

Our HDI standing

Political inputs missing

THE government's reaction to the Human Development Report, 2002, which ranks Bangladesh 145th in the human development index (HDI) among 173 countries under the United Nations umbrella has been one of disbelief. Bangladesh stands much higher than the HD performance ranking and that its achievement over the last 31 years "should not be negated", Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, a guest of honour at the launching ceremony, said immediately after the report was formally released last Wednesday.

The government's sentiments are understandable, though not unassailable, to be frank. One may have a point or two about the standards set for evaluating a country's HDI standing; but the fact of the matter is, those criteria are universally applied. That way there's a level evaluation format for all. Our performance in terms of socio-economic development over the last three decades has not been inspiring. Except for our records in reaching health and sanitation targets, termed "satisfactory" in the report, the country lags "far behind" in respect of meeting the eight targets set by the UN Millennium Summit in 2000. That we are last among the SAARC countries in human development terms is dispiriting. It means the tiny island nation of Maldives, the landlocked Bhutan, the Maoist rebellion-ridden Nepal and the war-ravaged Sri Lanka are all ahead of us.

The UNDP report in no way negates the facts that we have established a reasonably accepted level of democracy, raised our food production, rolled back population growth and brought poverty down; it only says we have done less than what we committed at the UN Millennium Summit to be doing. Our drawbacks in human development terms have their roots in lack of governance at every level of national life. For that the responsibility falls squarely on our leaders across the political spectrum. They have not adequately reflected a sense of purpose in giving a direction to national affairs in a way that could guarantee sustainable economic development and progress. And when the failures are reflected on human development index or corruption perception index vis-a-vis those in other countries in the neighbourhood they react sharply to such assessments. The law minister was right when he said the opposition has a great role to play in establishing good governance. Similarly, we think, the government has a big responsibility to be non-partisan, accountable and transparent in its conduct. Unfortunately, most of their good words hardly ever translated into deeds. If they had, Bangladesh would have fared a lot better on the Human Development Index.

Eviction drive at Mirpur

Lack of notice and rehabilitation the hall-mark

IT is the same old story inexorably replayed: demolition squads in action, illegal settlements dismantled and their dwellers destituted. The sequence of incidents has, this time around, reeled off centring around Balurmath in Mirpur.

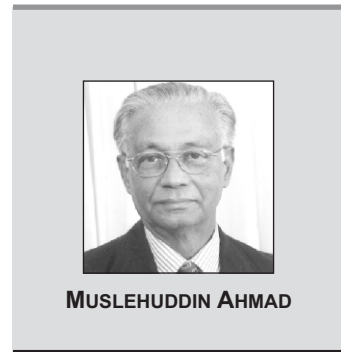
At the end-point there is obviously a concern for the human side to it when so many people are suddenly thrown on to the streets. What even lends a certain poignancy to the episode is that, most of them might have been driven to the city by land erosion and rural pauperisation in their original places of domicile. There is also no denying that they service the denizens in many important ways.

In spite of all these, however, the question of law as to the unbridled slum proliferation can not be shrugged off. What is basically at issue here is the state's responsibility in having properly designated rehabilitation zones for them, so that they do not stray into variegated spaces.

There is a method in doing everything. But we have a way of letting loose a hell over something that could be done in a well-thought-out manner. On the Mirpur topic, the standard directive for serving a 7-day notice before any eviction drive is undertaken was clearly flouted. Only 12 hours before the move was undertaken an announcement was blurted through a mike. Let's do away with any element of surprise when we are dealing with human beings.

Furthermore, the High Court's recommendation that the evicted slum dwellers be rehabilitated still goes unheeded. But it still can be made amends for, if we start rehabilitating them from here on. The state cannot shirk its responsibility towards them.

Bombing of apartment building: Another war crime



MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

ISRAEL has committed another war crime and this time it is in Gaza. Just after midnight of July 22 ie early hours of July 23, 2002, Israel launched an F-16 one ton missile attack on an apartment building in a densely populated area of Gaza that killed 15 Palestinian civilians, nine of them children including one two-month old baby and injured more than 150. The witness described that body parts including those of the children were strewn in the street. This was a ghastly scene. It is difficult to even imagine how a state military could carry out such a criminal attack against the unarmed civilians and the Prime Minister of that state congratulated the army for such a "successful" operation. This is a cold-blooded murder and the Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the Defense Minister Ben Eliezer ordered the attack. This was condemned by the international community. President Bush himself was "visibly angry" when he was briefed about the attack and denounced it as "heavy-handed". President Bush's statement released through his Press Secretary said -- "The government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was aware that the apartment building struck was filled with ordinary Palestinians, including children." This was a "deliberate attack on the site knowing that innocents would be lost." Britain termed the attack as "unaccept-

able". The EU governments also issued strong statements condemning the attack on the innocent civilians. Israeli President Katsav also asked the Israeli politicians to "take responsibility" for such a "mishap". Israel's Peace Now Movement leaders condemned the attack and said that Sharon government was not interested in peace. They said that the attack came at a time when Israel had the good opportunity to negotiate a meaningful cease-fire

