

ADP implementations

Lessons unlearned

WITH only 45 percent ADP implementation posted in the first nine months of the current fiscal, the government has had to slash the outlay to Tk 19,000 crore, down by Tk 1,300 crore from the original estimate. The downsizing of the ADP is the result of the failure to implement a portfolio projects at the desired pace. Whether even the revised target is achievable is open to question given the track-record of ADP implementation.

The donors have long been questioning the country's aid utilisation capacity, though the government puts the blame on 'procedural complications' pertaining to aid disbursement. But one thing is clear: ADP implementation has fallen well short of the target this time around. While poor project design is one reason behind the unsatisfactory performance, the 'development commitments' of MPs have been held responsible by the planners for the low ADP implementation. That brings us to the question of constituency nurturing by many a ruling party MP lobbying for projects to be set up in their areas. It seems political considerations get the better of economic ones, with the result that such projects might prove nonviable even before these have been fully implemented. It is a case of politics being mixed up with development issues and the price to be paid is sluggish performance insofar as project implementation is concerned.

The planning ministry has taken note of the problem and decided to cast aside lawmakers' suggestions (overtly influenced by local politics) while designing the ADP in future. Though belated, the appreciation of the need for separating development from politics is welcomed. Let the resolve not peter into rhetoric; people wish to see it on the ground with the assertion of government's political will duly stamped on it.

Poor ADP implementation can send disappointing signals to the people as it will be seen as a debacle in the crucially important field of development. Leaving out the lawmakers' politically motivated development commitments should be combined with a clear-cut delegation of authority to project directors for accelerating ADP implementation.

An abominable act

The prisoner abuse issue undiminished

THE gruesome killing of Nicolas Berg in Iraq by Islamic militants is a despicable and abhorrent act. The perpetrators of this abominable crime claim that the killing of Berg was to avenge the US abuse of Iraqi prisoners. No religion, much less Islam, sanctions senseless killings, even less, revenge killings of hapless and defenseless people. No person can condone such acts. We add our voice to all those that have condemned this act, irrespective of religion, creed or colour.

While we feel this act, purportedly by al-Qaida associates, should be roundly condemned by all humanity and our heart goes out in sympathy for the victim's family, it should not be mixed-up with the Iraqi prisoners' abuse issue. The culpability of those that are responsible for the prison abuses, both in the planning and execution of these acts must be accounted for and punished.

More outrageous pictures of prison abuse, since the ones in the CBS was broadcast, are coming to light. Our comments on this matter several days ago, particularly with regard to the quality of leadership and command and control of US forces in Iraq, have been borne out by the statements made by General Taguba to the congressional committee on defense. It appears to us that Abu Gharib is not an isolated incident but follows a pattern of similar acts, conceived and instigated from above. The disconcerting aspect of the matter is that the prison officials were encouraged by their superiors for doing a 'good job'. There are reports now of similar abuses in Afghanistan.

It is good to note the US government has taken the matter seriously. One hopes that appropriate actions would ensue, and that both the perpetrators as well as those that planned and ordered such despicable methods, would be brought to book.

Human rights implode in Iraq



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

THE last few weeks have seen resistance mounting in Iraq. US forces have been locked in tense stand-offs in the cities of Najaf and Fallujah. In both these urban areas, as in many other parts of the occupied country, various groups of irregular armed Iraqis are stubbornly defending sections of towns and villages against Coalition forces.

This deterioration in the maintenance of security within Iraq ahead of the scheduled transfer of power on June 30, has however taken a back seat with recent revelations about serious human rights abuse of Iraqis in different prisons in Iraq.

CBS first blew the whistle on April 29 by broadcasting images of US troops mistreating Iraqi detainees. It also indicated that an army investigation initiated on January 16 this year had found "systemic" problems in the Occupying Authority's handling of captured Iraqis.

Photographs aired by the network on 60 Minutes, related mostly to the infamous, overcrowded Abu Ghraib Confinement Facility, where more than four thousand prisoners are interned. Appalling pictures showed US armed guards mistreating those in their custody and assaulting them in contravention of all human rights rules in the book. Apparently, only about ten soldiers are being court martialled for these offences.

These CBS disclosures were followed very soon afterwards with additional reports of abuses in the Daily Mirror published from London. It printed front-page pictures showing British troops involved in

similar abusive action. It also reported that the British military had launched an investigation into the photographs. British politicians promptly condemned these incidents as being "completely unacceptable".

