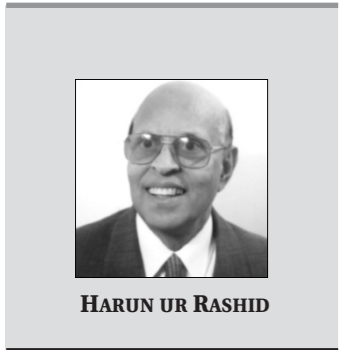


# In reply to a diplomat's letter



HARUN UR RASHID

THE British High Commissioner to Bangladesh has done his duty to defend his government policy on war on Iraq in a piece in The Daily Star (7 May). As an official diplomatic representative it is a right thing to do and I appreciate the stout defence he made for his government's policy. As a former Bangladeshi diplomat (11 years as Bangladesh Ambassador to Nepal, Australia, the Philippines and the UN), it is not my intention to embark on a debate with the High Commissioner. However, I consider his opinion should not pass without comments and some of them are enumerated below:

First, it is noted that the British government failed to convince the vast majority of the British people regarding the necessity of war on Iraq. It has been widely reported that 130 Labour MPs did not vote in the Parliament for Labour government's proposal. The former Foreign Secretary and the Leader of the House of Commons Robin Cook resigned on this issue. The resolution in the Parliament was adopted by the votes of the opposition Conservative Party. It was an unprecedented political fact that the ruling government's proposal had the approval of the opposition party. Even the head of the Church of England Archbishop of Canterbury rejected war on Iraq. The facts demonstrate that the government's case was weak both legally and morally.

Second, the ground for waging a war on Iraq was the possession of weapons of mass destruction. It is a surprise that the Anglo-American forces had yet to find these weapons in Iraq. Some of the evidence shown before the war were found to be "fake" and on 22 April the UN chief arms inspector Dr. Hans Blix said to the UN Security Council: "Is it not disturbing that the intelligence agencies that should have all the technical means at their disposal did not discover that this was falsified? I think this is very, very disturbing". The statement of Dr. Blix says it all and I have nothing to add.

Third, there were principally three arguments that were canvassed for war. First was the possession of weapons of mass destruction. Second, was the regime change and the third was the humanitarian consideration. The third ground had been advanced when the first and second ones were found to be weak. It was comparable to one of Aesop's fables when a leopard was intent to kill a lamb and the justification was that the lamb was polluting water on the bottom of the waterfall when the leopard stood on the top of the waterfall.

Fourth, the opinion referred to long wait of 12 years for the former Saddam Hussein regime to disarm but the interesting point was that after 12 long years of patience, one could not even wait for two months or so for a final view of the UN arms inspectors on disarmament. Another fact that merits attention is that Israel has been defiant of compliance with the UN resolution 242 of 1967 for nearly 36 years. Has Israel been attacked for non-compliance with the resolution? No, because there is one rule for Israel and another for Arabs?

Fifth, the opinion attempted to

justify the war on Security Council resolutions. The overwhelming view of international legal experts was that the war was illegal under international law as it had no sanction of the UN. Before the war, even the UN Secretary General said the legality of war without the UN approval would be seriously impaired. The UNSC resolutions 678 and 687 were specifically related to liberation of Kuwait including the destruction of WMDs in Iraq. The resolutions did not speak of use of force against Iraq. Only the sanctions would continue

Sixth, the opinion alluded to grounds of humanitarian considerations for removal of the Saddam Hussein regime. It is correct that the former Iraqi regime had committed serious violation of human rights of Iraqi people. The question is: Was Iraq the only regime to do so in the past and present? In the 70s and 80s many Latin American dictators committed gross violations of human rights on their people. Did any Latin American country subject to an armed aggression? In Africa, there are at present many instances where

of Iraqi people as a result of war. The British people were victims of the Second World War and they know best the years of suffering of people who were disabled during the war and it took years for them to rebuild and organise their lives.

Seventh, with regard to road map to peace in the Middle East, it has been already under trouble. On 4 May, Israel, the main player, had reportedly sent a senior envoy to the US to persuade the Bush administration to drop the support of Palestinian state. Furthermore in terms of US politics, political strategists say that President Bush has more to lose from pushing too hard for a Middle East peace deal than he does from failing to win an agreement. The right-wing US evangelist Pat Robertson said to media that President Bush was only trying "to placate the British Prime Minister" by releasing the road map. This being the case, there is little hope of peace in the Middle East, unless Israel takes actions to stop Jewish settlements, withdraw its siege from many Palestinian cities and towns and stop its military brutal campaign against Palestinians. These steps in turn will bring positive response from Palestinians. However, these actions can only be adopted if the US pressurises Israel and it is unlikely for the US to do so because of presence of strong lobby in Washington which is protective of Israel.

