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FDI trickle spells a grim message

Political leaders hold key to correcting the situation

ISFORTUNES come in a host. But when they do as some economic disappointments in a row, the sense of loss is so great that the philosophic resignation usually attached to the statement must necessarily be shunned. A pro-active policy is needed to ride out of the crisis instead of plunging in do-nothing fatalist lamentations of the nincompoop. Only recently a monitoring cell in the Board of Investment has disclosed that 41 per cent of the foreign investment proposals registered with the BOI over the last decade failed to materialise. Now we have the World Investment Report 2002 released the other day by UNCTAD which pits Bangladesh's poor showing against some success stories in the South Asia region itself. FDI flow into Bangladesh plummeted to \$78 million last year from \$280 million in 2000 reflecting a steep fall by 72 per cent. By comparison, India and Pakistan saw their FDI inflows increase by 47 and 26 per cent respectively last year. Even war-torn Sri Lanka's only three per cent dip resonates like an achievement before Bangladesh's 72 per cent decline, leave aside Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia or Myanmar getting a better slice of FDI cake.

The fact of the matter is our graphic rise on the FDI curve from 1997 onwards (till the slump set in) was largely due to foreign investment in the energy sector. The real picture of FDI inflow, to the exclusion of the investment in oil and gas sector, has always been bleak. The reasons are obvious: investment is not about package of incentives on paper that seemingly outsmart other countries; it is very much a matter of confidence that potential investors can have in a system.

Why are they shving away from Bangladesh? For one thing the hostile relationship between the ruling party and the opposition sends a negative signal and, for the other, ruling party misgovernance put them off as well.

This is a national crisis. The political leaders should be seized with it and reach a consensus over the paramount need for an early resolution of the country's basically political image problem. We have to emerge with improved governance records if we are to stay in the reckoning in a highly competitive world of business.

There is a plenty of scope in the telecommunications and the broader infrastructure building sectors that cannot wait to be tapped with a new vision and vigour. Let's see some ground-breaking there.

Once again Israel destroys Arafat's HQ

If this is a search for peace then what can we call a war?

USTIFICATION, if Israel ever needed one, is the latest suicide bombing. The reaction is to flatten whatever remained of Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah. One Palestinian policeman was shot dead and two others were killed in an attack on the Gaza strip. According to the latest reports, Israel wants to isolate Arafat and if possible drive him out of his headquarters. This happened within hours of a suicide bomber blowing himself up in a Tel Aviv bus killing five and wounding some 60 others.

Suicide bombing is wrong because it kills innocent peo-



ISDOM triumphed over frenzy and multilateralism won over unilateralism. At least for now. On September 12, 2002, the UN General Assembly looked like a real powerful body when its Secretary General Kofi Annan spoke and spoke with full confidence on behalf of the world body. He said, " Even the most powerful countries know that they need to work with others ... Any one State large or smallchoosing to follow or reject the multilateral path must not be a simple matter of political convenience. It has consequences beyond the immediate context... He looked confident and robust Though somewhat late, this time he rose to the occasion. But could the UN continue to stand on what is right? Only time will tell whether military power would ultimately trample down justice and peoples

right to a peaceful life. However, this time America's unilateralism was seriously challenged by the EU -- spearheaded by German Chancellor Gerhard Shroeder and French President Jacques Chirac, British Prime Minister Tony Blair's role was pro-American and indeed pathetic. However, maiority of the British people and several members of Blair's own cabinet and Labour party were critical of Blair's role. This is why Tony Blair finally made a departure, as it seems, from his initial support for pre-emptive strike to a multilateral path. The EU played a pivotal role in bringing Cheney-Rumsfeld-Bush rhetoric for a unilateral strike to a multilateral path. May be for the time being. Indeed, EU's stand on the issue was that of a potential superpower. Could it hold on to such a rightful position that may bring some balance in the

world politics?

apparently still feels that it should play the former Soviet Union's role of a superpower. China was relatively quiet probably because of its own problem with Taiwan, but the message was clear -- China was against any pre-emptive military strike. Former President Nelson Mandela was highly critical and

The Arab world led by Egypt's

President Mobarak, Saudi Crown

Prince Abdullah and Jordan's King

a joint stand apparently made a

huge difference to Bush's decision.

