

# Paradox of poverty

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reserve stands at over \$2.5 billion, equivalent to Tk 15,000 crore.

Economists say there is no lack of fund in Bangladesh for taking programmes to develop infrastructure and pull people out of economic woes.

"Bangladesh is suffering from a lack of proper mechanism to spend the funds it gets," said Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, a leading economist and Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, an independent civil society think-tank.

He said a paralysis of the delivery mechanism in the public sector and absorptive capacity failure in the private sector, which is reflected in the over-subscription of initial public offerings in the share market, as the main reasons for huge amounts of money remaining unused.

The commercial banks are not finding proper way to invest excess liquidity for commercial activities and setting up mills and factories to contribute to the national economy, according to officials. As a result, no new employment opportunities are created, which would have reduced poverty.

The economists blamed deteriorating law and order situation in the country for poor investment in the private sector. Industrialists would be enthusiastic in investing their hard earned money only if the law and order improves, they pointed out.

To make matters worse, foreign aid is not being released because of poor performance of the development projects as 96 percent of the aid has been committed against development projects.

The government takes hundreds of projects under the ADP every year but scores of these projects remain unimplemented leaving the money allocated for the projects unutilised. Though the government allocates a huge amount of money against these projects, the funds do not get released because of poor rate of implementation, the economists said.

For instance, the government allocated Tk 20,300 crore for the ADP for the current 2003-04 fiscal year but revised it down to Tk 19,000 crore due to poor project performance.

According to another estimate,

only 45 percent of the ADP was implemented in the first nine months of the current fiscal. The economists expressed doubt about whether more than Tk 17,000 crore would ultimately be spent by the end of the year.

Around 20 percent of the ADP in the previous fiscal also remained unimplemented. According to a survey conducted by the CPD, the rate of ADP implementation in the first nine months was only 54 percent in 2001 and 42 percent in 2002.

In the current fiscal, a number of ministries showed remarkable failure in implementing the ADP projects. For example, the allocation against the planning ministry was cut to only 7 percent to a mere Tk 33 crore from Tk 521.

The allocation against the establishment ministry was reduced to Tk 39 crore from Tk 57 crore because of poor performance in the middle of the ongoing fiscal year.

A recent CPD survey found four major causes for poor performance of the ADP and government's other schemes taken for providing economic safety net to the poor.

These are introduction of new public procurement policy limiting the scope for corruption in the implementation of foreign-aided projects; inability of the government officials to undertake anticipatory actions as agreed with the development partners; over-centralisation of the project planning and approval process and the state of uncertainty pervading the public administration in the backdrop of growing political confrontation.

It suggested massive reforms in the public administration and strengthening of local government for better use of government fund. A strong and elected local government authority would be in a better position to take people-oriented programme and development of infrastructure in the locality.

It also suggested an increase in the number of police forces and bringing professionalism among the cops for ensuring a better law and order situation, drawing more investment, both foreign and local. Huge employment generation would bring money to the general people and gradually reduce poverty, it maintained.

# Tests go haywire

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will never approve substandard chemicals, but we use them as the chemicals turned scarce."

"The restriction has led to widespread smuggling of chemicals and use of low-grade products. Before the restriction, diagnostic centres received a smooth supply of high-standard chemicals," said Hasan Ahmed, a leader of Bangladesh Scientific Dealers Association in Hatkhola. "Many traders have resorted to sales of impure chemicals to diagnostic centres and clinics."

A chemical trader in BMA Bhaban said: "We don't have pure chemicals and sell impure ones in secret to only known clients."

A visit to Hatkhola Market home to more than 150 chemical traders revealed that most of them are selling adulterated chemicals.

A 2.5 litre bottle of original

methanol sells at Tk 6,000 which is now scarce, but a bottle of adulterated substance is available at Tk 1,200-2,200 depending on concentration.

Hatkhola and BMA Bhaban are the only places in Bangladesh that sell chemicals wholesale.

"Only rarely clients prefer pure chemicals. Most of them buy adulterated ones for their diagnostic centres or hospitals. At least five laboratories regularly buy adulterated chemicals from us," a trader said.