Eighth, it is too soon to evaluate the ramifications of war on Iraqi people. First, according to US officials, more than 2600 Iraqi soldiers and 600 civilians including women and children were killed, and more than 4,000 were wounded. Second, law and order situation has been terrible in towns and cities and basic necessities, water and electricity, were not available for weeks. Third, Iraqi museums have been looted under the eyes of the occupation forces. Fourth, many enlightened Iraqis reportedly made it clear to BBC that they never wanted the situation to occur in their country. While most of the Shi'ites were relieved of the removal of the Saddam Hussein's Sunni regime, there is also a loud cry that the foreign forces should leave immediately Iraq so that an "Islamic Republic" can be installed. The US Defence Secretary rejected this demand. Is that view consistent with their democratic rights?

Finally, objectivity and balance of views are relative in nature. What is objective to one may not be so to another. However there are incontrovertible facts on the ground and they demonstrate that war was not warranted on Iraq. A bit of extra time (two months or so) could have provided to the UN inspectors to come to a final view on disarmament in Iraq. The argument was not about the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Every member of the UN including Bangladesh agreed to it. The question was about the methods to be used to achieve the objective, i.e. whether war or peaceful method.

All the members of the UN are obliged to comply with the Charter of the UN and one of the founding principles of the UN is that war has been outlawed in the Charter except in the case of an armed attack or threat of an imminent attack. Neither of this occurred. Under no circumstances can it be argued that war was legitimate under the UN. The war on Iraq has damaged severely the UN, NATO and the European Union. It has also caused irreparable damage to the world order in which "might" seems to rule the day. The consequences of the war are unknown and may live with us for years to come.

## BOTTOM LINE

**Objectivity and balance of views are relative in nature. What is objective to one may not be so to another. However there are incontrovertible facts on the ground and they demonstrate that war was not warranted on Iraq. A bit of extra time (two months or so) could have provided to the UN inspectors to come to a final view on disarmament in Iraq. The argument was not about the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Every member of the UN including Bangladesh agreed to it. The question was about the methods to be used to achieve the objective, i.e. whether war or peaceful method.**

for non-compliance of the resolutions. Kuwait was liberated in 1991 and there had been no final view of the UN arms inspectors with regard to weapons. Therefore, these resolutions cannot be relevant.

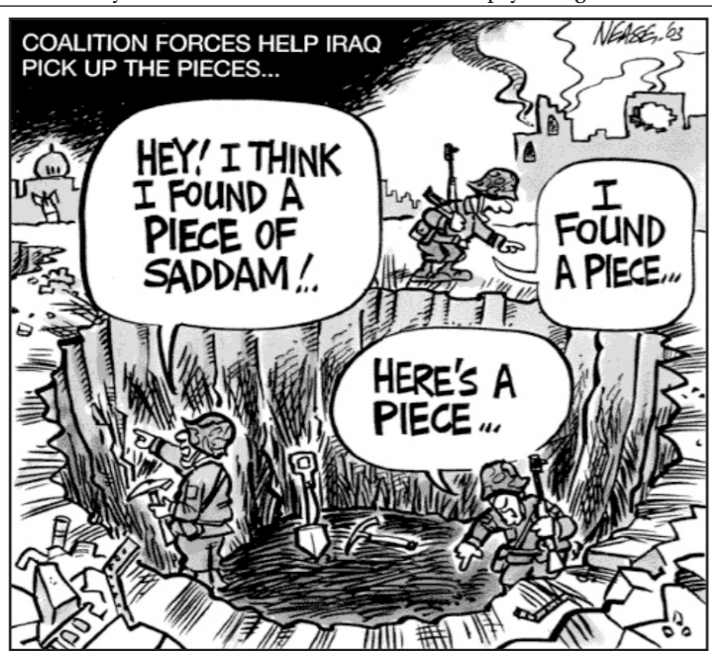
Furthermore, the resolution 1441 of 8 November 2002 did not authorise any country to use force against Iraq. It may be recalled that immediately after the resolution, France and Russia made clarification on the resolution with statements that resolution 1441 did not provide any trigger to use of force and the statements claimed that their position had the agreement of the US and other members of the Council.

It is noted that the US, Britain and Spain clearly wanted a "second" resolution authorizing use of force against Iraq. The majority members of the 15-member Council were not simply convinced that time had come to use force. The majority wanted to give more time to the UN inspectors to come to a final view on disarmament of Iraq. Even the US, Britain and Spain did not obtain the so-called "moral majority" (9 votes) in the Security Council. If the earlier resolutions had provided authority to use force, why did US, Britain and Spain seek another resolution from the Security Council?

serious violations of human rights are being perpetrated on people and one clear example is Zimbabwe's government. Has there been any move by any member of the Security Council to do anything about it?

