DHAKA SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 29, 2002

## **Rural road networks** turn elusive

Political considerations outweighed economic good

HAT has been happening in the name of rural infrastructure development is an eye-wash, by and large, if not a complete act of perfidy. In another country with a strong tradition of accountability this would have raked up an instant public outcry over being taken along the garden-path of hopes for the future that looked bound to be dashed.

The case in point is a status analysis on 800 smaller road network envisaged under a US\$ 1.7 billion umbrella Roads and Highways Department (RHD) project which have made very little headway to generate any confidence in their final outcome. The snail's pace of the undertaking forced by measly budgetary allocation of two to three per cent of the project cost per year leaves experts in little doubt that we are looking at a four-to-five decade-long time-frame for its completion?

The three-some umbrella project was designed to improve the feeder roads and, to some extent, rural roads proper by way of enhancing marketing access for a very large number of rural folks.

The low-priority treatment received by this otherwise intrinsically important composite project is basically the upshot of a reality check it has been put through. The subprojects of the same taken up under political considerations ipso facto lacked in engineering and economic feasibility. The hastily planned roads with overlapping population catchments spoke volubly of the members of parliament abandoning their lawmaking and national policy formulation roles for the passion of lobbying to procure projects for their respective constituencies. As if to emphasise this massive aberration, allocations hardly have had any provision for maintenance work.

It is amusing in a queer way, but hardly any laughing matter that loose ends were deliberately kept for the MPs to have control over delivery of public services by means of fostering patron-client relationship and nurturing votebanks.

No one can fail to endorse Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud's views on the overall systemic flaws: "the basic reasons for the weaknesses in the budget formulation and implementation are political rather than technocratic." Darning up projects under populist titles that are meant to milch money bespeaks a kind of wastage in public resource management at the local level we can only afford except to further our economic emasculation.

### Child patients at DMCH

When will the govt wake up to their woes?

EARS of mismanagement and negligence on part of the government have left the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in a miserable condition. Personnel, logistic and other needs of the country's premier public hospital have never been addressed to the full. While the number of patients has risen exponentially over the years, there has not been sufficient expansion of either its physical infrastructure or medical and other staff. More importantly, annual budgetary allocation, although increasing year by year, has never been up to the requirement. Overall, the DMCH administration has more often than not found itself negotiating with problems it is hardly equipped to cope with.

What has heightened the predicament is the everincreasing number of child patients in queue for emergency, and at times, lifesaving surgical procedures. For want of an exclusive operation theatre for the 23-bed paediatric ward, resident paediatric surgeons have to jostle with other doctors to get any berth at the operation theatres. At times they prevail while at others they are left with no option but to defer surgeries at the cost of aggravating their patients' conditions. The wait can sometimes lead to death, as it did in the case of Touhid. He had to be operated upon three days after his birth for an intestinal perforation last year. In the process, another surgery had to be put on hold halfway through. He was readmitted to the DMCH some time in August with similar perforations that needed surgery. This time around, he was not that fortunate. Surgery was scheduled for August 27; but it had to be deferred, as no theatre was available. Eventually when the surgeons did operate, it was too late. The one-year old died a few days later. A debate on whether Touhid would have lived or not hinges on the metaphysical; however, the fact remains that he did not get adequate medical attention when he needed it most. The health directorate has so far turned deaf to repeated DMCH requests for a surgical unit for the paediatric ward. It is time they woke up and

# Unilateralism smacks of imperialism



MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

FRMAN Justice Minister Deaubler-Gmelin decided to resign over her alleged likened those used by Hitler. She would no doubt resign but the damage has been done because of the vast publicity of the remark during German election. She was quoted as saying, "Mr. Bush wants to divert attention from his domestic problems. It's a classic tactic. It's one that Hitler used." Interestingly, this and also German Chancellor's position on Iraq vis-à-vis Bush Administration's policy on Iraq did enable his party, in coalition with Green Party, to retain power. But Secretary Rumsfeld said that German election campaign was "poisonous" in terms of US relation with Germany. However, German position on Bush Administration's possible attack on Iraq was very clear