Arab leaders and particularly the leaders of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan to bring about a cease-fire and it was clear that these three Arab leaders were seriously persuading Hamas leaders to give up suicide bombings so that the talks on larger issues like ending of occupation leading to a Palestinian statehood could begin. There was a good chance that Hamas would have agreed to this. But as usual Ariel Sharon and his ultra-rightist

Let the US consider this issue very carefully, because it appears to have sided with Israel after Sharon's accusation that Arafat is responsible for all these attacks, though Arafat has been confined in Ramallah headquarters for months by Israeli tanks. Sharon also carried to Washington some "fake" documents allegedly having signatures of Arafat on papers showing payments to suicide bombers' families. Today one could manufacture such docu-

The US, the strongest supporter of Israel, has to understand that today the US is in dire situation in terms of its safety and security apparently because of its biased and indeed undue support for Israel. The general feeling is that there would not have been any 9/11 if the US's M-E policy was right and balanced.

The remedy lies in going for the Palestinian State which was envisioned by President Bush too. It would be prudent to allow declara-

State alongside Israel in three years. Arafat's removal is certainly not the issue that the US can decide on, if the US Administration really believes in democracy. The US also should carefully note the reactions of the Arab world. Three important Arab members, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan also gave their reaction on the way the issue should be handled. The US should clearly understand that it stands alone on Israeli-Palestinian issue and particularly on Arafat's replacement. Indeed, President Mubarak warned President Bush of the danger of leaving Arafat out. "Sideline Arafat will be a big question we all regret. The man with his experience and role, has the loyalty of the Palestinians inside and abroad." The most important was the considered view of all three of the Quartet and major three Arab leaders that Arafat is the leader of Palestinian people and only the Palestinians, not the US and Israel, can decide who should be their leader.

It seems that President Bush got the message and he said individual is not important; it's the Palestinian Authority, legal system, financial system etc that need overhaul and here everyone should agree with President Bush. While changes are needed in Palestinian system, the changes have also become necessary in the Israeli leadership, Israel's behaviour and ways of dealing with the Arabs and particularly with the Palestinians if they are serious about peace and security in the area. If the long history of the Jewish people's behaviour is any indicator, one does not feel very optimistic about any stable peace in the region as unfortunately the US has got bogged down, apparently for domestic political reason, in the Israel's utterly selfish aims.

Muslehuiddin Ahmad is a former Secretary and Ambassador and founder president of North South University

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

The remedy lies in going for the Palestinian State which was envisioned by President Bush too. It would be prudent to allow declaration of the Palestinian State immediately after the Palestinian election which is scheduled to take place in January 2003. The election can take place only after the full withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the Palestinian areas. Once this decision is taken it would be easier for the Palestinian leaders, even the present ones, to crack down on the

as even Hamas agreed to stop suicide bombings if the reoccupation ended.

The UN and the International Court of Justice should immediately take note of such a gruesome attack on the unarmed civilians and institute war crime proceedings against Ariel Sharon and his associates. The Palestinian Minister of information said the PA would file a war crime case soon against Sharon and Israeli Army personnel responsible for the attack. Undoubtedly, the statements of the US President and the international community could be the most important support to prove the war crime against Sharon and his associates. This opportunity to bring Sharon to justice should not be lost as he committed similar war crimes before. The argument that a serving Minister could not be tried appears to be against natural justice and if there is any such legal provision, it should be dropped soon.

The US was indeed talking to the

government had the ulterior motive and they were not interested in ending occupation leading to peace. Sooner Bush Administration realises this, better would it be for the US and the world as a whole.

Israel wanted to establish that reoccupation was necessary to stop suicide bombings, but has it succeeded at all? The answer is No. Though Israel is in complete reoccupation of seven out of eight towns and cities of Palestinian areas, still one bus ambush took place right within the area of full military control that killed seven Israelis. Thereafter, two suicide bombings took place within Israel. The suicide bombers also reportedly came from the areas now fully under the military control of Israel. Also took place an attack on the driver of a passenger train. When the areas stand reoccupied and are under full Israel's military, why are the attacks taking place? Why can't Israeli army stop such attacks? Who is now responsible? Is it still Arafat or Sharon's soldiers?

ments with signatures of even President Bush.