The last few days have also seen the US administration attempting damage control through expressive statements from President Bush ("sorry for the humiliation and suffering inflicted on the Iraqi people"), Secretary of State Powell and Secretary Rumsfeld. Their

military-run prisons in Iraq (of which there are presently 12) has estimated that the occupying Authorities are presently responsible for over 8,000 detainees. Apparently, prisoners in such facilities can be held for up to 14 days before a decision is made to release them or transfer them to one of the three main prisons.

Human rights activists have alleged that most of the abuse takes place during these first two weeks of incarceration. They have also claimed that nearly 40 per cent of

Angeles that "the President needs to offer the world an explanation and needs to take appropriate responsibility."

As it stands now, there appears to be a complete breakdown in discipline in some of the coalition military units in Iraq. The reason for this in all probability is the latent arrogance of knowing that US troops cannot be subjected to a trial in the International Criminal Court.

One has to recall here that even as early as last July, Amnesty International had reported that

appear to be functioning under the wrong belief that the only language an Iraqi civilian understands, be it on the street or inside the jail, is force. This is a psychological aspect which needs to be corrected.

Statements are being made by certain US officials that such abusive treatment have been more of an "aberration" than the general rule, and that they have been committed by "a very small minority" of the prison guards. Some have also claimed that such forms of behaviour have been comparatively

invading Iraq was not the right thing to do. In a reversal of the earlier position, more than 61 per cent of respondents in a CBS/New York Times poll have indicated that the US administration did not try hard enough to reach a diplomatic solution before going to war in Iraq. These are significant developments.

The USA has a scandal on its hands. Allegations of human rights abuse among Guantanamo Bay detainees (described as irregular combatants) have now moved on also to Iraq and Afghanistan. It makes US allegations of human rights abuse in other parts of the world that much more insignificant.

The USA went to war in Iraq and Afghanistan with their own agenda. It was not only to ensure their own security but also to implement a strategic re-definition of their vital interests in the Middle East. In this regard, if fighting terror or terrorists have to be successful, then, there has to be more dignity and greater sense of justice.

Unless care is exercised, we might end up witnessing dramatic long-term consequences which will thwart US efforts to establish a stable, democratic, civilian structure in Iraq. The US has to understand that harming civilians will further increase the ranks of resistance in Iraq.

It is not enough for the US Administration to say that some US soldiers have been reprimanded and that a few others will face court-martial. The perpetrators, who have tarnished the image of USA, need to be punished in a way which will act as a deterrent for other soldiers in the future.

Nevertheless, I cannot conclude this piece without expressing my deepest admiration for the freedom of the press in the USA (despite the Patriot Act) and the UK. This allowed the facts to be revealed. Such disclosure might not have been possible in some of the countries where these abuses are being so strongly condemned.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

POST BREAKFAST

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reactions, according to analysts, appear to have been "too little, too late". It has been claimed consequently that Bush was more worried about looking good to Americans in an election year and not as interested in making "painful changes in US policy towards Iraq and Israel".

The US leadership have specifically made desperate attempts to pacify the Iraqis and regain some degree of trust among the Arab population in general. They have tried to portray the incident as being one of a kind for which only a few US soldiers are responsible.

However, what makes the whole situation that much more difficult to solve, is this coordinated spin, aimed at papering over the whole issue. A spade is a spade whatever be its description.

Occupation is never a very encouraging prospect. By its very nature, it tends to unfold many unfortunate aspects in the character of individuals or groups, who are primarily responsible for monitoring or enforcing harsh codes on those whose liberty has been taken away. What we are witnessing today is a sad example of such behaviour.

The US military, according to Maj. Gen. G. Miller, US Commander of

the detainees are essentially innocent and are subsequently discharged without any charges. Arrested whimsically on the basis of suspicion, a large number of such detainees spend a harrowing time having to fend off various kinds of abuse and pressures aimed at obtaining incriminating evidence. In this context, it appears that the prison authorities quite often forget that intimidation of any nature and harsh treatment constitutes clear and inadmissible violations of international conventions.

It was equally shocking to read published excerpts from US Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba's report that "between October and December 2003, at Abu Ghraib, numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant and wanton criminal abuses" were "intentionally inflicted" in a "systematic manner" by "several members of the military police guard force" (372nd Military Police Company, 320th Military Police Battalion and 800th MP Brigade). World sentiment has been best reflected by US Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist's comment that "the prisoner abuse is so disgusting, so degrading that ... humanity has been hurt broadly" and Senator Kerry's observation on May 6 in Los

angeles that "the President needs to offer the world an explanation and needs to take appropriate responsibility."

