

# Lies, lies everywhere, not a drop of truth!

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED  
writes from America

WITH the talk of war (read destruction of Iraq) dominating the air waves, I am reminded of a scene from the American civil war classic, "Gone With the Wind" (1939). As Rhett Butler (Clark Gable) returns home after a tour of the North, he encounters a group of Southern men, uncontrollably excited at the prospect of war with the North, and "dreams of victory." As is well known, the civil war turned out to be disastrous for the South. Similarly, the Bush administration is so gung ho, so full of gusto about the Gulf War II, it is as though war is a sporting contest like the recent Ryder Cup between the golfers of Europe and America in which America is the overwhelming favourite (America lost the Ryder Cup.)

But war isn't the Ryder Cup. It is the ultimate failure of the human race. Unlike in the Ryder Cup, people die in a war. Listening the war build-up here in America, it appears as though the population of Iraq is one: Saddam Hussein. Do any of the warmongers really care about the rest of the Iraqis? The honest answer is what Rhett Butler said in a completely different context: "Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn!" Of course, crocodile tears will be shed for the "unavoidable collateral damage" (the euphemism for the massacre of thousands of Iraqi civilians when smart bombs go dumb). But the sad truth is, regardless of what happens

to Saddam (who cares?), once again, hundreds of thousands Iraqi civilians, men, women and children will be killed. Sure, the sons and daughters of wealthy Jewish parents will not die, but thousands of poor white Americans, Hispanic Americans and African Americans soldiers will lose their lives. Why? So that President Bush and the Republicans can win the November mid-term elections, and Israel, with American help, can destroy another of its enemies, and can get closer to destroying its archenemy Iran.

The Six-day war of 1967 was catastrophic for the Arabs in more ways than one. It proved that Arabs are paper tigers, and that Israel is the real tiger. Impressed by Israel's performance, Richard Nixon, who took over the US Presidency in 1969, decided to forge, with the encouragement of his Jewish National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, a "strategic alliance" with Israel. The "strategic alliance" called for the US to arm Israel so that it maintained military superiority over all the twenty-two Arab states combined. All the US Presidents since then have honoured that "strategic alliance." That is why Ariel Sharon does not give a damn about what the Arab governments think and Arab streets do. He knows that with the US as his backup, he can tackle all the Arab states simultaneously and win.

In those days, the US's two staunchest allies in the region and regional powers, Turkey, as well as Iran under the Shah were Israel's friends. Therefore, the military

might of these two countries was not factored into the "strategic alliance" equation. Turkey still remains Israel's only Muslim ally. Things have changed dramatically in Iran. Iran under the Mullahs has become hostile to Israel and backs Israel's dihard enemies, Hamas and Hezbollah. It is in the US' and Israel's interest to demolish Iran's military capabilities. The upcoming war, therefore, is not a war against Iraq; it is actually a war against Iran. With the US already in Afghanistan,

tions. Wrong! The United States has vetoed over 30 UN Security Council resolutions critical of Israel. Even without those vetoes, Israel remains by far the number one violator of UN resolutions. Without declaring formal war, and illegally violating Jordan's air space, Israeli planes destroyed Iraq's nuclear facilities in May 1981, killing Iraqi and French nationals. When the UN Security Council asked Israel to pay compensation, the Israeli Ambassador tore the resolution

the war with Iraq will be over in a week. The prospect of quick victory is what makes the warmongers salivate. But the American people are wondering: If Iraq is so dangerous, why is a quick victory so certain? What people forget is that the Gulf War never really ended. America and Britain have been enforcing the no-fly zone for over twelve years, taking out Iraqi strategic air defence sites when they please. By over flying Iraq every day, they know each and every inch of Iraqi soil. They know very well

of the "suspect" Professors on his website, and gets away with McCarthyism. Supporters of Israel are offended that Israel is being targeted in a manner racist, apartheid South Africa was targeted in the 1980s. Ever wonder why the world's conscience, Nelson Mandela, is so critical of Israel? As Mandela, the leader of the Africans, was rotting in apartheid jail, Israel was wholeheartedly cooperating with racist South Africa in every sphere, especially in the development of the nuclear bomb. It was

