DHAKA SATURDAY JANUARY 18, 2003

US decision

A rude shock to Bangladesh

T is extremely unfortunate and highly regrettable that the United States has included Bangladesh in its latest list of "terror-risk countries" -- that will be made to face stricter restrictions in the US immigration process.

The move must have come as a rude shock to Dhaka, as it has always been firmly committed to the idea of combating international terrorism and has been an active collaborator of all US efforts. So it is an unpleasant surprise that Washington has bracketed Bangladesh with the countries, which, in its perception, pose a threat to international peace.

Though it is not immediately known what will actually be the impact of the US move on different sectors, Bangladesh has reasons to feel worried, if only because the decision is a clear indication of our stand on terrorism being not fully appreciated by the United States.

The US action should be seen along with the fact that longtime US allies like Egypt and Jordan have also been included in this list. Egypt, it may be mentioned, is the highest recipient of US aid for the last two decades, outside Israel. We can also take some comfort from what the US Ambassador in Dhaka Mary Ann Peters has already come up with some sort of clarification, saying that it is a purely security measure, the ultimate goal of which is to track all foreigners visiting the United States. However, it is not clear why a country like Bangladesh, which has thrown its full weight behind the war against terrorism, had to be included in the list.

What is important now is to safeguard national interests, instead of wasting time in political bickering. We cannot be oblivious of the truth that vital sectors like RMG could be affected by US immigration restrictions on our citizens. The political parties should rise above the level of petty thinking and demonstrate that they are capable of handling any crisis collectively. No individual or party should try to take advantage of the setback. The government should invite the opposition political parties in order to exchange views on the situation that has arisen following the US decision.

It is also necessary to gear up diplomatic activities. The embassy in Washington and the consular offices in New York and Los Angeles and those in Europe have to be strengthened, as protracted diplomatic efforts might be needed to convince the US and other western countries that we are just as committed to fighting terrorism as anybody else.

We believe the US government, which gave us full marks for our stand on international terrorism in the past, will attach more importance to our track record, than the propaganda that we have been subjected to by a section of the international press, while assessing our real position vis-à-vis ter-

Tannery relocation

Act with greater speed and determination

HE government's initiative to relocate the tanneries in the city's Hazaribagh area has so far produced little by way of concrete action, as the project is apparently caught in a bureaucratic tangle. A host of legal and technical barriers are yet to be removed.

It seems tannery owners are trying to make the most out of the government decision, by producing a long list of demands which, if fulfilled, will compensate for the dislocation. There is no doubt that the legal issues have to be settled according to the law of the land. But the truth of the matter is that the tanneries not only pollute the environment, but also pose a grave threat to public health. Surveys conducted on pollution caused by tannery effluents have shown that there is no way to keep people exposed to such pollution. So it is far from a routine decision to shift a particular type of industrial units to a new site. Here we are dealing with an environmental hazard that should have been eliminated long

BSCIC sources have said that the government will soon sign a memorandum of understanding with the tannery owners and push the project ahead to its logical conclusion, that is, relocation of the tanneries. That is of course necessary to ensure a trouble-free shifting of the tanneries However, it is imperative that urgency and speed are not sacrificed in the course of bureaucratic planning which often ignores the time factor. The just demands of the tannery owners have to be met, but they must not be allowed to take advantage of the bureaucracy's inability to act decisively.

And that is a task that only the bureaucracy itself can perform. Successive governments in the past acknowledged that the tanneries were located dangerously close to residential areas; they also felt that something had to be done to push away the potent sources of pollution. But the environment-friendly thoughts were never translated into tangible action. Sadly, the bureaucracy did more to reduce the ideas into damp squibs, than to inject life into them.

Clearly, a deviation from practice, not theory, is needed to implement the relocation project according to the government's plan. Enough time has been wasted and people have been made to pay a high price. It is time the government responded to the issue with a sense of clarity and determination.

US influence enhanced through EU enlargement



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

HE recent enlargement of the European Union has created its own dynamics both within the European Union as well as in the relationship between the European countries and the United States of America. The fact that this has coincided with the entry of many former Soviet bloc countries, essentially pro-American, into NATO, is bound to also generate an increase in the United States' overall general influence in Europe and within the EU in particular.

