

US' policy encourages proliferation of nuclear weapons



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THE Bush administration made it clear that there should be no spread of weapons of mass destruction that includes atomic, biological and chemical weapons (otherwise known as ABC weapons) because they endanger international peace and security. The probability of terrorists getting hold of nuclear weapons is increased as more countries acquire them. According to the 2002 estimate by the US *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, Russia has 8,600 nuclear weapons, the US 8,000, China 400, France 350, Britain 200, Israel 200, Pakistan 48, India 35.

The US government leaders through their not infrequent statements urged North Korea to halt immediately its nuclear programme, although by this time Pyongyang has reportedly managed to produce anywhere between three to six nuclear warheads. Iran is under strict surveillance of the US so that they cannot produce nuclear weapons from the uranium enrichment plants being built by Russia. The uranium enrichment plants could produce nuclear weapons grade fissile material. Iran declared that it would use nuclear plants for development, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes consistent with Article 5 of the 1968 Nuclear Weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

No country ordinarily wants to

manufacture nuclear weapons because (a) they are expensive and time-consuming to produce and (b) they pose danger to safety of the country because of the insufficient means of disposal of nuclear radioactive wastes that last for at least thousand years even if buried in the underground. The recent looting of radioactive materials in Iraq has posed great health hazards to Iraqi people and the UN IAEA inspectors have been allowed in Iraq on 6 June by the US to find out how much materials have been stolen or looted.

Consistent with the NPT provisions, many countries including Australia, Brazil, South Africa and Japan have decided not to acquire nuclear weapons although they have enough scientists and material resources to produce such weapons. Until this date about 180 countries including Bangladesh have rejected nuclear option under the NPT.

Although the NPT is discriminatory because it allows five countries namely, US, Britain, China, France and Russia to have nuclear weapons, each nuclear weapon-state under the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating "to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control" (Article 6 of the Treaty).

On 7 August 1996, a group of Non-Aligned states including Bangladesh tabled a three-phase proposal to the UN Committee on Disarmament in Geneva. However, all five nuclear weapon states remain uncomfortable with permanently ending nuclear weapons and the proposal could not proceed further. All the five countries refuse to begin negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons, proclaiming that nuclear weapons act as a deterrent to any armed attack and this appears to be an element to their defence policies for the foreseeable future.

The resistance of the Bush admin-

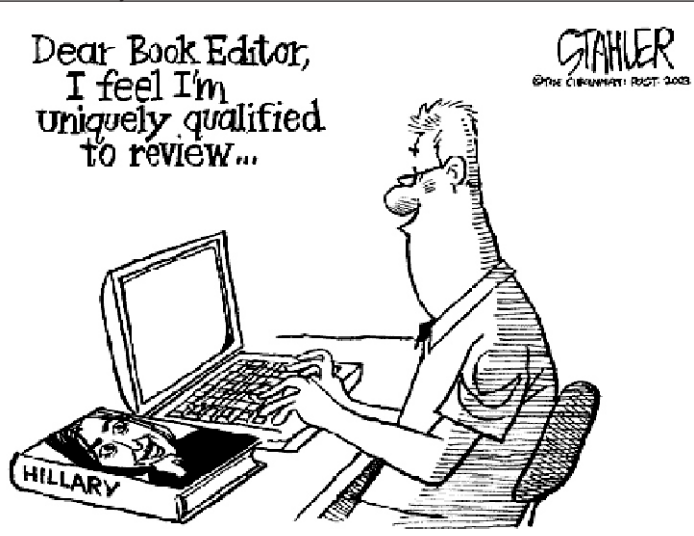
BOTTOM LINE

The policy "do what we say and don't do what we do" of the Bush administration is not doing any good to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. There is a strong perception in international community that threats to stability and security are emanating from the new American policy and not from "rogue states". The US may well be advised to shun its research and development of new nuclear weapons and revert back to multi-lateral consensus-based approach to prevent dissemination of nuclear weapons under the provisions of the NPT.

istration in horizontal expansion of nuclear weapons is understandable but its actions do not reflect this commitment. On May 1, 2001 President Bush declared: "Nuclear weapons still have a vital role to play in our security." This was well before the September 11 attacks. The Bush administration's reliance on nuclear weapons has threatened to inflict irreparable damage to the non-proliferation regime contemplated by the 1968 Treaty.

