree" that he would have stood in the way of the reform that is needed at the Home Office. John Reid is set to be the new home secretary, with Des Browne replacing him as defence secretary. Prescott, despite his sexual peccadilloes, was expected to retain his grandiose title but lose most of his power. The briefs of transport and local governments were snatched from



AFP
British Prime Minister Tony Blair leaves 10 Downing Street to address the House of Commons.

Straw loses job in post-poll reshuffle

REUTERS

LONDON, MAY 5

PRIME Minister Tony Blair sacrificed two top ministers in a major cabinet shakeup on Friday after the Labour Party recorded one of its worst defeats in a local election since coming to power in 1997.

Foreign Minister Jack Straw and Home Secretary Charles Clarke lost their high-profile jobs while John Prescott, who is Blair's deputy and has been embroiled in a sex scandal, lost his ministry.



British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett. AP

Environment Minister Margaret Beckett takes over from Straw at the Foreign Office while Defence Secretary John Reid replaces Clarke.

The reshuffle comes after accusations of government incompetence and sleaze and the poor local election results, which have put pressure on Blair to give his government new impetus or step aside. "This is a major reshuffle," said Ben Page, Mori pollster.

"Margaret Beckett going to the Foreign Office was not something anyone had predicted. Reid is a marvellous all round player for Tony Blair and here he is saving his bacon again," he said.

Clarke will leave govern-

ment while Straw becomes leader of the House of Commons. Reid will have to deal with the aftermath of a scandal in which 1,000 foreign prisoners were released without being considered for deportation.

Thursday's vote was held in 176 of the 388 local authorities in England, with a total 4,360 council seats up for grabs. Labour was defending 1,768 seats. Results posted on a BBC Web Site showed Labour had lost 256 seats while the Conservative party under new leader David Cameron gained 252.

06 MAY 2006

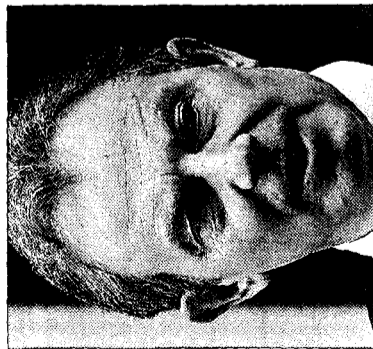
INDIAN EXPRESS

Labour plotters move to oust Blair

PATRICK Wintour
London, May 6

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Tony Blair came under carefully choreographed public and private pressure from Gordon Brown's closest supporters on Friday night to set out the timetable for his departure in the wake of dire local election results.

In an escalation of the power struggle between New Labour's two creators, Andrew Smith, a former Cabinet minister and a Brown ally, identified Blair as the problem on the doorstep in the elections. He said: "We have un-



Tony Blair
Under fire

certainty over the transition and it has to end very soon. It gets worse with every month that passes and reinforces the lack of trust in this government."

Ominously for Blair, backing for the Prime Minister to agree an "orderly transition" soon is also coming from former Blairites such as Nick Raynsford and John Denham. Raynsford said: "I think it's going to be necessary to set a timetable for the change of leadership, though I do not think we should seek to impose one. But the objective of stability for ministers to deliver will not be possible if there is uncer-

tainty over the leadership. Ministers will be continually looking over their shoulders."

If Blair does not bow to the pressure backbench MPs intend to publish a letter, possibly by the end of next week, with as many as 75 signatures calling on him to agree the transition or face a formal challenge. Brown called the election result — the Labour Party lost 306 seats and 18 councils — a "warning shot" that showed the party needed to renew itself in the same way as it had in the 80s. His aides said he would be speaking to Blair over the weekend about the need for renewal and

an orderly transition in Britain. The Prime Minister will hold a press conference on Monday and address querulous Labour MPs later that night. Despite the pincer movement against him, there is a defiant mood in Downing Street based on the fact that Blair was democratically elected only a year ago, the local election results were not calamitous and opinion polls do not show an overwhelming demand for him to go immediately. But Brown believes the defeats reflect an irretrievable loss of trust in the Prime Minister.



Gordon Brown
Taking aim

The Guardian

07 MAY 2006

MONDAY, MAY 8, 2006 ✓

New Labour's time of troubles

On Saturday, British Prime Minister Tony Blair turned 53 but the mood in his party was far from celebratory. Despite those mandatory smiles got up for television cameras, a sense of doom and gloom was all too apparent. The birthday celebrant looked exhausted after a nightmarish week in which his Government tottered from one crisis to another — and the Labour Party got a drubbing in the May 4 local elections pushing it into third place behind the Tories and the Liberal Democrats in terms of share of the national vote. This was an all-time low for a party that once took pride in its grass-roots loyalties. The mocking headlines (“Nightmare on Downing Street,” “The last stand,” “Blair’s bloody nose,” “Is this the end?”) that greeted Mr. Blair on his birthday were a far cry from the heady atmosphere nine years ago when he led New Labour to a historic victory, promising a “new dawn.” Arguably, the last few weeks have been the worst of Mr. Blair’s third term in office, with echoes of the final days of John Major’s Conservative Government when it was hit by allegations of sleaze and incompetence. “This feels like the beginning of the end,” noted *The Guardian*’s columnist Jonathan Freedland arguing that, for the first time, Labour was beginning to see the “possibility of a defeat” in a general election.

