

'US wasted billions in rebuilding Iraq'

AP, Khan Bani Saad

A \$40 million prison sits in the desert north of Baghdad, empty. A \$165 million children's hospital goes unused in the south. A \$100 million waste water treatment system in Fallujah has cost three times more than projected, yet sewage still runs through the streets.

As the US draws down in Iraq, it is leaving behind hundreds of abandoned or incomplete projects. More than \$5 billion in US taxpayer funds has been wasted on these projects more than 10 percent of the \$53.7 billion the US has spent on reconstruction in Iraq, according to audits from a US watchdog agency.

That amount is likely an underestimate, based on an analysis of more than 300 reports by auditors with the special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction. And it does not take into account security costs, which have run almost 17 percent for some projects.

There are success stories. Hundreds of police stations, border forts and government buildings have been built, Iraqi security forces have improved after years of training, and a deepwater port at the southern oil hub of Umm Qasr has been restored.

But even completed projects for the most part fell far short of original goals, according to an Associated Press review of hundreds of audits and investigations and visits to several sites. And the verdict is still out on whether the program reached its goal of generating Iraqi good will toward the United States instead of the insurgents.

Col Jon Christensen, who took over as head of the US Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq this summer, said it has completed more than 4,800 projects and is rushing to finish

233 more. Some 595 projects have been terminated, mostly for security reasons.

Christensen acknowledged that mistakes have been made. But he said steps have been taken to fix them, and the success of the program will depend ultimately on the Iraqis who have complained that they were not consulted on projects to start with.

"There's only so much we could do," Christensen said. "A lot of it comes down to them taking ownership of it."

The reconstruction program in Iraq has been troubled since its birth shortly after the US-led invasion in 2003. The US was forced to scale back many projects even as they spiked in cost, sometimes to more than double or triple initial projections.

As part of the so-called surge strategy, the military in 2007 shifted its focus to protecting Iraqis and winning their trust. American soldiers found themselves hiring contractors to paint schools, refurbish pools and oversee neighbourhood water distribution centres. The \$3.6 billion Commander's Emergency Response Program provided military units with ready cash for projects, and paid for Sunni fighters who agreed to turn against al-Qaeda in Iraq for a monthly salary.

But sometimes civilian and military reconstruction efforts were poorly coordinated and overlapped.

47 migrants

FROM PAGE 16 Saturday night came just hours after Morocco's Royal Marines stopped another group of 75 sub-Saharan Africans and Bangladesh natives off the coast of Al Hoceima trying to get to Spain.

Morocco has long been a jumping off point for Africans and others trying to reach Europe clandestinely.

4 Ugandan peacekeepers killed in Mogadishu

AFP, Mogadishu

Four Ugandan soldiers with the African Union forces in Somalia were killed yesterday when hardline insurgents fired a mortar shell at one of their bases, the force's spokesman said.

The AU troops, protecting Somalia's embattled government which the Islamist Shebab rebels are fighting to overthrow, have been locked in heavy clashes since last week with the radical group who have intensified their attacks.

"A mortar was fired at one of our positions and it killed four soldiers and injured eight," the force's spokesman Ba-Hoku Barigye told AFP.

The AU troops, numbering some 6,000 Ugandan and Burundian soldiers, are the only hurdle between the Al Qaeda-inspired Shebab and a total take-over of the conflict-torn Somali capital.

The latest battles that have seen the Shebab advance to Mogadishu districts under the control of the AU-protected government prompted President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed to appeal Monday for international assistance.

"It is quite impractical to expect Somalia alone to contain the evil Al Qaeda-Al Shabab alliance as Somalia is emerging from 20 years of destruction and chaotic political environment," Sharif said in a statement.

He said his government was not receiving as much international support as is being accorded to Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq despite facing near-similar insurgencies.

"The Somali government has neither similar support nor nearly as much resources as those countries have. Yet it's facing a similar, if not more potent, enemy."

Victim dies

FROM PAGE 1 project director of the Burn Unit, DMCH.

Meanwhile, brother of Billal Hossain filed a case with Kadamtali police station accusing four including the factory owner, two of his sons, and the owner of the factory building, said Motubur Alam, investigation officer of the case.