Russia also because of its historical

link with Iraq and recent politico-

economic deal warned America

against any pre-emptive attack on

total chaos.

vocal and was totally opposed to any unilateral attack. He reminded the US of the necessity of moving through the multilateral path. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed also openly opposed any military strike against Irag. All these voices made significant differences in the present perilous world situation.

Many were wondering why all on a sudden Bush Administration became mad at Saddam Hussein. After 9/11 the first thing which much of the media came out with was that Iraq was not involved in the suicide attack on the World Trade Center. This was reconfirmed by US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice only a few of days ago while talking to CNN. It was really baffling that the hawks in the Bush Administration suddenly brought up with full anger Iraq's noncompliance of UN resolutions. According to the US the number was 16, but according to British

Iraq. Despite Russia's own problem Bush also said that Saddam gassed in Chechnya, it took the stand as it his own people and also used chemical weapons against them as if none else did so before

source it was 23 -- several points

higher than the US. It is clearly an

uniust world. Nobody ever talked of

Saddam's appetite for weapons of

mass destruction. It conveniently

forgot that America itself has the

biggest stock of weapons of mass

destruction that can destroy the

world many times over. President

Interestingly, none of the neighbours of Iraq including the nearest ones (Kuwait was a different story about 12 years back, which also had debatable background and because of Saddam's madness entire countrv has been suffering) including Europe, Russia, China, South Asia

etc ever felt threatened by Iraq nor did they say that Iraq was a "gathering danger". How on earth the US could start feeling so threatened? Even in the wildest dream Saddam could never reach American soil with any of his antiquated scud missiles (only aluminium pipes could not produce ballistic missiles). Only possibility that one can think of is Israel, but for the last 12 years he kept quiet and even during the most dangerous period when Israel practically reoccupied all the Palestinian territories and nearly killed Arafat, Saddam did not raise a finger let alone sending a scud. He had also nothing to do with the bombing of the World Trade Center. Then why was he suddenly made a

target? The US has not explained this to the world nor showed any substantive proof of Iraq's possession of mountains of weapons of mass destruction including n-bomb. The

Where ignoring is bliss

provoke him and he, in turn, got provoked. Imagine Vajpayee not giving point-by-point reply to Musharraf's allegations. By not even mentioning his name, much less his remarks, the Prime Minister would have gone down better. India would have looked tall. The international community would have noticed the difference. Musharraf would have been the loser, not Vajpayee. Not long ago, India had given up the tit-for-tat policy. It would seldom take official notice of

exchanges. This lasted for nearly a decade Today the same old bout of

abuses has come back with a vengeance. No sooner did General Musharraf take over than it began all over. Till the writ of the deposed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif ran. there was an effort towards conciliation. Vajpayee even took a bus to Lahore. Apparently, the military rulers headed by Musharraf had to indulge in a hate-India campaign and to raise the temperature on drew from the UN debate. Fortu-

military strike could be launched Several of them were also critical about the way the Vice President Cheney started to promote the case and tried to convince the American people about the need for a preemptive attack. Senior President Bush and his the then Advisors apparently played a significant role in dissuading Bush Junior from taking a plunge into an abyss. President Bush, therefore, chose the multilateral path -- apparently very reluctantly. But would he stick to it? Iraq was truncated and virtually half of Iraq was occupied by American and British Airforces in the

generation. Now the argument is

reach but he did not do it probably by the weapons inspectors. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for some valid reasons. The regime which is the right international change by a foreign power is not organization for certifying evidence only undemocratic; it is dictatorial of possession of any nuclear bomb One does not know whether the US was quoted as saving that it had "no Congress which upholds democevidence that Iraq was developing racy will ever support such a step. nuclear weapons at a site destroyed Even under military strike by the UN inspectors, contrary to Saddam will still remain untouched

