

ADP downsized again

Obligation to implement paramount now

WITHIN a year we have had to trim the Annual Development Programme (ADP) twice. Evidently, it's the reality check that has impelled revision of the original financial and physical targets set for various development sectors. These are hard times. Foreign aid climate and flow have been declining for some time past. But there is more to the whittling down of the ADP size.

The ECNEC had originally okayed the Tk 19,200 crore ADP for 2002-2003 on June 4, 2002. This got slashed to Tk 17,500 crore on March 16, over a month ago. Then, only a couple of days back, the ECNEC downsized the ADP to Tk 171 billion. Resultantly, 182 projects stand pruned from the total 1,289 included in the original ADP. The declining trend in foreign aid flows is cited as the principal cause for the downward revision of the ADP. But certain superfluities which the programme contained needed to be shed; and thank God, they have been what if under a crunch-time.

We have had the culture of taking up projects under political or constituency-pampering considerations which acted 'as an impediment to proper utilisation of national resources.' Several projects are being jettisoned simply because these were stuck in poor implementation and cost involvement webs. Projects with 70-90 per cent implementation record are said to have been retained. If that is the case then there should not be any time and cost overruns insofar as such projects are concerned.

The difficult times have come as a blessing in disguise. The fact that we will be now upto 58 per cent reliant on local resources to finance the ADP is a self-reliant leap forward. But the counterpart financing of the foreign-aided projects will be dependent on national revenue collection and saving, the other name for putting a lid on wasteful expenditure. Whatever foreign aid inflow we are expecting could only be forthcoming if the utilisation rate were good. The legacy of the so-called pipe-line bulge has to go much the same way that we should be unburdened of carry-over projects.

The rate of implementation at 30 per cent during the first six months may not have been all made up for by the dropping of projects from the list. We have a job cut out there for stepping up implementation of the remaining projects.

Human rights in South Asia

A concerted approach needed to a complex problem

LEADING human rights activists from four South Asian countries have given a grim picture of the human rights situation prevailing in their respective countries.

There is no doubt that they have addressed an issue which has assumed a much deeper meaning and significance, with the latest global and regional developments. The human rights advocates are facing new challenges in the unipolar world, particularly after the United States overran Afghanistan and Iraq. They can hardly overlook the implications of such direct invasion of the two countries and the concerns revolving around violation of human rights.

That said, South Asia has certain built-in advantages over many other regions in that there is already a shared perception of human rights, and, above all, a strong civil society tradition. There is also a regional platform like SAARC, which can be a strong instrument in the fight against poverty and terrorism -- the two factors having a direct correlation with human rights violation. The civil societies in the South Asian countries are indeed in a position to put pressure on the governments to improve their human rights records.

There are, however, longstanding conflicts which need to be resolved. For example, the civil war in Sri Lanka is lingering with all its concomitant ills, including violations of human rights. Then there is Kashmir, where India and Pakistan are locked in a more than five-decade old dispute. Finally, the situation in Afghanistan, though technically not a South Asian country, remains a matter of worry because of its proximity to the region. These are all fertile areas for violation of human rights.

The human rights activists have to work together to forge a common view on the conflicts and possible ways for resolving them and then persuade their respective governments to act in the best interest of justice and fair-play. It is a sad truth that the governments tend to see little beyond their own worlds and are weighed down by the baggage of history. This is where the civil societies come in.

The fate of 'liberated' Iraq



M ABDUL HAFIZ

THE victory always comes with a 'band wagon' effect in its wake. Everyone wants to be on the side of the winners and pretends to have known of the outcome earlier. Last few weeks the phenomenon was explicit on the streets of Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq where hundreds gathered to welcome the invading US marines. Even the 'liberators' who had been received with the volley of bullets only days earlier were non-plussed and watched the singing and dancing Iraqis in disbelief. When the US' imperial regent in Iraq, General Jay Garner toured the country's Kurd areas, even the women turned up in large number to present bouquet and shower flowers on him. In the upsurge, Saddam Hussein, Iraq's Robinhood who eventually became an Arabian Knight in the land of Arabian nights, was swept away perhaps never to return again for the system he nourished did not allow anyone to stage a comeback and produced only one-time hero. The euphoria on both sides proved illusory as the masks of the 'liberators' soon fell down.

