

Comparative study of CPI data: 2001 versus 2005

MOZAMMEL H. KHAN writes from Toronto

It was one more record setting news for Bangladesh, but as usual not a good one. "Chad, Bangladesh Are Most Corrupt" read the heading of the October 18 issue of the New York Times. This was the flashing news in many news agencies around the globe as soon as Transparency International (TI), the Berlin based watchdog body on corruption, released its report on Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of 2005. NY Times further wrote: "In Bangladesh, government agencies siphoned off a reported \$68 million through corruption last year, with the communications sector the worst offender, the group (TI) said in September. Government officials and senior bureaucrats were blamed in 72 percent of the cases involving misuse of public funds in the South Asian nation. In terms of bribes and misuse of power, the police department was responsible for nearly 17 percent of money lost, the earlier report said."

The Globe and Mail, Canada's elite news daily that includes the top business leaders in its readership, that seldom cares to report the happenings in the developing world, did not neglect, this time, to feature the story circulated by the Reuter news agency, that read: "Bangladesh, Chad come bottom of corruption list." Although this dubious distinction has been uninterruptedly bestowed on the nation since 2001, this year the news release attracted extra attention since Bangladesh has

already been on the news map due to the unprecedented internal violent activities over the past year and the record setting terrorist bombings of August 17.

TI has been publishing its CPI ranking report since 1995. Bangladesh, featured for the first time in its list in 1996, securing the fourth berth from the bottom, placing itself above Nigeria, Pakistan, and Kenya among the 54 countries listed in the survey. The next time Bangladesh's name came up in the list was in 2001, which was incidentally at the flag end of the AL rule and right before the last general election. The top leaders of the then opposition party exploited the humiliating news to their fullest advantage, granting all the credit for this dubious distinction to their adversaries.

They called the TI report "timely and beyond question" and "done on the basis of international indices and not made to denigrate Bangladesh." Between 1997 and 2000, Bangladesh's name was not included since TI requires data from at least three independent sources to publish the ranking. However, in 2001, though three sources were available for Bangladesh, the data was so much statistically unstable that the TI report included the only footnote in its report for Bangladesh that read: "Data for this country in 2001 was available from only three independent survey sources, and each of these yielded very different results. While the composite score is 0.4, the range of individual survey results is from -1.7 to +3.8. This is a greater range

than for any other country. TI stresses, therefore, that this result needs to be viewed with caution."

In my article entitled "CPI index: Basis and Validity" (DS July 17, 2001), I vehemently questioned the statistical validity of the data. The sources of the data were Freedom House, Price Water House Coopers, and World Business Environment Survey of the World Bank. The variations between data values were so large that it gave a standard deviation of 2.9 and

would have an average score of 1.5 instead of 0.4 that would have changed the ranking drastically. In statistical jargon, this is known as "corrupt data." My viewpoints were partly concurred with in the response by Prof. Dr Johann Graf Lambsdorff (TI adviser and director of the statistical work on the CPI) published in the Daily Star, while his disagreement with my observations was technically untenable as was indicated by me in my reactions

yielded a mean score of 1.7, a 90 per cent confidence range of 1.4 to 2.0 and a standard deviation of 0.41 and standard error of 0.154. These resulted in a range over mean ratio of 0.35 (14 in 2001) and a CV of 24 per cent (725 in 2001). Therefore, from the statistical perspective, there is nothing to contest as far as the validity and the stability of the data is concerned.

Our politicians, especially those who are at the helm of the state, try to

release the report right before the general election, notwithstanding the fact that the TI report was neither prepared for nor intended for release in Bangladesh only. Ironically, a minister of the present government, whose ministry has been identified as the worst offender by TIB, has imputed this very individual as one of those who are trying to portray Bangladesh as a failed state. The very politicians in whose ears the TI report sounded like sweet music in

of its predecessor. However, neither the people of the country nor the international bodies did find any trace of indications reflecting any flattening trend of the positive slope of the corruption curve, let alone reversing it, since the publication of the white papers. In fact, the newspaper reports expose only a tip of the iceberg of the corruption stories that circulate around. None of the stories that involve the corruption of the government leaders and their family members have ever been contested or dispelled by the government through any credible investigations or explanations.

