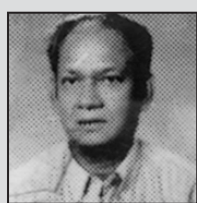


## Iraq and the UN



ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

### THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

**During the crisis Secretary General Kofi Annan had been severely attacked when he pulled out observers from Iraq. We have to remember that the Secretary General is unable to move his vast bureaucracy when the members of the Security Council are, and particularly the most powerful one -- the US -- is, determined to bypass him. Thus he has a most unenviable job -- he can quit leaving the world in a limbo.**

THE Security Council has voted 14-1 and adopted her latest resolution on Iraq. Thus closes a painful chapter in the history of the UN.

It is useful to recall the tumultuous period of the UN Security Council in March last. After maximum arms twisting by the US and Britain the Security Council adopted a resolution stipulating that the Arms Inspectors Hans Blix and Baradei should go to Iraq and report back to the Council whether they had discovered any arms of mass destruction on the basis of which there would be further step in matters of disarming Iraq. US-Britain tried their utmost to get a new resolution authorising them to attack Iraq. France, Russia and China, three permanent members of the Security Council opposed the move. US-Britain attacked Iraq nonetheless and this led to massive bloodshed of the poor Iraqis, and destruction of their country in a massive scale.

Relations between the US on the one hand and France, China and

Russia on the other went into deep freeze. Since France was leading the opposition she became the target of US-Britain. Since the end of the war US-Britain have been trying to set up an administration to run the show. First it was Gen. Garner who miserably failed. Now Paul Bremer is trying his hand in setting up an administration. Meanwhile Iraqis are determined that they will administer their own country. They have held massive demonstrations throughout the country and have put up an impressive show of unity between the long quarrelling Shias and Sunnis. This tableau of course excludes the Kurds in the north, who had been promised the moon by their new found friend -- America. In the chaos and confusion, which is today's Iraq, there is more than a chance that the cause of the Kurds will face benign neglect.

US-Britain while launching their murderous attack on Iraq, totally sidelined the Security Council and the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, who pulled out his observers from Iraq. The two Arms Inspectors were bluntly told by the two belligerents that they need not

return to Iraq.

The more than a month of administering Iraq must have taught the US the necessity to mend fences with her old ally, France and her new friends Russia and China. We may recall that the US was prepared to give the UN only a peripheral role and did not want to hear about Blix or Baradei. The US, according to the latest UN resolution, will see an eventual return of the Arms Inspectors and, most importantly, a high profile role for the UN. The UN will name shortly a representative to take up position in Iraq and is expected to play a role in running the administration. For the time being US-Britain will administer the country and the time table has been left deliberately vague.

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bypass him. Thus he has a most unenviable job -- he can quit leaving the world in a limbo.

Hopefully the Iraq misadventure must have shown US the limits of her power. Because of her military might she can cow down tiny Iraq but she was unable to conquer the Iraqi spirit. That is becoming manifest with every passing day. If anything the US invasion of Iraq has galvanised the Iraqis as rarely in their history. The Iraq crisis has demonstrated the power of European Union (EU) as manifest through the bold stand taken by France and Germany. The US must come to terms with the reality that she is no longer the colossus that strides the planet.

It may be premature to predict the future of President George W. Bush, who will have to face US voters within a year and a half. He became President in controversial circumstances. His record of presidency is lacklustre at best within the US and full of strange happenings worldwide. His handling of Foreign Affairs shows a very poor grip of the events and their fallout. In one area his partisanship has

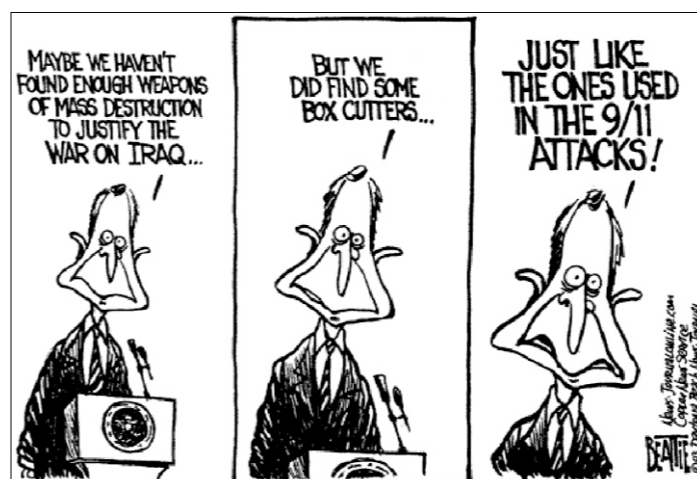
crossed all limits. This is his handling of the Arab-Israeli dispute and more specifically Palestine-Israeli dispute. Just in order to flatter his mentor and friend Ariel Sharon, Prime

Minister of Israel, he blackballed the elected longstanding leader of the Palestinians Yasser Arafat, giving the long festering Palestinian dispute a fresh twist.