Although the Anglo-American invasion was officially meant to be about Iraqi Freedom the rudely fluttering American flag hoisted by a US soldier at Umm-Qasr dockyard on the first day of the ground operation was an unsettling intimation of what the future had in store for the Iraqis awaiting liberation from the clutch of Saddam Hussein. Since then they worried if the entire exercise was to put them in a tighter bind of the alien forces. Bush Administration unmistakably knew that once it succeeded in bombing Saddam regime out of power and an administrative arrangement of its choosing was put in place -- switching from rule by Ordinance to Ordinance -- US interest would be pretty well secured.

Even if a bitter schism is raging between the Pentagon and the State Department over who would control the reconstruction of war shattered Iraq and a similar rift is widening in the transatlantic alliance, the US with the Defence Department having an upperhand is asserting her exclusive role in post-war Iraq. Already the reconstruction contracts are earmarked for politically well connected American Corporation like Halliburton

early nineties was to ensure that the US remained indispensable for European security. The nine/eleven terrorist attack on the Twin Tower gave the US much desired opportunity also to insert itself militarily into the very heart of Central Asia where oil and gas reserves rival those of West Asia. Under the axis of evil thesis and illegal doctrine of pre-emptive war and regime change the US is preparing for military intervention elsewhere also. In both

unaware of such US designs.

The US 'liberators' are already suspect in the eyes of the Iraqis who appear askance if the democracy and freedom are to be transplanted in Iraq by the outsiders, whether they come only through the devastation of public as well as private properties and brutalisation of the people and if they are, at all, something to be given by others. On the contrary, democracy is something to be evolved by indigenous

Muslims who are ideologically guided by Tehran and can seldom be friendly to the Americans. The suicide bombers appeared within days of Baghdad's capture. The other cities are also seething with anger against American highhandedness and their seemingly deliberate inaction while the private and public properties are plundered. National Library ransacked and the archeological treasures looted. The occupation forces remained busy in

region and perhaps destroy OPEC". But Powell prefers Adnan Pachachi in tune with Saudi Arabia which alongwith most other Arab states wants status quo of Sunni rule in Iraq. Most Iraqi experts believe that 'Rumsfeld's Iraq' is an idea whose time will never come. Says Sergei Kazynov of Moscow Institute of National Security and Strategic Research that "There is no prospect of democracy in Iraq. Only a strong force from outside will be able to hold the conflicting claims of Shiites, Kurds and Sunnis in check." Kuwaiti scholars say Iraqi society is a pre-modern sham, built around 35 broad tribal confederations.

Constrained by Iraq's complexities the Americans are not likely to pack up and leave anytime soon although President Bush, in a recent interview, mentioned of two years that would be required by the US to return. It does not seem to be in a hurry to give up its hold on the country -- not at least till Saddam and his close aids have been captured and liquidated. Even if Saddam is believed dead or incapacitated the Americans will continue to be haunted by his legacy. Because he has been Iraq's quintessential national hero who stitched together the diverse religious, ethnic and sectarian groups to give the country a national identity. With all his harsh methods, tyranny and cruelty what he wanted was to turn Iraq into a model, a magnet that would attract and change the ways of the rest. He had been a symbol of defiance against America where most other Arab rulers are slavishly pro-American. In life Saddam always sought greatness, in death also he is not likely to settle at anything short of courting martyrdom.

But then much of the Arab world felt shame, rage and helplessness at Iraq's capitulation which will only be intensified with its further routing -- a situation that can only produce more Saddams whom the Americans will have to grapple with. As one opposition leader in exile says "every Iraqi is a potential Saddam". If it is so, it's going to be a long haul for the Americans fuelling more and more anti-Americanism across the Arab world. Given the country's muddled history and chequered past the US-delivered liberation and democracy will be last thing to be relished by Iraq.

Brig (ret'd) Hafiz is former DG of IBIS.