A few comparisons involving the current government and its predecessor in their public actions to arrest corruption would be in proper order. During the tenure of the past AL government, DIT plots were allotted mostly to the AL leaders, which the newspapers dubbed as "Awami Village." After severe criticism from the news media, the then PM, through an executive order, cancelled the allotments. Exactly the same irregularities were repeated during the current government when the DIT plots were allotted mostly to the BNP supporters. In spite of similar criticisms from the media, the present PM did not bother to follow suit and cancel the allotments.

There was no alternate centre of power during the tenure of the past government as exists today, and which, in the view of the government's detractors, has stakes in most big businesses and govern-

ment contracts. The erstwhile PM's son did not own any business in the country, neither did he borrow any money from the country's banks. To the contrary, there are reports about the current PM's sons owning multiple businesses and big investments, both at home and abroad. Only on the other day, the leader of the opposition accused the government of writing off hundreds of millions of taka of interest on the loans owed to PM's sons by the nation's bank. It was incumbent on a democratically elected government with the slightest transparency and accountability to contest the accusation, if it did not have any merit, specially when it came from the official leader of the opposition and former PM.

A TIB trustee, while publishing the report in Dhaka, has asked both the current and the former PMs to disclose their assets publicly. The former PM has not only agreed to the suggestion, but has gone a step further by challenging that the assets of the PM's son, a political heir apparent, should be also included in the declaration. It is now the turn of the PM to accept the challenge of her adversary and let the people of the country as well as the international bodies know who amassed how much wealth during their political career.

Dr. Mozammel H. Khan is the Convenor of the Canadian Committee for Human Rights and Democracy in Bangladesh.

The very politicians in whose ears the TI report sounded like sweet music in 2001 heard only high-pitched noise thereafter, not only once, but also for four consecutive years since their ascendancy to power in 2001. The minister who once opined that the TI report "was not made to denigrate Bangladesh" is now brandishing the organisation as one whose "brain has to be examined."

standard error of 2.0. No other country's data in the last eleven years of TI's history has generated such a high standard deviation. It further generated a range over mean ratio of 14 and a coefficient of variation (CV) of 725 per cent. The same parameter (CV) for Canada, India, and Pakistan (whose data had the second highest CV value) were 6 per cent, 18 per cent, and 72 per cent respectively. A lower CV value indicates a higher objectivity and scientific validity of the data. In conclusion, I reemphasised, "one does not have to be a Fisher of statistics to discard these unstable data, let alone using them in any scientific analysis." To show the instability of the data, if, for example, one survey result out of three was taken out, Bangladesh

published in the DS as well.

The TI report of 2005 included 159 countries as opposed to 91 in 2001. Moreover, the countries such as Chad, with which Bangladesh shared the bottom berth, Turkmenistan, Myanmar, and Haiti, that ranked right above Bangladesh, were not included in 2001. This time around, the data for Bangladesh was drawn from seven sources and incidentally, none of these sources provided data for Bangladesh in 2001. Each of these sources carried out surveys in 95 to 155 countries. Out of these the World Economic Forum provide data for three consecutive years -- 2003, 2004, and 2005 -- based on its survey of senior business leaders and domestic and international companies. This year's data for Bangladesh

invent conspiracy in every critical report or review that either appears in the international press, such as Bertil Lintner's one on rising Islamic fundamentalism in the Far Eastern Economic Review, or comes out of the foreign capital, such as TI report on corruption. The unparalleled incident of August 17 and October 3 and the subsequent bone-chilling revelations by the suspected mastermind only helped to prove the accuracy of Lintner's story. The day-to-day experience of the people who are enduring the brunt of endemic corruption only validates the findings of the TI report.

When the TI report appeared in 2001, the then government pointed its finger to a highly vocal trustee of TIB for his alleged conspiracy to

2001 heard only high-pitched noise thereafter, not only once, but also for four consecutive years since their ascendancy to power in 2001. The minister who once opined that the TI report "was not made to denigrate Bangladesh" is now brandishing the organisation as one whose "brain has to be examined."

