

De-listing from terrorist states

We support business leaders' call for PM and opposition leader to make common cause

THE business leaders have very rightly decided to appeal to the prime minister and the leader of the opposition to work together in overcoming the crisis the country is passing through, owing to its inclusion in the US terrorist list. We welcome the decision, since an understanding between the PM and the opposition leader will certainly strengthen the process of making our case without any ambiguity.

The understanding, one might feel, should already have been there, because it is essentially a matter of safeguarding national and state interests. Though the US Ambassador to Bangladesh, Mary Ann Peters has said that the restrictions would not mean much in practical terms, the business leaders have reason to be worried.

A closer look into the recent developments might reveal that when the likely-target-countries across the globe were intensifying their diplomatic efforts to steer clear of the 'terrorism stigma,' our political leaders were busy accusing each other. The opposition leader even did not hesitate to hint at possible presence of 'terrorists' in the country. It was at least not a case where politicians appeared leaving sensitive issues out of their favourite pastime of trading charges.

The ploy of searching for a scapegoat, whenever something goes awry, has its hazards too. In this instance, the lack of agreement between the government and the opposition on terrorism might have been viewed with suspicion by the outside world.

The leader of the opposition seems convinced that her government's good work has been botched up by the 15-month old alliance government, and the government is not ready to budge from its position that the opposition propaganda is solely responsible for the present crisis. The two extremes should have been avoided and the challenge of being stereotyped faced in a concert. There was definitely scope for much better handling of the problems that arose when Bangladesh came under a sharp attack by a section of the international press. The attack did not have any substance, but sadly enough we failed to counter it effectively. The need was to tell the outside world in clear terms that we had nothing to do with terrorism, as it is understood today. Unfortunately, even on that critical question there was no consensus among the main political parties.

Now that the country has paid a price, the PM and the leader of the opposition should realise that they might not get a better opportunity to work together than by seizing the initiative to launch a unified diplomatic campaign for "de-listing Bangladesh".

City clean-up drive

No one-off affair, please!

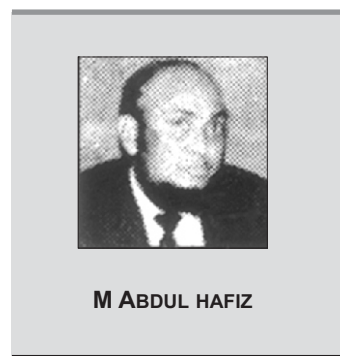
IN response to a prime ministerial directive to keep the city clean, the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has decided to undertake a fortnightly cleanliness drive. Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka has already asked his men to make sure that the dustbins on the VIP roads are cleaned out before the office hours begin. The mayoral instruction has a lot of room for cynical interpretation. One may feel the latest cleanliness drive could also prove cosmetic, with the DCC focusing on areas frequented by government high-ups and ignoring the problem areas in this regard.

The question is, even if the DCC were serious about the keep-city-clean drive, which we hope it is, could it possibly pull it off? On the fringes, perhaps yes, but in general terms given its personnel and logistical realities, the answer is a big no. Let us explain why. The DCC conservancy team, which is in charge of solid waste disposal, has 242 trucks, 100 of them inoperative, and some 6,000 cleaners, many of them allegedly do not work properly. In a city where more than 10 million people live and where approximately 5,000 tonnes of solid waste is generated every day, the arrangement is simply unrealistic. Little wonder, the DCC collects only 40 per cent of the garbage, leaving the rest to rot out in the open and pose health hazard to the residents.

Therefore, towards a clean city, the DCC has to first bring about some order in its conservancy team. Obviously, it needs more men and machines. However, before new addition, the DCC should sort out the problems the conservancy department now faces. The out-of-order-trucks should be repaired and put back on the road. On the personnel front, there should be regular monitoring so as to determine who are cutting corners.

Ultimately, though, the policymakers have to think about involving the private sector in waste management and recycling. As far as we know, one non-government organisation has already shown promising signs in waste collection and composting. It has proved that organic contents of the solid can be successfully made into compost and used as fertiliser. We are sure more private organisations would be keen to try it out, if they get support from the government.