PERSPECTIVES

Much of the Arab world felt shame, rage and helplessness at Iraq's capitulation which will only be intensified with its further routing -- a situation that can only produce more Saddams whom the Americans will have to grapple with. As one opposition leader in exile says "every Iraqi is a potential Saddam". If it is so, it's going to be a long haul for the Americans fuelling more and more anti-Americanism across the Arab world.

and Bechtel and oilmen from Texas have begun making their first forays into Iraq's Rumaila oil fields.

But the war is about more than just oil. It is rather about cementing the domination of the US in a world that is likely to undergo fundamental economic and strategic changes in next few decades. Faced with the prospect of a multi-polar world the first pre-occupation of the Clinton presidency in

the oil surplus region of West and Central Asia and oil deficient region of South and East Asia the US aim is to use its overwhelming military to control and manage the flow of energy resources including its extraction and operation where the real profit lies. This is what is the 'endless war' of Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. With long years of experience under colonial subjugation the Iraqis cannot be

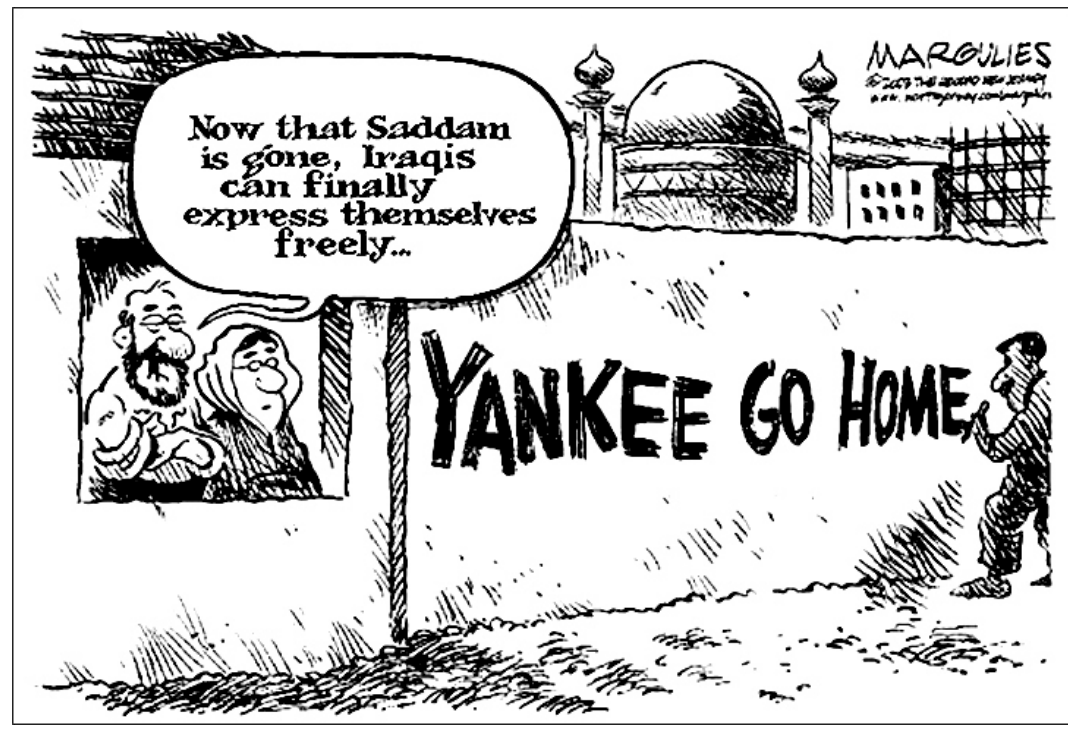
people over a period of time. There are apparent contradictions in the whole arguments justifying the war.

As a result it is not surprising that even the Shiite Muslims forming majority population in Iraq (58%) on whom the Americans pinned their hope for getting spontaneous support are also revolting against the occupation forces. The US gravely miscalculated in counting the support of Shiite

securing oilfields when anarchy prevailed in the country. The frustration deepened when it is learnt, of late, that the occupation forces as well as American journalists themselves participated in some of the plunderings. As the disillusioned Iraqis are becoming restive to drive out the American occupation forces the latter seem to be digging deep to prolong their stay on one excuse or other.