Sharon truly believes that "Arabs only understand force." The state of Israel now occupies 78 per cent of the Palestine of British Mandate. If Israel would only give the remaining 22 per cent, which constitutes the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinians, the Arabs and the Muslim world would gladly accept Israel's right to exist in the other 78 per cent. But, no, Israel has to have the remaining 22 per cent through creeping annexation via settlement building. The reason there is no peace in the Middle East is that only the Labour Party of Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres (who is currently being used as a fig leaf by Sharon) and Ehud Barak attempted to make peace with the Palestinians through land swap. The professed policy of the Likud Party of Yitzhak Shamir, Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon is that Israel should retain every inch of "Judea and Samaria." As America blasts the Palestinians for resisting occupation, they never question Likud's "occupation for ever" state-sponsored terrorism.

While any criticism of Israel is promptly discredited as anti-Semitic, there is stony silence whenever Islam is attacked. Muslim bashing has become America's favourite sport these days. America left, dominated by Jews and Hollywood, which ordinarily oppose war, are gleefully cheering America's impending onslaught on Iraq, "Israel's enemy."

It is amusing that all the "experts" on Al Qaida, the Taliban and Islam are either Jewish, like Mr. Bodansky, Mr. Daniel Pipes or Mr. Steve Emerson, or Hindu like Mr. Rohan Gunaratna. Where are the Muslims? Instead of owning up to the crimes of Israel and attempting to moderate Israel's behaviour, they always go after Israel's critics and accuse them of fomenting anti-Semitism worldwide. Not satisfied with tainting the first generation Muslim Americans, Mr. Bodansky recently predicted that the second generation Muslim Americans would also be terrorist-sympathizers! What a brazen way to indict Muslim American children just born and yet to be born, and poison American mind about inno-

cent Muslim Americans! The likes of Mr. Bodansky believe that as such lies are repeated over and over again, ordinary Americans will start believing in them. Ordinary Christian Americans are decent and trusting people (except Falwell and Par Robertson's Christian right, Israel's allies) who have a tendency to believe what the most devious Zionists among them utter. The advantage Muslim Americans have over ordinary Christian Americans is that having sprung from Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) themselves, Muslims can see right through the trickery practiced by the other side of Prophet Abraham's descendants, the Jews!

Israel and the US are adamant that Iran should not have the bomb. President Bush is on record saying that no theocratic nation should have the bomb. If he really means what he says, Bush should force the disarmament of the only theocratic state in the Middle East that possesses weapons of mass destruction, Israel! Zionists like Mr. Yossef Badansky has been claiming since September 9/11 that Osama Bin Laden has been alternately hiding in Iran and Iraq. No one challenges the motivation behind the propagation of such deliberate falsehood. Zionists like Bodansky write books on Al Qaida and Osama; that gives them a free time on television which they spend pushing Sharon's agenda why the US should go after Israel's enemies. Settling with the Palestinians and living as equal neighbours are alien concepts to Sharon and his ilk. All Sharon can think of is how to preserve Israel's weapons of mass destruction while denying the same to Israel's enemies. Because of savage Israeli atrocity towards the Arabs over the last 54 years, unlike white South Africa, Israel does not feel confident that its enemies will ever forgive them. Perhaps they are right. President Bush, too, is partially right. For the sake of justice, decency and world peace, the world needs a regime change: in Israel!

## Painful vacuum in the world of knowledge

PROFESSOR ABDUL MANNAN

A very successful woman entrepreneur was narrating her success story in a seminar attended by a select gathering of employers and academicians. She narrated how her own vision, commitment and creativity helped her attain success. She started her career some thirty years back in the world of media and at the moment enjoys a good standing in her profession, all by her own rights.

The seminar focused on what our higher education system is offering and what the society and the market demand, how big the gap is and how it can be minimized. Is there any niche to be filled? The speaker began with one of her personal experiences. One of her former teachers in Dhaka University in a telephone call asked her if she would appoint one of his recent graduates.

Let us assume the young graduate was Rahim and the entrepreneur was Shaheen. With a profound sense of respect for her former teacher, she asks him to send the young fellow to her. It is surely a good gesture shown to her former teacher. Such practices are disappearing fast these days.