Although TI report is not intended to make a comparative study of the performance of successive governments of any country, consecutive ranking of Bangladesh at the bottom of the list, a unique feat, does not bode well for the performance of the current government in reflecting its resolve to fight corruption vis-a-vis its predecessor. This government published hundred of pages of white papers elaborating the corruptions

Saddam trial a legal travesty

BILLY I AHMED

THE TRIAL of Saddam Hussein, which began on October 19 in Baghdad, under the patronage of the US-created Supreme Iraqi Criminal Tribunal (SICT) and the US-sponsored Iraqi government, is a legal travesty. Prosecuting the former Iraqi head of state by a puppet court and US backed Iraqi government lacks credibility. Saddam Hussein and his seven co-defendants have pleaded not guilty to charges stemming from 1982.

More rudimentarily, the illegal US invasion of Iraq raises the question of the legitimacy of the court itself. Writing in the Al-Ahram Weekly in February, one of Hussein's defence team, Curtis Doebbler, commented: "[B]efore any members of the Iraqi government headed by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein can stand trial, a determination should be made about the legality of the United States' use of force against the Iraqi people. To put the leaders of the Iraqi people on trial when the aggressors against the Iraqis are not held responsible for their actions is the worst kind of vengeance. It is vengeance based on a violation of international law and mocking the rule of law in a manner that will damage it severely for decades to come."

"We have grave concerns that the court will not ensure fair trial," said Richard Dicker, director of HRW's International Justice Programme as the court opened its doors on October 19 morning. "To ensure justice and its own legitimacy, the court must fix these deficiencies."

To prepare the case against Hussein and other Baathists began from the beginning by a liaison office made up of lawyers and advisers from the US, Britain, and Australia -- all countries whose governments are themselves guilty of war crimes from the 2003 invasion and following occupation. \$138 million from Washington funds the SICT.

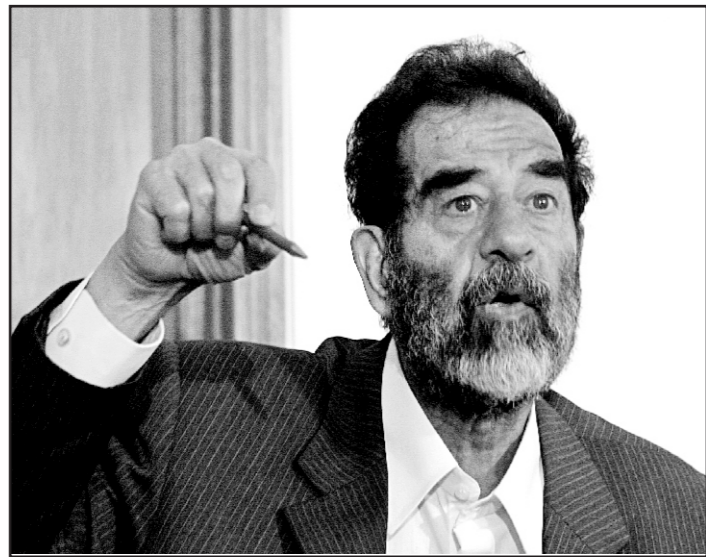
The basic law under which Saddam is being tried was written under the supervision of US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

The Baathist regime under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein has many grisly crimes against the Iraqi people to answer for. However, the proceedings are a show trial, maneuvering to have the former dictator swiftly sentenced to death and executed. The purpose is not justice, but to obscure the complicity of the US, Britain, and other major powers in many of Hussein's atrocities.

Saddam's prosecution is only for 19 charges about the massacre of some 150 people in the village of Dujail in 1982. On July 8, 1982, several of Dawa's gunslings attempted to assassinate Hussein by firing on his motorcade as it passed through the area. The members of the Shiite fundamentalist Da'awa organisation -- the party of the current Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari -- failed to murder Saddam.

The Hussein regime ruthlessly cracked down on Dujail to try to

International Human Rights groups had urged Washington to ask the U.N. Security Council to set up an international court to try Saddam similar to the one at the Hague that is trying former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, or at least, a mixed Iraqi-international court similar to the one now working in Sierra Leone. The Hussein trial is shaping up to be another political debacle for the Bush administration and the US occupation of Iraq.



intimidate the Shiite population and the Dawa Party, which engaged in anti-government guerrilla attacks.