Will the US hand over Iraq to the Iraqis as it's been telling any one who can pronounce 'oil'? And how soon, if it does? There are no answers yet, but the experience of Afghanistan can offer some clues. Afghanistan was returned to Afghans, but the Americans are still around after 16 months of the transfer. But even that transfer of authority in Iraq is proving far from easy in Iraq, let alone the question of the Americans leaving lock, stock and barrel anytime soon. The squabbling lot of aspirants for power in post-Saddam dispensation is far more complex than one man choice of designer-dressed Karzai in a deal brokered by President Bush's personal envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad -- himself an Afghan in Afghanistan. The US' post-war Iraq policy sounds schizoid.

Rumsfeld sees Shia leader Ahmad Chalabi, as heir apparent to the US' interim administration. His Iraq is to be a radical reagent to remake the Arab world. It will force a 'democracy domino' effect among the Arabs and 'undermine Saudi dominance in the



Welcome move on Kashmir : Why peace is imperative



PRAFUL BIDWAI writes from New Delhi

WHATEVER one's reservations about Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's party and its ideology, one must heartily welcome his decision to visit Kashmir in a bid for reconciliation and peace. On April 18, he became India's first Prime Minister to address a public meeting in the Valley since "azadi" broke out in 1989. This also speaks of the changed ground reality.

His visit, coming six months after the largely free and fair Assembly elections, has kindled new hopes. If it is followed up with wise and purposive moves, we could see some real progress in resolving one of the world's most troubled, complex and bloody disputes.

Mr Vajpayee attempted a "double whammy". He held out the "hand of friendship" to Pakistan. And he offered a dialogue with different currents of opinion in Jammu & Kashmir. Both offers were soon hedged in with

conditions. But they indicate a welcome softening of stance.

The change of tone and tenor has outlasted the dampening effect of the qualifying statements which followed, namely, talks with Pakistan would only take place once "cross-border terrorism" ends.

Of the two initiatives, on Pakistan and Kashmir, the first is more important and likelier to succeed--for three reasons. First, Pakistan has by and large responded positively and said it

ened to turn its attention to South Asia. On March 31, Secretary of State Colin Powell said: "the whole of the subcontinent's problems" are part of the US' "broad agenda". Russia, France and Britain too have called for an India-Pakistan dialogue.

Third, a certain momentum favouring a short time-frame for an India-Pakistan meeting has emerged, with the planned visit of US Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage in May. Both India and Pakistan will probably make

win it. India's conventional superiority over Pakistan has steadily eroded from 1.75:1 in 1971, to 1.56:1 in 1990, to barely 1.22:1 now. (The winning ratio is normally 2:1 or higher).

India-Pakistan's nuclear capability is a "great leveller". Nuclear war cannot be won.

For the summit's success, Islamabad must drop its traditional Kashmiri plebiscite demand. More important, it must verifiably give up supporting militant violence in Kash-

Right-wingers.

Their leader, Deputy Prime Minister Advani, torpedoed the 2001 Agra summit. He vetoed a draft declaration after Mr Vajpayee and Gen Pervez Musharraf had agreed to it. Mr Vajpayee didn't assert himself and allowed the summit to collapse.

This time, the BJP has supported Mr Vajpayee's peace gesture, but reluctantly. Its first response was to oppose it. Earlier, it welcomed Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha's diatribe against

and an uncooperative Centre.

However, the Centre is fumbling at the level of strategy. It said it would talk to all who abjure violence. Yet, it didn't invite the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference. There is little political sense in talking only to those for whom J&K's integration with India is unproblematic. It must win over the others.

They include the APHC. The Hurriyat's influence may have declined. But it still remains significant. Because it wasn't invited, it has decided not to meet official interlocutor N.N. Vohra.

Mr Vohra has a thoroughly vague brief. He has taken an over-cautious, even timid, approach. He published his itinerary in Kashmir's newspapers, but didn't invite specific groups!

This attitude must change. Kashmir's past experience with interlocutors--Messrs K.C. Pant, Arun Jaitley, R.K. Mishra or A.S. Dullat -- hasn't been happy. To have credibility, Mr Vohra must pro-actively, aggressively, talk to all currents of opinion as a step towards an apex-level political dialogue.