The Department of Narcotics Control (DNC), assigned to check the illegal business, has apparently ducked their duty.

DNC Director General Kamaluddin Ahmed said: "We monitor only the licensed users of the chemicals and it is not always possible to track illegal traders."

try through a number of militant communal groups.

"They (Jamaat) are providing training for killing people. Being Muslims, they are training up other Muslims to kill people. Their politics (claimed to be) based on Islam is nothing but rhetoric," she alleged.

Referring to women's reserved seats in parliament, Hasina said if Awami League is voted back to power, they would provide 100 reserved seats for women and arrange direct election for them.

Awami League leaders Toifal Ahmed, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim MP and Motia Chowdhury were present while Sherpur district AL President Atiur Rahman Atiq MP, Sherpur Bar President Narayan Chandra Hore, General Secretary Mukhesur Rahman, Nalitabari Poursasabha Chairman Abdul Halim Ukil, Nokla Poursasabha Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman and Sherpur Sadar Poursasabha Chairman Golam Kibria Liton spoke.

## 3 of a family

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Awakened, Morsheda asked about their identity but the four raised their mosquito-net, threw acid on them and ran away.

The three were rushed to Gauripur Government Medical Hospital and shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at 6:00am. Hospital sources said Morsheda suffered burns all over her body, while Billal and Ramjan sustained 40 and 30 percent burns.

Morsheda told newswomen at the DMCH that she identified three of the criminals as Mangal, Kukul and Moteleb, all cousins to her husband.

She said her uncle-in-law had filed a case against them over land dispute one year ago. After the trial, they were sent to jail for one month.

## al-Qaeda deadline to kill US hostage in Saudi looms

**REUTERS, Riyadh**

Thousands of Saudi security officers backed by FBI agents scoured Riyadh for an American hostage held by al Qaeda, while the engineer's family pleaded for his life before a Friday deadline to kill him.

Osama bin Laden's network has said it will execute Paul Marshall Johnson, kidnapped last week, unless the Saudi government frees jailed militants. It has not said at what exact time the deadline Friday expires. Saudi officials insist the kingdom will not give in to the group's demands.

"Please release my father. He is an innocent man. He loves Muslims. Saudi Arabia was his home," Johnson's son Paul told Dubai-based Al Arabiya television from the United States.

Johnson's Thai wife Thanom urged U.S. authorities to save her husband. "When I see pictures of my husband, I hurt so much, I fall to the floor," she said in broken English. "He is sick man, he need medicine. He hasn't done anything wrong."

A senior Saudi official in Washington, who declined to be named, said a team of about 20 FBI agents specialized in hostage rescue and negotiations were working alongside the Saudis.

He said that for the past two days, more than 15,000 Saudi officers and security forces have been searching throughout Riyadh for Johnson, going door-to-door in some neighborhoods considered hotbeds for al Qaeda militants and sympathizers.

"More than 1,200 Saudi homes have been searched as of Thursday night. The searches continue," he added.

Prominent Saudi cleric Sheikh Saleh bin Abdullah al-Humaid, in a sermon at Muslim Friday prayers in Mecca's Grand Mosque, denounced hostage-taking and murder as grave sins under Islam, the most senior Saudi cleric to do so.

"Killing a soul without justification is one of the gravest sins under Islam, it is as bad as of polytheism," the state-appointed cleric said at Islam's holiest shrine.

"Whoever kills any person under our protection will not go to heaven. The blood of people under our protection is forbidden...they are on par with Muslims," he added.

His comments, however, are unlikely to sway al Qaeda, which is fighting to topple the pro-U.S. monarchy and drive Westerners out of the world's largest oil exporter.

## Several Iraqis killed in clashes south of Baquba

**REUTERS, Baquba, Iraq**

U.S. forces clashed with insurgents south of the town of Baquba on Friday in a second day of fighting in which several Iraqis have been killed, residents and the U.S. military said.

