

Education budget

Expenditure pattern is equally important

THOUGH successive governments laid great emphasis on educational uplift, the budgetary allocations for this sector have decreased over the years if we consider the GNP-education budget ratio. At present, only around two per cent of GNP is spent in this sector.

The question of increasing allocation to the education sector is often raised because it is believed to be performing well below the expected levels. We support the idea of pumping in more money to the sector, which is saddled with too many limitations and constraints; yet the pattern of expenditure is also very important. If payment of salaries and infrastructural overheads gobble up the bulk of the allocations, then issues like standard of learning, educational equipment, teacher training and research will never get due attention. Not that routine payments can be avoided, but the point is that if very little is left after meeting those expenditures, then the budgetary allocations are clearly not enough to bring about the desired changes.

We believe organisational matters like formation of management committees comprising honest, dedicated and competent people is basic to better educational administration. In other words, it is essential for ensuring proper utilisation of the allocated money. Then there are 'signboard' institutions which eat up money that could go to genuine schools or colleges. They have neither the teaching staff nor the infrastructure to call themselves educational institutions. Such schools or colleges will have to be either phased out or re-organised to prevent wastage of money and downslide in the standard of education. However, the authorities must tread carefully since the number of children not attending school is still high. They may fix the number of schools that can be set up in an area, depending on its population, to weed out those that exist only in paper.

In the ultimate analysis, a viable system cannot be developed unless there is regular monitoring, supervision and inspection of the different tiers of education at work. It is a relevant point because in our context constraints and limitations often snowball into insurmountable problems owing to mismanagement, corruption and inefficiency.

Toxic chemical in fruits

Public health in jeopardy

APPEARANCE can surely be deceptive. The reported use of a toxic chemical to enhance the look of fruits and vegetables is a case in point. Obviously, this is not a matter to be taken lightly or glossed over. Being alarmed by these reports would be an understatement. Especially when a highly toxic chemical called 'Ethrel 39SL' is supposedly being used for ripening and maturing fruits and vegetables making the innocent consumers fall into a deadly trap. How else one would explain the anxiety such acts by some unscrupulous businessmen cause in the minds of common people. According to reports, the label on the bottle of Ethrel, said to be smuggled from India, clearly warns of the serious health hazard it may cause to a human body.

Even after that, businessmen are using the chemical to lure the consumers into buying the products. What a deplorable lack of social conscience! As long as they make hefty profits, nothing else seems to matter to them. But the worrying thing is adulteration is not a new phenomenon. Another report says that a chemical named calcium carbide is also being used to hasten the process of ripening fruits in old Dhaka. Sadly, there is none to check these gross violations. Adulteration is a highly culpable offence, no better than murders. But the violators would only get caught if concerned authorities pulled up their socks.

Newspapers have been publishing reports on such criminal practices since the beginning of the season, but to no avail. We have not heard of any punitive action taken against anybody so far? We have to realise that human lives are being put at grave risk only for some monetary gains. And that surely is a serious legal offence. We wonder where have Bangladesh Standard Testing Institute and the Food Department gone? Shouldn't it be their responsibility to check such gross violations of consumers' rights? It's about time we had an authority with clearly defined terms of reference to deal with such irregularities that seem to have plagued our society.

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

THE object of the present enquiry is an attempt to understand as to why the invasion of Iraq was given a higher priority by the US than an intervention in North Korea, the last Stalinist outpost in the world.

In October last year State department spokesman Richard Boucher informed a stunned international audience of North Korean (DPRK) "confession" to Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly of its continuing programme "to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons in violation of Agreed Framework and other agreements" e.g. Non-proliferation treaty, its IAEA safeguards agreements, and joint North-South Declaration on Denuclearisation of Korean peninsula. A few days later joint US-Japan-South Korea Trilateral statement called upon DPRK to dismantle the programme in a prompt and verifiable manner and to come into compliance with all its international commitments. Both statements committed the three countries to resolve the matter peacefully. But some analysts found the DPRK confession not only unapologetic but its response to international criticism was characterised by mounting belligerence. Joshua Muravchik of American Enterprise Institute for example argued that if the North Koreans could not be stopped now, despite US' unsuccessful efforts for the last twenty years, then the world faced the prospect of DPRK becoming in Richard Perle's phrase "the nuclear bread basket of the world" or at least of the underworld of the failed states and terrorists.