The Dujail massacre is meticulously chosen, instead of other Baathist crimes that were encouraged or sanctioned by the major powers. These include the slaughter of Iraqi Communist Party members in 1979, the murder of thousands of Shites in the lead-up to the 1980 US-backed Iraqi invasion of Iran, the use of Western-supplied chemical weapons against Iranian troops and civilians during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, the pogroms against the Kurdish population in the late 1980s, and the butchery of tens of thousands of Shites and Kurds following the 1991 Gulf War.

The frame-up of Hussein prosecution is to prevent any repetition of the current trial of former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic, in the UN-run International Criminal Tribunal.

Milosevic, over the past four years, has used his trial to document the conspiracies of the major powers in arousing the ethnic conflicts that tore apart the Balkan region and to expose the criminality of the NATO attack on Yugoslavia in 1999. The trial has become, to put it mildly, an embarrassment for the prosecutors.

The Bush administration knows that, like former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam could use his trial to embarrass the US. He is, for instance, intimately familiar with the two visits of the then presidential envoy Donald Rumsfeld to Baghdad in 1983 and 1984 to cement US ties with the dictatorship, despite Iraq's use of chemical weapons.

Beside, he is also aware of the military backing the US provided to Iraq during the war with Iran, and of

details of European companies and US that aided in Iraqi chemical and biological weapons programmes. These political minefields are among the reasons Washington has insisted the trial remain under firm US control in Baghdad, rather than at the International Criminal Court in the Hague.

Prime Minister Jaafari declared the trial was not a "research project." All the judges had to decide, he stressed, was: "Has this man committed crimes?" And to do so quickly.

Article 30(b) of the SICT statute dictates that a death sentence must be carried out within 30 days of appeals being exhausted.

On October 16, US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) drew attention to this article in a lengthy critique of the Hussein trial. The sentencing stipulation, it noted, "creates the possibility that a person charged in several cases can be tried, convicted, and executed for one of those cases, before any other cases are subject to public trial, and as such is likely to deprive victims, witnesses and the Iraqi people as a whole of the opportunity to conclusively establish which individuals were legally responsible for some of the worst human rights violations in Iraq's history. The execution of convicted individuals while other charges are pending against them means that there may never be a public accounting of the evidence for and against them in relation to these events."

In December 2003, HRW prepared a document suggesting many areas of the Special Tribunal's statute failed to meet the standards set by international law. It does not guarantee the presiding judges are independent and unbiased, or have the necessary

experience to hear complex human rights cases. It does not rule out confessions brought by torture, guarantee the right to remain silent or ensure that guilt has to be proven beyond reasonable doubt.

In addition, the memorandum to the IRC last December, by the US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) cautiously questioned the tribunal's legitimacy and suggested many amendments to its statute to bring it into line with international law. Neither the IRC nor the US occupation authorities took any notice of the letter. Summing up its objections in January, HRW concluded the US had "failed to articulate any basis in international humanitarian law by which the tribunal could be established" and criticised its drafting as "highly secretive without any opportunity for broad consultation or public comment."

Hussein's defence team, which claims to have had far too little time to prepare its case.

"If this was a regular murder trial at the Old Bailey in London, the defence would have had been granted six months to prepare," one of Hussein's lawyers, Abdel al Haq al-Ani, told Reuters on the opening day. "The Americans are intent on making this pure theatre, a show trial," he added.

Saddam's lawyer Khalil al-Dulaimi has made clear in press statements the central thrust of the legal defence will be a rejection of the court's legitimacy. He plans to demand adjourning the entire trial while a motion to dismiss the case is prepared.

However, Washington insists that the court meets international standards, as White House spokesperson Scott McClellan said: "They have established the basic standards that you would expect of international law."

Nevertheless, in a report released last weekend, HRW said the tribunal's procedures fell short of international standards. The judges, for example, will be able to convict Hussein if they are merely "satisfied" by the evidence, as opposed to their being convinced beyond a reasonable doubt.