Any talk of a Labour meltdown may be exaggerated but danger signals are clearly up. Disillusionment with Mr. Blair’s agenda of creeping privatisation and his alliance with the U.S. President George Bush have been compounded by a deepening power struggle within the Government, leaving the field free for the Conservatives who did extremely well in last week’s elections under their new and youthful leader, David Cameron. But rather than address the issues at the heart of Labour’s troubles, Mr. Blair seems to be preoccupied with shoring up his own position as pressure grows on him to exit. The Cabinet reshuffle he announced on Friday, even as election results were still coming in, have been compared to “re-arranging deckchairs on the Titanic.” Indeed changes such as the removal of Jack Straw from the Foreign Office, apparently because of his softer line on Iran and Iraq, not to mention his proximity to Chancellor Gordon Brown — Mr. Blair’s arch rival — are likely to send all the wrong signals. In normal circumstances, the appointment of Margaret Beckett as Britain’s first-ever woman Foreign Secretary should have been a cause for celebration, but in the current febrile atmosphere it has been overshadowed by accusations that Ms. Beckett’s promotion has less to do with a genuine desire to break the glass ceiling in the male-dominated Foreign Office than with Mr. Blair’s determination to enlarge the circle of loyalists around him. We know what shuffling deckchairs did for the Titanic. Blairite New Labour is a house badly divided, and public confidence in a party that promised so much a decade ago seems to be slipping away.

08 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

Labour MPs' letter calls on Blair to quit

ASSOCIATED Press

London, May 7

LAWMAKERS IN Tony Blair's Labour Party are circulating a draft of a letter calling on the British Prime Minister to set a date for his departure, a legislator said on Sunday. The rebels have, however, been warned by top party figures against launching a coup that could destroy Labour.

Friday's government overhaul indicates that Blair intends to hold on to his job. He often notes he won re-election to a third term just a year ago and says he plans to serve a full term, although he will not seek a fourth in elections expected in 2009.

However, his government has lurched from one crisis to the next in recent weeks. The embarrassing third-place election showing followed a furore over

officials' failure to screen foreign criminals for deportation when they were released from British prisons and allegations that Blair nominated Labour's financial backers to the House of Lords.

The letter that Labour lawmakers are circulating is not going to be made public immediately, a Labour legislator said. "It will materialise in due course if there's no change of mind on his part," the lawmaker said. "It can be posted at any time."

He said rebels wanted to avoid damaging the party but were "prepared to be tough". "People are struggling for the best way to thank Tony for all he's done for us and then say goodbye."

He said he didn't know how long the rebels would wait for Blair to meet their demands, but warned the timetable could be accelerated if the Prime Minister, and

his allies attacked their opponents instead of listening to them.

Blair's allies hit out against the rebels on Sunday, saying that if the Prime Minister announced the timing of his departure, he would strengthen the opposition Conservatives.

"They are not going to win," Home Secretary John Reid said on BBC television of Blair's Labour opponents. Stephen Byers, a former transportation secretary and close Blair ally, said forcing the prime minister out would make an orderly transition to his successor — widely expected to be Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown — impossible.

"For those people who are organising a coup against him, they are playing a very dangerous game and they should stop," he told Sky News.

A LITTLE RED BOOK OF SLEAZE

IN BOOKSTORES SOON

A most interesting book is expected to be soon available in bookstores around Britain. Simply called, *A Little Red Book of New Labour Sleaze*, the book will be out later this month, and will remind readers about the party's 100 sleaziest scandals.

24 HOURS AND 100 SCANDALS

Co-editor Iain Dale, founder of Politico's Bookshop, told *The Sunday Telegraph* that the idea for the book struck the team on May 1 evening. "Within 24 hours, we had enough volunteers to write the items. So time was never a problem," Dale said.

Blair faces mutiny in party

Pledges To Fight The Civil War Within Party. Rules Out Timetable For Retirement

Rashmee Roshan Lall | TNN

London: Tony Blair has defiantly pledged to fight the civil war raging within his Labour party with a combative battle plan against rebel MPs whom he dismissed as wanting to "radically change the direction of policy and not to renew Labour but to reverse it".

Blair's very public refusal to step down after nine years as PM comes amid rumours that at least 50 backbench Labour MPs are preparing a letter asking him to set out a clear timetable for handover to chancellor of the exchequer Gordon Brown.

But Blair said on Monday that he would not be laying out a timetable for his departure because it would "paralyse the

proper working of government". However, he admitted that Labour's ongoing and vicious internal politicking and its front-page treatment in the British media was distracting attention from governance and policy-making.

Pundits said that Blair's combative charge appeared to be a way of reminding as well as reassuring Labour malcontents that even though he would not go on and on and on, he would, as of now, be going on. The row over a stable and orderly transition from Blair to Brown has occupied centre-stage since Blair led Labour to an historic third consecutive election victory.

But with calls for his head coming increasingly from all sides of Labour, Blair is seen



The rebel MPs want to radically change the direction of policy and not to renew Labour but to reverse it

Tony Blair | BRITISH PM

to have taken the battle into the enemy camp by authorising his cabinet allies to warn Labour rebels that a forced leadership change will mean electoral disaster in the next general election.

On Monday Blair spelt this out once again asserting that brazen politicking and a leadership struggle would result

bloody Blair authorised home secretary John Reid to mount an unprecedented public attack on Labour rebels. Reid has been touring TV studios to denounce a "calculated and planned" attempted coup by rebels opposed to Blair's reforms of key sectors like education and health.

He said that "the whole thing has been generated by people who want to push Blair out, they want to stop the reform programme and they want to change direction back to old Labour. That would be a complete catastrophe."

On Monday, Blair himself repeated Reid's message by telling the world's media that he was deeply worried about the motives of some of the rebels calling for his head.

