

# Incidence of robbery worrying

## Plug the holes in police vigil

A frightful dimension has been added to the law and order situation by a spate in burglaries lately. Within a span of 24 hours, gangs of dacoits swooped on three apartments and several business houses in the capital city spiriting away money and other valuables from them day before yesterday. In another incident, gangsters burgled into the main post office in Comilla. In terms of dare-devilry and methods of operation they are going to new extremes.

Such crimes tend to strike fear in city dwellers' hearts and reduce confidence in the law enforcement people. Morning walkers were trapped by a group of robbers as they came out of their flats in Siddheswari area and were forced back up to guide them to where the money and valuables lay. Some burglars also broke into the offices of commercial concerns at Kakrail and neatly carried out their plan of stealing money and other things.

These incidents could not have happened without the robbers doing a bit of information gathering before committing the crimes. The law enforcers need to mount surveillance on such activities in order to freeze the criminals on their tracks.

The residential areas usually remain vulnerable at night, and during office hours when the male members of households are away. Although the apartment buildings or residential areas may have their own guards, police should step up vigil in view of the breaches taking place in their respective security outfits keeping in view the *modus operandi* of criminals.

The price that we are paying for an unusual rise in criminality is too big to be ignored. People are suffering from a sense of insecurity as they watch criminals regularly outwitting their victims and the law enforcers. The lack of security affects their lives in a number of ways. But the greatest damage is done to trade and commerce as the business community is bound to be shaken when apparently well-protected offices become the target of burglary.

The government should take stock of the situation and go for corrective steps to curb such crimes.

## Strategy for SMEs

### Dispersal key to overall uplift

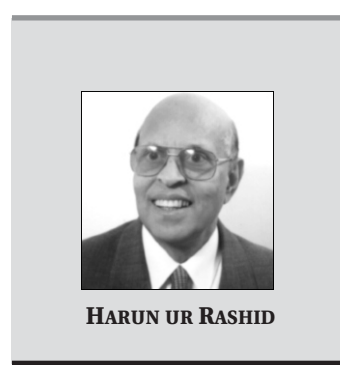
A T a regional consultation meeting of the National Policy Review Forum-2003 in Narayanganj some excellent ideas were thrown up as inputs for an industrial policy review. The authenticity of the recommendations lies in the fact that these have emanated not just from policy-planners, researchers and media practitioners but also from stakeholders.

One of the splendid views aired at the moot takes us to the basics: "a local government-based strategy should be adopted to boost the industrialisation process, especially for small and medium enterprises." This is in line with the vision of tertiary growth centres, or development epicenters abandoned a long time back. The idea was to trigger reverse migration from urban areas to the countryside or hold the people of rural areas to their habitats or thereabouts by offering them gainful employment at the doorstep. Development of growth epicentres is key to redistribution of wealth envisioned to benefit the largest number of people in the country. A local government-based industrialisation programme also fixes in well with the still unaddressed agenda for devolution of powers on to the grassroots. The central government should be involved with the setting up of strategic industries, something like a silicon valley, for one, leaving it out for the divisional and district headquarters or their suburbs to develop backward linkages to major industrial enterprises at the top.

There is a huge potential for agro-based industries to string out with excellent networks of highways girdling the whole country, which are of world class really. The poor quality Dhaka streets stand in stark contrast to the silken highways built by adherence to international building codes under multilateral or bilateral loan agreements. The point is such wonderful road linkages mean there are potential marketing networks waiting to be harnessed.

The Narayanganj consultations helped forge a consensus on one point: there is need to explore domestic market to ensure sustainability of the industries, small and medium units in particular. This is not to say though, they will not have export potential. In fact, these will have a plenty of it. Basically, a local-based industrialisation strategy besides being environment-friendly, can ensure utilisation of indigenous resources, including the manpower.

# UNSC provides legitimacy to US-British rule in Iraq!



ON 22nd May, the UN Security Council provided a stamp of approval to the occupation of US-British forces in Iraq by adopting a resolution (number 1487) lifting immediately the sweeping economic sanctions on the country imposed in 1991. Many will interpret the resolution giving indirectly legitimacy to the unprovoked invasion of Iraq when US-Britain erred in their prewar assessment of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In addition it provides validation to the concept that "might is right" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The principled stand that Russia, France and Germany took against the war collapsed due to the pressure of the US for strategic and economic reasons.