Only sufferers will be the Iragi peo-Similar questions were raised ple. Because wild bombing based even by several of US Congresson instruments from distant places men and some officials of previous will kill civilians. This happened Administration. They wanted subduring the Gulf war. The civilian war shelter was identified by satellite stantive evidences before any pictures as a military command centre and was bombed that killed hundreds of civilians -- men women and children. Same thing happened in Afghanistan too. Based on faulty intelligence a wedding party was bombed killing hundreds of civilians. Therefore, even in a military strike Saddam and his associates will go unhurt. So the whole exercise of the US in terms of military strike appears ill-advised. It will only antagonize more people and in the process Al-Qaida would be benefited. The best course would be to leave it to the people of Iraq. They know what to do. If need be, help name of saving the Kurdish people. them in a discreet way. The world saw many dictators, but many of Saddam's people have been suffering under strict sanctions for the last them are no more there. So why kill 12 years. Indeed, the Iraqi children innocents to remove a "dictator"? A week's bombing by the US may only suffered the most. Iraq in fact lost a

that sanctions did not work. Yes, this was known, yet sanctions continued and still continue to remain in place. Sanctions killed Iragi children and did not even touch Saddam and his associates. Their raised bellies further propped up but the Iraqi children died of malnutrition.

As sanctions did not work. Bush Administration decided that there is a need for a military strike to topple Saddam. Toppling of Saddam was not the agenda of senior Bush during the Gulf War. It was within his

achieved in the last 30 years America never faced terrorism before, certainly not of this magni-

tude. Why is it facing now? America should ask itself to find the answer What sort of foreign policy is it following now? So long many talked ill of Jews (of course, all Jews are not Sharon), now it is Jews and Americans. It is shocking for those who like America. They like America not because it is a superpower, but because it has many good things to offer to the civilized world -- democracy, education, research, medicine, freedom of thought and

expression (now this freedom has suffered somewhat because of 9/11) etc. Therefore, let President Bush go by the advice of those who have seen the world more and have better experiences. Once he (President Bush) has chosen the multilateral path, he should go by the world opinion as the world has not run amok yet. Let the world body work with patience and with malice to none and give its decision after horough investigations and consultations. Unilateralism has already undermined the authority of the UN. Further unilateral action against a sovereign country because of the "unacceptable behaviour" of its leader will plunge the world into total chaos and may produce more bin

Ladens Let President Saddam Hussein stop playing cat and mouse game. He has done well by agreeing to allow the weapons inspectors to return without conditions. If he really does not have weapons of mass destruction. let him open up his turf for inspection by the weapons inspectors. The UNSC may recruit a new team headed by a new chief from a neutral country e.g. Norway. The reasons are obvious: the inspectors should go with an open mind. In case, any "spying" by any inspector(s) is detected, the matter should be brought to the notice of the SG of the UN for appropriate action. The inspectors should have unfettered access, but the work must be completed within a time frame to be set by the UNSC with the clear assurance of lifting sanction in case satisfactory report is given by the weapons team. It should not be a never-ending process.

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ministers of their respective country, picked up the thread where it was left off. The vituperativeness on both sides had not lessened, nor the tendency to join issue even at the slightest provocation. Still the debates reflected a bit of the strength of arguments than the coarseness of accusations. A decency of sorts prevailed. Bhutto publicly apologised for his remarks that the "Indian dogs have gone" when the Indian delegation with-

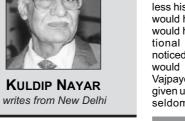
fore from the back burner. Many Pakistanis are happy that he makes no compromise with the large-sized India which is breathing down their neck. But never before has crossborder terrorism been so relentless and never before has relations between India and Pakistan touched so low as today. Had Vajpayee ignored

double the number

"dictators

Musharraf's remarks, however provocative, nothing would have been lost. The dust would have settled quickly as it generally does.