This new development is expected to have different consequences for mainframe Europe in more ways than one. It will have its own impact on the once accepted idea of an 'emergent Germany' leading the continent from Berlin. This important change in the European scenario will also ensure, in its own way, great difficulty within the EU to define itself and its evolving foreign and security policy as being clearly independent of the United

The debate that has followed the expansion of the EU last month. clearly demonstrates that for policymakers in several European countries, the new members from Central and Eastern Europe, after a decade's transition from subjugation, remain existentially concerned with maintaining their national independence and identity. This connotes that the new EU members continue to consider the United States, rather than any European neighbour or the EU itself, as the principal quarantor of their infant

democracies, and probably the important political reference point in creating a future that is relatively secure and prosperous. Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski has already underlined this with the statement that "there would be no Europe without American democracy". Such a view must have proved to be very sensitive for European self-esteem.

This approach may be interpreted as a desire by these new

compared to many of the EU's senior member states. This in the long run is bound to affect the balance of power within the new. enlarged European Union.

This evolution is interesting because most political scientists do not appear to have anticipated in the early 1990s that the US would have such an overwhelming role within the process of European unification. It was assumed then that the newly reunited Germany, after the fall of

Germany and integrating that part within the new Germany. This has resulted in the virtual disappearance of the old West German type of high-cost, low-risk capitalism being a suitable model for development.

It is true that the German economy has remained important in matters of trade with the countries of Eastern Europe, but its power appears to have diminished overall in European and international ing a scale-down of European aspirations. Reality is now settling

Jacques Delors, the former President of the European Commission, is now referring to a Europe, 'whose ambition is to be influential' This mildness compares greatly with earlier French concepts of Europe being a competitor for world political power.

In the recent past, one has seen how some of the European counto the original members of the EU'. However, there are questions pertaining to sustainable development subsidy in general and agriculture in particular, environment and other areas of competing and varied interests. It is in these sectors that greater European unity will probably surface in the longer run.

The equation has altered inexorably in Europe and the USA is more of a ball player in this new matrix. The older members of the European Union will have to acknowledge this and ponder on how to create a better pecking order and unity among diversity

They will also have to agree on a fresh strategy on issues that will require balance in terms of priorities and interests within the context of a unipolar world order dominated by the United States, their principal competitor.

As has been exemplified in recent years, Europe will have its own economic and trade agenda. Conflict of political wills might have a special bearing here. Some of the new EU member states from Central and Western Europe will definitely act as bridges between Europe and the United States. This will be of special importance for both sides of the Atlantic and also for countries from the developing world.

The presence of the new members will probably stop the drifting apart of the United States from its Atlantic partners, but it will also raise the question of how the EU will reorganise itself within this frame of contradiction in expectations. The next few years will be difficult. In addition to streamlining the regulatory mechanism that is in place, emphasis will have to be given also to the discovery of the least common denominators that will be required to formulate common

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POST BREAKFAST

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members to join an 'Euro-Atlantic' community with its own commitment to peace and stability. This is a phrase that is being used quite often now-a-days and probably reflects the mindset of these countries blending the EU and NATO increasingly together. In a manner of speaking, these countries would probably like, as a German historian has recently put it, that 'the Atlantic becomes the same widths as the Oder or Dneipr rivers'.

This may not be immediate but there is greater likelihood that after the recent steps there will be a more organic relationship between them and the US. This subtle shift in thinking appears to have been underlined in a recent blunt pro-American declaration by the socalled Vilnius Group (consisting of then former Soviet bloc countries) presenting themselves as part of a potential coalition committed with the United States to the disarming of Iraq. Such a step was indicative of the fact that these countries were subject to greater US influence as the Soviet Union, would be the dominant beneficiary of Europe's opening to the East.

Besides the economic advantages of Berlin's proximity, it was often thought that Germany would provide political leadership for the countries emerging out of the old Soviet's 'orbit'. It was presumed that Germany would emerge as the essential political force, East and West, in all of Europe. In fact, any discussion on shifts in Europe's political centre of gravity, usually ended with Berlin. This, in turn, led countries like Netherlands, Spain and France to express guarded concern about possible German predominance in a reorganised and revitalised Europe

However, reality appears to have worked in different ways. Instead of a resurgent Germany, the world has witnessed, for the last decade, economic stagnation of sorts in that country. There has been a vast drain of resources in the overcoming of the various infra-structural shortcomings of the communist East

It has also been pointed out in the recent past by some analysts that the downturn in the German economy has been accompanied by a relative lack in the increase of Germany's political reach in acting as an initiator of defender of democracy. Some have even noted that Germany has been 'less of a prime mover in opening up NATO membership to the former satellite states' and has been more interested in being a "bargainer laving down tough economic and social conditions for the individual applicants' entry into the EU." These views have led to careful scrutiny within the German establishment.