It is, however, true that Arafat was unable to stop the suicide bombings. It's not his fault; the problem lies with Sharon and Israel's occupation and reoccupation. The Palestinians are tired of the Israeli occupation, blockade, torture, oppression, assassinations, bulldozing of homes, destruction by using American equipment etc. They have only thing at their disposal and that is to destroy Israelis and along with it destroy themselves. Whether it is martyrdom or terrorism -- it's for the Palestinians and the world to decide, but the fact remains that the violence is going on and civilians are being killed on both sides.

The issue of Palestinian State would have been solved long ago if the US had played its role correctly in an unbiased manner. Unfortunately, the US domestic pressure is unusually high in terms of support for Israel. The reasons are known.

tion of the Palestinian State immediately after the Palestinian election which is scheduled to take place in January 2003. The election can take place only after the full withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the Palestinian areas. Once this decision is taken it would be easier for the Palestinian leaders, even the present ones, to crack down on the extremists to bring down the suicide bombings. Indeed, such a decision would naturally satisfy the Palestinians and they themselves will work hard to stop the extremists. And it is also true that even the extremists will have no further reasons to die and kill others when they will get their own State.

This seems to be the only way to go about it and this was clear from the reactions of the three (EU, Russia, and the UN) of the Quartet that met in New York last week. The three were openly against the US on the issue of removal of Arafat. They suggested for a 'working plan' that would bring about a Palestinian

An enquiry into the causes of South Asian tension

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

FOR the third time this year British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw visited South Asia. His mission was to diffuse the existing tension between two nuclear powered neighbors -- India and Pakistan. During his visit he met neither Prime Minister Vajpayee nor President Musharraf. He was not disappointed over not meeting the two leaders as, in his words, he came "to the region to meet the new Foreign Minister in India and Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs". Across the board Indian political commentators felt that Straw's visit was pointless because dispute with Pakistan would not be resolved unless Pakistan stopped cross border infiltration, permanently closed down training camps of the so-called Mujahedeens, and dismantled infrastructures of terror. At a press conference at Chaklala airport at Rawalpindi Jack Straw said that since his previous visit and that of Richard Armitage, the US Deputy Secretary of State, to Pakistan "the level of infiltration has come down and we welcome it". He reiterated that both the UK and USA wanted "a permanent end to infiltration" (*Times of India*, July 21, 2002). Use of words like "infiltration" cannot sound musical to Pakistani ears as they would like to believe that India has been put on the defensive on Kashmir issue and Pakistan has succeeded in putting a dormant issue as a burning one on the global agenda. How far the Western powers are exercised over a conflict fifty years old is difficult to gauge. But that the West does not feel comfortable with longtime adversaries sharing common borders and both

with fingers on nuclear buttons (having questionable command and control structures) is understandable. Woes of the Western powers are compounded by the eclectic politico-constitutional experiments being conducted by President Musharraf to consolidate his hold on power. These seemingly linear attempts to shape the character of government in Pakistan could quintessentially prove to be discursive thus producing hybrid power

behaviour (e.g. becoming an exponent of NAM and friendship with Soviet Union) and her obstinate refusal to toe the Western line. Pakistan in the depth of her heart remained suspicious of Britain in particular as she could never come to grips with Nehru-Mountbatten mix which remained an important underpinning of British policy towards South Asia since 1947. India after all was wedded to democracy, had a much bigger

ballistic missile capable of carrying nuclear warheads deep within Pakistan or China. Pakistan responded few days later by testing two advanced nuclear capable ballistic missiles of its own. Pakistan, which welcomed British mediation in the Ranna of Kutch dispute with India in 1965, today stands tall, albeit standing at the edge of abyss. That Indo-Pakistan rivalry is having a telling effect on SAARC is stating the obvious. High hopes,

even fleeting attention of the First World if they perceive the "subaltern emancipatory potential" is disunited and bent upon following a suicidal course. On top of that if leaders use the instrumental value of culture to forge new alliances based on ethnicity or religion to create a homogeneous entity, then progress would be difficult to achieve (*Culture and Economic Growth -- Keith Griffin*). In effect, such efforts would arrest the growth of multiplicity and diversity of

in today's post-Westphalian world where transnational and transcendent inter-penetration of cultures, perhaps, provide the best panacea for freedom from the dark vortex of under-development.