09 MAY 2006

অসহায় প্রচেষ্টা

কিছু পরিমাণ উদাসীনতা, কিছু বেপরোয়া মনোভঙ্গি এবং সাহস (মতান্তরে দুঃসাহস)— এই সকল আচরণের মিশ্রণ লইয়া টনি ব্লেয়ার ব্রিটেনে লেবার পার্টির দুর্গ সামলাইতেছিলেন। এক্ষণে পুরভোটে তাঁহার দলের শোচনীয় ফলের পরে স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই প্রশ্ন উঠিয়াছে, এই নির্বাচনী ফলকে কি তবে ব্লেয়ারের নেতৃত্ব বিষয়ে জনতার রায় বলিয়া গণ্য করা হইবে? শুধুমাত্র পরাজয় নহে, লেবার পার্টি অকিঞ্চিৎকর ভাবে তৃতীয় স্থান দখল করায় দৃশ্যতই ব্রিটেনের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর উদাসীনতার নির্মোহক অন্তর্হিত। তিনি মন্ত্রিসভায় বেশ কয়েকটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ রদবদল করিয়াছেন। সহস্রাধিক ভিনদেশি অভিযুক্তকে ছাড়িয়া দিবার জেরে স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী চার্লস ক্লার্কের আসন না হয় অনিশ্চিতই হইয়া পড়িয়াছিল, কিন্তু প্রতাপাশ্রিত বিদেশমন্ত্রী জ্যাক স্ট্র-কেও যে সরিতে হইবে, তাহা লেবার পার্টির অনেক প্রখর সমালোচকও আশা করেন নাই। অতএব, স্ট্র অপসারণের ন্যায় অপ্রত্যাশিত এবং যৌন কাণ্ডে অভিযুক্ত উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী জন প্রেসকটের ক্ষমতা কমাইবার ন্যায় প্রত্যাশিত ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করিয়া ব্লেয়ার বার্তা দিতে চাহিয়াছেন, তাঁহার ক্ষমতাভিত্তি দুর্বল হয় নাই। কিন্তু তাহাতে বিশেষ ফল হয় নাই। অন্য দলের কথা যদি বাদও রাখা হয়, টনি ব্লেয়ারের স্বদলেও অসন্তোষ ধুমায়িত। বহু সাংসদই তাঁহার অপসারণ কামনা করিতেছেন এবং সেই বিক্ষোভের সম্মুখে দাঁড়াইয়া টনি ব্লেয়ার বলিয়াছেন, তিনি গদি ছাড়িবার কথা ঘোষণা করিবেন না, পূর্ণ মেয়াদকাল দেশশাসন করিবেন।

প্রশ্ন হইল, তাঁহার দলীয় নেতৃত্বদণ্ড কি অনুরূপ ভাবনা পোষণ করিতেছেন? সাম্প্রতিক একটি সমীক্ষা বলিতেছে, লেবার পার্টির 'ব্যাকবেঞ্চার' বলিয়া কথিত ১৭২ সাংসদের ভিতর মাত্রই চারিটি ব্যক্তি টনি ব্লেয়ারের পূর্ণ মেয়াদকাল দায়িত্ব পালনের পক্ষপাতী। শুনা গিয়াছে, অন্তত পঞ্চাশ জন লেবার সাংসদ নাকি শীঘ্রই একটি খোলা চিঠি প্রকাশ করিয়া ব্লেয়ারকে তাঁহার অপসারণের দিনক্ষণ ঘোষণা করিতে বলিবেন। বাতাস যখন এই সকল গুঞ্জনে অস্থির, তখন প্রধানমন্ত্রী ব্লেয়ার বৎসরকাল পূর্বের নির্বাচনী ফলাফলের শরণার্থী। তৎকালে তিনি জনতার আস্থা লাভ করিয়াছিলেন, অতএব সেই গণ-আস্থার সম্মানরক্ষার্থেই তিনি দায়িত্ব পালনে প্রস্তুত— এই বক্তব্যে প্রজানুরঞ্জনের মোহন আভা আছে বটে, কিন্তু ইহার ফলে তাঁহার কর্তৃবাচ্যে ঘাটতি পড়িবার কথা যে জনসমক্ষে আসিয়া পড়িয়াছে, তাহা প্রধানমন্ত্রী খেয়াল করিয়াছেন কি?

অবশ্য নিজস্ব কর্তৃবাচ্য বজায় রাখিবার জন্য টনি ব্লেয়ার বিশেষ ভাবিত নহেন। সন্ত্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে 'বিশ্বব্যাপী সংগ্রাম' যে বৃশ-ব্লেয়ার জুড়িকে প্রায় মানবতার অতন্দ্র প্রহরী করিয়া তুলিয়াছে, সেই দ্বৈতের প্রথম নামপদটিই যে প্রকৃত ক্ষমতা ভোগ করেন, তাহা বর্তমান বিশ্বে দিবালোকের ন্যায় স্পষ্ট। এমতাবস্থায় ব্লেয়ারের কর্তৃবাচ্য যে ক্রমেই দুর্বল হইয়া পড়িবে, তাহাতে বিস্ময়ের কিছু নাই। বিস্ময় জাগিয়াছে অন্য কারণে। জনশ্রুতি, ইরাক নীতির সহিত সহমত নন বলিয়াই নাকি জ্যাক স্ট্র-কে সরিতে হইয়াছে। তাহা হইলে কি 'ইরাক যুদ্ধ' এবং 'মার্কিন মিত্রতা' টনি ব্লেয়ারের গোপন ক্ষতের ন্যায় হইয়া উঠিল? নিজস্ব উদাসীনতা এবং দণ্ডের আবরণ সত্ত্বেও কিন্তু জন-দরবারে সেই ক্ষতচিহ্নটিকে গোপন করা যাইবে না। মন্ত্রিসভার রদবদল ব্লেয়ারের কর্তৃত্ব কায়ম রাখিবার একটি মরিয়া প্রয়াস হিসাবেই গণ্য হইবে। সেই প্রয়াসে তাঁহার কর্তৃত্বের পাশাপাশি এক প্রকার অসহায়তাও বিদ্যমান। সেই অসহায়তা লইয়া ব্লেয়ার কত কাল স্বপদে বহাল থাকিতে পারেন, তাহার উপর ব্রিটেন তথা বিশ্ব রাজনীতির গতিপ্রকৃতিও অনেকাংশে নির্ভরশীল হইবে।

10 MAY 2006

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Blairism's failure: private delivery of public goods

The limits of New Labour have been exposed. The next stage will be nothing less than a refashioning of the state.