One late afternoon, Rahim announces his arrival at Shaheen's office without any prior appointment. Unfortunately these days the Rahims generally are not taught about the importance and the advantages of making prior appointments. Knocking before you enter anyone's room is a long forgotten practice. Rahim enters the room without any formality and takes a seat. Shaheen was in a hurry and wanted to finish off the interview quickly and so hurriedly she asks, "Who is the heir to the British throne?" He seemed a bit confused and asked if she could repeat the question? She did. Still Rahim seemed blank. Just to give a cue she told Rahim that the next heir had a terrible personal tragedy in his life. Rahim scratched his head and finally came out with an answer: "Madam, I have never been to England, but I heard that the 'air' of England in this time of the year is cold!" Well, that concluded the interview and Shaheen did not find any reason why she should recruit Rahim. This is a small indicator of what students learn and what we the teachers teach them now a days. This is not something unique to the students of Bangladesh. It has now taken the form of a universal phenomenon.

Few years back a survey was done in US to find out the depth of general knowledge in geography of secondary school going kids. Eight out of ten students could not say the location of London. In US, practically every State has its own London, Moscow, Tokyo, Mecca or Peking. Some of the school kids who participated in the survey identified his State's London as the London in question. The alarming survey result was published in some US media.

In the mid seventies I had been attending a Law class in a leading university in the United States. Our

instructor Dr. Marsh was a practicing lawyer. One evening he asked if anyone in the class could name at least four signatories to the American Declaration of Independence. There was an uneasy calm in the classroom of thirty. Nervously I raised my hand and answered the question. The ever-smiling Dr. Marsh suddenly looked very grave and blasted the class. He said he was really ashamed to see the naiveness of my American classmates. He added how come a non-American student (I am sure none of them had any idea about where Bangladesh was located) could answer this simple question but the Americans could not?

Sometimes back in the "Boogie Woogie" programme of Sonny TV the anchor person, Javed Jaffrey (I hope I am right about the name) asked a ten-year old the name of the newly married Bombay film star Madhuri Dixit's husband. The ten-year old of course had the answer on his lips. His face beamed with satisfaction as the audience applauded. But when the next question followed: "Who is the President of India?" a deafening silence descended on the floor.

**Our national history curriculum is in tatters. We have a unique character of changing our history with the change of government. No nation on earth is known to have indulged in such self-defeating exercise. Unfortunately our policy makers are yet to realize the distinction between history and fiction. The nation is poised to pay a high price for this new bipartisan motivated interpretation of history.**

When the recent Bollywood blockbuster DEVDAS was released the young generation went into frenzy and thought their life would be meaningless if they did not watch the movie immediately. Thanks to our very 'efficient' cable operators the movie was aired the day it was released in India or even before its release. I am still wondering how the cable operators are able to perform this seemingly impossible task with such a magical precision and efficiency. So the bubbling generation watched DEVDAS with unfettered attention -- Parvati and Chhadrakumhi dancing and singing together! I asked many of them who wrote DEVDAS? 'Is that something we are supposed to know', they shot back. Well, not really, I sheepishly tell them, but it surely would add to the depth of your knowledge if you do. When I asked 'Never heard of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay? No, never was their answer. When I informed them that there are at least five other versions of Devdas made in India and one in Pakistan, the young listeners suddenly started to take an interest. When I told them about Promotesh Barua, K.L. Saigal, Soumitra, Dilip Kumar, Jamuna Devi, Suchitra Sen and Vajriyanthimala their interest grew. In the title of Pakistani version of Devdas the name of the author of the immortal novel was wrongly written as Sirit Chandra Chattopadhyay. My young listeners were somewhat amazed.

Recently, on a visit to Iraq, US Congressman McDermitt accused President Bush of misleading the nation about the threat posed by Iraq. Indeed, several lies have been recycled as truth to justify America's belligerence towards Iraq. Number one: Iraq is the number one violator of UN resolu-

saying it was not worth the paper it was written on! The US Senator from Massachusetts John Kerry said the other day that he had been privy to all the intelligence briefings and is yet to see any conclusive proof that Iraq had any link with Al Qaida. Yet, the Bush administration has now embraced the Zionist lie that Iraq has links with Al Qaida. As the former UN Inspector Scott Ritter pointed out the other day, Iraq is a secular Muslim country, whereas Al Qaida is Sunni and fanatic. Like oil and water, they do not mix.