Families fled their homes to escape the violence north of Baghdad in a largely Sunni Muslim area where U.S. forces have frequently been attacked by insurgents, residents said.

The U.S. military said the latest clashes broke out on Thursday when a U.S. patrol returned fire after being attacked with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms south of Baquba, killing several of the attackers.

There were no reports of U.S. casualties.

Three U.S. soldiers were killed north of Baghdad this week when insurgents attacked their base with rockets.

## African catfish

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eat out all other fish species," said Ainun Nishat, country representative of the IUCN -- the World Conservation Union.

This particular catfish has been living in the sewerage line for years and some others may still remain there, he said.

Experts said people could cultivate catfish in tubs or artificial ponds. But they should not have cultivated it in open water bodies.

Shakhawat Hossain, a resident of Kathalagan, told this correspondent that he saw two people landing a couple of catfish from the sewerage line of Asadgate last year.

Fisheries Secretary Iqbal Uddin Ahmed told the BBC radio service yesterday that they have stopped encouraging cultivation of such harmful species. However, the government does not have any plan to prohibit the African catfish cultivation, he added.

As many as 14 alien fish varieties are being cultivated in the country, the first of which was introduced in 1953.

## Anthrax found

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Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Bandarban Md Hafsur Rahman said they buried the carcass and cordoned off the area.

Officials of the Department of Forest said elephants frequently take a route between India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The elephants are coming to the locality due to deforestation, they noted.

# WB provides \$91m

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participation of a wide variety of stakeholders, including the private sector and NGOs in piped water supply, the press release continued.

"This project will help the government increase coverage and quality of water supply, in particular to the poorer populations, which is essential to increased health and productivity in the country," said Karin Kemper, the World Bank's senior water resources management specialist.

Karin, also the task leader for the project, said the project will provide the rural population with a convenient as well as safe water supply procedure.

The total cost of the rural piped water supply project is US\$ 55 million. The World Bank's International Development Association, as a free grant will provide US\$40 million. The remainder will be provided through government, private sector and community contributions.

The other project, entitled

'Reaching Out-of-School Children', with the help of US\$51 million grant will work to increase access to schooling for thousands of disadvantaged children and improve the quality and efficiency of non-formal schools, called Learning Centers, said the press release.

It will enroll half a million out-of-school children in the Learning Centres to be managed by communities with support from non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Learning Centres usually provide three years of primary education, after which many students move on to government-approved primary schools. About 8-10 percent of students, or about 1.7 million, attend non-formal schools in Bangladesh.

About three million children from 6-10 years old are not in school, says the press release adding, the approved fund will help Bangladesh move closer to its goal of providing universal primary education for all children by 2015, said the press release.

# Probes into sensational cases

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Kotwali area on June 5.

The DB men talked with 15 people including the bus driver Anisur Rahman, helper Hanif, conductor Mohiuddin and lessee Shipon, but failed to make any headway into the case.

Asked whether they found evidence of Dinesh and Mannan's involvement in the arson, Inspector Saud said, "I will not disclose it at the moment."

"The investigation is on and I will need more time to make any disclosure about motive or identity of the people behind it," he said.

## AHSANULLAH KILLING

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police has failed to make any notable progress in its investigation into Ahsanullah Master murder after arresting three accused Mahbub, Monir and Dulal and Kabir Hossain, the North Badda landlord who sheltered them, on May 14.

CID sources said they might soon submit charge sheet in the case. The AL lawmaker was assassinated a few yards off his house in Tongi's Noagano in a burst of gunfire that also left a schoolboy killed and five injured.

"We've raided different places in and outside the capital to arrest the killers, but are not getting them. We've asked nine police stations outside Dhaka for information on the accused and their accomplices and found their criminal records there," said Assistant Superintendent Khaliqzaman, who is leading a four-member CID probe team.

Most of the accused including suspects Nasiruddin, Suman, Oli Mian and Qaiyum, who were arrested on May 11, and many witnesses identified Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal leader Nurul Islam Sarker as the mastermind. Some said they saw Sarker and prime suspects Dipu and his brother Tipu dropping the killers near the spot two hours before the incident.