The police however have yet to arrest any of the accused.

"The plaintiff accused them of neglecting the safety and security matters of the workers," said Alam.

Five injured workers were admitted to the Burn Unit of DMCH, while others are receiving treatment at different city hospitals.

Insiders at the Steel Mills Owners' Association say about 20,000 workers in over 100 steel mills across the country work in very unsafe conditions, mostly without any protective gears and under almost non-existent government monitoring.

The factory owners and the secretary of the Bangladesh Steel Mills Owners' Association could not be contacted despite repeated attempts.

2 construction

FROM PAGE 16 holding on, said Selim Akhter, sub-inspector of Badda Police Station.

The bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy. Police filed two unnatural death cases in this regard.

A week ago on August 24, two construction workers, who happened to be siblings, died after falling from an 18-storey building at Motijheel in the capital.

Textile mill

FROM PAGE 1 from the DoE.

The mill did not obtain environmental clearance even after several reminders from the DoE, said Munir Chowdhury.

In a bid to keep operational costs low, the company discharged chemical wastes to a nearby canal through which the pollutants end up in Karnaphuli, he added.

The team conducted tests on samples of the discharged liquid wastes and found toxic substances far beyond the acceptable level set by the government.

"The factory has been releasing around one lakh cubic metres of untreated liquid wastes over the last 12 years," said Munir, adding that the textile mills authorities have promised to set up an ETP by this December.

The same DOE team also fined Reaf Leather Ltd a sum of Tk 8.60 lakh for not using its ETP effectively.

They found the tannery discharging untreated liquid wastes into the canal through a drain.

2 power plants

FROM PAGE 1 sector, said Indian power ministry officials.

This MoU is preceded by a power exchange agreement signed between the two countries in July under which Bangladesh would import 250MW power within two years -- with the provision to export power to India in the future.

BPDB Chief Engineer (generation) Abul Kashem signed the deal on behalf of Bangladesh with the NTPC at the latter's office in the morning. Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Tariq A Karim and Indian Power Secretary P Umashankar were present on the occasion.

Under the MoU, an eight-member board of directors will manage the joint venture with Bangladesh as its chairman and an NTPC representative as the managing director for the first eight years before switching over to three-year rotational system.

The two countries will by rotation hold the posts of chairman and managing director for a period of three years, said the MoU.

Bangladesh and India will have an equal number of nominees -- four each -- in the board.

The two power plants, to be set up at a cost of Rs 13,200 crore (2.78 billion US dollars) with 50:50 equity, are likely to be operated by India.

The agreement also envisages Indian assistance to Bangladesh in power generation and transmission, energy efficiency as well as in development of renewable energy,

consultancy services, research and development of human resources in power sector and enhancement of productivity.

The MoU is the culmination of the decision on cooperation in power sector taken during Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's India visit in January this year.

The power sector cooperation was high on Hasina's talks with her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh and the Joint Delhi Declaration issued at the end of the visit.

The MoU does not mention where high-quality coal for the proposed power plant in Khulna will be sourced but it is planned that the project would use coal imported through the sea from countries like Indonesia or Australia which have very little ash content and poses much less damage to the ecology.

To set up the coal fired power plants, the BPDB is acquiring 1,200 acres of land near the Chittagong coast beside the Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL) and 1,800 acres in Khulna, opposite to the Chalna port.

NTPC, India's largest power generator, is already in talks to acquire coal mines or coal blocs in Australia, Indonesia, South Africa and Mozambique as part of its efforts to augment its capacity by 22,430MW in the next few years.

The BPDB's four-member delegation, which reached the Indian capital last week, visited some NTPC power plants in the last three days, before signing the MoU. Later yesterday, it flew back to Dhaka.

Witness

FROM PAGE 1 home from the court," Zafrun said.

Lawyers say numerous are the instances where cases could not be resolved even in 20 years due to absence of witnesses. And this is one of the reasons why the courts have to grapple with a huge backlog of cases.

A ballpark estimate is that at least 60% cases in every court suffer for witnesses unwilling to testify, said some public prosecutors at Dhaka judge's court.

According to a parliamentary sub-committee report, over 15 lakh cases were pending in subordinate courts till January.