Now President Bush has come up with his brilliant Road Map, which may be thrown into the dustbin within a short time. The predecessor of President Bush President Bill Clinton succeeded in establishing an evenhanded approach towards the Palestinians and the Israelis. In the US the Jewish lobby reigns supreme and President Bush, who was enormously helped by the Jews for his election is eagerly waiting for the Jewish lobby to bail him out one more time.

Since 11 September 2001, the US appears to have lost its moorings. Sooner or later it has to come to terms with its lost power. Until then the world can only wait in shock and awe.

Arshad-uz-Zaman is a former Ambassador.



## Damaging impact of SARS on Japanese economy

MONZURUL HUQ writes from Tokyo

JAPAN has so far not been affected directly by the spread of the deadly SARS virus that has brought life in China and some other countries and territories of the region into a virtual standstill. Although it has been reported recently that the public health measures are being seen as effective in containing this severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in many countries, the fear that the disease might cross over to hitherto untouched areas is still real. Hence, strict quarantine measures are being imposed and public health

personnel kept in full alert in almost all East and Southeast Asian countries to prevent any possible penetration of SARS virus in their areas.

In Japan there is so far not a single incident of SARS being detected. Country's port of entries are now given further instruction to tighten up the screening process of incoming passengers as it was reported last week that a physician from Taiwan was diagnosed as having SARS after he returned home from a sightseeing tour in Kansai region and Shikoku island. The Taiwanese doctor's incident raised sort of paranoia among

some Japanese as the media started to follow up the event up to its minute detail. The health ministry at one stage announced the names of the hotels, restaurants and tourist facilities the doctor visited and urged people who happened to be at those facilities in recent days and developed flu-like syndrome to contact medical centers without any delay. But fortunate for Japan, no one else seemed to have contracted the disease from the unwanted visitor. Even so, many hotels and restaurants promptly announced their decisions that presence at their premises of foreign nationals

result, Japan is yet to find its first SARS patient, despite all medical arrangements, including isolation of the patients and treating them with most up to date methods available in the world are in order. The government also made an announcement earlier that the cost of treatment of SARS patients in Japan are to be borne by state funding.

There is no doubt that Japan is in full preparation to combat any possible assault of SARS virus within the border of the country. The preparedness also somehow could convince people that the

some other factors like a surging yen and uncertain prospects for US recovery could cloud the outlook in the second quarter and beyond.

As China continues to struggle with SARS, Japanese economy is increasingly coming under pressure as country's industrial sector in recent days are becoming more and more reliant on high growth in Chinese market. The spread of SARS in China has resulted in a sharp decrease in market prices. Moreover, as Japanese technicians have been advised not to travel to affected areas, production at Japanese plants in China are also being seriously hindered.

The petrochemical industry in Japan, which has seen its resurgence in recent years as a result of rapid growth in Chinese demand, has started to scale down the production of some of its vital products due to a decline in orders from Chinese firms. Idemitsu Petrochemical Company has already announced that it would reduce production of a raw material used to make Styrofoam and electric appliances by 25 to 30 percent from the later part of May. As orders from China are continuing to dry up, price of the raw material known as styrene monomer has plunged more than 30 percent in recent days.

Many of Japan's electronic appliance makers in recent years have increased their stakes in China with the hope of penetrating a fast expanding huge market. But the sudden outbreak of SARS in China is compelling many of them to rethink about the strategy of relying solely on Chinese partners. Japan's renowned camera maker Nikon Corporation has been forced to delay a project to start assembling of lenses at its new production base in China's Jiangshu province. The project was scheduled to start in April, but had been halted due to travel restriction on Japanese technicians.

Honda Motor Company announced the postponement of the start of subcompact sedan production in China by one to two months due to the outbreak of SARS. Production was originally planned to begin in July. The effects of SARS are hampering Honda's production operations at its plant in Guangzhou.

The service sector in SARS affected regions has been particu-

larly hard hit as number of tourists drastically declined leaving hotels and entertainment facilities virtually deserted. Japanese service sector has not been affected that much as the country's tourism industry is much more diversified and not dependent solely on the inflow of tourists from other Asian countries. But one particular side of the industry that has been hit really hard is Japan's airline companies. Number of flights to SARS affected regions had to be curtailed in line with the decline of mostly outbound Japanese tourists. Travel agencies with business in Asia are also suffering as cautious Japanese are not only unwilling to travel to countries that have been marked as hazardous due to the spread of SARS, but showing a tendency of avoiding Asia in general. JAL, which has recently become the holding company for Japan Airlines and Japan Air System, has already announced service cut-backs for international flights to cut costs, and is also set to raise domestic fares from July to September to compensate for the revenue loss due to SARS.