Jonathan Freedland

IF YOU did not care about the outcome, this would be wonderful entertainment. The battle between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown is one of the few sagas that has crossover appeal. It can be marketed to the mass audience as a national soap opera set in Westminster. Or, for those in the expensive seats, it is pure Shakespeare, part Macbeth, part Coriolanus, all power play. When a climax such as last Friday's comes along — a hammering at the polls followed by a merciless cull of some of the saga's doughtiest characters and talk of a coup at the top — you can hardly blame addicts of the drama for getting feverish in their excitement.

But one day all this will be forgotten, the details at any rate. The name of the Deputy Prime Minister's former mistress might live on as a pub-quiz question; perhaps anoraks will remember who got which job. But in 10 or 20 years' time, these will be lost to oblivion. They will be mere trees when the clear view is of the wood.

Imagine how events looked 30 years ago, in what turned out to be the twilight years of the last Labour government. Doubtless, there would have been frenzied interest in the Westminster soap opera, as one Prime Minister resigned and another fought hard to survive. Each day would have brought a fresh twist. But now those details are hazy. What we see instead is the big picture: that 1976-79 represented the last gasp of a post-1945 welfare-state consensus that gave government a commanding role in the economy, either managing it or owning chunks of it.

Now this synthesis is becoming a consensus of its own. Few expect the Conservatives under their new leader David Cameron to roll back the minimum wage or the social chapter.

The Tories promise to maintain spending on education and health; they insist they want to eradicate child poverty.

Which brings us to the current ructions tearing apart the Blair Government. How do they fit into this story? I suspect we may come to see this period as the moment when the limits of the New Labour synthesis were exposed. For at least seven years, Labour has sunk huge amounts of cash into the state. It has tried scheme after scheme to make it more efficient: setting targets, issuing directives, oiling, buffing and shining its creaky and rusted machinery. And yet it still is not working properly. Recent weeks brought vivid illustration of this, as the Home Office lost track of foreign prisoners and Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt showed you can spend billions and billions on hospitals — and still get booed at a nurses conference.

Lumbering bureaucracy

That is not because Labour Ministers were useless or that a different group of people would have done the job fine. It is rather a structural problem with the British state. Its machinery was designed for a 20th-century world that no longer exists. Today's citizens are used to fast, efficient, wireless services that give them a high degree of personal choice; the lumbering bureaucracy of the state cannot catch up. Nor will aping the private sector, pretending government can be run like Domino's Pizza or

Cauvery tribunal drops

stitution of an expert committee, we received hundreds of telegrams and fax messages opposing this. They are saying the Tribunal is already 16 years old, and asking what is the enquiry for allegedly "on the deal was also for allegedly... the Business... of the Lok... and the Left... on the... a special fo... incidence of... On the office... Government... could complete... all political... "Some time... ill could be... tiamment to ex-... fices" held by... be exempted... qualification.

He told the counsel, "See the political impact and the reactions from farmers. Even the counsel were not spared." On the award.

But once the majority members directed that the assessors reports be given to the parties, Mr. Justice Singh asked the States to examine the political impact and the repercussions while giving their response. When one counsel pointed out that the term of the Tribunal was due to end on August 6, the Karnataka 465 tmc ft of water and sought 566 tmc ft of water and Pondicherry together and Pointing out that Tamil Nadu while giving their response. This will be another trial, and confusion for everybody."

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Blair face of most unpopular Labour PM in four decades

Press Trust of India

LONDON, May 10: Nine years after he entered office with a record mandate, British Prime Minister Tony Blair is now ranked the most unpopular Labour Prime Minister since the 1960s, a poll said today.

Only 26 per cent of voters are satisfied with Mr Blair's performance, lower than Mr Harold Wilson's 27 per cent rating in May 1968 after devaluation of the pound, according to the YouGov survey for The

Daily Telegraph

The poll showed most voters want Mr Blair to go by the end of next year, while only six per cent believe the Labour is united - the lowest figure since the party split of the early 1980s when Mr Michael Foot was leader.

Chancellor Mr Gordon Brown kept up the pressure on Mr Blair saying he did not want a repeat of Margaret Thatcher's ejection from office at the hands of her Cabinet.

"Tony said that he is

going to be doing it in a stable and orderly way, that means that he is going to be talking not just to me but to senior colleagues about it," the Chancellor told GMTV.

"Remember when Thatcher left, it was unstable, it was disorderly and it was undignified." The book-

makers Mr William Hill have made the Tories favourites to win the next election, the first time they have been in front since 1997. The spectacular collapse in Mr Blair's personal

rating was reinforced by a further drop in support for Labour. After last Thursday's drubbing in the English local elections, Labour is now six points behind a resurgent Conservative Party. According to the survey, Conservatives are on 37 per cent, Labour 31 and the Liberal Democrats 17.

It is the second opinion poll in 24 hours to show a collapse in Labour support after the turmoil of recent weeks, including the "loans for peerages" scandal and the foreign prisoners fias-

co, Mr John Prescott's affair with his diary secretary. Reports said Labour MPs who attended a tense meeting of the parliamentary party at Westminster on Monday night claimed that the countdown to the end of Mr Blair's era had begun.

Mr Blair is Labour's most successful leader, having won three consecutive general elections to give the party the prospect of at least 12 years of uninterrupted power.

Five months after his first

landslide victory in May 1997, his satisfaction rating reached a record 83 per cent. Margaret Thatcher fell to 24 per cent in April 1990 at the height of the poll tax riots - and was ousted by Tory MPs seven months later. Mr Blair's predecessor, Mr John Major registered a low point of 15 per cent in January 1995, two years before he lost office.

Labour's two other post-war premiers Mr James Callaghan and Mr Clement Attlee never dropped below 30 per cent.