the unending exercise in confrontation slacken. One knows the compulsion of Musharraf. He has created the Frankenstein's monster of terrorism and extremism which is threatening him and the Pakistan society. He has to highlight the danger from India all the time to seek legitimacy for his military rule. And the October elections, despite the constitutional authority with which Musharraf has armed himself, are still unpredictable. But what are Vajpayee's compulsions? He has the entire country behind him on cross-border terrorism. Parliament has given him full support. Why should he feel it necessary to talk something for home consumption? He does not have to play to the gallery Vajpayee should have rebutted Musharraf's nuclear blackmail with withdrawal of forces from the border and the resumption of bus, rail and air services to help people-topeople contact. Even President Bush would have congratulated Vajpayee. India has not learnt how to adjust and live with an intransigent neighbour like Pakistan. It tends to behave like a Big Brother, which has an area of influence and expects small countries to look up to



F governments were to forego temptation to pay another in the same coin, they would sound responsible and mature. Outsiders would applaud them. But the desire to have the last word drives them to take a position which fritters away whatever advantage they initially had. India had an opportunity to put Pakistan to shame. But it surrendered to the impulse of one-upmanship. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee should have ignored Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's speeches in the US, either at the UN, which the General himself characterised as "desperate" or at other places. What the Pakistan President said was nothing new. He and his government have assailed India in a similar vein many a time before. Was it necessary for India to retaliate in the same vituperative language? Does taking notice of abuse help? Vajpayee's own reply at the UN was on familiar lines. He and his spokesperson have said more or less the same things, even in a harsher tone. By repeating them, he may have countered Musharraf but did not put him on the spot. Vajpayee would have done so if he had refused to take notice of Musharraf's ranting and raving. The Pakistan President wanted to

Mandela, President Bush is creating

chaos and a threat to international

Abdullah II, put up a unified position Israel's violation and nonmonths time. This was the report of against America's pre-emptive compliance of UN resolutions -- the IISS of Britain apparently based on strike against an Arab country. The number may exceed even half a the statements of some weapons Arab world followed their earlier century. Bush Administration also inspectors who were in Irag earlier. decision in Beirut summit and such was trying to project the case of It seems that this Institution did not

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

Let President Bush go by the advice of those who have seen the world more and have better experiences.

Once he has chosen the multilateral path, he should go by the world opinion as the world has not run amok

yet. Let the world body work with patience and give its decision after thorough investigations and

consultations. Unilateralism has already undermined the authority of the UN. Further unilateral action

against a sovereign country because of the "unacceptable behaviour" of its leader will plunge the world into

British and US claims.

Any unilateral attack on Iraq will be highly irresponsible

assumption that if Saddam can

'steal or buy fissile material' he can

build the n-bomb in a couple of

counter the assertion of Scott

Reitter, the chief weapons inspector

that 'Iraq is incapable of producing

any weapons of mass destruction.

He said all infra-structures for

producing n-bombs were destroyed

MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

The Daily Star

ple. But what Israel is doing in the name of retaliation is a calculated move to annihilate the Palestinian people. While President Bush is busy preparing his own arsenal against Iraq and keeping the international community preoccupied in dealing with the possibility of an US attack, Israel is taking full advantage of that distraction and carrying out its own agenda of destroying the Palestinian people.

The people of Bangladesh will never accept this wanton destruction of the Palestinian people. We would like to convey this message to the international community that Israel is really crossing all the limits of tolerance of peace loving people everywhere. President Bush's war against terror is beginning to look farcical when state terrorism sponsored by Israel is not stopped and individual acts of terrorism by suicide bombers are made so much. Doesn't anybody understand that suicide bombing is an act of desperation? Everything is being snatched away from Palestinians -their land, their livelihood, their freedom and now their right to live. A suicide bomber is a person who has lost all hopes of living a normal life. Until the prospect of a normal life is restored in the hearts and minds of the Palestinian people the birth of suicide bombers cannot be stopped, however we condemn what they do, and we do condemn it categorically.

The world will blame the US as the sole superpower, and more so as the closest of allies of Israel, if it does not immediately intervene to stop the madness that Sharon has unleashed in the tinderbox of the Middle East.