One would therefore hope that in the present nuclearised world President Musharraf would heed the advice given by the international community and rein in the so-called Mujahedeens and their sympathisers to the satisfaction of international scrutiny. Mere words of assurance would not assuage India which sees itself bleeding everyday by wounds inflicted from across the border. In conclusion it may be said that though the nuclear threat has been avoided for the time being one would like to be assured that the avoidance would be durable. If Pakistan insists that cross border terrorism is "justifiable fight" of the so-called Mujahedeens to "liberate" what is theirs then there would be no solution. Equally if India insists on finishing the unfinished business of taking back "Azad" Kashmir then

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a retired Secretary to the Bangladesh Government and former ambassador

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structures satisfying none of the key players currently on Pakistan's political stage. In that case the West's quest to totally destroy Islamic fundamentalism could prove to be illusive. As it is the Western intelligence, regardless of the unconfirmed death of Osama bin Laden or otherwise, is constantly on guard fearing a repeat of September Eleventh which may be less spectacular but vitriolically destructive none the less. Therefore Jack Straw's successive visits gather increasing importance with each passing day in the "most dangerous place" in the world.

Ever since its birth in 1947 Pakistan despite its constant efforts to hang on to Western coattails, faithfully doing the biddings of the West particularly during the Fifties and the Sixties, was never sanguine of receiving the affection in equal measure from the West as was given to India despite her aberrant

economy, an old civilization almost mythical in character, a huge population constantly enriching the Western world with talents, and of course had a much bigger military machine which could be a prop against Communist China notwithstanding India's humiliating defeat at Chinese hands in 1962. It was therefore essential for Pakistan's prestige and to equalise perceived military threat from India to conduct nuclear tests despite Western exhortations to the contrary. It is interesting to note that while Australia, Germany, Japan, the USA and several other countries imposed a range of economic and trade sanctions to punish India for her nuclear tests also in 1998; the United Kingdom along with France and Russia declined to impose sanctions. Nuclear tests by the two powers was followed by back to back missile tests next year. In April 1999 India successfully test fired an intermedi-

which had accompanied the first SAARC Summit at Dhaka, have been lost in the quagmire of South Asian tension. The developed world (e.g. G-8) has little time to interact with individual countries. They prefer to do business with a group of countries like African Union (former OAU), Latin American Summit, ASEAN etc. Due to Indo-Pak disensions the developed world has by-passed SAARC as a dialogue and development partner. Only India because of its inherent and intrinsic value receives somewhat serious attention from G-8, ASEAN and similar bodies. Other countries of SAARC have been left on the wayside. Such abandonment is excruciating for the abandoned if we accept Michael Watts description of the Third World as "essentialised realm of at worst normalised subjects and at best hybridised, subaltern emancipatory potential". In such a situation it is difficult to claim

cultures which, some feel, to be essential ingredients in man's quest for a better quality of life.

Battle rye resonating with religious fervour is in contradistinction with the secular, albeit not agnostic, trend of the world today. Centrality of Kashmir in the sub-continental tension claimed by Pakistan but disputed by India should not be of great importance to other countries in this region. Colonial masters of the yesteryears in Asia, Africa and elsewhere had drawn arbitrary political boundaries giving scant attention to the realities on the ground. In many cases these realities had undergone such complete transformation that no amount of extravagant rhetoric could change their colour or shape. If the great Hindu-Muslim divide, the raison d'etre of the 1947 partition, is to become central to South Asian tension, then it is all the more necessary to avoid such abhorrent chasm

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

Dark episode at DU

I am shocked to learn about the unexpected midnight attack on the students of Shamsunnahar Hall. It is nothing but the negative impact of teacher and student politics, which is plaguing our educational institutions for a long time.

How long would we continue to remain the victims of this negative politics? Would the lawmakers please come to a consensus and ban student and teacher's politics and save us from this cancerous cell?

M. S. Uddin
Nagoya, Japan

takes and how the opposition reacts regarding the incident.
Gopal Sengupta
Montreal, Canada

"Adamjee closure"

Thanks to Protik for reacting to my article on the closure of Adamjee (July 26). The closure of this unique factory raises many important issues and one reason I wrote the article was to provoke some debate and discussion on these issues.

Let me respond to one of Protik's comments; i.e., about the impact of Adamjee's closure on jute farmers. The important thing to note here is the distinction between the closure of a firm and the demise of an entire industry. The well being of jute farmers depends on the entire jute industry not just on one firm, even if it is a huge one. As far as I know, most jute mills in Bangladesh operate substantially below capacity with perhaps as much as one-third of the capacity being utilised on average. Assuming that the international demand for jute goods remain unchanged, one can think of a scenario where other jute mills step in to fill the demand that Adamjee

had been filling so far. That way we should not see any reduction in our aggregate production of jute goods and hence, by implication, no reduction in demand for the raw jute produced by our farmers. Given that a substantial part of the bank credit given out each year to the jute industry (and used for raw jute purchase) was being absorbed by Adamjee, the latter's closure frees up this credit, which the other jute mills can now use.