Muravchik chronicled North Korean efforts to build weapon grade nuclear reactor in 1979; it signed NPT in 1985 under Soviet pressure; refused to sign IAEA safeguard agreement till 1989 on the plea that it would not sign unless South Korea agreed to turn Korean peninsula into a nuclear free zone (which ROK did); then added the demand that annual joint ROK-US military exercise be scrapped (President Bush announced his decision to withdraw nuclear weapons from South Korea in 1991 and to cancel joint military exercises). Meanwhile South Korea launched its "sunshine policy" of friendship

with DPRK; unilaterally renounced the manufacture, possession or use of nuclear or chemical weapons; and signed a non-aggression pact with the North. Unfortunately while these positive steps were being taken, DPRK continued its nuclear programme in complete secrecy. When in November 1993 President Clinton announced that DPRK would not be allowed to develop nuclear bomb, CIA had assessed that the North already had one or

goal is to possess nuclear weapons. Already isolated further isolation may have marginal effects as would any strict sanctions regime by the UNSC given our experiences with sanction busting in other cases. War is hardly an option and is implicitly regarded by the Bush administration as "unthinkable". North Korea has hundreds of thousands of soldiers and thousands of artillery pieces are believed to be arrayed in and around DMZ. These shells can

ble damages.

The obvious question facing the US is what to do? It is generally believed that only China has the greatest leverage as the sole fuel supplier to DPRK due to suspension of oil supply by the US consequent upon North Korean infringement of the Agreed Framework. Fortunately Chinese policy has consistently favoured a denuclearised Korean peninsula. China is also apprehensive that in case of disappearance of

divergent interest of the two regarding DPRK and has advised removal of China from the list of countries for "constructive engagement" by the US for solution of international crises. At this point one could also recall the 1999 Armitage Report (now Deputy Secretary of State) prepared by a panel also including Paul Wilfowitz (now Deputy Secretary of Defence) which concluded that the lesson for Pyongyang over the last four years

meetings would also include Japan and South Korea. The point of departure here is that DPRK would have liked to hold bilateral talks with the US which the US had refused flat out and would like other concerned countries -- Japan and South Korea -- to be included in the talks.

At the Bush Texas ranch meeting Koizumi was at pains to convey that in essence all parties wanted peaceful resolution of the problem lest the isolated dictator at Pyongyang got the impression that the Texas talks was a mini council of war. On 24th May DPRK accepted the US demand to include Japan and South Korea in the future talks. According to a statement issued North Korea did not find "the format of the talks itself as an essential issue if the US truly wanted to settle the problem". It is the first time that DPRK has agreed to a five-way multilateral format to deal with the nuclear issue. This softening of North Korean stance could have resulted from the tough stand taken by President Bush at his Texas ranch meeting with Koizumi that US would refuse to be blackmailed and would insist on a complete, verifiable and irreversible elimination of North Korean nuclear programme.

This message along with those sent to Syria and now Iran must not have been lost on Kim Jong-Il who has seen the disastrous results of the failed deceptive diplomacy of Saddam Hussein. Since the carrot and stick policy appears to be in order in this case some (e.g. Henry Soloski of the Non-proliferation policy education centre in May 2003 Arms Control Association publication) have suggested that Bush administration has to cut off illicit flow of cash to DPRK army; that it blocks North Korean and other proliferators from exporting WMD; and that the UN should toughen the non-proliferation regime. Otherwise in a decade or more the world would be crowded with hostile suspected nuclear states some of which may be willing to trade with or unable to stop trade with terrorist organisations.

Kazi Anwarul Masud a former Secretary and Ambassador.

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two. Clinton Defence Secretary was resolute that he would rather risk a war now than face an even greater catastrophe several years hence. State department, however, was not so sanguine that the point of no return had arrived.

The mounting tension was diffused by a visit to Pyongyang by President Carter who found Kim Il-Sung being revered and treated "as a combination of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln". He also found Kim "very friendly towards Christianity, vigorous, intelligent, surprisingly well informed and very frank". Carter's visit paved the foundation for Agreed Framework under which DPRK would freeze its existing plutonium programme and in return would receive two light water reactors and pending their completion half million metric tons of heavy oil annually. Such Faustian bargain was made in the hope that North Korea's economic difficulties would lead to regime change and result in Korean unification a la Germany. Nothing happened and the father Kim Il-sung was succeeded by his son Kim Jong-Il. On the other hand the agreement set a dangerous precedent by rewarding Pyongyang for her defiance and could encourage future proliferation of WMD.