These perceptions appear to have created their own logic. With the entry of additional members from Central and East Europe, so reliant on the United States, it is now generally agreed that it will be that much more difficult for France or Germany to create a global force within an expanded EU that could be a counter-balance for the United States. The new scenario is dictatthe rest of the world their belief in principles of international law. They have to some extent been successful in reaffirming the importance of multilateral action as opposed to unilateral response. However, the impact of united, expanded Europe has not always been evident. This probably has been one of the downsides of being an extended geo-political entity which is subject to pressures and pulls from different angles. Nevertheless, despite some

tries have tried to demonstrate to

difficulties in the short run, there will be, I believe, a gradual growth of greater understanding on complicated international issues within the expanded European Union. One tender to agree with F.

Pflueger, the foreign policy spokesman of the Christian Democrat grouping in the German Parliament. that in some areas related to security, within the EU, 'influence of the United States will be fostered by the Central and Fast Furopean countries which look more to the US than

Change is inevitable

MEGASTHENES

OMPARISON and competition -- not unrelated in concept -- in most areas of activity and endeavour, are perhaps ingrained in the human psyche. It is not enough for some to excel in absolute terms only; excellence must also be relative to others. It is a plausible enough contention that competition brings out the best in an individual . As Andrew Carnegie -who began life as an impoverished Scottish lad working in a cotton factory in Pennsylvania for two cents an hour and went on to become one of the biggest names in US steel -- put it, while the law of competition "may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the

There is, to be sure, a downside

also. Comparisons, it has been asserted in different languages and by the likes of Swift, Shakespeare, Donne and Cervantes, are odious. And competition of the "devil take the hindmost" variety has much that is patently undesirable. Indeed there is the view that if excessive pressures to excel relative to others are eased. an individual may just as easily achieve his or her potential by a less exacting process and with greater equanimity of mind. Bertrand Russell, I believe, at one time had tried to set-up an avantgarde school for children to study and learn without having to compete. In sports or athletics, of course, the elements of competition or comparison are inescapable. Performance in such areas can only be measured against some criteria or individual.

Gladiatorial contests of yore

epitomized competition and comparison at its most intense and for the highest stakes possible. These were a form of entertainment of those times .The sight and smell of gore and violence -- as gladiator fought gladiator or when gladiators engaged in mortal combat with fang and claw -- were a lure rather than repugnant. On films such themes or contests are still popular. Recent

Lennox Lewis earn astronomical amounts each time they step into the ring. This may well explain why top boxers tend to continue in the profession beyond the time when they should call it a day. The only heavyweight to have retired with a perfect record -- 49 fights and 49 wins -- remains Rocky Marciano. He was small man compared to the heavyweights of today -- his fighting

following that is almost worldwide. There is a touch of irony in this, given that wrestling represents not so much a test of skill or strength as a world of make-belief. It affords thrills and excitement with -- unlike boxing -- minimal risks to the athletes. The top stars of wrestling are skilled and strong with magnificently sculptured bodies. They are also not without acting ability, playing with more a test of skill and strength than make-belief or simulation. That was also the time when the Great Gama of the sub-continent was at the height of his powers. Nat Fleischer. editor and publisher of The Ring magazine and dean of boxing writers and archivists had in 1962 rated 10 best boxers in different weight divisions. This was before the time of Ali and Tyson. Fleischer's and Gotch it is only to cater to changed wishes and preferences of audiences Public opinion in these times is

veering away from blood sports. Nothing, for example, is heard these days about pig-sticking -- a sport in which Field Marshal Lord Wavell himself indulged in his younger days. Even fox-hunting, for long a traditional sport in Britain, has come in for criticism. How does change in mindset come about? Something acceptable and even pleasurable does not simply become anathema overniaht. Change or evolution in every

sphere, whether slow or quick, is inevitable .For Emperor Ashoka, according to history, legend and rior king to an apostle of peace, piety social spheres as well

LIGHTEN UP

Public opinion in these times is veering away from blood sports. Nothing, for example, is heard these days about pig-sticking ... Even fox-hunting, for long a traditional sport in Britain, has come in for criticism. How does change in mindset come about? ... Change or evolution in every sphere, whether slow or quick, is inevitable .For Emperor Ashoka, according to history, legend and lore, the battle of Kalinga was an epiphany; he changed from a warrior king to an apostle of peace, piety and morality.

movies like Gladiator -- more quasihistory perhaps than fact -- received critical as well as popular acclaim and picked up a few awards as well.