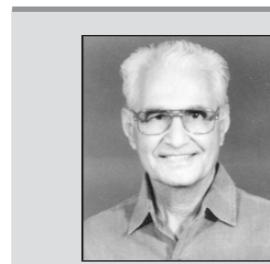
It is now being alleged that this pattern of abuse goes beyond Iraq. Newsweek has mentioned of a recent report by Human Rights Watch which has described similar treatment of prisoners at Baghdad and other US run detention centers in Afghanistan. Deaths of at least two persons in American custody in Afghanistan have also been officially declared as homicides by the US military doctors who performed autopsies on the victims. Are we then to understand that US troops are being sent abroad without sufficient training as to how to treat prisoners who might fall into their custody? Many of them also

soft given the earlier sadistic abuses that were perpetrated during Saddam time in Iraq. I have a simple response to such suggestions. Saddam was no angel and that is why he was removed. 'Newsweek' also puts it appropriately "being more humane than Saddam isn't much to brag about."

It is good that the US President has acknowledged the gravity of the situation and promised an open investigation after which, those responsible, will be brought to justice. It is important that this is done. The political scenario is evolving at a fast pace in Iraq. There are deadlines which have to be met by the Coalition Authorities. There cannot be any distraction. None of these targets should be affected because of dereliction of duty by some soldiers from the Coalition Command.

The moral high ground, so necessary for political governance is already week on the part of the Occupying Forces and eroding continuously. More US troops have been killed in action in Iraq in April than during the six weeks of "major combat" in the US-led invasion. President Bush's approval rating is at an all-time low and more than half of the Americans now believe

Unending eddies



M B NAQVI
writes from Karachi

RUUMOUR mills are working full time. Mir Zafullah Khan Jamali's Prime Ministership is supposed to seem rickety. Some talk of a new polls. Shujaat Hussain, the PML Q Chief, has officially debunked such rumours. But these do not die down. So what is happening?

On a cue from no obvious source, five or six PMLs are uniting supposedly under Mr. Shujaat Hussain; former President Farooq Leghari's Millat Party claimed the other day it has unconditionally merged itself with or into the Q League -- the enlarged --to-be King's Party in which most PML factions and other Musharraf-loving parties like Sindh National Alliance are for ever ready to merge. The unity show is on. There are questions about who can hold such a huge PML intact in which so many, indeed uncountable, PMs-to-be would be straining at the leash.

Inevitably President Musharraf's name is dragged into the arena. He, as President, needs a party to belong to -- may be has to head it. But many advocate that Gen. Musharraf should also remain the top general; he cannot afford to shed his uniform. Or else, the country will be overtaken by instability. The gentlemen, no ordinary folks these, are in vitally important positions in the Federal Cabinet. They have a point: if Gen. Musharraf doffs his uniform and becomes only a civilian Head of State, he will face the new situation in which a part, may be a large part, of his power will shift to another center of power, i.e. a new Army Chief. The unity of command will disappear that has been achieved so laboriously by Mr. Musharraf.

On the other hand two needs have been felt: one, you cannot run institutions of democracy without a strong political party -- a conclusion arrived at by successive military dictators who tried to civilise themselves. Remember Gen. Zia's compulsion to form a PML in a partyless Parliament. Also, why forget Ayub Khan's strongly felt need to have a PML (Convention), though we can ignore the putative plans of Gen. Yahya Khan.

Secondly, the Jamali government's image undoubtedly is a poor

uniform or in starched Shalwar Kameez. The two do not inhabit the same world. Uninformed rulers' knowledge of the civilian world remains confined to traditional influentials with large estates who claim to be able to manage these multitudes as their forefathers had done under the British.

Don't forget the party that served the British well in Punjab was the Unionist Party. Its (Muslim) stalwarts quickly joined the Pakistan Muslim League in 1946-47. Henceforth the latter became the

services and widespread misery stalk the land. But none of it impinges on the uninformed or uninformed princes -- or their well-groomed courtiers.