International Human Rights groups had urged Washington to ask the U.N. Security Council to set up an international court to try Saddam similar to the one at the Hague that is trying former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, or at least, a mixed Iraqi-international court similar to the one now working in Sierra Leone.

No current international tribunal allows a death sentence. Not only does Iraqi law allow such a sentence for different crimes, but once a death penalty sentence is pronounced, it must be carried out within 30 days of the final appeal, a provision that raises at least the possibility that Saddam Hussein may be executed before other cases are heard.

The Hussein trial is shaping up to be another political debacle for the Bush administration and the US occupation of Iraq.

Billy I Ahmed is a researcher.

Scandal, corruption bedevil Bush administration

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

PRESIDENT Bush has been confronted with series of scandals and corruption cases in the administration and congress as well, which is keeping it from sticking with the agenda that he laid out to accomplish during his second term in office.

A series of scandals involving most powerful Republican congressmen on the Capitol Hill and advisers of President Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney in the White House demonstrate that the country is not governed on the right track, to say the least.

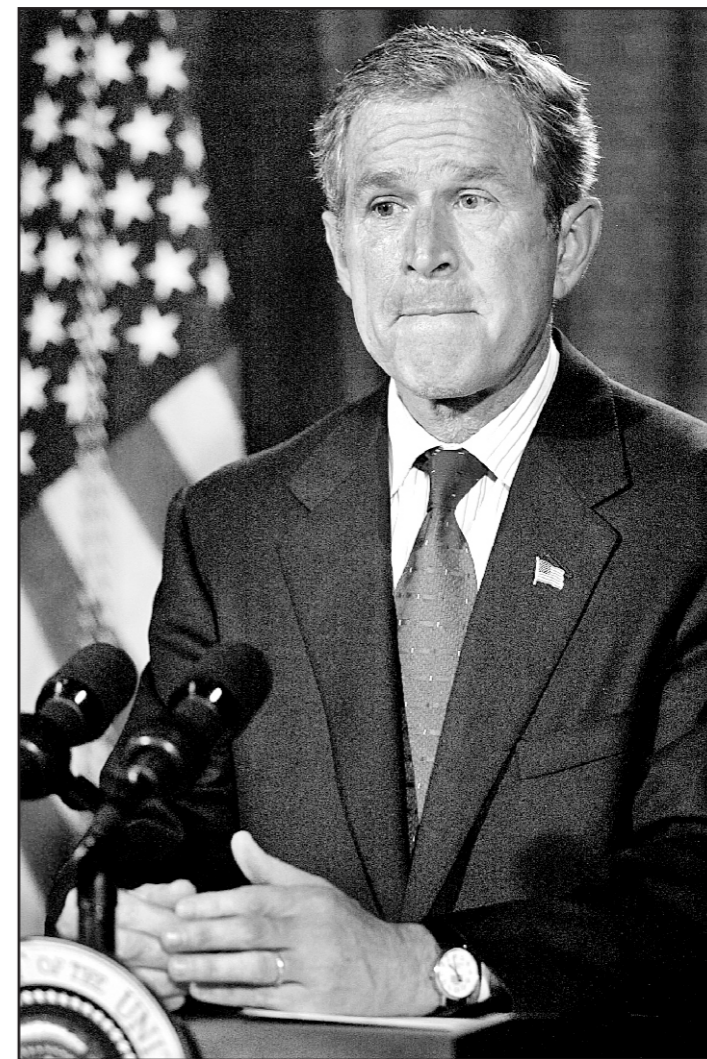
The indictment of House Majority Leader Tom Delay, Republican from Texas for alleged campaign funding illegally and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, Republican from Tennessee, who is facing subpoena in an insider-trading investigation, have caused serious jeopardy in conducting the business in the congress during the Republican's 11 year reign. Tom Delay has resigned from Majority Leadership by now. Tom Delay is facing another case in Texas for money laundering and conspiracy. He is now on a bail.

These have created crisis also in carrying forward President Bush's agenda. In a letter to Democratic supporters on the eve of Governor Election in Virginia, Senator John Kerry on October 20 said, "we all watched as Katrina exposed not only misplaced priorities but also the staggering lack of competence that has come to characterise this administration in recent years. We are fed up with the steady stream of stories about misplaced priorities and corruption." This is the reflection of the sentiments of majority people in the United States.