It is hard to see the Home Ministry going this far. A breakthrough on Kashmir will probably have to wait upon progress in India-Pakistan relations. But reconciliation must start, internally and externally.

Too much is at stake -- not least, the lives of millions who could turn into radioactive dust should an India-Pakistan war break out.

Praful Bidwai is an eminent Indian columnist.

Changing old stands won't be easy. But if a robust beginning is made soon, the process of reconciliation could get rolling. At times, process is everything... The biggest obstacles here will be the hawks, who have a stake in perpetuating enmity. In Pakistan, they are jihadi Islamists, both inside and outside the army. In India, they are BJP Right-wingers. ... Too much is at stake -- not least, the lives of millions who could turn into radioactive dust should an India-Pakistan war break out.

is willing to hold a dialogue "any time, any place and at any level."

Second, there is growing recognition within both governments that they cannot indefinitely sustain their mutual hostility. They are under the Major Powers' pressure to defuse it.

Only six months ago, India and Pakistan were ready to go to war. The reasons why they didn't, continue to hold. The global situation after Iraq has also highlighted their vulnerability on account of Kashmir and nuclear weapons.

Washington, in its most aggressively expansionist phase, has threat-

positive gestures before his arrival.

More important, Mr Armitage will probably "facilitate" an India-Pakistan summit--just as he brokered peace between them twice last year.

This doesn't argue that a Vajpayee-Musharraf meeting will happen or succeed. Even one terrorist act in India, whether or not sponsored by Pakistan, can scuttle it. The meeting's success will depend on how far the two governments move away from their "first positions" and explore peaceful coexistence.

This, above all, means they accept war is not an option. Neither side can

Such support has done nothing to advance Kashmir's cause.

Equally, New Delhi must drop its old stated position that Kashmir is "an inalienable part of India". The issue must be opened up. The Kashmiri people must be involved in settling it.

Changing old stands won't be easy. But if a robust beginning is made soon, the process of reconciliation could get rolling. At times, process is everything.

The biggest obstacles here will be the hawks, who have a stake in perpetuating enmity. In Pakistan, they are jihadi Islamists, both inside and outside the army. In India, they are BJP

OPINION

An imprudent act

HUSSAIN M MANJIL

WHY this war (if they call it so, although it is simply an invasion)? There must be sufficient grounds before waging a war against any country. But Mr Bush and Mr Blair utterly failed to show any justification in favour of their war against Iraq. They say that Saddam Hussein has in his possession deadly chemical weapons which are a great threat to the security of mankind. But are the nuclear bombs and the Tomahawk missiles those in their possession not a threat to the mankind? However, Mr Bush said that he had proof of Saddam's having chemical weapons. But when that proof was put before the UNO, it was nothing but an essay written by a student ten years ago. So the UNO declined to accept that. Mr Hans Blix, the chief UN weapons inspector said in his report that he did not find any proof of Iraq's having chemical or weapons of mass destruc-

tion. Mr Bush said that Saddam was a cruel dictator and people did not support him. But if the people of Iraq did not support Saddam why they did not revolt against him and had not come forward with flowers and garlands to greet the 'liberators' that Mr Bush expected? Rather as the days roll on, the Iraqi people's rage against the Bush administration is terribly increasing. Not only that people's voice is going further up against the invaders in Iraq but also across the world.

Let's see first what the prominent among the American and the British people said. Mr Moore, director of American documentary films, while came to receive the Oscar prize said before about one thousand celebrities, "Mr Bush, we are against the war. You've come to power by unfair means and doing unfair things. We're ashamed of you. Mr Bush we don't support you. We damn you." The other Oscar winners came carrying placards that read "No war for oil." On the other

hand, ex-British foreign minister and the leader of the parliament, Mr Robin Cook said, "Bring back our army before they die more." He also said, "It's an unnecessary bloody war." So the voice of Mr Cook and Mr Moore are the voice of the people of the world today. The print media of 1st April published a report that 24 years old Ms Mary Cheney, daughter of the vice president Mr Dick Cheney decided to go to Iraq to protest the war as a member of human shield. So the logic behind the war they gave against Iraq is just absurd.