Cases relating to women and children repression can be taken as an example. Though they were supposed to be settled in 180 days, 1,426 cases including 682 in Dhaka have remained stuck in different courts for years.

"In more than half the cases, witnesses are not available. Sometimes victims are implicated in false cases so they cannot pursue the case," said Dr Bilkis Begum, coordinator of Dhaka medical College's One-Stop Crisis Centre, which gives shelter, treatment and legal help to abused women and children.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed said, "We want to formulate a law to ensure witness protection, and have already asked the ministry to examine everything relevant."

He observed that rarely do witnesses get protection; they are rather hauled before the courts as per arrest warrants issued against them.

Witness intimidation is a problem so acute that the Appellate Division in a ruling noted that few witnesses want to appear before court.

In this context, it said, a court can pass verdict on single evidence, provided the proof is convincing.

How many cases are hung for intimidation of witnesses cannot be known, as neither the complainants nor the witnesses file complaints with court or general diaries (GD) with police station.

"It's no use filing a GD. The accused keep terrorising the witnesses, as the police do nothing," said Shahid Khan who has recently filed a GD with Madaripur Police Station after receiving death threats from those accused of killing his younger brother.

Sometimes it gets beyond intimidation and costs a witness his life.

On May 18, Jubo League activist Rahim was killed in Mirpur while on his way home.

Belayat, who was accompanying him and also injured in the attack, said Rahim was killed as he had seen the murder of a local Jubo League leader.

"Now it's my turn. The killers are after me. They have been threatening me because I am the second eyewitness to the first murder and main eyewitness to Rahim killing," he added.

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Lawyers said the police hardly act on a GD, leaving the complainant exposed to intimidation and constant threat of attack.

Besides, public prosecutors do not want to cite intimidation as a reason for non-appearance of witness as that would lay bare the state's failure.

Tawhida Khandker, director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA), said, "Over 50 percent of our cases are making no progress, as witnesses do not want to show up amid intimidation and lack of security."

BNWLA Executive Director Salma Ali said the notion of witness protection is barely present in the existing laws.

The Code of Criminal Procedure (1898) has a provision with regards to witness's appearance in court. Ironically, that provision says the police can arrest a witness and produce him before the court.

Stressing the need for a comprehensive code, Salma Ali said the new law must seek to ensure safe shelter, various support services and treatment for the victims and witnesses, and punishment to those harassing the victim and witness.

It must also provide for use of interpreter and modern technologies like teleconferencing in taking deposition.

Shibir leader

FROM PAGE 1 organisation Shibir, was arrested early Sunday, a Rab press release said Sunday night.

Mortuza is a top criminal on Rab's wanted list. He is accused of more than one criminal case filed with the capital's Mohammadpur Police Station.

The arrest was made when a patrol team of Rab during sehri hours challenged two people, who were moving about suspiciously on the road near a coaching centre.

Youth found dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth was found dead at Manik Nagar in the city's Sabujbagh area last night.

Deceased Mohammad Kawsar, 24, used to look after the family transport business with his brother.

Locals rushed Kawsar to Dhaka medical College Hospital around 9:30pm. The doctors there declared him dead.

The family members identified the deceased at the hospital.

The locals who took the body to the hospital said Kawsar had stab wound in the abdomen.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Sabujbagh Police Station Asaduzzaman told The Daily Star that they had visited the victim's residence and are investigating the matter.

Hasina 6th

FROM PAGE 16

was placed fourth, Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel fifth, President of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf seventh, President of Finland Tarja Halonen and Rica Laura Chinchilla tenth in the list.

In its comments, the Time said Sheikh Hasina, the 62-year-old leader of Awami League, has a history of surviving. On the fateful night of August 15 in 1975, assassins killed 17 members of her family including the fateful night of August 15 in 1975, assassins killed 17 members of her family including her three brothers, mother and father, president Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Hasina, then 28, was abroad at the time. She later survived a grenade attack on led.

Hasina was first elected the PM in 1996. But her party was defeated in the 2001 general elections. In the next elections on December 29, 2008, the Awami League won 230 of 299 parliamentary seats, and she was elected the PM again.