11 MAY 2006

UK terror law comes to force

VIJAY Dutt
London, April 13

NOTWITHSTANDING OPPOSITION from human rights groups, British Peers and even judges, the Terrorism Act 2006, introduced as a Bill after the July 7 bombings in London last year has come into effect in the UK. The Act allows groups or organisations to be banned for those offences and covers anyone who gives or receives training. It also makes nuclear sites into designated areas where trespass can become a terrorist offence.

Critics argue the law is drawn far too widely and it faced stiff opposition in the House of Lords. Peers were also worried it would curb free speech and rejected the plans five times before voting them through in March. It was also opposed by Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair said the measure would allow action to be taken against people with placards glorifying the 7 July bombers — which were seen in London during protests against cartoons satirising the Prophet Muhammad.

The Act creates offences of undertaking terrorism training, preparation of or planning a terrorist act and disseminating terrorist publications. Police powers to detain suspects up to 28 days, rather than the existing fortnight, will come into force lat-



Malcolm Kendall-Smith

RAF doctor jailed

A RAF doctor was on Thursday jailed for eight months after being found guilty of failing to comply with lawful orders when he refused to serve in Iraq. Flight Lieutenant Malcolm Kendall-Smith — who likened the invasion of Iraq to a Nazi war crime — was convicted on five charges, including refusing to serve in Basra, by a court martial panel of five RAF officers. He will also be dismissed from the service. GNS

er after consultation with police chief constables.

Doug Jewell, of the human rights group Liberty, told *BBC Breakfast*, the new laws were too wide-reaching. "The problem with this is that the encouragement and glorification laws which are coming in today are so broad that anyone supporting violence to remove a regime anywhere in the world now or in the past would theoretically get caught up."

Blair more isolated on Iraq issue after Berlusconi's defeat

Hasan Suroor

LONDON: The British Prime Minister Tony Blair faces more isolation in Europe over Iraq after the defeat of his Italian counterpart and political ally Silvio Berlusconi.

Of the three European leaders who unreservedly joined the U.S.-led invasion defying domestic public opinion, Mr. Blair is the only one who still remains in power amid growing calls for him to quit.

The first to go was the Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar after he was defeated in the wake of the Madrid bombings in 2004 which were seen as a consequence of his support for the Iraq invasion. Now Mr. Berlusconi

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Pressure grows on Tony Blair to quit

• Bastion of support for Bush falls

is out, and though his fall is not directly related to Iraq it will add to pressure on Mr. Blair as he lurches from one crisis to another.

Mr. Blair, Mr. Aznar and Mr. Berlusconi forged a political alliance that proved highly divisive for Europe during the Iraq war which was strongly opposed by France and Germany. Americans used the divisions to dismiss France and Germany as "Old" Europe and embrace the

so-called "new" Europe represented by leaders like Mr. Aznar and Mr. Berlusconi — with Mr. Blair acting as a bridge in trans-Atlantic relations.

The trio also formed a close personal relationship with Mr. Blair spending summer holidays at Mr. Berlusconi's villa in Sardinia. Analysts said that Mr. Berlusconi's exit meant that mainland Europe's last bastion of support for the U.S. President George W. Bush's foreign policy had fallen and it would add to Mr. Blair's sense of isolation.

"Mr. Blair is likely to put a brave face on the defeat although many will see it as a further nail in his own political coffin," said *The Independent* newspaper.

Majority of Britons for Iraq pullout

Findings may pressure Blair to set time-table for withdrawal

Hasan Suroor

WK (2) KD 13
LONDON: The public opposition in Britain to the continued occupation of Iraq has reached its highest levels since the invasion three years ago with 55 per cent of Britons in favour of either immediate or gradual withdrawal of British troops, according to a new opinion poll.

For the first time, an overwhelming majority (57 per cent) believes that the invasion was wrong and the continued presence of foreign forces in Iraq serves no purpose.

Only 39 per cent of the respondents agree with the Government view that troops should stay in Iraq until the Iraqi security forces are ready to take over. "This is a mirror image of

April 2003, when support for the war was at its highest after the lightning campaign to capture Baghdad and the televised toppling of Saddam's statue.

Then, 60 per cent of respondents said that military action was right and 35 per cent opposed it," said *The Daily Telegraph* which commissioned the poll conducted by YouGov.

Growing concern

The findings, which are expected to increase pressure on Prime Minister Tony Blair to set out a time-table for withdrawal of British troops, came amid growing concern over the worsening situation in Iraq and the growing delay in forming a new government.

Foreign Secretary Jack Straw,

who made a surprise visit to Baghdad on Sunday, expressed concern over the continued political uncertainty in Iraq.

"There is significant international concern about the time that the formation of this government is taking and therefore we will be urging the Iraqi leaders we see to press ahead more quickly," he said ahead of his meeting with the Iraqi top brass.

The U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, during a visit to Britain last week, admitted that the Bush administration had made "thousands" of mistakes in Iraq.

Throughout the tour, she was greeted by anti-war protesters forcing cancellation of a visit to a mosque in Blackburn, Mr. Straw's parliamentary constituency.

04 APR 2006

THE HINDU

Mistake to rule out 4th term: Blair

Canberra, March 27 (Reuters): British Prime Minister Tony Blair sparked a fresh bout of conjecture over his future today when he said it may have been a mistake to rule out a fourth term.

Newspapers also reported that Blair, facing media calls to resign over a "cash-for-favours" row, had decided when to stand aside but that he was not yet revealing the date.

The Prime Minister, on a visit to Australia, was asked in an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corp if his determination not to seek another term was a mistake that had left him open to calls for his resignation.

"I think what happens when you get into your third term and you are coming up to your 10th year is that it really doesn't matter what you say," said Blair, in office since 1997.

"You are going to get people saying it should be time for a change or 'when are you going?' or 'who's taking over?'"

The announcement not to seek a fourth term was "an unusual thing for me to say, but people kept asking me the question so I decided to answer it. Maybe that was a mistake."