North Korean perfidy having been established it is difficult to chart a course to restrain DPRK if its

reach Seoul in a matter of minutes causing deaths of thousands of South Koreans and US troops stationed there. It is not beyond North Korean leadership to use nuclear weapons causing incalcula-

DPRK the Americans would move in to fill the vacuum and thereby come closer to the Chinese border. Ellen Bork at the Project of the New American Century is skeptical of Chinese help to the US because of

was that brinkmanship paid. The report warned that the 1994 agreement had only created a cycle that would lead Pyongyang to believe that it could extract concessions. Wilfowitz expressed his doubts that a regime which cared so little for its own people except enhancing its military capabilities would be willing to give up the ultimate weapons in exchange for power reactors. Armitage report recommended various force enhancement measures relating to ROK and Japan and called for identification of a "redline" which would trigger response should DPRK decide to cross it.

Attacks on North Korean nuclear sites was not considered because there was no "neat and safe military operation that in some antiseptic way could eliminate North Korean nuclear problem" and also fearing the North's devastating retaliation against the South. Again the US was back to square one. Recently on 23rd May President Bush and Prime Minister Koizumi made it abundantly clear that the US and Japan would not tolerate nuclear weapons in DPRK; they would not give in to blackmail and would not settle for anything less than complete, verifiable and irreversible elimination of North Korean nuclear weapons programme. They praised the role played by China in the recent US-China-DPRK meeting at Beijing and expressed the hope that future



Who makes to the White House next?

BRIG GEN JAHANGIR KABIR, NDC, PSC (RETD).

CLEARLY President Bush has violated one of the basic principles of war much to the chagrin of Colin Powell and many like him. That he opened up second front in Iraq before the fall of Taliban government could give any indication of the consolidation of victory over Al-Qaeda networks. Enemies nowhere but everywhere in the mountainous Afghanistan have the making of quick sand for the technology driven Americans. It is also a stark reminder of history that invaders could never feel at ease on those rugged mountains and valleys more known for blood feud but little as a nation state. Today, Karzai is reduced to a high profile prisoner protected by the American servicemen in Kabul.

In fact it was unfulfilled desire of getting Bin Laden 'dead or alive' along with his host, Mullah Omar and failure to capitulate Al-Qaeda networks that impelled Bush to go for Saddam at an odd time in an unglorious way. The catastrophe of 9/11 did not only destroy the Twin Towers in New York and part of Pentagon in the capital, it put the myth of invincibility syndrome of New World into the thin air. American public backed President Kennedy to the peril of a nuclear war in Cuban crisis to maintain that invincibility. The youthful late Kennedy is so much revered even today due to his success in playing brinkmanship to maintain the myth by expelling the missiles from Cuba.

Four decades later, in the unipolar world, when that vital invincible image is shattered by striking the major American icons, people are emotionally rallying around and asking action from another young president occupying the White House. It's not so much confidence in his leadership but the crisis culture that rallies the people behind him. To appease his ego and soothe the public opinion he went into Afghanistan in an angry haste. With expected result deceiving in Afghanistan his spin masters went for public relation drama: playing Saddam for Bin Laden. So the dye is cast for Saddam's doom.

Even after capitulation, Saddam presidential election. Clearly signs are uneasy if not ominous for the President. Meanwhile, American economy is performing below capacity. Millions of jobs have been lost. War in Afghanistan and now in Iraq has drained out more than \$200 billions without immediate gain at sight. Budget deficit is ever widening and President's effort to revitalise the economy by slashing down the corporate taxes is tamed down to \$350 billion from proposed \$726 billion in a spell of 10 years due to war and other fiscal constraints. Frightened Arab nations put \$200 billion of liquid investments from American market on Trans Atlantic

two of Ronald Reagan's economic mantras, that worked as twin rail of prosperity. It somehow worked in Reagan's time at the cost of huge borrowing and perennial trade deficiencies from which US economy could never fully recover despite visible prosperity.

Adding further to the woes President Bush aligns himself with rich and affluent, on the very right track of the Republican right. It is now questionable if the traditional right wing thrust of oil, war and defence production can give facelift to the economy to get back the jobs and balance average American pockets. With over \$6 trillions of dollars in debt which is sucking

Reaganomics was the last of propped up balloon in that traditional hue which however ate on the very vitals of the American economy. Consumer economics has its own limits too, for you can't infinitely spend more than you earn nor spend before you possibly earn.