It's not only Germany, the entire Europe (except Tony Blair and small number of his colleagues) appears against Bush Administration's position on Iraq. Several of Tony Blair's cabinet members including former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and nearly 120 MPs were opposed to Tony Blair's support for possible US attack on Irag. The dossier published by Blair government was ultimately termed by some MPs including George Galloway as "fictitious". The dossier was something similar to what IISS of Britain published a couple of days ago. These were said by some as reports by Saddam's opposition groups 'bought and paid by the US' and nothing close to any reality. Even Von Sponoeck, the former UN

dossier as speculative and said several of the specific dangerous sites mentioned in dossier were already destroyed by the weapons inspectors. The dossier also did not counter the open statements of Scott Titter, former chief weapons inspector, saying that 'Iraq does not have the capability to produce nweapons.' Therefore, despite the fact that PM Tony Blair talked of the multilateral path in the emergency debate in the British Parliament, 60

expressed around the world through various columns also very strongly arque against any war. War kills only human beings whether in uniform or not. Even if in uniform, they are human beings and work for their livelihood and become cannon fodder in the battlefield. If they are left alone, they will not join any war. Everybody is afraid of death. If all the promoters and supporters of war in the Bush Administration were ordinary US citizens, not in uniform, and were asked to take up arms, go

ism would have gone down automatically. Any way, the world does not want any more Hitler. But unfortunately it has man like Sharon there in the M-E. Hitler killed millions of innocent Jews, but unluckily for the Palestinians and Arabs, Sharon was not one of those

Iraqi issue in the form of a draft resolution has gone to the Congress for support which has not been cleared yet. I do not know what would be the position by the time this comment is published. But, any doing! The table will turn upside down if Bush 'goes alone'. Washington's Archbishop has also expressed reservation over the rush to attack Iraq as he said no convincing proof was yet placed before the

Indeed, there should not be any precipitous hurry to launch a dangerous thing like war. This will seriously affect the lives of the people of the entire world whether directly involved in the war or not. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary

certainly not by countries around the world. When the truth is not known, the murderous war machine must not be launched. And as the US is now fighting terrorism, it must not use war -- another version of terrorism -- to get over its perceived notion; it will be a foolhardy and absolutely a murderous decision at a time when the world is not prepared to wage a war against a sovereign country when other appropriate and effective options are available. Bush Administration has report-

edly sent a 36-page document to the Congress outlining its policy decision to continue to remain the only superpower in the world and will stop, if necessary, by force if any one tries to surpass or even equal the military power of America. The age-old justification of a country for having the weapons like nuclear bombs as a deterrent has reportedly been rejected by Bush Administration unilaterally. Bush Administration did not think it necessary to consult even its allies. Then what will be the justification for other countries having n-weapons? This means not only military supremacy, but also the political domination of the US over every country on earth. Then what happens to Western Alliances? This clearly smacks of some form of imperialism and the US Congress -- the inheritors of Abraham Lincoln and Washington -- has to decide whether to support such a doctrine leading to political and military supremacy of the USA. If done, the bad days are ahead for the world as a whole. Indeed, one sees the immediate application of this doctrine as the Bush Administration has been making all preparations for going it alone on Irag. And the present concern of some senior members of the US Congress appears valid Bush Administration under such a doctrine, if approved, will be able to attack "any country in the region" without even consulting the Congress. Can such a doctrine fall within the definition of democ

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racy? The answer is number

# SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

The war is never a good option. The war is nothing but terrorism unless it is forced on any one. Irag's case is certainly not that; Iraq has not forced war on the US. Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction is a perceived notion of the Bush Administration, which is not shared by all Americans and certainly not by countries around the world. When the truth is not known, the murderous war machine must not be launched. And as the US is now fighting terrorism, it must not use war -- another version of terrorism -- to get over its

MPs remained totally unconvinced of the need for any attack on Iraq and forced a technical vote where they registered their opposition to Blair's proposals. Majority of the British public also reportedly showed their opposition to any war against Irag.