On the eve of a heart operation in 2004 and under pressure from the fallout of the

Iraq war, Blair ruled out a fourth term but said he intended to serve a full third term.

That could take him to 2010 but most commentators expect him to hand over to his presumed successor, finance minister Gordon Brown, in the next year or two.

His spokesman said Blair was keen to carry on. "The Prime Minister is focused on getting on with the business he was elected to get on with," he said. Several analysts believe Blair is particularly keen to see through reforms to the National Health Service, due by 2008.

Some also think he wants to stay in office longer than

Margaret Thatcher's eleven and a half years, which would mean hanging on until the end of November that same year.

The spokesman said Blair, seen by some as a lame duck, was interrupted by the interviewer. "He did not say the pre-announcement was a mistake, he did not say the pre-announcement had backfired. He simply said his hope it would kill the speculation had proven not to be the case," added the spokesman.

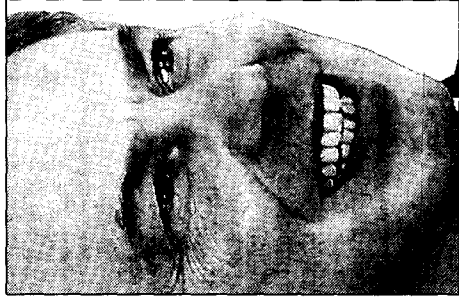
Some commentators think Blair's comments signal an intention to stay on until nearer 2010. Blair's authority, weakened by last May's election where his majority was more

than halved, has waned in the last few months.

He has been defeated three times in parliamentary votes and has had to rely on the opposition to push through flagship education policies. A funding crisis in parts of the health service is also damaging, given the large amount of cash poured into hospitals.

But most serious is the row over loans to his Labour Party.

A controversy erupted after officials revealed it had received nearly £14 million in loans from 12 businessmen, some of whom were subsequently nominated for seats in Britain's upper parliamentary chamber.



Tony Blair in Canberra. (AFP)

Pro-Russia Opposition headed for victory in Ukraine election

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President Viktor Yushchenko faces humiliating defeat

Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW: The Opposition Party of Regions led by former Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich took an early lead in Ukraine's parliamentary vote on Sunday, according to exit polls.

The Party of the Regions captured 25 per cent of the votes, followed by a bloc led by former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, the fiery spirit of the pro-Western "Orange Revolution" a little over a year ago, which got 16.2 per cent, the All-Ukraine Independent Sociological Service said citing mid-day exit poll results.

While victory for Mr. Yanukovich's party was expected, the poor showing of President Viktor Yushchenko's bloc Our Ukraine with under 10 per cent of the votes, half of what pre-poll surveys gave it, came as a sensation.

Irregularity alleged

Voting was marked by long queues as many people could not find their names in the voters lists due to confusion in translating Russian names into Ukrainian as ordered by the Central Election Commission. The Opposition accused authorities of deliberately trying to disenfranchise hundreds of thousands of voters in the Russian-speaking eastern and southern provinces.

The parliamentary election was the first test of popularity for the leaders of the "Orange



ALL SMILES: Ukraine's former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko (right), receives flowers after voting in the parliamentary election at a polling station in Dnipropetrovsk on Sunday. - PHOTO: REUTERS

Revolution" who sought to reorient Ukraine towards the West and away from Russia, but failed to deliver on their promises to maintain economic growth and raise living standards.

Jointly with the radical People's Opposition party, which grabbed a surprising 15.5 per cent, Communists, and the bloc Ne Tak, the Russia-backed parties may capture half the seats in

the 450-member Verhovna Rada Parliament and form a government with Mr. Yanukovich as Prime Minister.

Political revenge

This would mark a dramatic political revenge for a man stripped of victory in the presidential poll in November 2004.

Mr. Yanukovich promised that relations with Russia would

improve after the election. "We are going to have remarkable relations with Russia," the beaming Opposition leader said as he cast his ballot on Sunday.

Ukraine's poll marked a second setback for the West in the former Soviet Union, following the trouncing of pro-Western Opposition candidates in a presidential election in neighbouring Belarus last Sunday.

THE HINDU

27 MAR 2006

U.K. rally demands end to Iraq war

Protests across the world on invasion anniversary

Hasan Suroor

LONDON: The third anniversary of the U.S.-British invasion of Iraq saw hundreds of Britons take to the streets in London on Saturday demanding an end to the occupation.

Protesters, waving anti-war placards and raising slogans against the continued presence of foreign troops in Iraq, marched through central London in a show of solidarity with war victims and ordinary Iraqis.

Parliament Square, normally out of bounds for protests, wore a festive look as peace activists and people from different walks of life many of whom had come from outside London gathered there in freezing cold.

Amid a sea of placards saying "Freedom for Iraq" and "Bring back the troops" the protesters walked past Whitehall and held a rally at Trafalgar Square addressed by prominent peace campaigners, trade union leaders and political figures including Labour Party MPs.

The protest, organised by the Campaign against Nuclear Disarmament

(CND), the Muslim Association of Britain and Stop the War Coalition, coincided with similar demonstrations in other countries.

Demanding withdrawal of British troops, Lindsey Green of Stop the War Coalition said: "We believe that a peaceful solution to the chaos caused by the illegal war in Iraq will only be possible when the occupying foreign armies have all been removed so that the Iraqi people will be free to decide on their own political future."

She said the London protest was among the 200 taking place in cities all over the world, including Baghdad and Basra.

Kate Hudson of CND said the British Government must listen to the people and bring the troops back home. She also expressed concern over veiled threats of military intervention in Iran, and said the sort of allegations that were now being made against Iran were used to attack Iraq three years ago.

"The U.S. is making charges about a covert nuclear weapons programme in Iran without presenting any credible evidence," she said.