Apart from reform in Social Security and tax cut proposals, President Bush appears to be making little headway in attempting to sell the Supreme Court nominee of the White House aide Harriet Mires, who will replace Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, to skeptical conservative Republicans in the Senate.

Karl Rove, Deputy White House Chief and advisor to the President, who is known as architect in planning President Bush's winning second term, is facing the grand jury for disclosing the name of CIA operative Palme to journalist or journalists. The same is the case with Lewis Scooter Libby, Chief of Staff to Vice-President Dick Cheney, reportedly involved in leaking out the name of CIA operative to newsmen to cause embarrassment to former American Acting Ambassador Joseph Wilson to Iraq (1990-1991), who said in a

While survivors of the Katrina and Rita continue to suffer without home and basic necessities of life, Bush administration is granting contracts without bid to enrich their corporate friends and adding misery to the survivors by cutting wages for reconstruction. President Bush is having lowest approval rating in handling state affairs. If Karl Rove and Lewis Scooter Libby are indicted as speculation goes, Bush administration could be in serious trouble indeed.



signed column in the New York Times that President had misrepresented the facts in his State of the Union address in 2003 wherein the President said that Saddam Hussein attempted to import uranium from Niger. That might have caused embarrassment to Bush administration.

Judith Miller, investigative reporter of New York Times on release from jail having served four months agreed to disclose the name of the person or persons divulged the name of Palme, CIA operative to her. Judith Miller suffered imprisonment for refusing to testify before the grand jury.

The Republicans are also worried about Jack Abramoff, conservative

lobbyist, whose business and political links brought him in contact with dozen of lawmakers and top White House officials. He is under severe investigations. Tom Delay's corruption is intertwined with that of Jack Abramoff, who is the target of a string of Federal kickbacks and illegal lobbying probes. Tom Delay is facing arraignment on charges of money laundering and conspiracy. Already David H. Safavian, top White House procurement official, who was Karl Rove's business partner, was arrested on charges that he lied about and impeded an investigation into his dealings with Abramoff.

President Bush's nominee, Timothy E. Flanigan, for Deputy Attorney General had to withdraw following raising questions on his dealing with Abramoff. Meanwhile, Chairman of the House Administration Committee Robert W. Ney, Republican from Ohio, is facing questions about ties to Abramoff, including his participation in a golf outing in Scotland which was sponsored by Abramoff in 2002. According to the Washington Post, Karl Rove's allies are entangled in the investigation of Abramoff. The newspaper further said that twin investigations of Abramoff by the Senate Indian Affairs Committee and a multi-agency Federal task force "appear likely to tar a host of lawmakers the White House has relied on for the passage of critical legislative initiatives."

2006 in the United States is the year for elections in the Senate. Attention, therefore, has focused on the constituencies of Republicans and Democrats alike. Presently both the House of Representatives and Senate are in the hands of the Republicans, they being majority. A number of seating Republican Senators have decided not to contest elections in North Dakota, West Virginia, Florida, Michigan and Vermont. That has caused anxiety in the Republican Party. Besides this, the Republican Party is also facing formidable problem to select candidates to face Democratic challengers in 2006 elections. The reasons are: unpopular war in Iraq, scandals involving top Republican congressmen coupled with corruption, inept handling of devastating hurricane Katrina and Rita by the Federal government and high gasoline price.

The awarding contract to Halliburton Company, (Vice-President Dick Cheney's former organisation) without any bid for the reconstruction works in Katrina affected Gulf coast has been questioned by lawmakers from both parties. This is another scandal. Halliburton was given no-bid contracts in Iraq for reconstruction and repairing oil pipelines etc. after invasion. While survivors of the Katrina and Rita continue to suffer without home and basic necessities of life, Bush administration is granting contracts without bid to enrich their corporate friends and adding misery to the survivors by cutting wages for reconstruction. President Bush is having lowest approval rating in handling state affairs. If Karl Rove and Lewis Scooter Libby are indicted as speculation goes, Bush administration could be in serious trouble indeed.

Mohammad Amjad Hossain, a former Bangladesh diplomat, resides in Virginia.