As also other reports show, no country in the rest of the world except Israel has any support for the Bush Administration's position on Iraq. The people do express their views openly. Some time back Farrahkahan said at a TV show that before 9/11, Bush was facing serious domestic problems and the nation was divided on Bush's election, but 9/11 came as a rescue; the whole country came together to support Bush, Farrahkhan's views apart as he is considered a rebel, the Americans do not appear to be united on any unilateral attack on

Many, of course, agree that Saddam is a dictator, but some also say that Bush is also a dictator. The other day there was a letter in the letter column in The Daily Star, saying 'Bush is a bigger dictator than Saddam.' The views

to the war zone and face death in Iragi desert, they would have immediately said NO to war; they would proposed other means to tackle the Iraqi leader. It is easy to order war from the White House. White Hall/10, Downing Street, Kremlin and other air-conditioned palaces of the Capitals. This is what . Saddam and his associates do when they say that Iraqis, if attacked, will teach a good lesson to the Americans. They are saying these from their air-conditioned palaces though they know that American attack would be a devastating one. But ask any Iragis who have been suffering for the last 12 years under UN sanctions and their children have been facing death, al that because of Saddam, will say they have nothing to do with war and are not prepared to die for Saddam and his associates. That's all about

This is why German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder rightly opposed war and proposed a peaceful solution to the conflict. He said Middle-East does not need war; it needs peace. If all the concerned leaders of the world could join German Chancellor's peace pursuit, terrorway, it is still Bush Administration's position not yet a US position. So far there appears to be some serious reservations and indeed concerns of some of the senior Congressional leaders over the draft. According to some, "It's (the resolution) is much too broad, there is no limit at all on Presidential powers." Mr. Bush is seeking " all means necessary, including force.. and to restore international peace and security in the region." This may mean President Bush may attack any country in the region. Any way, the world has not authorised President Bush to restore international peace and security. The UN is there for the

Al Gore has finally broken silence and come out heavily on Mr. Bush. He said. 'Going it alone is a cowboy policy.... President Bush good will on 9/11 and damaged the anti-terror coalition. So far the international community was fully engaged on what the terrorists were doing and now it is engaged on watching what we (the Americans) are doing...' An obvious indication what Bush Administration is to assess the situation carefully and most importantly to be sure about Irag's actual possession of weapons of mass destruction. So far it is only reports and satellite photos -- noth ing trustworthy at least for launching a war against a sovereign country where innocent people would be directly hit. Once President Bush has cho-

sen the multilateral path and gone to the UN with the problem, the world would expect him to await the decision of the UNSC where the US is a permanent member with a veto power. If the idea is to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and if this can be done through the weapons inspectors, nothing like it. And that should be the option for the US Congress too instead of risking the lives of the US armed personnel and endangering the peace of the world.

The war is never a good option. The war is nothing but terrorism unless it is forced on any one. Iraq's case is certainly not that; Iraq has not forced war on the US. Irag's possession of weapons of mass destruction is a perceived notion of the Bush Administration, which is not shared by all Americans and

Had there been no American

## Regime-change' for whom?

A M M SHAHABUDDIN

HE United Nations (UN) was established some five decades back to ensure international peace and security and, perhaps most importantly, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Now, there from the ominous alarm signals are being raised, centring US-Irag conflict. In fact, the world which is now being driven towards another catastrophe since after the second World War, is now divided into two opposing camps -- one 'pro-war', or 'strikefirst' against Iraq, led by US President George W. Bush and his most able second-in-command, British Prime Minister Tony Blair; and the other is rather most powerful 'nowar' group, led by world leaders from the European Union (EU), the Afro-Asian and Latin American leaders, including, a personality like Nelson Mandela of South Africa. and three veto-weilding permanent Members of the UN Security Council, namely, Russia, France and China.

The more America is getting isolated because of its 'unilaterist' policy of 'going alone', the more desperate Bush is becoming, to wage war against Iraq for a regime change. If Saddam can be dubbed as 'little Hitler', as he was called by the Western media during the Gulf War, then the 'big Hitler' is not far away! Undoubtedly, the ominous signs are looming large on the horizon, with the Sword of Damocles hanging on the head of world peace and security. Because of this desperate policy by a desperate President, if the much-cherished international cooperation, that was developed to fight terrorism following the 11 September (2001) tragedy, falls apart, there would be nothing to wonder.