The resurrected BJP with its malignant Hindutva



M ABDUL HAFIZ

DECEMBER 6, 1992 was the apogee of the belief that the Indian Muslims must pay for the 'sins of their forefathers' and came crumbling down the five-century old Babri Mosque in the hands of Hindutva zealots. Last month the tenth anniversary of this day of infamy passed off amidst renewed trauma and an anguish of a desecrated national soul. Simultaneously, however, it had also been tragically demonstrated a decade later in Gujarat as to what could happen to the society if the breakers of the religious sanctity ever assumed state power. The attack on Babri Mosque was in a genre of its own. It revealed a medieval fundamentalist mindset which had been to tally at odds with India's syncretic culture. The villains of December 6, 1992 wanted to show that the minorities would henceforth have to live in India by the terms set by the majority. Their intention was also to demonstrate that the pluralism and secularism would be junked in the Hindu Rastrya of their dream. The despicable demolition of the mosque was therefore a negation of every fact of modern life which India had been painstakingly building since independence -- democracy, the rule of law and a multicultural polity.

But what happened on 12 December, 2002 in Gujarat was indeed far worse. As the result of the election fought primarily on communal mobilisation started powering in on that day it physically eclipsed the model of great diversity, a pluralistic world view and multi-religious as well as multi-cultural terrain that had for long characterised the ethos and perspectives of Indian civilisation. It was as if their ramparts were directly

assaulted. Even if the dangerous process has started in Gujarat, it threatens to spread to other parts of India. Apart from giving Narendra Modi a landslide and the triumph of vitriolic hatred the Gujarat syndromic points to even deeper and far more extensive spread of communal virus having impact on the shaping even of societal behaviour. Gujarat has not only seen the reversal of independent India's fundamental values but also the chipping away of democratic ideals -- the Indians are so proud of!

ests within a viscerally communal, intensely nationalistic Hindu supremacist framework based on the utopia of a 'unified' Hindu community. Golwalker's programme could be implemented only through wilful sabotage of the constitutional order by chipping away of democratic values, undermining parliamentary norms and tampering with judicial process. The Vajpayee cabinet has meticulously accom-

plished the first part of Golwalker programme and perhaps consciously left out the second part presumably with the intention of not further smearing its image. Narendra Modi instinctively took up the second part of the same programme by organising spectacular bout of communal violence with typical storm troopers' tactics. Modi implemented his part with unique brutality by enacting independent India's worst anti-Muslim pogrom. In the process the BJP has indeed been resurrected by Modi at a time when the party was virtually on retreat. It already lost much of its attractions -- as a party with difference. Many of its adherents started turning their back to its continuing anachronism. Disgusted by its poor governance, to persecution of the minorities, manufacturing contro-

versions and an archaic world view in which they even attempted to rewrite history and change the education curriculum, the frustrated voters were convinced that the BJP was not what it pretended to be. It is significant that prior to the state-sanctioned communal violence in Gujarat -- the only major Indian state ruled by the BJP -- the party was losing ground everywhere all the time. In all local elections and bi-

chief minister Narendra Modi, the BJP worked with desperate resourcefulness to capitalise on communal polarisation that occurred in the wake of Godhra killings on 27 February, 2002 and the genocidal anti-Muslim pogrom unleashed in 'retaliation' by the militant forces of Hindu right with the state sanction and complicity. And the credit, if any, for it is entirely reserved for the BJP's new mascot -

Backed by the hardliners in the BJP and hot heads in Sangh Parivar Modi already considers himself as one answerable to none and as the new icon for the BJP's brand of aggressive Hindu ideology. According to observers, none can stop him now from capturing the citadel of power in Delhi.