President Clinton believes that

To mention another incident, there was a freshers' reception in a university. The cultural programme started with the popular Bangla song "Dhono Dhanyea Pushphe Bhora." After the function, I asked the immaculately dressed artists who performed brilliantly, the name of the poet who wrote the opening number. The answer ranged from Tagore through Nazrul to Shamsur Rahman. To my utter surprise, no one ever heard the name of D.L. Roy!

When we were young back in the fifties and sixties, all schools, or most of them, had school libraries, which had annual budget to purchase books, and students were allowed to borrow books from those libraries. In towns, like Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Rangpur (there were no cities in those days), there were the United States Information Service Library (USIS), the British Information Service (BIS), the predecessor of the British Council), and the Public Libraries. The Comilla Town Hall Library I am told is still a treasure for ardent readers and researchers. Chittagong City Corporation used to have a rich library, which is in a pitiable condi-

tion long before. The British Council though has a young learners' section, for some reason its exposure is limited to some kids from some 'hi-fi English Medium' schools. The commoners need motivation.

Mention has to be made of 'Classic Comics' of our days. Almost all of the popular English, American, French or Russian novels or stories were available in comic form in the Classic Comic series. It ranged from the *Merchant of Venice to Gulliver's Travels to The Brothers Karamazov and The Last of the Mohicans*. The Wild West American stories came in the 'Dell Comic' series. Dell Comics were a good source to know about the Lone Ranger, Roy Rogers or Zorro.

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Few years back I had the opportunity to attend a UNESCO sponsored conference on higher education in Vishawa Bharati, Shanti Niketan. It was held a week after Amartya Sen was awarded the Nobel Prize for economics. The whole of Shanti Niketan was in a festive mood. I asked the manager of the guesthouse where I was staying if he knew why Amartya Sen was awarded the Nobel Prize? Perhaps he wrote some 'Kavita' he casually remarked!

Scholars from all over India attended the conference. There were three teachers who taught Amartya Sen. One of them was Amlan Dutta, one time Vice-chancellor of Vishwa Bharati and a renowned economist. I was asked to preside over the session he would address. Professor Dutta is a very humble and modest person. Through his simple dress, ruffled hair and often unshaven face, you could feel his depth of intellect. During his hour-long deliverance he tried to explain the crisis of the present generation in acquiring knowledge. While talking about the role of teachers in such a crisis he told the spellbound audience "if the students have not learnt, we the teachers have not taught." While concluding the session, in my brief remarks I said, "I would like to echo Professor Dutta's comment and rephrase it as 'If the present generation has not learnt, the teachers and parents have not taught.'" The sooner the teachers and parents realize this, the better for the nation. We may one day have the right answer to the question 'who wrote DEVDAS?' It would be easy for Rahims to start a challenging career. 'Heir' to the throne would not be same as cold air to him. The world of knowledge would be more exciting. The country would have better future in the hands of Rahims.

Most of the school libraries unfortunately have long gone. My niece studies in a hundred-year old school. It used to have a library stacked with hundreds of books. I asked her if the library is still there. Surprisingly she never heard of it. On investigation I came to learn that, about a decade back, one of the learned headmistresses sold all the books at the rate of few taka per kilo to an old bookseller to have an extra classroom! These days the only library the young generation are normally exposed to in the big cities is the local DVD or VCD library. USIS has closed its shop