### Iraq phobia!

But why America is suffering from such nauseating 'Iraq phobia'? Particularly, when Iraq has agreed to allow unconditionally the return of the UN weapons inspectors who

had left Iraq in 1998? Moreover, Bush's war-cry becomes all the more irrelevant when the UN had announced that they would reach Baghdad by mid-October next. Now Bush insists for a UN resolution prior to the visit of the UN team, which has been rejected by Iraq saying that there was no need for a new resolution for the UN inspectors' resumption of duties in Iraq. It is, therefore, confusing to think what America actually wants when the matter is going to be peacefully settled as a result of intensive diplomatic pressure on Iraq to change its policy. The letter written to the UN Secretary-General convey's Irag's unconditional acceptance of the return of the UN weapons inspectors, "to remove any doubts that Iraq still possesses

Meanwhile, President Bush had prepared a list of some sixteen UN resolutions that had been defied by Iraq to show to the world what punishable 'crimes' Iraq had committed by showing disrespect to the august world body. But before bringing such allegations, (admitting that they are true), one should look at the mirror and ask: 'Mirror, Mirror, who is fairer?' otherwise, it would be totally wrong on the part of 'world policeman' to lynch Saddam for his defiance of the UN. as if no other 'recalcitrant member state had not shown any disregard to the UN resolutions'. But who will be the judge, when the judge himself becomes complainant (also himself being on the wrong track)? The world 'policeman' or 'peacekeeper' cannot blow hot and cold

ambitions \$ 60-billion worth of National Missile Development (NMD) programme to fight 'nuclear minnows'. like three 'evil regimes' or 'axis of evil' -- as Bush calls them --Iran, Iraq and North Korea. Earlier, no US President, not even during the Cold War period, showed such 'wisdom' of opening the nuclear-'Pandora's box' only to bring chaos and destruction. If this is not 'defiance' of UN, what is? But the sad and tragic story of

defying UN by Bush doesn't end here. In one of his first acts in office, Bush announced last year that he wouldn't put the UN pact on global warming, dubbed as Kyoto Protocol. to the US Senate for its endorsement, on the plea that it was against over-all interests of America! In another subtle move Bush

there is no end to such listing of wrong doings whether by a superpower, or any other member. But when one 'wrong-doer' tries to find faults with another it becomes an act of foolery. But then 'King' can do no wrong. The world will have to accept

### How Israel honouring **UN resolutions?**

In this context, it won't be proper not to mention what America's ally Israel has been doing to the innocent people of Palestine and their leader Yasser Arafat on the plea of hunting 'terrorists'. Taking shelter the wrongly-interpreted Article 51 of the UN Charter, perhaps taking a cue from its mentor, Israel is playing havoc there in

support, covertly or overtly, Israel would never have dared to go so berserk with its naked aggression. Not to speak of the current devastation committed by Israel in some other's territory unabated and unhindered, the UN had so far shown little of its 'backbone' against continued violation of its resolutions by Israel, except adopting some watered-down toothless resolutions rebuking the aggressor. Otherwise, the Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) could not have been so contemptuously trampled by Israel. But what happens when a country occupying another member state's territory, does not show honour to the UN resolution, was vividly seen when Iraqi forces were sitting tight in Kuwait disregarding the UN appea to withdraw. But in the case of Israel UN seems to be in deep slumber And UN has again gone into hibernation perhaps waiting for the next summer to wake up for another

Now it seems that the world is standing almost face-to-face with another impending eruption in the Mid-East, with its centre in Iraq. Bush is determined not to give up his hawkish  $\,$  stand vis-a-vis Iraq. He has now sought the support, of the US Congress, for possible military action against Iraq to bring a 'regime change' there ...Will the world be ruled by hardline 'hawks' or, will there be a new beginning with peace-loving 'doves'?

weapons of mass destruction". But Bush calls it Iraq's another "tactical move" or "a ploy" to gain time. And the way he is fomenting war hysteria, with repurcussions at home and abroad, particularly for his 'home consumption' to raise his popularity ratings, it cannot be considered a healthy sign for the peace-loving people of the world. A 'patient' suffering from 'political hydrophobia' can do anything and everything at