Most blood sports, such as dog fights, bull fights, fox-hunting, cockfights and pig-sticking, though increasingly limited in practice and in decline, are not without their adherents, to whom these are a sport with a long and honourable tradition. Opponents would assert that pastimes, where the purpose is to inflict pain and visit violence, more than the display of prowess and proficiency, are more a reflex of some primeval or atavistic instinct.

The nearest thing to gladiatorial contests today would be boxing and also professional wrestling. Boxing is big business and a bruising sport. Stars of the likes of Tyson and

weight never exceeded 190 pounds. One wonders how he would have fared against the bigger. stronger and often faster fighters who followed him; Ali, Liston, Tyson and perhaps Holmes.

Ali will always be an icon for many, as much for his boxing skills as for his human qualities .He was unceremoniously stripped of his title at the peak of his powers, when he declined to be drafted. Vindicated by the courts, he returned to the ring after a long gap, which must have taken away some of his speed and reflexes. And vet he remained good enough to defeat convincingly a younger and bigger opponent to regain the title.

Professional wrestling today would be more entertainment than sport. It is also big business with a equal facility the roles of "good guys" and "bad guys," victor and vanguished. The super star of wrestling in recent times has been Hulk Hogan, later known as Hollywood Hogan, after he acted in films.

The one wrestler who has achieved renown in an unrelated field is, of course, Jesse Ventura, After his wrestling career, Ventura became an entertaining and incisive wrestling commentator on television where also acting skills are helpful before moving to politics and election as governor of Minnesota, the State that had sent Hubert Humphrey, Eugene McCarthy and Walter Mondale to the Senate.

There was almost certainly a time in the early years of the last century when wrestling was a serious sport. Or in other words,

thoughts. Have you tried to contact

or work with BUET? I am sure they

would be most interested in such an

idea if it holds such remarkable

potential as you state. They may

even help you in building a demon-

strable prototype. As for invention

ideas being stolen, there are some

ways to protect it. One can keep the

interest extended to wrestling and he also ranked among six best wrestlers of "modern times." Although the character of wrestling may have changed, his list continues to be of academic interest.

Fleischer's boxing list placed the first African-American heavyweight champion Jack Johnson at top and included Joe Louis, Jack Dempsey and Marciano at No. 10. Among wrestlers he rated Frank Gotch. US heavyweight champion, 1904, as the greatest wrestler of "modern times," with George Hackenschmidt in second place and the Great Gama at No. 4 with the proviso that Gama was the only wrestler of "recent years" who could have been the master of both Gotch and Hackenschmidt. If wrestling today is different from the times of Gama

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

lore, the battle of Kalinga was an epiphany; he changed from a warand morality. At the other end of the spectrum we have Thurgood Marshall's frustration at the slow pace of change, Marshall, the first African-American to be appointed to the US Supreme Court, was eminent as a civil rights activist and lawver. In the late 1950s, responding to President Eisenhower's call to blacks to be patient he had commented famously, "I'm the world's original gradualist. I just think 90 odd years is gradual enough." A very persuasive perspective of change is to be found in the autobiography of Max Planck -- Nobel laureate for Physics, 1918. Planck wrote, "-- A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather its opponents eventually die and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it". Planck was, of course, writing about scientific truths. One is almost persuaded that it applies to

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

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.

Army pulls out

After three months of 'Operation Clean Heart' the army has begun pulling back to the barracks. It's difficult yet to welcome such a move, being a supporter of this operation, I am not sure they have been able to totally or to a large extent succeeded in eradicating the anti-social and criminal elements from our society in such a short time.