But some parties do exist that are still incipient ones after all these decades. The military rulers, generally at a decade's distance with one another, come, destroy what political order there was so as to be able to rule and, after a few years, usually three or four, suddenly realize that they cannot go on being an Army Chief. They look

multitudes that it is an answer to their prayers. And (c) it should preserve the unity of command under the Army Chief. In other words, the President should remain both the President and Army Chief and somehow preside over, or at a minimum control, the King's Party -- without which control the party may burst at its seams. The Prime Minister's job is hardest in the new system: He should seem to have total power but should be no hindrance at all in the exercise of total power by the Army Chief and

do Generals' well-laid plans work while they hold the whip and break down after they suffer a setback or die? The only conclusion to emerge is that they try to square a circle; you cannot empower an individual with a unified command and yet appear to be a democratic system.

Look clearly at the ten periods one divides Pakistan's history into. The first was clearly a unified command under civilians; it ended in 1951 with Liaquat Ali Khan's assassination. Next phase was of uncertainty during which the bureaucracy, both civil and military, conspired and finally succeeded in becoming the decisive power in the land. Its victory came in 1954 with the sacking of Constituent Assembly by a bureaucrat who became a Minister and Governor General. Third phase was transitional (1954 to 1958) during which politicians were manipulated by two persons: President Iskandar Mirza and Army C-in-C Ayub Khan.

Fourth phase was pure Ayub; he ruled as Chief Martial Law Administrator for four years. He became a civilian President in 1962 and was overthrown in 1969. Thus ended the fifth phase. Sixth period was denoted by Gen. Yahya's bumbling and ended in the disaster for the country; Yahya was overthrown by other Generals. Seventh began by generals choosing Zia Bhutto to put in power. Bhutto did have a unified command; army submitted to his whims for a while and then overthrew him in 1977. Eighth period was again pure Martial Law for eight long years. Ninth, Zia devised a system that was best known for innumerable PMs marching in and out on President's orders -- behind whom loomed the Army Chief. The tenth period was inaugurated in 1999 when Gen. Musharraf overthrew Nawaz Sharif and the whole Zia system.

Now Musharraf is grappling with the abiding problem of an Army Chief's need to keep all the levers of power. But the old necessity of showing a democracy to ward off foreigners' criticism and other generals' lust for power create difficulties.

Kuldip Nayyar is an eminent Indian columnist.

PLAIN WORDS

The present situation underscores the strangely familiar dilemmas that Gen. Musharraf is facing. These stem from the plenitude of his powers; it is an embarrassment of riches rather than the lack of anything. So he needs nobody's sympathy. He may need only more wisdom. But that is for God to bestow. Us mortals can only notice the giant eddy that encircles the political players -- and not for the first time either.

one; it looks, for all its running around and claimed economic gains, a bunch of amateurs and dilettantes. It shows no signs of moving in any particular direction. Compared to the image of power, dynamism and direction of the President, it is a non-government. So some change would appear to be indicated. Mr. Jamali is too much of a gentleman with Old World charm rather than a Premier on the go like Tony Blair.

Outside commentators are totally irrelevant: The present situation underscores the strangely familiar dilemmas that Gen. Musharraf is facing. These stem from the plenitude of his powers; it is an embarrassment of riches rather than the lack of anything. So he needs nobody's sympathy. He may need only more wisdom. But that is for God to bestow. Us mortals can only notice the giant eddy that encircles the political players -- and not for the first time either.

The hitherto unmentioned part comprises the 150 million or more Pakistanis -- most of whom are strangers to power game players. There is no linkage between the vast unwashed multitudes and the government wallahs, whether in

ruling party with at least half a dozen, if not more, factions formed as a result of the political vicissitudes when some politicians of oversized ego retained a bit of the GOP while a new ruler inherited the old dowagers sans only a few. It was the same party that became Republican Party overnight or quickly became Convention ML or even, up to a point, PPP and back to PML(N). Most of its leaders are true, blue-blooded conservatives who love nothing so much as the status quo -- especially the land tenure system.

King's Party should be peering at the mayhem that Pakistan society has become. Sindh had only a vague tradition of a ML. The NWFP has always been under the influence of either Bacha Khan or the great Khans with large farms. Baluchistan had only incipient political tendencies among Sardars who spent more time in lording it over their own realms; for commoners there were slogans of nationalistic radicalism. Centre was a far off, rather alien, something that was to be obeyed or rebelled against. Crimes rate has zoomed up; unemployment, poverty, inflation, non-availability of social

around, create a new Muslim League, hold a well-managed election, have an elected government to show to outsiders and yet hold most levers of power.