Another fact is that why did the Western powers support Iraq against Iran during the war from 1980 to 1988. Who provided the materials for chemical and biological weapons to Iraq? Was it not the same Saddam Hussein regime which committed violations of human rights to its people, even killing Kurds with chemical weapons? Why were they silent at that time to "liberate" Iraqi people?

Sixth, with regard to harshness of the UN sanctions on Iraq for 12 years, suffice it to recall that two UN Humanitarian Co-ordinators had resigned on this issue because they felt that the sweeping sanctions were cruel to Iraqi people including children. Furthermore it is no wonder after the war that the "coalition of willing" countries have been "generous" to Iraqi people. It is they who first caused the massive devastation in Iraq and naturally they should be responsible to fix it. The most damaging aspect of war is the economic and social costs that can run for generations. Re-fixing does not eliminate or remove psychological wounds



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# Determining priorities in educational planning

DR M ASHRAF ALI

EDUCATION is a precondition for economic and social development. We have professed the importance of minimum education for the masses but have done very little in translating those pronouncements into action. We want democracy to function in the country, but how can democracy work in a nation where 40 per cent of the people are illiterate? We also want to implement such vital national programmes as family planning, increased food production, improved health and sanitary conditions, etc. But can any of these programmes make any headway unless the people are able and willingly ready to participate in the programmes? The answer is obvious.

Although education as a vital sector deserves special attention due to the fact that progress in the other sectors depends on it, ironically it was given the least priority during the Pakistan era. As a result the inevitable has happened. In spite of heavy investments in money and effort, we have failed to make any breakthrough in terms of utilisation of modern agricultural practices mainly due to lack of education among the people which prevented assimilation and utilisation of modern agricultural technology by the people.

The tradition of assigning low priority to education still persists and this is reflected in the financial allocation for the education sector. It can be said without any doubt that until and unless our people are developed through education and

awareness, we will be a nation of hand-to-mouth living perpetuated through a spoon-feeding development process.

In order to make the development process self-sustaining and self-propelling, it is essential that the people participate in the nation-building activities voluntarily with a strong urge to improve one's own condition as well as the condition of the nation. Needless to say that in the present condition with 60 per cent illiteracy, this will not happen unless steps are taken to educate the people within the shortest possible time. In this connection, one may remember the statement made by Dr Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania, when he assumed power in his country almost thirty years ago. He said, "we have chosen to remain poor for the next 20 years because we are going to invest 50 per cent of our national income for education. We want to develop our people first and then they will develop the country."

It does not need any further emphasizing to prove that unless education sector is not taken seriously, we are not going to go anywhere and the country will be languishing as ever under the heavy burden of population explosion and the resulting mass poverty which has become endemic in the Third World countries.

Centralised planning which is the legacy of the colonial rule cannot satisfy the needs of a free people. Since centralised planning does not involve the general people whom it intends to serve, it becomes an exercise of the technocrats and is bound to fail. As in the

Pakistan days, so at present very little has been achieved through centralised planning manifested in the form of five year plans.

There has been a lot of talk about bottom-up planning or local level planning as against top-down or centralised planning but nothing has been done so far to put this idea into practice. It is time to start doing things in the proper way so that wastage could be substantially minimised while optimising the benefits.

Local level planning does not call for high level economists and sophisticated technocrats. Rather, it can be done on a smaller and simpler scale involving local resources and personnel.

The strategies for the local planning is simple. The following strategies may be appropriate for effective local level planning.

1. The union may be accepted as the planning unit. As the first step, surveys of resources in the villages under a particular union should be undertaken to have an idea of the existing resources. Such a survey should also identify the areas which need additional inputs for further improvements and also new areas of development which hold potentials for improving the infrastructure of the locality.

2. After the survey is completed, attempt is to be made for identifying new projects which need to be undertaken as well as previous projects which need further improvement. After completing this step, estimates of cost should be calculated and a realistic budget should be prepared for each of the projects separately. The project

plan should also include the strategies for implementation of each of these projects.

3. The union plans should be collected and compiled together at the thana level and may be sent to the district authority for compilation at the district level. Again they should be compiled at the divisional level and then forwarded to the Planning Ministry for final scrutiny and approval.

4. The Central Planning Commission at Dhaka should scrutinise each of these plans and modify them depending on their viability. The Planning Commission personnel should undertake tours in the planning areas to gather firsthand knowledge so that modification are not based on purely arbitrary decisions.

5. The plans should be ultimately compiled on the basis of divisions. This way there will be six plans for the six divisions compiled into one. These plans may be printed at Dhaka and sent to the divisions for distribution to the local planning authorities.

Needless to say that it is very likely that by this process of planning, local involvement will be ensured. Since local representatives will be involved in preparing the plan, they will try to sincerely implement it as they have a stake in its success. If this process works and it is bound to work for a self-sustaining development process may be the outcome which is the long cherished dream of both the government and the people.

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