Earlier, Hasina was rated as the sixth most powerful woman in Asia.

The US-based media giant CNN prepared an index of world's most influential women coinciding with this year's World Women's Day.

Hasina was named in the sixth place in the index while China-based Nine Dragons Paper Holdings' Zhang Yin topped the list.

India's PepsiCo Chief Executive Indra Nooyi scored the second position followed by Congress Chief Sonia Gandhi.

MP Shaon's

FROM PAGE 16

Kala left the scene of the shooting immediately after the incident in a CNG-run three-wheeler, and took shelter in the city's Badda area, he added.

On August 13, some people left Awami League activist Ibrahim Ahmed at DMCH emergency department with a gunshot wound to his head, and soon the doctors pronounced him dead.

Following Ibrahim's death, Kala filed an unnatural death case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station the same night.

According to the case statement, Ibrahim was toying with Shaon's gun sitting in the lawmaker's car parked near the parliament building earlier in the evening, and the gun went off killing him.

Moniruzzaman said they want to interrogate Kala since he admitted that he had witnessed the incident while wiping down the car parked at Block-6 of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban area.

Khaleda off

FROM PAGE 1

democracy and development of the country, reports UNB.

Party leaders including secretary general Khandaker Delwar Hossain, RA Gani, Moudud Ahmed, Sarwar Rahman, Selima Rahman sawher off at the airport.

Khaleda's younger brother Shamim Iskander and his wife, Arafat Rahman Koko's wife Syeda Sharmila Rahman and daughter Zahia Rahman, former lawmaker Mosaddek Ali Falu, among others, will accompany her during performing Umrah.

Khaleda's press secretary Maruf Kamal Khan said the BNP chairperson would offer prayers at the grave of prophet Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH) in Medina and then go to Makkah to perform Umrah.

She will be residing at the Makkah Royal Palace as the guest of Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud.

Khaleda will return to the country on September 9.

New video shows emotional trapped Chilean miners

AP, San Jose Mine

A new video of 33 men trapped in a mine under Chile's Atacama Desert shows them sending greetings to their families, talking about how they are doing better since receiving food and breaking into tears as they talk about loved ones.

In the video released Sunday, the men are shirtless because of the heat in the mine and wearing what look like white surgical pants, special clothing sent down to help keep them dry.

Most are upbeat, expressing gratitude to their families and the rescuers for the support they are receiving via handwritten notes sent to them through three small bore holes. Authorities also send food, water, medicine and other goods to them through the three holes.

But when it comes time to speak about their wives and children, many of the men break down.

"I'm sending my greetings to Angelica. I love you so much, darling," says 30-year-old Osman Araya, as his voice chokes and he begins to cry. "Tell my mother, I love you guys so much. I'll never leave you, I will fight to the end to be with you."

Araya and 32 fellow miners were trapped by the Aug. 5 collapse of the main shaft of the San Jose gold and silver mine in northern Chile. They only gained contact with the outside after 17 days during which they rationed 48-hours' worth of food and dug for water in the ground. On Monday, the men will equal a mark set by three miners who survived 25 days trapped in a flooded mine in southern China last year. Few other rescues have taken more than two weeks.

In the video, one miner explains to the family of 28-year-old Ariel Ticona that he

didn't want to appear on camera apparently because he is shy but that he was sending his love to them and that, according to an unidentified speaker, he "is super happy and he is super, super, super well!"

The latest video, in contrast to the first 45-minute video released by the government on Thursday, shows little of the men's surroundings. Instead, it appears meant as a video postcard for loved ones, as each of the 12 men who speak to the camera are given about 30 seconds to talk.

At one point, the camera pans to a larger group of men, and several animated, joking voices can be heard throughout the tape.

One unidentified man, who squints in the light shone on his face as do most of the miners, said he is thankful "for all your efforts out there."

Another man shown says he is doing much better because of the food and water the miners have received.

Commodity

FROM PAGE 16 at Tk 73 for the month of Ramadan.

The team fined Ramjan Store Tk 3,000, Janata Enterprise Tk 5,000, Amania Store Tk 5,000, Mostafa Store Tk 8,000, K Store Tk 8,000 and Haji Ichhamuddi Store Tk 2,000 of Kaptan Bazar for selling sugar at a higher price.