One unexpected victim of SARS is the East Asian Football Federation (EAFF), which is facing bankruptcy as its inaugural championship has been postponed due to the disease. The EAFF has spent \$2.5 million for the qualifying tournament in Hong Kong and preparing for the four-nation championship, which was due to kick off in Yokohama on May 28. The postponement of the tournament means EAFF is now devoid of its income from TV rights or ticket sales. If the Federation fails to find a new date for the tournament that would virtually mean facing unavoidable bankruptcy.

SARS has so far spared Japan from the spread of its virus. But being an important country of the region having economic stakes in territories that are severely affected by SARS, it was virtually impossible for Japan to by-pass the impact of the disease on country's economy. But the blow came at a time when other woes are already causing serious harm to Japanese economy. The fear as a result is that, the real impact of SARS might prove to be no less damaging than in those countries that are now struggling to contain the virus.

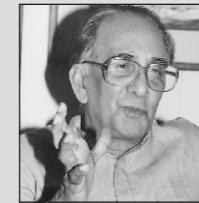
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arriving from other Asian countries would be considered undesirable.

The health ministry officials in Japan are now convinced that there is little chance for anyone who came in contact with the Taiwanese doctor to have contracted the deadly disease. They came to the conclusion early this week after the driver of the bus that the doctor moved around for four days across western Japan was tested negative for SARS. The doctor was in Japan in a group tour and all others who took the bus with him except the driver were fellow Taiwanese who have returned home since then. As a

country is facing no imminent danger despite the worsening situation of SARS elsewhere in Asia. Routine healthcare instructions are being given to citizens and local administrations throughout the country are keeping a watchful eye over public health situation. Japanese returning home from East and Southeast Asian countries are being advised to remain home for a week before resuming their routine life. All such precautions are no doubt helping Japan to remain free of SARS.

But this no way indicates that Japan is totally free from the devastating impact that SARS is having on Asia. The new disease is taking its obvious toll from other parts of country's regular activities. Japan's cabinet office has recently released the data on nation's economic growth rate for January-March quarter, which shows the growth rate in the first quarter of the year falling virtually to zero percent as exports keep on falling and persistent deflation hampering the expansion of overall economy. Economic analysts point out Iraq war and the spread of SARS as two important outside factors responsible for such poor performance of Japanese economy. Many believe that the export for Japan may not improve soon as the possible further impact of SARS as well as



MUHAMMAD HABIBUR RAHMAN

### This young girl cries too much

The young girl, the grand daughter, Met her grandmother twenty-five years after.

They belonged not only to two different ages. They did not even know each other's languages, She had left the country when she was very young. She had forgotten her mother's, grandmother's tongue. Their food habits were different. Their clothes are also different. Their religions were different. Their taboos and superstitions were different. How wonderful! With so many a difference, A complete understanding did soon commence. Between the two with their full concurrence.

The girl's whole childhood had a re-run before her. She remembered all the stories the grandma told her And the funny places in the stories where did she wiggle And where invariably she used to giggle. After a lot of sighin' and cryin' When the little mouse told the lion: "I may be of some help to you in the future." The lion burst into laughter: "You puny little brat! You'd help me! How you dare?" She remembered the slow-footed hare -- the unready And the surefooted tortoise, the slow but steady. Well she remembered How she and her grandma conspired To bye-pass her mother's frowning don'ts With regard to foods, drinks and odd haunts. She remembered how grandma persuaded her To swallow the bitter *chirota* before every summer.

Grandma in her sari was sitting Cross-legged at the centre on the cot The girl in her skirts was sitting Straight on a stool in front of that cot. The English the grandmother could not speak. The Bengali the young girl could hardly speak. But their clasped hands gave them a wonderful support And their entwined fingers built a wonderful rapport. The two soon found themselves standing At the centre of the bridge of understanding.

Overcoming her initial difficulty with her English accent The young girl suddenly became eloquent And uttered a few words in Bengali. Surrounded by an extended Bengali family All present there mumbled and murmured happily.

Tears were rolling down the young girl's cheeks. Tears were rolling down the grandma's cheeks. And the grandma continued with her refrain: "This girl cries so much!" "This young girl cries too much!"

Shedding all tears the girl felt light and eloquent With one bold step forward she went Her grandmother to retort and reflect: "This old woman cries too much!" "This old woman cries too much!" Everyone around the extended Bengali family Burst out together into laughter very heartily.

The girl wiped out her tearstains The old woman wiped out her tearstains The sky was smiling after the rains. The grandma's eyes were smiling The young woman's eyes looked sparkling. Oh! She had a pair of wonderful large lotus-eyes A romantic lover would like to romanticise And a young poet would like to rhapsodise.

True, that the young girl cried much Also true, the old woman cried much But can it be said that they cried too much? Weren't the girl and her grandmother After twenty-five years seeing each other? When there was nothing between the two to lament Let the happy two cry in joy to their heart's content.

Muhammad Habibur Rahman is former Chief Justice and head of caretaker government