Confessing to his involvement in the killing, the 14th accused in the case, Mahbub identified Sarker as the mastermind.

Police raided Sarker's house on June 2 for the first time, 26 days into the grisly murder.

Khaliqzaman claimed that the probe was progressing. "Investigation does not mean only arresting the accused. We're verifying statements collected so far and will act on them."

## ATTACK ON AZAD

Humayun Azad and his family repeatedly pointed their fingers at the fundamentalists and some leaders of ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami including Delwar Hossain Saidee for the February 27 machete attack on him near Bangla Academy. But investigators are reluctant to go along that line for reasons best known to them.

Police so far retrieved two machetes, arrested Dhaka University leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League Abu Abbas Bhuiyan, Tablig Jamaat activist Golam Mostafa alias Mostafa Mahbub and "Tiger", a mugger of Suhrawardy Udyan.

Asked about Azad's allegation of fundamentalists and Jamaat leaders' involvement, Investigation Officer of the case and CID Inspector Kazi Abdul Malek refused to comment 'at this moment of investigation' which 'was progressing'.

Asked when he would submit the charge sheet, he said, "It is uncertain. I just cannot rush into submitting the charge sheet in such a sensitive case."

## JS body

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probe report. Now I will prepare a report in consultation with Bangladesh Road Transport Authority for submission to the prime minister," Manjur told The Daily Star yesterday.

"The prime minister directed us (standing committee chairmen) to inform her of the irregularities or corruption in the activities of ministries, if we find any, in the interest of fighting graft."

The standing committee formed the sub-committee on January 7 for the probe after criticising Communications Minister Nazmul Huda for the allegations of corruption. Huda denied the charge outright.

Members of the standing committee alleged at the temper-hung meeting that a CNK autrickshaw was sold at up to Tk 3.67 lakh, up from the actual price of Tk 1.67 lakh as a result of monopoly by Uttara Motors.

The sub-committee was asked to submit its probe report by next 30 days, but it failed the deadline and promised to come up with the report on May 30.

The committee also failed the new deadline and the convener of the committee, Nadeem Mostafa, is now abroad.

# Candidacy was not a cause

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Airport yesterday on his return from the International Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) of the OIC held in Turkey. SQ Chowdhury also returned with him.

"The candidate as an individual is a secondary issue, there were no discussions about this at the ICFM," he added.

Morshed said, "We have lost the election for the post but there's a victory in the loss as it showed the OIC is a democratic and a more transparent body than even the UN."

"We have also to remember we fought against Malaysia which currently holds the OIC chairmanship, and Turkey, the host country," the foreign minister said.

"Representatives from all countries attending the conference lauded our efforts to ensure that for the first time the OIC secretary general was elected, rather than selected under the influence of pressure groups behind the scenes," said Morshed.

When reminded he was confident and hopeful about winning the election as he left for the ICFM, Morshed said, "No-one contests any election, be it international, national or municipal, without hope. If you do not nurture any hope to win, why would you take part in an election?"

SQ Chowdhury described his

defeat as a victory for Israeli-American interests. "The country that won is the only OIC member to have diplomatic relations with Israel when Palestinians are being killed like flies. It is a member of NATO but is yet to sign the charter of the OIC," he added.

He however noted there is no Jewish lobby within the OIC but it was state interests that dictated the election.

Chowdhury said although Bangladesh received only 12 votes, the countries with the biggest Muslim population voted for it.

He also criticised the Awami League's questioning his credibility for the post and an apparent demand by AL MP Suranjit Sengupta for the resignation of Morshed Khan. "I was surprised that he (Sengupta) made a remark about Bangladesh's participation in a Muslim organisation," he said without explaining.

Bangladesh and Malaysia received 12 votes each as they lost to Turkey's candidate Ekmeluddin Ihsanoglu, who received 32 votes out of 56.

Meanwhile, opposition parties, former diplomats, and social organisations said Bangladesh's nomination of an 'inappropriate candidate' led to its loss of the prestigious post of OIC secretary general.