Syria, the only Arab member in the Council, remained absent and the resolution had the concurrence of other 14 members including Russia, France and Germany. It is intriguing to note that it has been a sheer coincidence that at a time when the UN resolution was adopted, it was revealed in the media that Pentagon had been investigating how CIA went so wrong in their reports as to the presence of WMD in Iraq. A team of US analysts will review reports from secret agencies to compare with what has actually been discovered in Iraq since the war has ended. A question has been asked whether the Bush administration tried to pressure the intelligence agencies to produce reports that supported the administration's positions on Iraq.

Russia, France and Germany were opposed to war on Iraq and it was considered that any resolution of the UN Security Council to lift sanctions would meet opposition from them because under the resolution of 687 of 1991 the economic sanctions could only be lifted after the UN certified

destruction of WMD in Iraq and at one stage the three countries (Russia and France carry their veto-powers) insisted on sending UN inspectors to Iraq to verify the position. It seems however that they have agreed to have this resolution adopted -- what they call "a compromise resolution".

The question is why did Russia, France and Germany agree to this resolution?

In the decade between the end

issues, including economy and terrorism. Iraq's war has damaged the credibility of the UN, unity of NATO and the European Union. The big powers have realised the value of the UN and the unity of Atlantic Alliance for their strategic and other reasons. The quicker is the rapprochement between the US and the major European powers, the better it is for the strength of the Atlantic Alliance.

The truth is that winners take it all and in international relations

Besides the above strategic reasons, all the members of the Council including the three countries are genuinely concerned with humanitarian conditions of Iraqi people. Not only the people were deprived of basic goods and medicines because of harsh economic sanctions but also had to face worsening conditions after the devastating war. Until this day Baghdad had no electricity and water in most areas and law and order situation has been most

make the following concessions:

- The Security Council shall review the implementation of the resolution within a year.
- A continued, though limited, role of the UN in humanitarian, reconstruction and administration in Iraq until an Iraqi authority is installed.
- The possible return of UN weapons inspectors to Iraq.
- Up to six months given to phase out the UN oil-for-food

to leave Iraq and this will allow the US and Britain to govern Iraq for an unspecified period of time until an indigenous Iraqi authority is installed. Third, money generated by sale of Iraqi oil will provide what they call "Development Funds" for reconstruction of Iraq and the US and Britain do not have to spend their tax-payers' money. Fourth, US-British companies will get most lucrative contracts.

The resolution however did not satisfy some of the Iraqis who could be a part of the interim administration in Iraq. In Baghdad, a spokesman of the US-backed Iraqi National Congress said that his group was concerned about the resolution's description of a proposed interim administration for Iraq as a "provisional authority" rather than a "provisional government". The Iraqi National Congress fears that the use of the phrase "authority" demonstrated that the US and Britain might take years to hand over 'real' power to Iraqi people.

## BOTTOM LINE

With this UN resolution, the US will have a legal road to Baghdad. Collective ways of doing business in Iraq will provide the US to have the moral high ground. The Truman administration after the Second World War understood that the success of containment of the Soviet Union required cooperation of Europe and the Bush administration appears to have made the connection between its war on global terrorism and re-engagement with "old" Europe and the UN.

of the Cold War and the start of the war on terrorism, the military balance between the US and Europe widened. European powers failed to meet the challenges of the post-Cold War era, allowing the US to reign supreme. While the US has stressed on "hard" power, the Europeans concentrated on "soft" power. The US offered protection from Jerusalem to Seoul and stationed more than one million men and women under arms on four continents. Its military spending reportedly equals the combined defence budget of the next 14 highest spending countries. Europe has been a silent spectator to the American power at unassailable heights from space to the seas.