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## LETTER FROM AMERICA

**Settling with the Palestinians and living as equal neighbours are alien concepts to Sharon and his ilk. All Sharon can think of is how to preserve Israel's weapons of mass destruction while denying the same to Israel's enemies. Because of savage Israeli atrocity towards the Arabs over the last 54 years, unlike white South Africa, Israel does not feel confident that its enemies will ever forgive them. Perhaps they are right. President Bush, too, is partially right. For the sake of justice, decency and world peace, the world needs a regime change: in Israel!**

what the Iraqis are up to. The fact that, in spite of monitoring Iraq from air and satellite twenty four hours a day, they have not been able to provide any proof of Iraq's production of "weapons of mass destruction," or Iraq's complicity in 9/11, is a testimony to the enormity of the lies being propagated. So much is made of the fact that the monster Saddam gassed his own Kurdish people. Let us grant that Saddam is a psychopath. Madness is Saddam's excuse. What is the excuse of the sane and "civilized?" "Civilized" people gloss over the fact that "civilized" people enacted "civilized" UN sanctions against Iraq that murdered hundreds of thousands of Iraqi men, women and children over the last twelve years.

In response to Sharon government's brutality against the Palestinians, a campaign is underway in several campuses all over America by students and Professors, pressuring their universities to divest from companies that invest in Israel. In response, Zionist Daniel Pipes has asked Jewish students to send him unfavourable information about the signatory Professors. He then promptly displays the dossier

only after President Carter threatened South Africa with breaking off of diplomatic relations in 1977 that South Africa stopped its nuclear programme. Of course, Israel did not. The reason the apartheid regime in South Africa fell was that they had no sponsor in the US. The reason all the brutal regimes in Israel thrive is that their sponsor, the Zionists, control America. It is a tad hypocritical, therefore, for the Zionists to be "offended" by the well-deserved comparison with racist South Africa. It is a tad stifling to be labeled an anti-Semite any time someone legitimately criticizes Israel's genocide of the Palestinians.

Instead of fuming over comparison with their erstwhile friend apartheid South Africa, Israel could do itself a favour by adopting the South African example. The whites in South Africa could never imagine how forgiving blacks in South Africa under Mandela would be. Blacks have forgiven whites for apartheid crimes; consequently South Africa will someday rival America as a beacon of multicultural tolerance and prosperity. Israel, as Professor Edward correctly points out, believes in military might. Racist

## It's dark under the lamp: Poverty in world's richest country?

AMM SHAHABUDDIN

AMERICA is hitherto known as the world's richest country -- with the highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP), highest per-capita income, enjoying largest industrial and agricultural production base. It speaks highly of democracy, human rights, extends its helping hand wherever people's rights and democracy are in danger. It is true that because of US aid many poor developing countries had been able to stand on their feet. But it is just half the truth.

Fact is always stranger than fiction. So when one gets a glimpse of the 'dark picture' of America's 'under world,' not in the sense of crimes, but in the sense of the agony of the 'under-dogs' or the 'have-nots', the impoverished people of America, mostly the black African Americans. They are born poor, grow poor, live and die poor. They are being grilled year after year by the privileged class who literally controls the string of the purse. A leading US authority on education and poverty, Jonathon Kozol, while commenting on the miserable condition of the children in New York's "impoverished South Bronx", said that these children are "innocent", their "only crime is being poor in a rich society", adding that "a five per cent tax on the wealth of the Wall Street's one hundred richest men would lift them out of poverty".

**Cosmetic measures won't help**

However, there is no sign of any move to "lift" the poor American society "out of poverty". Rather it is going the other way. With the passage of time, particularly during the last 18 months, the socio-economic situation is gradually going down from bad to worse for the "impoverished" Americans, revealing inch by inch the pathos from which they are suffering. It is a 'great fall', no doubt for US 'Humpty Dumpty' from the golden pedestal and it would be a hard job for "all the king's men" to put the broken pieces together again, without bringing about a radical change in the US domestic policy, both economic and political, to ensure equal share of benefits for 'all'. Mere "cosmetic" measures won't help much. Such impoverished condition of the have-nots may be common in the third world developing countries where majority of the people go to bed half fed or even hungry. But for the world's

richest country enjoying a prestigious position of number one economy, it is a pathetic anachronism, to say the least.

America is now in a deep economic trouble, particularly since the 11 September terrorist attacks. It has not yet been able to fully recover from the fatal wounds. The US Government had recently blamed the economic recession that began in March 2001, on cause of "increased poverty" and "lower incomes". And the economic "pundits" believe that "prospects remain gloomy for America's have-nots." The US Commerce Department's census Bureau has recently painted rather a gloomy picture as it announced that the number of Americans, who are now "surviving

pass through worst days of its economy, when the stock market lost \$4.5 trillion in value and more than two million people had lost their jobs. The situation was further worsened by a string of US corporate scandals, shaking American people's faith in the free market.