First war against Iraq that Bush sr. fought was most profitable due to cash and kind doled out by Arab and other nations. But such bank rolling by Arab nations, Japan and other allies in this war is likely to trickle down little due to laissez-faire failure of the war effort. The way contracts for rebuilding Iraq is being dished out to corporate

on. Al Gore the most heavy-weight of the lot, as pollsters predict, is still leaking his wounded pride due to last minute Supreme Court verdict which cost him the White House more than the popular mandate. Never in the history of the USA is a Presidential election so much talked about.

With Al Gore all but gone is American public getting ready to part from the traditional ways? Signs are confusing, for nothing has emerged yet; but the undercurrents are felt somewhere.

Hilary Clinton is the most acceptable leader among the Democrats after reluctant Al Gore and gaining ground everyday. She has always been an exceedingly smart lawyer and now a senator from her adapted state of New York. She has brilliantly converted the former President Clinton's crisis into an opportunity to make her from First Lady to a potential First Person ... Is America ready to offer the Oval Office to a Lady?

remains wily like Bin Laden, and frustratingly so, Iraq too proves close to Afghanistan. No wonder threatening Syria, Iran and others has the making of another spin in case this one too proves heavy thunder and thrust with little delivery. Question is how long American public will wait to satisfy their wounded ego before they start questioning the wisdom of the President. While there is enough time to ponder, there appears to be little time to answer before the

flight to continental Europe before the Iraq war. All these are weakening the dollar against Euro and other major currencies but trade is not adequately responding to reduce the imbalance.

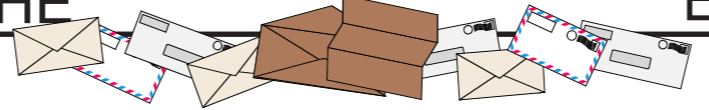
On top of it all a deflationary tendency is now forecast by the Federal Reserve Chief, Greenspan on the fragile economy. It is up to the economic gurus to suggest highway to recovery. President Bush appears neither in a position to insist on the huge tax cut nor arm build up,

more than 6 per cent of GNP in debt servicing, almost a billion dollar trade deficit everyday, there appears to be no miracle waiting for the under performing economy to take off immediately. Ever more challenges faced from continental Europe, Japan, NIC and China, the economists are divided about the validity of traditional conservative approach that worked wonders since the emergence of the USA in the world arena for nearly a century ago.

America it appears the incumbent President will have huge financial resources to fuel his campaign one more time. But as the pockets of average Americans have been vastly depleted and their invincibility syndrome not entirely restored, how much the TV commercials and media campaign paid by the incumbent's generous election budget can humour the public and balm their wound is to be observed by the curious minds.

The war for presidency is already

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

US resolution 1483!

So the US has finally legalised its illegal occupation of Iraq. Even though US is so powerful that it doesn't need any legal papers (it can open your doors by dropping a couple of bunker-busters and then just walk in), it still went through all the civilised tactics to get the licence from UN. So from now on, whatever US and UK do in Iraq, it is all legal. No more complaining you Muslim boys!

The fact that people can actually steal and kill in broad daylight is bad. But if they get away with those murders despite committing their crime in front of the whole world, then it is very bad. However, to commit a crime first and then simply change the law itself to legalise your crimes, well, this would leave even magician Jewel Aich standing like a fool! This is pure civilised and democratic magic. Just how did they do it? Imagine what would have happened if a Muslim/Arab country even proposed something like this. But thanks to our Muslim

leaders, not a single country -apart from Syria- dared to say even a word against this humiliating act of vandalism against the entire civilisation. Muslim leaders are only interested in saving their seats and now it is official (proven by resolution 1483) that they are all cowards. **Azad Miah**
Oldham, UK

Destruction of the ancient city of Iraq

It is becoming clear, day by day, that the "liberation" of Iraq also included liberating the Iraqi people of their archaeological heritage.

As reported in the Observer (www.observer.co.uk, May 18, 2003), after divesting Iraqi museums of their antiquities, the coalition troops are currently engaged in the petty theft of bricks of the many ancient structures located in the city of Ur. These millennia old, kiln-baked bricks, along with other artefacts looted from museums will undoubtedly be the star attraction of

private auction houses in Europe and Northern America. Not content with the unabashed desecration of the city, US troop have also vandalised the walls many of the ancient and historic structures with spray painted graffiti displaying regimental and patriotic mottos.