One thing for sure is during the 'Operation' the people in general felt relieved since the 'law and order' situation improved tremendously The fact remains whether the criminal elements were in hibernation and now they may return with vengeance. The Government, according to the newspapers, are keeping the army standby and introducing the Rapid Action Force to check future deterioration of law and order. This is appreciated but the citizens have also the responsibility to come forward and assist in controlling criminalisation of our society. We should stop looking at and blaming the Government for all evils in our

As citizens of an independent country we have certain obligations before we can enjoy all the rights and obligations bestowed on us in our constitution. We have allowed the nation to reach such a pitiful state and only we can pull it out from this dreadful dark hole. We can't shrug our duties to our nation. It's pathetic to see the nation going into a stupor of 'apathy' and accepting as a fact that 'there is no hope for us'. I for one would hate to buy that and I am sure there are many like me. I am proud to be Bangladeshi and we shall surely overcome. Akku Chowdhury

Banani, Dhaka

Back to square one!

Are we not back to square, prior to the general election? The electronic and print media are telling us that the deployment of the armed forces during the coming UC elections is not acceptable to one political party, the party in power, while the opposi-

Similar to the last general election the army was called in by the caretaker government at the behest of the Election Commission. In those days the party of the outgoing government (AL) did not like it rather vehemently opposed the deployment of the army in the election while the party in opposition (BNP) was vociferously asking for the said deployment. BNP is now opposing the deployment and has advanced the argument that never before in the history of Union Council elections the army had to be called in. Further that the law and order situation is under control (?). Further that the CEC is being accused of having crossed the line by asking for army deployment at the UP elections.

We wonder why the party in power is always against deployment of armed forces during elections while the opposition in favour of it? Sved Waliullah

Saddam Hussein and

Iraq

Many people say that America's intention to fight Iraq is clearly to access the vast reserves of oil, that Iraq possesses. They blame America for attempting to kill innocent civilians. Maybe that's the reason but little do the people in this world know what damage Saddam Hussein is causing to his own peo-

A few days ago, I was reading a newspaper article about Saddam Hussein's life. A brief summary of that article would be like this:

He kills any people who speaks against his will. Kills his political prisoners in a brutal manner. He even attempted to kill his own son and some of his generals just because they disagreed with him. The recent referendum in which he won 100% vote is enough to prove how much everyone fears him. Apart from killing his own people, he also poses threat to neighbouring countries like Israel and Kuwait. For the sake of the innocent Iraqi who were suffering since the last Gulf

War, he should be removed in the quickest possible time. A. Imtiaz NSW, Australia

"Invention of pollution-free, free electricity generation"

Huda's letter. For many years, various inventors have tried to theorise and demonstrate perpetual motion or obtaining some sort of energy without expenditure of another form or energy. While I am no expert in this, your invention title almost seems to suggest you are using some form of force to obtain perpetual motion. It could be as simple as the blowing wind, solar power, or flowing water or some such apparently inexhaustible energy source, I don't know. I think friction is the biggest spoiler of nearperpetual motion. But it is also good

In any case, here are some of my

quintessential idea/principle behind it proprietary. Another way is to jot This is in reference to Mr. Nazmu down notes and drawings of ideas one gets, date it and have a credible witness understand and sign it in a

> Filing a patent as soon as possible is a protection method since it is I would also recommend you visit the following related websites, if you have Internet access, where you can find more on perpetual motion and inventors: http://paranormal.about.com/libr

ary/weekly/aa090798.htm http://paranormal.about.com/gi/

lab notebook, for example

dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://ho Additionally, you can use the

search engine www.google.com to

such places even prize offerings of up to \$100,000 to anyone who can produce a working free energy device Good luck on your endeavours.

explore further on this issue. This

particular search engine is good for

technical topic searches. Some

"My visit to Bangladesh--an American view"

This is in response to the blatantly insulting letter written by the visiting lady from Ohio a few weeks ago. People like her are actually the reason why our country is in such a

When the British took over India in the 18th century, they tried to make their colony as British (or subservient to the British) as possible while depleting it of all its resources at the same time. Ever since then, the Indian subcontinent has been trying to westernise itself those big, wonderful white countries. It's funny how some Bangladeshis never complain when the INS in the States treats them like dirt but Americans have the audacity to criticise our country when, individually, they're not willing to do much to alleviate its condition.

to land in the same league as all

As a matter of fact, I applaud the immigration officers at ZIA for giving some Americans a taste of their own medicine. So the next time a foreign visitor has something negative to say about Bangladesh, please remember not to whine about it to the Bangladeshi public through a national daily. I really hope that American woman realises she insulted her husband by insulting his native country. I grew up in the States. most Americans are awesome, but there are always some exceptions.

Sharmeen Shehabuddin American International School