In early 2002, referring to the Bush administration, Stephen Schwartz, publisher of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* in the US, said that "Not since the early 1980s and the admin-

istration of Ronald Reagan has a US President placed such high priority on nuclear weapons." Similar sentiment was expressed by William Arkin, a senior Fellow at the John Hopkins University when he stated that "the administration is reversing an almost two-decade-long trend of relegating nuclear weapons to the category of the weapons-of-last-resort". *The New York Times* blasted that "if another country were planning to develop a new nuclear weapon and contemplating pre-emptive strikes against a list of non-nuclear powers Washington would rightly label that nation a dangerous rogue state".



In the classified version of the Pentagon's Nuclear Posture Review, leaked in *The Los Angeles Times* in 2002, it set out the direction for the nuclear arsenal over the next decade. First it flagged the need for smaller nuclear bombs with less fallout designed to penetrate underground bunkers in which command centers or stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction might be held. Second and most controversially it urged contingency plans for strikes on Iraq, Iran, Syria, North Korea and Libya as well as nuclear powers China and Russia. It also alluded to Pakistan and India, saying a "sudden regime change" in an existing nuclear power could also require a nuclear response. What concerned experts was that the strategy sought to integrate conventional forces and weapons into a nuclear war plan that envisaged small nuclear bombs -- all of which made their use more likely.

Quizzed on the leaked document, President Bush reportedly told that "all options on the table" were being considered to ensure no country threatened the US with weapons of mass destruction. The Russians have mixed feelings about the twists in US nuclear policy. According to the US Centre for Defence Information, the US and Russia retain 16,600 intact nuclear warheads and despite the Moscow Treaty of May 2002 on reduction of nuclear arms, they intend holding on to them. The Treaty has recently been ratified by both countries during the visit of

President Bush in St. Petersburg early this month.

In addition to the increasing reliance on nuclear weapons by the US, the muscular approach of the US towards Iraq has raised security concerns of many states. Many believe that the unprovoked war on Iraq could not have been launched if Iraq had the nuclear weapons. (In 1981 Israel in a pre-emptive strike destroyed the nuclear reactor in Osirak in Iraq and later such action was condemned by the UN Security Council as a gross violation of Iraq's sovereignty). North Korea's Foreign Minister said that "Iraqi war shows.....that only tremendous military deterrent force can prevent attacks that America dislikes."

It appears that many countries that shunned in the past nuclear weapons are coming to a view that possession of nuclear weapons can only avert war from the US and it is likely that nuclear proliferation will be on the rise. The NPT is not something that is sacred. Any party can withdraw from the Treaty under Article 10 in the interest of the country and only three months' notice is required. North Korea is the only country so far that has withdrawn from the NPT.

The policy of the Bush administration on nuclear proliferation appears to be full of contradictions. On one hand it is determined to ensure nuclear non-proliferation, on the other hand it has engaged itself to produce new "smart" nuclear weapons and use them if necessary (similar to the one demanding "zero tolerance" on marijuana but happily accepting millions of dollars from alcohol and tobacco lobbyists in the US). Some say that the US does not intend to become a nuclear "Guliver" tied down by a UN coalition of "Lilliputians". Furthermore it is prepared to tolerate some countries to possess nuclear warheads because, as *The New York Times* recently said, "There are no bad weapons, only bad regimes". To this way of thinking Israel's nuclear weapons are good.

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don't do what we do" of the Bush administration is not doing any good to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. There is a strong perception in international community that threats to stability and security are emanating from the new American policy and not from "rogue states". The US may well be advised to shun its research and development of new nuclear weapons and revert back to multi-lateral consensus-based approach to prevent dissemination of nuclear weapons under the provisions of the NPT.

That is of course a big asking from the Bush administration. However, if the US fast-food chain McDonald's can lose money, nothing is unusual. If the administration's policy changes, states that perceive that their security is threatened by the unprovoked war on Iraq and are desirous of producing nuclear weapons are most likely not to opt for nuclear weapons.

Would that the US could be so wise to change its policy?

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Education sector and national budget

Missing concern for job creation for the educated unemployed

M. SHAMSUL HAQUE

A recent editorial in The Daily Star (June 1) has highlighted some of the problems in the education sector such as relatively lower budgets as a percentage of GDP (about 2%), spending on teachers' salaries as modest as it is taking greater percentage of the budgeted amount, low quality education and the recently highlighted facts about huge wastages in large number of schools with zero percent passing in SSC exam. We also know that governments have been implementing plans and programmes to increase enrollment in primary and secondary schools with financial incentives for the poor and girl students. There have been successes in such efforts as figures released from time to time. GoB, of course, claims that total allocation for the education sector exceeds all other sectors, indicating top priority for education. Such aggregates do not signify much if we break it down to per student basis. For example, the budget for primary and mass education was Tk.3256.00 crore in FY 2003 representing 48.52 per cent of the total budget for the education sector. Divided over 1.77 crore students, per student amount was Tk.1840 only per year. The amount includes revenue and development, a meaningless division anyway for the education sector. Was that amount sufficient for the quality of education needed at the primary level?