Somehow in this tasty ointment flies intrude: either the people out there rebel as they did in 1968-69 or even 1977 or unmanageable tensions grow within the system they roughen. See the tension between Zia and Junjo or the sight of seven or eight PMs marching in and out of PM's House and four general elections between 1988 and 1999. In these 11 years there was no unity of command, as Gen. Musharraf has said; instead there were three power centers: the Army Chief, the President (with Eighth Amendment powers) and of course the PM. Everyone could see the Troika system totally broke down when one civilian PM tried to establish a unified command of his own by amending away the Eighth Amendment.

Thus we are back at the beginning, trying to build yet another political system. The true requirements of its builders are (a) it should look like democracy -- of a parliamentary kind so as to satisfy foreigners. (b) It should seem to the

the President.

Leaving aside the people -- who at any rate do not come into this architecture of power -- there are inherent difficulties. For one thing, at odd hours of Pakistan history some parties come together, probably on a cue from somewhere, attract shouting crowds and cause instability. There was that father figure of the Army who was ruling wonderfully, as Altaf Gauhar told us. Suddenly odd incidents took place and a movement brought down Ayub Khan's system that had taken seven years of labour to perfect. Obviously some people elsewhere were getting impatient. So another General appeared on the stage and had plans of a long-range nature. But East Pakistan Crisis forced him into a civil war that later became a war with India in which the valiant Commander surrendered the entire Eastern Command. Yahya's plans died on the vine.

Next, Zia was able to create a system that might have worked as he planned, if only he could prevent the 1988 crash. As we saw, the system created and gave way 11 years after Zia had gone. The system must be adjudged a failure as Ayub Khan's obviously was. Why

TO THE EDITOR 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.

Trendy Fotua

Fotua is considered to be the most popular apparel both among young men and women these days. To put it on with jeans has been set as the latest trend in the fashion market. There are many boutiques which are running successfully just because of trendy fotua. In these shops, we can find the fine weaving of various colourful fotua; some of these are decorated with needlework, some are designed

with block prints and sketches and some others are the combination of both that display the beautiful crafts of our indigenous culture. Artists and draftsmen are getting good opportunities to demonstrate their talents and skills by putting designs on it.

Wearing fotua is the latest passion for fashion conscious people and it has a hallmark of tradition because in rural areas men have been wearing fotua and lungi

for a long time. It is such an elegant dress that goes with every mood of the individual and suits every occasion of life. That's why fotua is in great demand to the Bangladeshis living abroad and catching attraction of western people as well.

So, the government should support and promote this dress from national fashion to international fashion and help the artisans earn fame abroad.

Rubab Abdullah

Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka May Day and our garment workers

It is not long that we have observed the May Day with numerous seminars stressing the right of the workers. Members of our self-styled 'civil society' and leaders of different trade bodies have delivered passionately their well-written speeches. But the situation on the ground was revealed by yet another tragic stampede in a garment factory.

The safety measures in most of the garment factories are inadequate and the workers are not trained how to tackle the emergency situations. The cheap labour force contributing to the highest foreign-earning sector seems cheap indeed. Over the last 14 years, around 300 workers were killed and about 1500 injured in 35 accidents in garment factories in the capital.

How many more life does the authorities concerned need to change the situation?
Saif

Dhaka A different Jatiya Sangsad

It was altogether a different Jatiya Sangsad (May 12) -- for those in the gallery as well as those watching it on TV. It was of course a very sombre occasion to condole the death of a fellow MP, Ahsanullah Master who was brutally murdered only a few days back in Gazipur at the end of a meeting. Everyone from both sides of the floor praised the life and work of the deceased law-

maker who was also a valiant freedom-fighter and lamented the loss with a strong appeal for bringing the killers to justice immediately.

Needless to say, the day of this exclusive session was evidently sad for all the members, senior leaders and particularly for the patriotic countrymen of the nation. The PM also personally assured the house of necessary steps to bring the killers to justice during her tenure. In fact everything on the May 12 parliament session bore the signs of

respect for each-other, reconciliation and tolerance; the qualities which we so far failed to observe in the behaviour of our parliament members before.

We all hope that Allah grants sanity and good sense to all of us (our MPs in particular). Unless we can bring law and order in our society, a day may come soon when many of us will be victims of similar senseless killings like Ahsanullah Master.

Z Rahman
Gulshan, Dhaka s