# Journalist Syed Quahhar dead

**BSS, Dhaka**

A senior journalist, veteran unionist and assistant editor of the now defunct Dainik Bangla Syed Abdul Quahhar died at his Mirpur residence yesterday morning. He was 65.

Syed Quahhar, former acting president of the National Press Club, general secretary of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) and founding secretary of Dhaka Journalists Housing Cooperative Society, was suffering from diabetes.

He left behind his wife, three sons and a daughter, a host of relatives, friends and admirers.

The first namaj-e-janaza for Quahhar was held at Dhaka Journalists Housing Society Mosque at Mirpur after Jumma prayers. After second janaza on the National Press Club premises, the body was taken to Nabiganj in Brahmanbaria for burial.

President of National Press Club Reazuddin Ahmed and General Secretary Shaikat Mahmood, presidents of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Gias Kamal Chowdhury and Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, secretaries general of BFUJ Ruhul Amin Gazi and Manzurul Ahsan Bulbul, presidents of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) Elahi Newaz Khan and Altaf Mahmud, general secretaries of DUJ Abdus Sahid and Shah Alamgir in separate messages condoled the death.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday expressed her deep shock at the death of Syed Quahhar. She prayed for the peace of the departed soul and conveyed her sympathy to the bereaved family.

## Shipping

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But a section of officials at the Department of Shipping are opposed to the idea, as they feared the system might curtail their control over the inland shipping sector, sources said.

Under the system, a number of private companies would be appointed to check the standard of the passenger ships and cargo vessels. They as local classification society would also monitor the ship building process right from the beginning. They would issue fitness certificates to the vessels. No vessels would be allowed to ply without their certificates. Currently the shipping department is doing the job.

If introduced, the system would scale down the activities of the Department of Shipping. It (shipping department) would only be tasked with monitoring the activities of those private companies. However, the government would have the authority to cancel and punish the private companies for any kind of irregularities.

Following the suggestion, the government decided to introduce the system and the Department of Shipping called tender in August last year.

A total of eight local companies participated in the bid. A selection committee headed by the director general of shipping scrutinised the bid and selected four companies suitable for the job.

But the aggrieved companies complained to the minister and secretary of the shipping ministry that they had been deprived from the job without any valid reason.

They alleged that the four companies were selected on the basis of marks that was not mentioned in the tender. The advertisement only asked for application without mentioning clearly what sorts of documents to be attached with the application, they said.

Following the allegation, the shipping minister cancelled the selection of the committee and decided to appoint all the eight participating companies for working as classification society.

But now, after eight months, the government is going to cancel the whole tender process and start again from scratch, sources said.

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain when contacted said the previous tender was cancelled because a section of the shipping department officials participated in the bid forming companies with their close relatives. It was a gross violation of terms and conditions of the service, he observed.

Sources said cancellation of the previous tender has delayed the process of setting up local classification system at least for six months.

Akbar Hossain, earlier, admitted that a vested interest group in the Department of Shipping had been hindering the introduction of the system. He also committed himself to introduce the system within two months.

## Cop held

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Majlish and threatened to implicate him in criminal cases if he failed to pay the sum.

On suspicion, Majlish held him and started shouting for help. Members of the house and neighbours arrived on the scene hearing the hue and cry and handed Milon over to Mohammadpur police.

Milan told Mohammadpur police that he used to realise money from businesspersons identifying him as a DB officer.

# Terror suspects kept in 'secret' US detention centers

## HR group says

**REUTERS, Washington**

The United States is holding terrorism suspects in more than two dozen detention centers worldwide and about half of these operate in total secrecy, said a human rights report released on Thursday.

Human Rights First, formerly known as the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, said in a report that secrecy surrounding these facilities made "inappropriate detention and abuse not only likely but inevitable."

"The abuses at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib cannot be addressed in isolation," said Deborah Pearlstein, director of the group's US Law and Security program, referring to the US Naval base prison in Cuba and Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq where abuses are being investigated.