BETWEEN THE LINES

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In fact, the problem with the governments in India and Pakistan is that they have their eyes fixed on the domestic audience, how it would react to what they say or do. And over the years they have nurtured separatism, which requires hatred to sustain itself. From infancy it is dinned into the ears of people on both sides that the enemy lives across the border. Foreign Ministry officials in the two countries are the worst culprits. They do not ever let the unending exercise in confrontation slacken.

Islamabad's harangues at the UN or at other world forums. Governments headed by VP Singh, Narasimha Rao and Inder Guiral did not even exercise the right to reply and left Pakistan squirming in its rhetoric. Even junior officers in the Ministry of External Affairs made it known that they would not stoop to the level of Pakistan

This hurt Islamabad. It looked silly when New Delhi would not even retort to Pakistan's attacks. The result was that Islamabad saw the futility of speaking violently or noisily against India at international gatherings, be it at Geneva or New York or The Hague and raising the problem of Kashmir. An atmosphere of decent quietness, if not understanding, came to prevail in the relationship between India and Pakistan. There were no acrimonious

Kashmir so as to provide justification for the ousting of democracy.

The same old accusations and counter-accusations have come to hold the field. This is almost like day one at the UN when New Delhi referred to the problem -- Pakistan's "attack on Kashmir" -- some 52 years ago. They were open sessions of rancour and abuse. There were no holds barred. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar and Krishna Menon, the two stalwarts of the fifties, on the Indian side and Sir Zafarullah Khan on the Pakistan side went on speaking for hours. hurling invectives against each

other. One landmark of those days at the UN is the speech by Krishna Menon, who spoke for more than 26 hours at a stretch. Subsequently, in the sixties. Swaran Singh and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, both foreign

nately, cross-border terrorism was In the process, New Delhi would more or less absent at that time. have made the point that it was a far There was infiltration by Pakistan in more secure country and had a far 1964 that resulted in the 1965 war more stable society than to bother between India and Pakistan. After about the remarks that an unsure the Tashkent agreement between leader makes. There should have Lal Bahadur Shastri and Ayub Khan been at least that much of difference there was a pause in the foul lanbetween a 55-year-old democracy guage the two sides used against and a military-ridden country for each other. But it started soon after decades over again on a full scale. In fact, the problem with the

When the Janata Dal came to governments in India and Pakistan power in the nineties New Delhi took is that they have their eves fixed on a policy decision not to reply to the domestic audience, how it would Pakistan's adverse remarks at react to what they say or do. And international forums. The BJP-led over the years they have nurtured coalition followed a different policy. separatism, which requires hatred Still the vexation was less in the to sustain itself. From infancy it is early days of relations between dinned into the ears of people on India and Pakistan. Musharraf both sides that the enemy lives revived abusive language deliberacross the border. Foreign Ministry ately. He has the satisfaction of officials in the two countries are the successfully bringing Kashmir to the worst culprits. They do not ever let

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

Pakistan genuinely fears that India, a far bigger and more powerful country, will one day gobble it up. t imagines that New Delhi is not reconciled yet to the creation of Pakistan, although Vajpayee has recorded in the visitors' book at Minar-e-Pakistan that the integrity and development of Pakistan is essential for the integrity and development of India. The reiteration of such a statement would have been the best reply to Musharraf's warn-

Kuldip Nayar is an eminent Indian columnist.

TO THE EDITOR

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

Let us remember too

Would the media be kind enough to print the list below and remind the world that there are many other victims around the world that do not even hit our conscious. We are talking about figures much larger than 3000.

a) Innocent victims of Afghanistan, b) Gujarat, c) Jenin, d) Qana, e) Hiroshima/Nagasaki, f) Vietnam, g) Israeli Killings in the invasion of Lebanon, h) Killig Fields of Iraq, i) Bosnia. Sebranica, Gorzda, j) Kosovo k) Kashmir, L) Chechnya, M) Indonesia, N) Central America (Nicaragua, Panama, Granada), o) Rwanda, p) Sabra-Shatila etc..