In this background it is time that we raise certain questions about the size of the budget in this and following years, how can we improve quality and reduce wastages of both public and private money. We know that if wastages can be reduced budget allocation for the remaining activities can be increased. We also know that if management of institutions is improved then there would be some gains in efficiency and quality in education. More money in the national budget may be asked for certain specific purposes, such as improving quality of teaching by training more teachers and providing certain essential supplies of books and equipment. However, the questions of quality improvement is much more complex an issue, which is difficult to resolve in the situation that exists in the country. Decades of failures in governance resulted in accumulation of many socio-economic problems, especially lack of job creation for both educated and uneducated youths. Young people with no means to earn a living are the natural targets for misuse by criminals, drug pushers and political godfathers. This is contributing to increased level of social uncertainty besides other natural sources of uncertainty, such as floods, draughts and cyclones that frequently occur in Bangladesh.

An incomes policy for the nation

Concern for rising unemployment of educated youths must be addressed soon if we want to reduce social uncertainty, unrest and violence from this group. Efforts to improve law and order will not succeed unless we can reduce uncertainty from the lives of millions

of unemployed youths. In these days of financial innovations it should be possible to offer some schemes of social insurance for this deprived class of youths in the country.

As explained below any policy to improve quality in the education sector will hit the issue of staggering unemployment in the country. We hear and read of justified concern from some quarters when a loss-making factory is closed and some employees are sent home with a golden handshake. More serious concerns should be expressed about millions of SSC, HSC and undergraduate students who fail and/or pass in third divisions, and drop out of the education system. Similarly those who graduate after another 3 to 8 years of study and wait for jobs, that are hard to come by for years. May be we should have an incomes policy first so that every one in the society can be assured of a minimum income to avoid starvation and other deprivation.

a job in Bangladesh is not associated with the quality in processing and the standard of education as mentioned above. For that reason increasing budget allocation and raising efficiency in management shall not be enough for the education sector. Creation of more jobs and increasing the supply of needed manpower targeted from the education sector should be of great concern for the policy makers. For example, let us suppose that in some branch of education quality of outcome matches the quality referred to by the employers and also it is of international standards. However, the economy did not grow as expected and many of the qualified graduates would remain unemployed. That would amount to wastage of valuable human resources and the costs incurred for producing these graduates would be largely wasted. Hence there is need for sound manpower planning and linking the national budget for the education sector. Besides

The study's over all conclusion was that returns from education was modest, close to 10 per cent only. A look at the statistics computed from the data showed mean returns for various levels of education but with very high standard deviations over twice the value of the means. For example, the sample contained 305 households with graduates as heads with mean earnings of Tk 143,000 per annum and standard deviation of Tk.263, 000. Similarly for HSC completers the mean was Tk.88,000 with a standard deviation of Tk.136,000. Certainly these statistics did not come out of normal distribution in the population. This has relationship with high percentage of unemployment and under employment among educated people in the country. Weakness of the model aside it truly reflects the poor value of education in the country. Setting against costs and net benefits or cash savings, Internal Rate of Return will be much lower.

Mismatch between

Perhaps, the framers of education policy this time will try to reduce the mismatch that is heading the country to a dangerous path of social uncertainty, unrest and violence by increasing the supply of educated youths with very few skills that are in demand. The GoB should give serious thoughts on the matters of unemployment insurance and provide some benefits to the educated and uneducated youths for a limited period, at the least. Food or cash for education to enroll more students in primary schools and girls up to HSC is basically income support payments.

What is quality in education?

Many discussions on quality start with "quality" and goes round and round to describe some elements in certain things as better than others. In the literature the concept of quality is defined as 'fitness for purpose' or 'added value'. Harvey and Green (1993) described the nature of the concept of quality in relation to higher education. "First, quality means different things to different people. Second, quality is relative to 'processes' and 'outcomes' "they concluded after a thorough treatise on the subject. This is not a place for a fuller exposition. But let us take the point of 'outcomes'. Passing rate in certain exams can be considered as good or bad outcomes. "International standards" of education at lower costs may be another outcome. However, is that education relevant for the time and place?