It is noted that the US, Britain, Germany, France and Russia are after all in the same boat because they had supplied chemical, biological and other weapons and technology to the former Saddam Hussein's regime. The five G-8 members -- US, Britain, Russia, France and Germany-- sell two-thirds of all global arms to other countries and on 19 May Amnesty International in its report titled "A Catalogue of Failures: G-8 Arms Exports and Human Rights Violations" accused them of arming some of the worst abusers of human rights. Furthermore the G-8 countries (US, Britain, France, Germany, Canada, Italy, Japan and Russia) are expected to meet next month in Evian (France) to coordinate their actions on urgent global

victory has its own momentum and often provides veneer of legitimacy to the end-product. American predominance is the central feature of the current geopolitical environment and there is no competition for primacy of American power, although Russia, France and Germany prefer a multipolar world. Russia, France and Germany realised that victors have come to stay in Iraq, whether they like it or not. If they refuse to cooperate with the victors, they are likely to lose both politically and economically.

precarious. It seems the sooner the sanctions are lifted the better will be conditions of Iraqi people.

There were intensive discussions among the members of the Council to make it palatable to all members. Both sides claimed to give concessions to arrive at a compromise draft. It was reported that the three countries were able to force the US to make 90 changes to its original draft resolution which was presented a week ago.

It is believed that Russia, France and Germany forced the US to

programme, allowing the Secretary General to honour billions in contracts.

- Russia, France and Germany not to be excluded from contracts in reconstruction of Iraq.

The key area of debate was the role of the UN in postwar Iraq. Under the terms of the resolution the UN Secretary General will be allowed to appoint a "Special representative" with "independent powers" to oversee the UN relief and reconstruction efforts and to participate in the transition to an Iraqi authority. It is expected that NATO forces including those from Germany may soon be stationed in Iraq. The French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin said at a press conference on 21 May that "the UN is back in the game" although he stated that the resolution did not go as far as France had hoped.

### Conclusion

Foreign policy must be judged not only on grounds of national interests but also on grounds of prudence. If unilateralism becomes strategy of the US, it may become self-defeating as it increases global instability and insecurity. After Iraq's war, it is quite natural for the US to fear further threat of terrorist attack and the stress of living in fear can only be reduced by multilateral approach and adherence to the rule of international law. The Bush administration has learnt the hard way that it cannot easily act alone in postwar Iraq.

With this UN resolution, the US will have a legal road to Baghdad. Collective ways of doing business in Iraq will provide the US to have the moral high ground. The Truman administration after the Second World War understood that the success of containment of the Soviet Union required cooperation of Europe and the Bush administration appears to have made the connection between its war on global terrorism and re-engagement with "old" Europe and the UN. At the same time Russia, France and Germany had to swallow the bitter pill that American primacy to define contours of politics in every part of the world has come to stay for many years to come.



What do the US and Britain get?

On balance, the compromise resolution appears to indicate diplomatic victory for the US and Britain. First, for the US and Britain, the resolution accorded them the status of occupying forces under the Geneva Conventions. This provides legitimacy of the presence of the US and British forces in the country. From now on, the US and Britain are responsible for arms inspections and may keep the UN informed of their activities in the field. Second, there is no time limit stipulated in the resolution for the occupying forces

Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bangladeshi Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

# SARS and governance

HABIBUL HAQUE KHONDKER

CRISES put governments to tests. Valuable lessons can be obtained by observing how governments deal with them and how communities cope. Crises raise important questions about governance, to use a contemporary parlance. Governance simply means the state of the government or the act, or the process of governing. More important, it is the quality of government. The spread of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) has raised the question of governance once more. In the recent past, most of the pundits were looking at the role of governance in socio-economic development. The interest was generated by the World Bank and other multilateral organisations that were impressed by the rapid economic development of East Asia and attributed it to a large part to governance or the high standard of government. Since then the literature on governance has been awash with criteria, conditions, role, and sustainability of governance. Accountability, neutrality, transparency, future-orientation, tough-mindedness, strong anti-corruption measures, commitment to improvement and pragmatism became the hallmarks of good governance. East Asia prospered because of good governance. Africa (minus, Botswana) floundered because of bad governance. Like globalization, governance has become a new mantra for the development gurus and the public policy experts. One could say, all the characteristics of "governance" can be easily subsumed under the

good old phrase "administration". But why do we have such predilection for neologism? That's another paper.