**Peace-economy vs war-economy?**

President Bush, full of optimism and enthusiasm, is trying hard to boost the falling economy by speaking highly of its performance. Perhaps he wants to maintain the tempo by changing the failed peace-economy into a vibrant war-economy by creating a war hysteria all around. Because that's perhaps the only

**The UNDP report clearly portrays the US wealth and poverty, dividing the American society into two parts. While the richer class enjoy their full share of sunshine and summer ice unabated, the poor in the lower strata continue to suffer in the winter ice and snow storms. Will ever the poor Americans enjoy their share of ice in the summer? Let President Bush and US Administration put their house in order first, rather than run after a shadow game, like a Don Quixote, against Saddam Hussain.**

in poverty", after four straight annual falls, had risen by 1.3 million people in a year to 32.9 million, or 11.7 per cent of the population. And the number of "impoverished" families rose from record low 6.4 million in 2000 to 6.8 million, 9.2 per cent of the total number of US families.

**Worst Performance of US economy**

Meanwhile, the democrats are already in the field to exploit the situation by focusing on the falling economy "being on the brink of a second slump" on one hand, and a possible war with Iraq ahead of the up-coming congressional elections. Democrat controlled Senate majority leader Tom Daschle had said that there was a real possibility for double-deep recession. In the Republican-dominated House of Representatives, Democrat leader Richard Gephardt said that the US economy was "suffering its worst performance since 1950s." During the last 18 months, America had to

way for him to divert the people's attention from the domestic problems and take them on a holiday-jinks in the Middle East! But how far that empty-rhetoric about war against Saddam would be successful is a major question. What a costly war with Iraq will bring for the Americans will be another huge burden of taxes. The Senate Budget Committee chairman, Kent Conrad, during a debate on the question, warned that the debate should not be driven by how much it will cost US taxpayers but the important thing to keep in mind was that three months of combat with a heavy ground force and a five-year occupation by a large US force could cost more than \$272 billion. Perhaps not much for the richest country in the world. But for the poor taxpayers? Forget about it.

But one thing must be admitted. Poverty in America glaringly differs with that prevailing in a poor developing country like ours! US poverty has a standard of its own, befitting the world's richest country! Accord-

ing to a recent report, the poverty threshold ranges between 18,104 dollars for a family of four to 9,039 dollars for a single person. Thus apparently poverty standard is much higher than that existing in the Third World countries, where an average poor labourer lives on a ridiculous wage of a dollar a day! But when price indices of essential commodities and other related items are taken into consideration, the hardship undergone by a poor US labourer can be imagined. They stand on the same footing.

**US wealth gap**

I would like to conclude this write-up with the comments made in a UNDP survey, made recently, showing 'human poverty' indexes for some seventeen industrial countries, including America, that gives a clear picture about the prevailing wealth gap in America. The major points made in the UNDP report about America are:

*Among the 17 industrial countries surveyed by the UNDP, the US has the most poverty, although the highest GDP.*

*The US is the most unequal among all industrialised countries surveyed, with 40 per cent of the nation's wealth concentrated in only one per cent of households.*

*In 44 of the 51 states (provinces) of America, upper income families have become richer and the poor have become poorer since the late 1970s.*

**Home truth**

So the UNDP report clearly portrays the US wealth and poverty, dividing the American society into two parts. While the richer class enjoy their full share of sunshine and summer ice unabated, the poor in the lower strata continue to suffer in the winter ice and snow storms. Will ever the poor Americans enjoy their share of ice in the summer?

Let President Bush and US Administration put their house in order first, rather than run after a shadow game, like a Don Quixote, against Saddam Hussain. Isn't it better to clean first your own backyard, infested with land-mines of poverty before they get articulated creating a greater disaster? This is just a pious wish of a non-American who wants to see American leadership at the right place and at the right time to pre-empt any national crisis.

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