Employers certainly will refer to the knowledge, skills and attitude obtained during the period of study as quality. Academics have their own ideas about quality as having a good learning environment to transfer knowledge and good relationship between teaching and research etc. For students, quality must be related to individual development and preparation for a position in the society. Education must link up with the personal interest of the student. What then are the personal interests of students? To complete successive stages in education: primary, secondary, higher secondary, degree and so on and get a job and earn for a living. This aspect of quality, that is, getting

wastage and misallocation of resources, such a situation signals low value in education and discourages attainment of other quality dimensions by the students, teachers and parents. Why waste poor tax payers' money on some form of education (such as the outdated Madrasha education) if it is not related to the job market in the country?

On the other hand the expenditure made for that purpose and the human resources developed could be used for more productive sectors, perhaps to make them self employed with some other skills of practical use and at lower costs. The present dismal and chaotic states in the education sector might be due to the low returns obtained by educated people in jobs and without jobs. The following section discusses the problem based on a report of the World Bank published in 1998 on the Education Sector in Bangladesh.

Private low returns on education

There are different methods in measuring private rate of returns on education. The report mentioned above used one method to analyse data collected from a survey on the heads of 7407 households. I suppose the sampling was scientific and the survey was done with reliable and verifiable data. The study attempted to relate earnings of the households with various levels of education and age as surrogate for experience. The result showed very poor relationship between the variables, meaning that education and experience were not actual determinants of earnings.

education and production

The above statistics also indicate that the existing education system is not linked with the system of production in the country. Agriculture and the fast rising services sector jointly comprise 75 per cent of GDP with which the education sector has spurious links. The present education system withdraws students entirely from manual labour and if at all they expect some white colour jobs that do not exist. Whereas the dominant sectors in the economy are largely manual labour based. We have to discuss and find ways to reduce the mismatch between education system and production system in the country before we demand more budgetary allocation from the government. The present pattern of expansion of schools, colleges and universities needs to be reviewed. If we want more people to be self-employed, then more vocational training facilities for various categories should be created in existing schools and colleges. The government has been encouraging livestock, pisciculture, agro processing and social forestry. Expansion of these economic activities needs certain skills. The Ministry of Youth and Labour can organise training for high school and college students to train themselves in promoting skills in these vocations. We see nice buildings are constructed in some places for training youths. Buildings are less important for these training projects. This kind of costs incurred under ADP is also a waste of public money.

Perhaps, the framers of education policy this time will try to reduce the mismatch that is heading the

country to a dangerous path of social uncertainty, unrest and violence by increasing the supply of educated youths with very few skills that are in demand. The GoB should give serious thoughts on the matters of unemployment insurance and provide some benefits to the educated and uneducated youths for a limited period, at the least. Food or cash for education to enroll more students in primary schools and girls up to HSC is basically income support payments. How should these beneficiaries survive after they stop getting those income supports? For SSC and HSC students stipends may be given to get some vocational training to increase the supply of skills in rural areas to support expansion of rural industries. This should form an element of the poverty reduction strategy being pursued with donors. Donors may be requested to contribute to a fund or foundation out of loan redemption money to support training projects for SSC and HSC students who would join those vocational training for three to six months. It must be pointed out that uncertainty and risk increases cost of doing business and other socio-economic activities. Needless to mention that human lives are lost everyday, including those of police personnel, from the dangerous activities of youths all over the country. No part of any society should feel safe if a vital section of it is forced to engage in disruptive and violent activities for basic needs of life, that too in the prime time of life.

Financing income supports to educated unemployed

This year the MOE spent over Tk.400 crore for salary support to over 1000 schools with zero percent pass in SSC. Similar situation also exists in HSC colleges. Most of these schools and colleges were set up with political consideration to give jobs to local graduates and others. There is allegation of big money exchanges for getting a job in these places. Above all students are the victims of this kind of political moves. MOE should close these places as soon as possible and put the money in a fund for negotiating payments to unemployed teachers and staff in these schools and colleges. Sponsors of such educational enterprises should be diverted to some productive activities after training in some skills. Since 70 per cent of all taxes are collected on consumption of goods and services in the country, money spent for such income support projects will not be fiscally too burdensome for the GoB. It is time that we took a holistic approach instead of merely increasing enrollment in schools and colleges.

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