"This is all about secrecy, accountability and the law," Pearlstein told a news conference.

The report coincided with news that Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld ordered military officials to hold a suspect in a prison near Baghdad without telling the Red Cross. Pearlstein said this would be a violation of the Geneva Conventions and Defence Department directives.

She said thousands of security detainees were being held by the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as locations elsewhere which the military refused to disclose.

"The US government is holding prisoners in a secret system of off-shore prisons beyond the reach of adequate supervision, accountability of law," said the report.

Pearlstein said multiple sources reported US detention centers in, among other places, Kohat in Pakistan near the border with Afghanistan, on the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia and

at Al Jafr prison in Jordan, where the group said the CIA had an interrogation facility.

Prisoners are also being held at the Naval Consolidated Brig in Charleston, South Carolina, and others were suspected of being held on US warships.

A defence department spokesman told Reuters he would comment when he had more information about the report.

Pearlstein called for the US authorities to end "secret detentions," provide a list of prisoners, investigate abuses and allow the International Committee of the Red Cross unfettered access to detainees.

US treatment of detainees came under the spotlight after disturbing photos were leaked to the media showing US soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners.

The United States is conducting several investigations into these abuses but Pearlstein said these were not enough and a full court of inquiry should be ordered.

Families of suspects detained by US authorities have complained strongly about the lack of information about detainees held by US authorities since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks against the United States.

Pakistani Farhat Paracha said via a telephone link-up at the news conference that she tried for weeks to find her husband, Saifullah Paracha, who disappeared last June when he took a business trip from Pakistan to Thailand.

Paracha said she asked the US and Pakistani governments to track him down and only learned about his whereabouts when the Red Cross contacted her six weeks later to say her husband was being held at Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan.

"I feel disgusted. It makes my heart sink. I feel so powerless and so helpless," said Paracha.

# Annan raps US for bid

**FROM PAGE 12**

The Bush administration, for the third year, is seeking to renew a Security Council resolution that would exempt from the court's prosecution military and civilian personnel "related to a UN-authorised operation" such as that in Iraq.

The immunity is extended to all nations not among the 94 countries that have ratified a treaty establishing the court, based in The Hague, Netherlands. The resolution expires by the end of the month.

So far Washington does not have enough support or will barely reach the required nine "yes" votes needed for the resolution to pass in the 15-nation body.

Among the 15 council members, Germany, France, Spain, Brazil, Chile, Benin and Romania, are expected to abstain. But some, like Romania, are reluctant to be responsible for failure of the resolution, if it dies by one vote.

Crucial is whether China abstains. China has criticised the resolution as sending the wrong signal to the world. But diplomats say Beijing is seeking US concessions on Taiwan, although China denies this.

Expected to vote in favour are Russia, Algeria, the Philippines, Pakistan, Angola as well as Britain, one of 94 countries to have ratified the treaty. Its vote is based on Washington's past threat to veto UN peacekeeping missions one by one as it did in 2002, British officials say.

The Bush administration argues that the tribunal, based in The Hague, Netherlands, could be used for politically motivated lawsuits against American soldiers. Supporters say the court's statutes exclude countries with a proper judicial system, like the United States, from prosecution.

"We want an end to the dual administration in the city corporations, besides abolition of activities of development authorities and voluntary organisations, with a view to provide better services to our citizens without interference from others," said the mayor of Khulna.

## Mayor

**FROM PAGE 1**  
for medical treatment.

The mayors have decided to hold a meeting with the prime minister soon to convey their demands as well as some suggestions for further empowerment and strengthening of the city corporations, according to a source.

"We want an end to the dual administration in the city corporations, besides abolition of activities of development authorities and voluntary organisations, with a view to provide better services to our citizens without interference from others," said the mayor of Khulna.

He said they will meet and present some proposals to the prime minister for her approval which are aimed at ensuring better living condition for the city-dwellers and implementing various development programmes undisturbed in the metropolises.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the resolution "should be renewed the way the council said it would."

AFP added: Annan said Thursday Iraq was still too