No silence, no concert, no big speeches, no CNN coverage ... they are just background statistics. Yamin Zakaria UK, London

"US, UN and Iraq"

I appreciate the thought provoking party they want to go after as and letters written by Mr Hussain. I when they choose, or does the UN would like to further add here that truly belong to the whole world Mr. Bush. his speech being so where grievances are heard from all shamelessly one sided as far as the members of the UN and just remedy world is concerned, has insulted the is accorded based on facts and intellect of every American citizen. fairness by the UN, backed by the not to mentioned ours. By going on will to use force if necessary? record so meticulously about the Judging from the level of intellinon-compliance of Irag of UN Resoence and distorted logic President lutions to build his case and totally Bush and his warmongers (Richard ignoring the non-compliance of UN Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Resolutions by Israel since it's birth. lately Colin Powell, not to mention he has proven once again how Dr. Rice!) has displayed, it will not be politically, morally and ethically a surprise if the above question is bankrupt Mr. Bush is. He obviously seen by them as a threat to civilised assumes that, the forgotten few like America. In case you have forgotus living outside the USA, possess ten, they have put it simply "you are less intellect and sense of fairness either with us or against us". than he does According to Mr. Nelson

The question from the so-called civilised and uncivilised nations that begs a reply is whether the UN is there only for the US to act on nonpeace. America, you deserve better! compliance of IRAQ or any other **A**Thinker Dhaka

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sympathise with the victims of September 11 in the USA and in Afghanistan following the "war on terror". It seems that the innocent people always pay the price for the interests of some world politicians or religious groups

And now its Iraa's turn even though there is no substantial evidence that Saddam Hossain possesses as a threat to the US or the rest of the world.

Could it be that Bush is trying to divert both the world and his nation's attention from the corporate scandals, violence and other faults of his administration by planning an attack on Iraq? Naziat Choudhury

University of Rajshahi

Highway toll collec-

tion am a daily commuter between Uttara and Nayerhat and I have been noticing the worsening traffic situation of Ashulia road, part of which is Dhaka protection embankment, and the rest, an extension of the same, going up to Nabinagar and thus connecting itself with the Asian Highway.

The toll money charged on all types of vehicles using Ashulia road is collected by private parties gaining contract presumably from Roads & Highways. The latest to come on the scene has raised the rates any thing between 20% to 100%. For example, private cars, paying Tk.10/= the other day, then Tk. 15, now have to pay Tk. 30/=

each time. This is atrocious, this 100% increase of toll-money, for no

Isn't Roads & Highways a part of the government? How can a Govt. agency allow such highhandedness on the part of the `ijaradars' without any consideration for the public?

stopped the present *jiaradars* from their exploitation of the road-using vehicle-owners especially the private-car users.

Also, for daily-users of this road, can't the authorities issue a monthly ticket, which will charge the equivalent of say 30 single charges? Presently, one has to pay 60 x 30=1800 a month for daily use of the road. This is not asking too much for daily commuters. The toll-house/ toll-plaza is an eyesore, and itself the cause of traffic-iam. because of its one-lane capacity, and the crude management for collection of tollwaiting rushed towards to get in. But money. Decency and the prestige of we came there first! Aren't there any the country demand that these be rules? built on a permanent basis, providing multiple-lanes for smooth transit of vehicles. Must our highways have

I have been to many countries; it's not like that over there! There are taxi stands with queues; the first one waiting gets the first cab, and the taxis just don't pass by the queue, they always stop. But look how it is

in our city? No rules, nothing. The taxi drivers don't even turn on their taxi lights at the roof of the cars. Then how will the awaiting passengers recognise a cab at night?

Dumping several hundred taxis on the road will be of no use unless there is discipline. So all taxi owners must be conscious about how to make their business more profitable by providing good service.

Mahi Rushdi Auvi Dhaka

rime or reason

I wish Roads & Highways

so low a profile as exhibited on the

toll-collection points? A Commuter

Dhaka

Has taxi service really improved transportation?

There was a 6 to12 p.m. hartal that day and after the hartal was over my father and me were waiting at the taxi stand for a cab. A few minutes later I saw more people gathering at the stand waiting for a taxi. After a long time a taxi stopped along the side of the road. Before we could do something, all the other people