Adverse economic effects: The adverse economic effects of this war has already started to be felt throughout the world. In Bangladesh the price of kerosene as well as that of some other essentials has gone up. The tourism industries of the world have already got major set back. If the unsettling situation prolonged, tourism industry will suffer most. The price of dollars is falling. So it will have a serious effect on the economy of the USA itself.

And the economic condition of Iraq needs no explanation.

Sense of insecurity: The war has given birth to a sense of insecurity for most people throughout the world. There may be terrorist attack not only on American soil but also any place where American interest exists. On the other hand the war has given birth to an anti-white anti-west sense among the diverse nationals especially in the Muslim world. This sense may be supported by the views expressed by Hosni Mobarrah, President of Egypt who said "The war will create one hundred Bin Ladens". It means terrorism, it means loss of lives and property of the innocent people throughout the world. Mr Bush and Mr Blair have created this sense of insecurity by their imprudent act.

A war against humanity: When all the people of the world had been showing agitation against the war and when the UN itself did not permit, the USA and the UK jumped over the

innocent Iraqi people and bombarded them. The allied forces were saying that those were very accurate in targets. If so why then the missiles fell on a market killing 40 civilians, on the agricultural farms killing 43 including 11 children? Why they hit the Reuters office, hospitals, innumerable private houses? The actual number of children killed and wounded could be gradually known. But then there would be nothing to do for them. May be that some of them did not like Saddam. But they remained silent and living. Now this Bush-Blair coalition has not allowed them to live.

"Mr Saddam is a dangerous person" is one of Mr Bush's important sentences. But why he is dangerous can Mr Bush explain? Bush said Saddam was a cruel dictator. He said that Saddam possessed deadly weapons. But Mr Blix did not find any. Also the coalition forces could not discover any such weapon as yet. Then how can Saddam be the most dangerous person? And actually who is it?

Terrorism begets terrorism: The attack on Iraq may otherwise be called an act of state terrorism. The weak states will now continually be the prey of the stronger states in the days to come. Mr Bush says that they've come to rescue the Iraqi people from the oppression of Mr Saddam Hussein. But whom they want to rescue? The 22 millions Iraqi people today have coincided their stakes with Mr Saddam, they want no invaders in. Mr Bush and Mr Blair have killed them too. It's just an invasion to occupy the land of others. This will lead them to take resort to terrorism. Creating the Israeli state, driving out of the Palestinians from their motherland, ancestors of Bush and Blair sowed the seeds of terrorism on the banks of the river Jordan and now they are sowing the seeds on the banks of Euphrates and Tigris.

Mr Bush should have done better by looking before he leapt. Has he been able to capture Osama-bin-Laden or Mullah Omar? Though that was his

prime motive behind the war against Afghanistan. The war is still continuing there. And thus the fear of Bin Laden and Mullah Omar still stalking Mr Bush and Mr Blair. The same may be waiting in Iraq too. So it was wise to solve the problem politically not by force.

War against civilisation: Both Mr Bush and Mr Blair are supposedly protectors of civilisation and supporters of human rights. But what they have done in Iraq is a curse for civilisation and simply violation of human rights. It's now well known that Mr Saddam Hussein, though a dictator, is still popular to his people. To oust a popular government by a foreign country can't be, in any way, protection of human rights. By applying force and killing thousands of people they tried to depose a popular government and impose a puppet government on the people. Iraq is the cradle of civilisation. The not so civilised Bush-Blair action damaged the thousands of years old relics and sites, besides killing innu-

merable innocents. Then followed the tooting of the treasure troves, while the coalition forces just stood by, protecting what?

Conclusion: The people of the world have already witnessed the showdown of the arms and their destructive powers. In the ancient ages and in the recent past the wars were fought in the battlefields. The death tolls were limited among the soldiers. But now the missiles and lesser-guided bombs are fired from a distance of few hundred or a thousand miles. And they hit civilians irrespective of male, females, old and young and destroy the dwellings of the innocent. The enemies of the humanity are in action to utilise the adverse sides of the science. So, before it's too late the world conscience should raise its voice for banning those destructive anti-human armaments.

Hussain M Manjil is a semi-government officer.