19 MAR 2006

THE HINDU

Blair justifies Iraq in God's name as Britain seethes

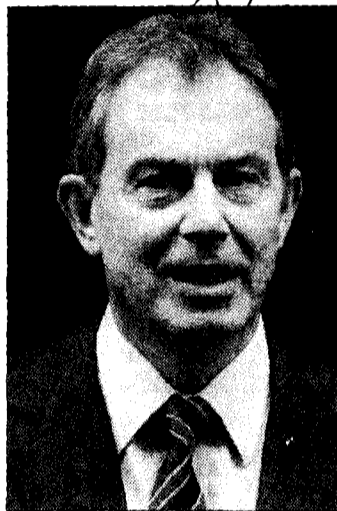
AGENCIES

London, March 4

THE FAMILIES of British soldiers killed in Iraq seethed and Labour's political opponents cried out in outrage as British Prime Minister Tony Blair went on live television defending his decision to join the Iraq war coalition by saying God and history would judge his move.

In a rare reference to his Christian religious faith, Blair told broadcaster Michael Parkinson he had struggled with his conscience over the decision. "That decision has to be taken and has to be lived with," he told ITV's Parkinson programme. "In the end there is a judgement that is made by other people." Asked what he meant, Blair added: "If you believe in God, it's made by God. The only way you can take a decision like that is to try to do the right thing, according to your conscience, and then leave it to history."

The words did not sit well with Rose Gentle, whose son Gordon was killed in Basra in 2004, one of the 103 British soldiers to date to have lost their lives in the



Tony Blair
Holy reason

Iraqi conflict. "How can he say he is a Christian?" said Gentle, a campaigner with Military Families Against the War. "A good Christian wouldn't be for this war. I'm disgusted."

Reg Keys accused Blair of "using God as a get-out for total strategic failure and I find it ab-

horrent." His son Lance Corporal Tom Keys was one of six Royal Military policemen killed by an Iraqi mob in June 2003.

Keys said Blair's remarks reminded him of US President George W. Bush who was quoted as saying last year that God told him to invade Iraq and Afghanistan. "God has nothing to do with this war," Keys said.

That view was echoed by the new leader of the Liberal Democrats, Britain's second opposition party, who said "going to war isn't just an act of faith. It requires legal analysis and a close look at the consequences," Menzies Campbell said.

Other Liberal Democrats agreed that God should not be part of the equation. "It is shocking that the Prime Minister claims to have been guided by the supernatural, especially given the religious sensitivities in West Asia," said Evan Harris, a Liberal Democrat MP from the Oxford area, who is an honorary associate of the National Secular Society. "We don't want Bush or Khomeini-type fundamentalism in our politics," he added.

05 MAR 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

05 MAR 2006

Blair says he will answer to God for waging war against Iraq

Press Trust of India

LONDON, March 4. — After US President Mr George W. Bush reportedly claimed that Iraq invasion was "a mission from God", his ally British Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair has now come under fire for evoking God in his decision to go to war.

In an interview to ITV1 Mr Bush, said his conscience guided the decision which will be

ultimately judged by God. "That decision has to be taken and has to be lived with and in the end there is a judgment that... well, I think if you have faith about these things then you realise that judgment is made by other people," Mr Blair said.

Asked to explain, Mr Blair said: "By other people, by, if you believe in God, it's made by God as well." Mr Blair told the inter-

viewer Mr Michael Parkinson that he made policy decisions according to his conscience, which is guided by his Christian faith, ITV reported.

In October last year, Mr Bush had reportedly claimed that his decision to invade Iraq was "a mission from God". Anti-war campaigners have criticised Mr Blair's comments. Mr Reg Keys, whose son was killed in Iraq, said Mr Blair was "using God as

a get-out for total strategic failure". Religion had nothing to do with the Iraq war, Mr Keys, who contested the 2005 general election as an anti-war candidate in Mr Blair's constituency of Sedgfield, said.

Mr Evan Harris, a Liberal Democrat MP, said Mr Blair's comments were "bizarre" and warned against politicians making "references to deity" in public life. Addressing a union con-

ference in London today, Mr Blair made a joke about the reaction to his remarks.

Termining the decisions on the military conflict as the toughest he had faced since he came to power in 1997, Mr Blair said "I struggled with my conscience over the decision to join the US-led invasion." More than 100 British servicemen as well as thousands of Iraqis have died in the conflict.

Talabani welcome

BAGHDAD March 4. — President Jalal Talabani today underscored the need for a united government in Iraq after a spasm of sectarian killings and said he had been assured US forces would remain in the country — "no matter what the period". He said this after a meeting with General John Abizaid, chief of US Central Command. AFP

Why Blair must be impeached

The only way the U.K. Parliament can regain the trust of disaffected British voters is to admit that it was wrong to support the Iraq war.

Michael Rose

WARS ARE won when the people, government, and army work together for a common cause in which they genuinely believe. Whereas the people may be initially uncertain about military intervention, politicians will often be the strongest advocates — blinded by the imperatives of their political views. It will invariably be military commanders who are most cautious about using force — for they understand better than most the consequences of engaging in war.

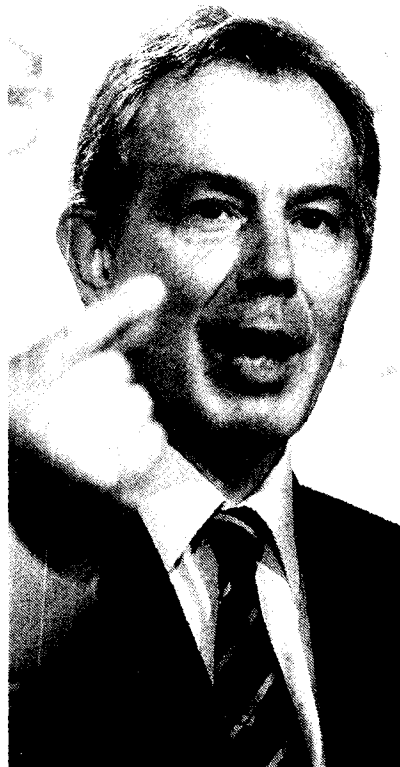
Although in a true democracy they must remain subordinate to their political masters, they have a clear responsibility to point out when political strategies are flawed or inadequately resourced. Since they might also have to ask their soldiers to sacrifice their lives, they must be assured that a war is just, legal and the last resort available. Yet three years ago this country was somehow led by the Prime Minister into war in Iraq where few, if any, of these requirements were met.