The spread of SARS has created a new situation of uncertainty in a region that once became a by-word for rapid economic development. The issue of governance is important because, in retrospect, a more transparent and accountable

example are clear. Lack of transparency, authoritarianism (hand-over of the socialist command structure), hyper-nationalism and an arrogance fed by rapid economic growth (China, the sleeping giant, is going to rival US economic dominance by 2020, and so on) hamstrung China's ability to deal with this crisis effectively. Now the hyperbole of economic miracle has been replaced by the hyperbole of doom. The SARS crisis has been variously labeled as "Chernobyl of China" or "9/11 of China". The impact of the epidemic has been termed as severe. Yet on April 9, patriotic *China Daily* denounced the critics of Chinese authority as "anti-Chinese clique". It is only in late April China woke up to face the

reality. On April 20 the government dismissed the health minister Zhang and the mayor of Beijing. On April 29 when China's new leader, Premier Wen Jiabao came to the SARS meeting in Bangkok organised by the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), he said: "I come in humility" and apologised for the inconveniences caused to the ASEAN partners. This was surely a very

The lessons from the Chinese

denial mode. Again arrogance undermined its governance. As of May 19, Taiwan had 344 cases with a death toll of 40; at the time of writing this paper on May 26 the death toll rose to 72 with total cases of 570 so far. One third of all those affected in Taiwan are from the medical community. As of May 26, the total number of cases in China stands at 5,316 and the nationwide death toll remains 315. Singapore's

response to spread of SARS has been forthright, open and strong. Still the crisis is not over yet. On May 18 when it was waiting to be cleared by WHO, a new case was reported. Attempts are underway to find out the contacts of this 39 year old Chinese man. The extent of spread is yet to be determined. The death toll in the island state stood at 28 as of May 19, by May 26 it rose to 31.

Surely, as the crisis continues it brings home the fact that even good governance has its limits. But without good governance, the crisis would cross all limits. The lessons from Taiwan and Hong Kong are that even with a good medical infrastructure and effective governance, the crisis can be

difficult, if not intractable to handle. Vietnam's lessons provide countries like Bangladesh some hope. Vietnam was open about the problem from February when a Chinese-American businessman apparently brought the disease from Hong Kong. Fortunately, (for Vietnam) a well-known communicable disease expert Carlo Urbani, an Italian working for WHO, was at hand who alerted the government. He succumbed to the disease but his warnings were heeded and the situation was brought under control. Vietnam's example showed that an administration that listens and is ready to cooperate with international agencies can handle the crisis effectively. Bangladesh should not lower its guard against this nasty disease and must remain vigilant. A combination of SARS with bad governance can be frightening. We in Bangladesh can all be patriotic and chide the donor community for accusing our democratically elected government of poor governance, or we can eat the humble pie and gear up for cleaning our own house. We may not have to wait for the actual SARS, we already are faced with a host of serious problems where the viruses of corruption, poverty, gangsterism, injustices, lies and mismanagement impede our progress. Here the lessons from China may help. We must shift from a denial mode and come out clean in favour of transparency and truth.

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## TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

### "Passport fees"

I could not help think how insensitive an educated person can be after I read the response of Mr Shuja Khondkar to my earlier letter.

Mr Shuja, either you are ignorant of the conditions in the rest of the world or you don't care for other Bangladeshis preferring to act like an ostrich. What gives you the idea that all Bangladeshis are multi-millionaires in the Gulf? You have to come and see our conditions. It's a different thing that we can't just leave (as you might jump in to suggest). Whoever gave you the idea that a government earns millions by charging exorbitant passport fees? Please get your facts right before suggesting such ridiculous things.

Besides, a wrong is a wrong and no justification, however silly it may be, cannot condone it

**Ahmad Kamal**  
Abu Dhabi, UAE

### "George W. Bush is a

### man of vision"

Mahmood Elahi is right about the title of his letter of 27th May. Mr. Bush has a vision of falsehood and oppression! Islam in its true form which is a threat to the tyranny and injustice of democracy/capitalism, is being targeted by Mr. Bush's regime. Just like when fourteen centuries ago the falsehood of the paganistic Arabs targeted the Muslims. Throughout the history of mankind falsehood showed up in many forms but truth always prevails.