An important issue here is whether the other mills are more efficient than Adamjee. If many of them are, then the above scenario involves a transfer of resources from a less efficient factory to more efficient ones. This way the closure of one enterprise, however large it is, may actually end up benefiting the industry as a whole and with it those who depend on it, notably the jute farmers. With its average efficiency increasing, the industry as a whole may be able to produce more, and offer higher prices to raw jute farmers, than it could before. Thus, far from harming the jute farmers, the closure of Adamjee may actually

benefit them. Please note that I have always used the phrase "may benefit" and not "will benefit". This is because my arguments were based on certain assumptions, which may or may not be true. I would like to know if the readers think my assumptions and/or my logic are not correct.
Syed Akhtar Mahmood
Maryland, USA

Kemal Ataturk

I have been keenly following the discussion on your Letters to the Editor page about Kemal Ataturk.

Right after capturing power the Turkish hero Kemal Ataturk got the idea that Turkey should shun the eastern way of life and adopt the western lifestyle. He declared that the true salvation and progress of Turkey lies in its complete westernisation. He ordered all Turkish to abandon their local outfit and wear western clothing, and all Turkish people should take a last name like the European.

However unlike the European-religious freedom, freedom of speech and human rights are drasti-

cally curtailed in the so-called modern Turkey.

In the West Muslim women are allowed to wear complete veil called *nikab*. In US Muslim women on religious reasons can take headscarf-wearing photograph for their passport. I wish Turkey would learn the real democracy from the West.
Dr. Mohammed Rafique Uddin
TN, USA

This is in response to Mr. A Maten Durmos's (Charge d' Affaires, Embassy of Turkey, Dhaka). His letter is self-contradictory. He tells us that 94 per cent of Turks are Muslims. Then how come veils and headgear for women are banned in Turkey? The Turks are trying to join the EU. And the learned Charge d' Affaires forgot to mention that all of the EU countries have one or two parties called Christian Democrats or Free Christian Democrats. But in Turkey anything, which smells Islam or Muslim, is banned. If I am not wrong, a former Prime Minister and

chief of the Welfare Party (supposed to be a pro-Islamic party) was arrested.
Sohail
On e-mail

Taxicab chaos

Taxicab system in Dhaka city is still very problematic. On my way to a friend's house in Cantonment (from Motijheel) I failed to get a taxicab despite asking 10/12 cabs standing before City Heart (near Motijheel Thana) around 5:30 in the afternoon! All the drivers refused to go there! I know that government has issued a notice saying that taxicabs must go wherever the passenger wants. When I told them about this, they behaved strangely, some of them begging pardon, some of them showing defiance. Finding no other alternative, I went there by hiring an autorickshaw. On my return from there around 9:30 at night, I found a CNG station for cabs where almost everyone of 15/20 cabs wanted to go to my destination near Motijheel. I asked that cab driver about their strange behaviour and this is what I found:

1. Cab owners give drivers only 15 kms free, after that the money is cut from their salary, so the drivers do not want to go in a place where they will not get passengers easily after dropping one.
2. During the office hour around 9:00-10:00 in the morning, no cab driver will go to Motijheel as there is traffic jam, he would rather find a passenger who will go to airport because in 1 trip he will earn 300.00 taka. According to the driver, they suffer losses if they stuck in a traffic jam.
3. According to the driver, each cab driver has to give 250.00-300.00 to police as toll everyday from their own pocket as the company refuses to pay him that money.
4. Some taxicab drivers may still go to places like cantonment if they are offered 20-50 taka as additional.
5. He also told me that if rickshaws and auto rickshaws are removed, police harassment is reduced, free quota is increased from 15 to at least 50 km, they would go anywhere with the passenger as they are too poor to bear these

burdens.
Reaz Mohiuddin
Notre Dame College, Dhaka

Mayor Khoka

No one expected any miracles from Mayor Khoka but I am disappointed in his inactivity. Cleaning garbage off the streets, maintaining the roads, protecting our parks and playing fields and controlling a few kitchen markets isn't the toughest job in the world.

Mayor Giuliani proved that the city most people thought was ungovernable only needed a strong man with police will power.

Orlando
Dhaka

Notice

In view of the massive response from the readers we shall devote the entire Letters to the Editor page of Monday (July 29) on the issue of the police attack on Shamsunnahar Hall as well as on student politics.

-Editor