Many historians believe that Ur is the birthplace of the Prophet Abraham. From this city originated the line of dynasties that ruled Mesopotamia starting about 4000 BC; the wheel was invented here and the first poetry, the epic Gilgames was written here. The Ziggurat -- a stepped pyramid, one of the best preserved monuments built by the Sumerians around 4000 BC and restored by the emperor Neduchadnezzar II in the sixth century is also located here. To add insult to injury, the US is building a massive airfield and base in this city. Clearly, what nature has not destroyed in over 6000 years of history, the forces of liberation will, within a short time.

Shomit Chowdhury
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

No rickshaws on

Mirpur Road from July

A careful assessment of the Government's efforts in controlling the traffic jam in the city vis-à-vis the gradual withdrawal of the rickshaws from the main thoroughfares would reveal that this has so far been friendly towards the wealthier section of the society. I am not against the practicality and the reasoning behind the Government's decision but what is of concern here is that this is being done in a hurried way without any proper planning and is not having the corresponding result and the expected impact.

Firstly with the ban of rickshaw, traffic on most of the existing strip of Mirpur Road right up to the Kalabagan intersection has already resulted into a perennial traffic jam in all the lanes and by-lanes within the entire Dhanmondi Residential areas.

Secondly with the limited number of "filling" stations, the CNG operated four-stroke wheelers often have to wait hours before they can

fill their tanks and roll on to the roads. This in turn resulted into demanding of extra charges over the fixed meter readings by the three-wheeler operators. On the other hand most Three-wheelers often "refuse" to go to short distances on one pretext or the other.

Thirdly one has to take into consideration of the fact that the proposed banning of the rickshaws from Kalabagan to Mirpur is certainly going to hurt the majority of the population living in the adjoining areas belonging to lower middle class and moderately fixed income groups whose only mode of transportation is rickshaws since there is no effective alternate public transportation systems. These people will be badly hit.

Finally on this day we have not heard a single word from the present Government about its plans if any, of helping the rickshawpullers with alternate means of income generation. Already the Government moves have hit the rickshawpullers badly.

I feel that the whole thing is infested with ill-planning and short-

sighted and cannot be sustained and may even fall through sooner than one can think of.
Dhamsheer Chowdhury
Shakha

"Anti-Americanism"

Mr. S. Khan's letter on anti-Americanism (May 30) was interesting for some un-called for remarks. The USA has been criticised in *The Daily Star* for the right reasons. The USA lied to the international community by telling them that according to their intelligence sources, Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and force was necessary to destroy those weapons. Where are these weapons?

The USA is today held in respect of the world with little respect for its stance in Iraq where it went against world opinion by conjuring lies and making excuses for achieving its interests. Thus criticism of the USA is not by any means anti-Americanism but an honest, objective one of the world's only Super

Power, which has unfortunately fallen into the hands of ultra conservatives. Mr. Khan's remarks about USA beating the ultra-Islamic fundamentalists to a pulp is so offensive that one can only question his sanity and his ignorance of what he is talking about. Who are the ultra fundamentalists? Saddam Hussein? Osama bin Laden? But Saddam was not an Islamic fundamentalist and Laden has not been neutralised yet, not if we believe all the alerts that the USA continues to give. If Saddam Hussein or Laden had been killed or brought to justice by the US actions, then one could perhaps given the USA the benefit of the doubt. Neither have been killed or captured but in the process, many thousands of innocent civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq have been killed. Does Mr. Khan have any sympathy for the innocent Iraqis or Afghans who have been killed by US operations?

How would he respond to the fact that both Saddam and Laden were given the greatest boost to the careers of brutality or terrorism by sponsorships of the US Govern-

ment and the CIA till they chose to pursue their careers against the US interests rather than against those that the US considered harmful to its interests?

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

This is in reply to S. Khan's "Anti-Americanism." I have been insulted by his comment stating that all Bangladeshis would like to become an American.

I am currently studying in USA, but will, without a doubt, go back to my country after my education is complete. Additionally, I have seen numerous other people going back home; these people go back because they either like it better in Bangladesh, or out of a sense of obligation towards their country (which Mr. Khan obviously don't have). Since it seems he is so keen to be an American, let me give him an advice on taking a further step in that direction: quit reading *The Daily Star*, and stick to Fox News.

Sami Afzal
USA