I regularly point out the falsehood of Mahmood Elahi's values and comments but they are never answered, we only get another slogan or opinion praising democracy/capitalism.

**Abu, UK**

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This is in response to Mr Mahmood Elahi (May 27). The man (G Dubya, in case you are wondering) of "vision" is in reality a person who knows only one thing: how to state the obvious. Mr Elahi is also

cheesed off at the liberal Left.

Well, when the civil rights movement and Vietnam War protests took place, a lot of people criticised the Left because they would not conform to the US Govt version of the truth. The Left was proved right in opposing the war in Vietnam. They did the right thing in opposing this war, a war that undid the UN based world security set-up and established "Might is right policy".

Conscientious Americans all opposed the war. Only the blind sheep types marched the tunes of the Pentagon. Those interested in truth, peace and justice were out there in the cold rain, holding placards that read: "What do we want? Peace. When do we want it? Now!" Mr Elahi would do well to remember: "Violence is the last resort of the incompetent"-Isaac Asimov.

**Yahya, USA**

### FIFA decision

The ban on Bangladesh Football Federation by FIFA is another

any rational analysis. The reason?

Well the world's only super power the USA has a cabinet of less than 20 (I am not sure of the exact number but I am sure it is not more than what I have quoted?). The world's second biggest economy Japan has a cabinet of more or less the same size. Most of the developed countries have cabinets far smaller than ours. Yet we have to have a cabinet three times the size of the USA or Japan. Anyone who says that there can be any explanation for this size must indeed be speaking just for the sake of speaking. No wonder our ministers can be seen cutting tapes, addressing useless gatherings, that all sum up to wasting time at the taxpayer's expense while in substance, doing nothing. Given the services they deliver, our government can easily be cut by 1/3 and as a step towards that, we should begin by cutting our cabinet by 1/3rd or to a size that is rational.

The changes made by the Prime Minister recently are to say the least cosmetic and such cosmetic changes may be a matter of discus-

sion for those ministers or families of those on whom the axe of the PM has fallen and not for us who have much better things to do.

**Shahjahan Ahmed**  
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

### Corporate democracy or mass representation?

The American promise of genuine self-government for Iraq has yet to materialise and the issue is obscuring as the media gradually diminishes focus on all the pre-war promises. Such obscurity has been exacerbated by equating mass participation in the political process, of which election is one form, with US version of corporate democracy. Whilst mass participation is a feature of democracy but by no means it is exclusive to it. Let us examine briefly its implementation within the US:

- a) Lets ignore the obvious fraudulent "election" of Bush in Florida. The unrepresentative grip on the "democratic" system by the power-

ful corporate is perhaps the most significant factor. Overt bribes are conveniently termed as party "donations" by the mass media, who receives a good deal of advertising revenue from the same multinationals. Recent war was no doubt partly financed by the "contribution" made by these US Multinationals in return for the promises of being "awarded" the contracts.

- b) Undemocratic influence by the lobby groups (e.g. Jewish Lobby) "ensure" that their interests are represented through the back door rather than through their voting powers. Yet the recent huge anti-war demonstrations coupled with the opinion polls was simply ignored by the political authorities that often shamelessly speak in the name of its people.
- c) Only the candidates that have the backing of the financial muscle can practically (high cost of campaigning) run for election, resulting in the exclusion of most of the ordinary citizens and thus prevent their interests being represented.
- d) The advocates will argue,

democracy allows the masses to select candidates of their "choice". Bearing in mind the above restriction (point c), and considering that an average voter has a voting life span of about 40 years. That only gives you about eight opportunities to "participate" in this charade. What a waste of a life! Yet, it is this rotten model of US "democracy" that is being proposed for Iraq.

- e) So when US talks about bringing "democracy" it means how it can facilitate its sponsors i.e. Republican Party donors to exploit freely, and it has very little to do with providing the needs of the massed in society.

Everyone would welcome genuine rule of the masses by the masses in Iraq and lets not forget the rest of Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc) conveniently. As for corporate "democracy" as practised by the Americans, they can keep it.

**Yamin Zakaria, UK, London**