Though the monitoring team found edible oil was selling at the government fixed rate at Hatirpul kitchen market, it fined Amin Store Tk 2,000 for not selling sugar at fixed price.

The teams also realised Tk 32,500 as fine from ten shops, AR General Store, Satota General Store, Babul Store, Sohel General Store, Mizan Store, Suman General Store and Jabbar Store, of Karwan Bazar for selling sugar at higher rates.

Hassan Mahmood

FROM PAGE 1 general of police (IGP) by replacing Nur Mohammad after about four years.

Besides, Rajshahi range deputy inspector general (DIG) Mohammad Mukhlesur Rahman has been made the new Rab DG.

Nur Mohammad, who played a crucial role for the government during the BDR mutiny at its Dhaka headquarters last year, has been attached to the foreign ministry for appointment as an ambassador. He served as the IGP since January 29, 2007 during the past caretaker government.

Sources say the IGP was removed as a result of some differences with the home ministry over some issues including the police reform projects.

Earlier during the caretaker government, Nur Mohammad openly raised questions about non-implementation of the reform project.

Hassan Mahmood Khandker told The Daily Star the changes have been made following a home ministry order issued yesterday.

Insiders at the police headquarters say the new IGP will join office today. The new Rab DG told The Daily Star he will take new office within two to three days.

Hailing from Peergachha upazila in Rangpur, Hassan Mahmood joined the police department in 1984 as a member of the BCS cadre of the 1982 batch. He completed honours and master's degrees in English from Dhaka University. He was appointed as the Rab DG during the last caretaker government in February 2007.

Besides, newly appointed Rab DG Mukhlesur Rahman hails from Comilla district. He completed honours and master's degrees from Chittagong University and joined the BCS (Police) cadre in 1984.

DB firing kills

FROM PAGE 1 argument as Zebu's father Nurul Islam asked the cause of the arrest. At one stage, the police opened fire in which Nurul received a bullet in his left thigh and bled to death. Soon after villagers surrounded the policemen, they freed the arrestee in a hurry and left the scene.

However, Superintendent of Police, Habiganj, Mohammad Ali Miah told the Daily Star yesterday afternoon that a team of five DB police arrested Zebu. While returning from the village with the arrestee, villagers attacked the policemen after Zebu shouted out that dacoits caught him. All the police personnel sustained injuries in the attack and they opened fire in retaliation, causing the death of Nurul Islam.

They fired three bullets, he said. The remote village is about 28 kilometres from the upazila headquarters and only one kilometre from the Indian border.

Madhabpur police sent the body to Habiganj Sadar Hospital for post mortem.

Locals said Zebu was involved in peddling phensidyl but recently he left that illegal profession. Besides, there was no case against him.

They said DB SI Belayat went to the house for realising money by threatening to arrest Zebu for his earlier activities since Zebu's elder

brother returned from the Middle East a few days ago.

A 3-member committee led by Additional Superintendent of Police Zillur Rahman has been formed to investigate the matter and submit a report within 24 hours.

Shamsul Islam, chairman of Dharmapur union parishad, said there was no attack on the DB Police.

Enamul Haque, a retired army man and a neighbour of the deceased, said he requested the police not to arrest Zebu as there was no case against him.

Faulty launches

FROM PAGE 16 Mohammad Hossain, proprietor of the dockyard, said vessel owners don't want to miss even a single trip during the festival. They want to make sure that their vessels look fit and beautiful.

A study of Safe Waterway Implementation Movement says lack of monitoring and faulty design of vessels led to 535 major accidents that claimed more than 6,000 lives in the last 25 years.

Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan said, "We have taken all necessary measures to ensure safety of passengers and make their journeys hassle-free. Special monitoring teams will be vigilant to check plying of unfit and overloaded vessels."

Blasts kill 7

FROM PAGE 16 vehicle, which was set on fire by the blast.

The deaths bring to 14 the number of US troops killed in action in eastern and southern Afghanistan over the past three days.

A spike in US troop numbers in Afghanistan to over 120,000 has brought increased contact with insurgents and a rising death toll. Forty-nine US service members have died in Afghanistan