Most importantly a clear justification for the war in Iraq was never sufficiently made by Tony Blair — for the intelligence he presented was always embarrassingly patchy and inconsistent. What is more, his unequivocal statement to the U.K. House of Commons that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction that could be used within 45 minutes was made without being properly validated — for it was decided in Washington and London to launch the invasion of Iraq early, on the basis of the flimsy evidence available. This was done without asking the UN weapons inspectors, who were actually on the ground in Iraq, to investigate this allegation. Ultimately, as the inspectors suspected and as we now all know, it turned out that there were no such weapons. Britain had been led into war on false pretences. It was a war that was to unleash untold suffering on the Iraqi people and cause grave damage to the west's prospects in the wider war against global terror.

Nevertheless, today the Prime Minister seeks to persuade the world that the war was justifiable because Saddam Hussein was toppled and there now exists in Iraq a slender hope of democracy. The Iraqi elections are a creditable achievement by the coalition forces. But it must be remembered that a general election was previously held in Iraq in 1956, and within two years the country had fallen under military rule. Without adequate security and the necessary democratic institutions in place, there are absolutely no long-term guarantees that democracy will endure.

Before the invasion, regime change was never cited as a reason for going to war. Indeed, Mr. Blair insisted that regime change was not, nor ever could be, a reason for going to war. Had such a justification been fully debated in Parliament, it is exceedingly unlikely that the necessary political support would have been forthcoming. It was the apparent need to defend ourselves against a dire threat — so vividly described by Mr. Blair in the Commons — that finally won the political argument.

During the build-up to war and since, most of the electorate of this country have consistently opposed the decision to invade. People have seen their political wishes ignored for reasons now proved false. But there has been no attempt in Parliament to call Mr. Blair personally to account for what has transpired to be a blunder of enormous stra-



Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair ... how did he decide to go to war? — PHOTO: AP

tegic significance. It should come as no surprise therefore that so many of this country's voters have turned their backs on a democratic system they feel has so little credibility and is so unresponsive.

One obvious way of re-engaging these disaffected voters would be for Parliament to accept that it wrongly supported the war — but only because it believed what Mr. Blair told them. Now it is clear that Parliament was misled by Mr. Blair, either wittingly or unwittingly, Parliament should also call on him for a full explanation as to why he went to war. It is not a sufficient excuse for Mr. Blair to say that he acted in good faith and that his decisions were based on the intelligence he had been given. For it is the clear responsibility of people in his position to test intelligence. No intelligence can ever be taken at face value. Indeed it is negligent so to do.

Parliament should therefore ascertain how far the Prime Minister did evaluate intelligence regarding WMD and how he assessed the reliability of the many sources that provided that intelligence. It should ask him what corroborating evidence there was for his specific statement about WMD — and why more use was not made of the UN inspectors on the ground in Iraq to test the validity of that statement.

It should inquire just how much he discounted the mass of intelligence that came in from the Iraqi National Congress — a body that had a vested interest in removing Saddam from power. The list of possible questions is huge and would no doubt be usefully expanded during any hearings.

Mr. Blair is an able lawyer who should relish the opportunity to put his side of the case. No one can undo the decision to go to war. But the impeachment of Mr. Blair is now something I believe must happen if we are to rekindle interest in the democratic process. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006

(General Sir Michael Rose was adjutant general of the British Army and commander of the U.N. protection force in Bosnia.)

THE HINDU

1 1 JAN 2006

Impeach Blair on Iraq: British general

Prime Minister misled the public on the reason for war, says former U.N. Bosnia commander

Richard Norton-Taylor
LONDON: A former British general has called for impeachment proceedings against Prime Minister Tony Blair, accusing him of misleading Parliament and the public over the invasion of Iraq.

General Sir Michael Rose, commander of U.N. forces in Bosnia in 1994, wrote in Tuesday's *Guardian* newspaper:

"The impeachment of Mr Blair is now something I believe must happen if we are to rekindle interest in the democratic process in this country once again."

Britain was led into war on false pretences, he says. "It was a war that was to unleash untold

suffering on the Iraqi people and cause grave damage to the West's prospects in the wider war against global terror."

Reflecting widespread unease among serving military chiefs

over Iraq, Gen Rose says most British people had consistently opposed the decision to invade.

"These people have seen their political wishes ignored for reasons that have now proved false.

Nor has there been any attempt made in Parliament to call Mr Blair personally to account for what has transpired to be a blunder of enormous strategic significance," he writes.

It should not be surprising that "so many of the voters of this country have turned their backs on a democratic system which they feel has so little credibility and is so unresponsive".

The general, a former Director of Special Forces, says MPs should investigate just how far the Prime Minister went to evaluate the quality of the intelligence about Iraq's weapons programme. Military commanders were inevitably more cautious about using military force than political leaders since they understood better than most the consequences of engaging in a war that is bound to be brutal. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006

U.S. missed signs of rebellion: Bremer

Paul Harris

NEW YORK: Paul Bremer, who led the U.S. civilian occupation authority in Iraq after the 2003 invasion, has admitted that the Americans "didn't really see" the threat coming from

militants in the country.

He also criticised President George Bush and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, saying they had not listened to his concerns about the quality of Iraq's army.

Mr. Bremer, interviewed by

the U.S. television network

NBC before the publication this week of his book on Iraq, said the decision to disband the Iraqi army quickly after arriving in Baghdad was a major mistake. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006