Oil in Gulf Just hours after Iraq's announcement on the return to Iraq of UN inspectors, Irag's Dv. Prime Minister Tarig Aziz had guestioned whether this move by Iraq would end the crisis. He said: "The issue does not end with Irag's acceptance of the return of the UN inspectors. The aim of the American policies is oil in the Gulf". Aziz had earlier accused Washington "of using any excuse" to start a war "to seize Iraqi oil" and "redraw the map of the region."

simultaneously for its own convenience, nor can preach one thing for others to follow and itself practice something else

### Like a spitfire! In fact, Bush since his entry into the

US Presidency, has been behaving almost like a 'spitfire' to complete the 'circle' left unfinished by his father, Bush Sr. Immediately after assuming power, Bush started 'bomb-shells', one of which was the most ignoble and unbecoming of a superpower, when he announced immediate withdrawal from the 1972 UN-Sponsored Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty on the plea that it had "hampered"(!)US ability to keep world peace, because under the 1972 ABM treaty deployment of a missile defence shield has been prohibited. Thus the head of a superpower had the audacity to ditch a 30-year old historical UN Treaty in the garbage bin. Since then Bush had been harping on his Administration had launched a campaign against the newlycreated UN-sponsored International Criminal Court (ICC), since America had announced recently its decision to withdraw signature from the ICC Treaty. Subsequently, US made efforts to block the UN Security Council resolution on the mandate for peace-keeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The US government, in two separate resolutions, demanded exception of peace-keepers from the jurisdiction of the ICC, as they had apprehended that US peace-keepers in Bosnia would have to face criminal charges for their role these

Not only that. In the context of the current Palestine-Israel conflict Arab countries brought a resolution some time back in the UN Security Council, as suggested by president Arafat, to station UN observers to monitor the activities of the Israeli forces. But the resolution was downright vetoed by America, giving Israel a free-hand in Palestine. So

exerting its 'right of self-defence'. In fact, Article 51 provides a UN member country "right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs" against it, "until the Security Council takes measures necessary to maintain international peace and security". But can Israel claim this 'right of self-defence against 'now and then' suicidebombings or bomb-blasts by the Palestinian militants who are fighting for the liberation of their land still occupied by Israel which is using its mighty air and ground forces to destroy Palestinian properties, including Arafat's UQ in Ramallah. killing innocent people in the name of hunting the terrorists? Perhaps not. Because Israel has resorted to 'state terrorism' against almost unarmed Palestinians. Then why UN is looking so blank and almost blind to Israel's acts of distraction in Palestine, practically putting Yasser Arafat under house-arrest since March last? Is it not a case of aggression as defined in the Char-

### "Regime-change best solution"?

Now it seems that the world is standing almost face-to-face with another impending eruption in the Mid-East, with its centre in Irag. Bush is determined not to give up his hawkish stand vis-a-vis Iraq. He has now sought the support, of the US Congress, for possible military action against Iraq to bring a 'regime change' there because America believes, as stated by US National Advisor, Condoleezza Security Rice, that "regime change is the best solution". So the bottomline has been reached. It now all depends which way the UN is used for adopting another resolution before the UN inspectors resume their duties in Iraq

But still the big question remains unanswered: Will the world be ruled by hardline 'hawks' or, will there be a new beginning with peace-loving

AMM Shahabuddin is a retired UN official.

TO THE EDITOR

## TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

### "Muslims and America"

This is in regards A Thinker' letter (September 27). Even the most anti-American among us cannot claim that all US policy is Zionist controlled. The Jews were integrated into the US society very late. Until well into the '60s, they were discriminated against as were the Irish and Italians. The rise of Jewish influence in American foreign policy is directly related to their integration into American society

Personally, I dislike the current Israeli policies as well. But not the entire people. This may sound a bit racist but I've never in my life met an Arab who treated me as an equal And I've met my fair share in London, Dubai and the US. I have also met my fair share of Jews; many are good friends and many I dislike. But as a group, they are far more liberal. cultured and educated than most of

us "Arabs and Muslims".

Of course the Israelis should make peace with the Palestinians. Just as important, the Palestinians should stop the suicide bombings.

By the way, this same Zionist American policy also advocated the intervention in Somalia and Bosnia. Where were our Muslim brothers

Please do not lump all Muslims and Arabs together into one group. We Bengalis have nothing in common with the Saudis and their habits. It was this kind of lumping together of Muslims, which so many on this page seem to believe, that was the justification for East and West Pakistan.

If our Liberation War taught us anything, it's that we are Bengali first. Muslim second.

Dhaka

War of hypocrisy!

I was shocked to read the letter of Mr. Mahmood Elahi (September 9) where he has urged America to attack Iraq for the sake of liberating the Iragis now under persecution at the hands of Saddam Hussein. Mr. Elahi should not ignore the fact that history is not replete with such instances when America with Republican Party in power has ever come as a liberator for the oppressed mankind anywhere in

this world. Mr. Elahi's advocacy is shocking especially when we see that no government other than Mr. Blair's has come forward to approve the military adventure that the controversial President in the person of Mr. Bush wants to launch in near future. Mr. Elahi must not be unaware of the possible casualties that a war is to cause even if it is not a protracted one, and that the last Gulf war turned into mass slaughter of Iragi

soldiers and innocent civilians

A note of warning that came from Dr. M. R. Shelly in his article "The Great Divide" (September 11 supplement) merits serious consideration. Dr. Shelly has cautioned about the looming war in the Middle East as "The resulting scenario can lead to a grim situation in which moderate Governments especially in Muslim countries may tumble giving rise to the anarchy or extremist dispensations committed to a war to death against USA and the West. The oil-rich Middle-East may be in the throes of disastrous convulsion, disrupting the secure supply of fuel and energy to Europe and Japan, their very life-blood." This would mean grave damage to the dominant civilisation.

S.R Shaheed Banani, Dhaka

Stop American aggression

We do not support the US air strike

on Iraq. Without caring the world opinion, America and United Kingdom is violating human rights in Iraq. If we observe closely, we will see that America in the name of fighting terrorism is actually invading Muslim countries one after another. Israel is ignoring human rights, killing innocent people of Palestine and America is blindly supporting this violation whereas they should have done the very We all have to be united and fight such aggression of the US and UK. Rashidul Ghani

Dhaka

"Not so great Navy" Mr. FM, it is not the navy's duty to evict those so-called bars. It is the

CCC's duty. If the navy evict those bars will people like Mr. Joyonto and Mr. Emile remain quite? Wouldn't they

then start another debate on "Great And Mr FM. I don't know which

EDITOR TO

comment is baseless

A concerned civiliar Chittagong

commanders you talked to but your

This is in regards to FM's letter on the Navy's live and let live policy.

First of all this is just another example of the need to liberalise our alcohol laws. It should be easier to set up licensed bars. Such establishments would take away the alcohol business from smugglers and mastaans. Just visit this road in Chittagong, Patenga beach or Banani Bazar in Dhaka to see how many people drink. It is a fact of life that a lot of people now enjoy a drink in Bangladesh and this business should not be left to the same peo-

ple who also sell drugs

I actually know the road FM mentions quite well. I used to go there often. Ten years ago, the bootleggers were so scared that when driving down that road you'd see suddenly people running across the road into the paddy fields beyond carrying crates of drinks. Now thanks to our Navy, they operate freely.

Dhaka

### "52 families 'outcast' for living 'only on theft"

Md. Sadeque's opinion on the above subject (September 24) must

be appreciated. I would like to ask the concerned MPs to tell us the difference between "traditional thieves" and "non-traditional thieves". All mv life I knew that a thief is a thief. If their

definition is applied elsewhere many 'important communities' will be wiped out from our land including a large section of our affluent community In this sort of decisions where

children and women are involved helping these to get employed (by the government and social organisations) is more important than eviction

Dr. Rashid Hyder Baridhara, Dhaka

### Notice

The readers are requested to send their comments on 'Bangladesh cricket" (the cricket team their performance in the ICC tournament and other internaional tournaments--how to nprove their performance, what future they have, the government's role in improving the cricket standard etc).