Earlier, the Gujarat violence saw a virtual dilution in Vajpayee's authority and moral standing both as the head of the government and the party. On occasions he was defied by Modi, even if indirectly. Whether it was the killing of 59 Hindus in the train or about 2000 Muslims done to death by Hindu mob in a carnage of revenge, Vajpayee found himself in defining moments where he was helpless. Even Advani has realised that Modi has grown too big for his boots. Notwithstanding the fact that Advani praised Modi 'as one of the best CM we have ever had' Modi denied a nomination to Haren Pandya, Advani's betenore in Gujarat.

As Modi's model has worked in Gujarat resulting in a big win there is little doubt that the party will use Modi as its mascot both in assembly elections in other states and Lokshava election, though whether he can polarise electorates in the states other than Gujarat is debatable. It will take some time for the new sets of power equation in the BJP to crystallise, but for the moment Modi looks taller than any one else and absolutely capable, with his brand of more masculine Hindutva as a potent weapon, to take on any rival to his rise.

Brig (ret'd) Hafiz is former DG of BIISS.

PERSPECTIVES

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Against this backdrop the BJP's sweep of Gujarat on December 12 state assembly election is certainly a turnaround in the fortune of Hindu right. Godhra and its aftermath presented the party an opportunity for resurrection -- this time decisively with its malignant and more masculine version of Hindutva. Led by a new Hindutva cult figure the

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This is unmistakably in the footsteps of the programme charted by Golwalker, the RSS' most important ideologue. He introduced his diabolical ideas in the garb of now familiar Hindutva; an omnibus, collective, Sanskritising ideology which articulates 'bhadralok' inter-

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- Narendra Modi. Gujarat election and its results is not just another electoral exercise of the republic. It has apparently brought the BJP politics, if not the national politics, to a crossroad raising complex questions. What Mr. Modi is up to? Or, where will he be led up to? Has Vajpayee inadvertently created in Modi his Frankenstein? Many think Advani to be the next boss. But would he step into the slot of the PM when the more militant forces of BJP have been bracketing him with Vajpayee for their conciliatory posture?

Modi's victory is widely seen as that of strident youngsters within the BJP over the mellowing old guards of the party. Conversely, the uperhand gained by new generation of BJP adds only to the strength of Modi even at the national level.

The unjust war

HABIBUL HAQUE KHONDKER

IN early September 2002, I asked Professor Immanuel Wallerstein, a well-known left liberal intellectual in USA: "what if Saddam Hussein goes to the national television and announces that in the interest of peace and safety of Iraqi people, he is stepping down would US still invade Iraq?" Professor Wallerstein's response was blunt. He said: "Even if Saddam commits suicide in front of television cameras, US will still invade Iraq in January 2003." In an article with a suggestive title, "The Crash Landing of the Eagle", published in the July-August 2002 issue of *Foreign Policy* Wallerstein argues that the US hegemony is in decline since 1970s in the wake of the Vietnam War. He also reminds the US hawks in that article that of the three wars that US has taken part since the World War II -- Korean War, Vietnam War, and the Gulf War -- the results were one defeat (Vietnam) and two draw. Yet such warnings are going unheeded by the hawkish Bush administration. The war seems to be imminent. Logic and rationality seem to have taken leave and morality is not even on the agenda for discussion.

Although it is difficult to determine what is just and what is unjust, philosophers have tried to establish conditions and principles under which a war can be viewed as just. Michael Walzer's book, *The Theory of Just and Unjust War* was published in the wake of the Vietnam War, which has since become a classic. The losses of civilian lives in the Vietnam War caused serious moral problems for the US public and a legitimacy crisis for the US

War administration. In terms of the criteria of just war, the impending invasion of Iraq by the United States and its so-called "allies" will be unjust. War is a terrible thing, yet sometimes it becomes a necessity - a necessary evil -- either as a response to atrocities and injustice or self-defence. Yet since war itself is barbaric, it poses a moral dilemma as to when and under what circumstances a collectivity (coun-

try, people, state) should go to war against another collectivity. Such a moral dilemma led to the creation of the concept of just war or "justum bellum", a notion that goes back to St. Augustine. In order for a war to be just the following criteria are to be met. 1. Just cause: such as defending fundamental rights (The war of independence in Bangladesh can be justified according to this criterion). 2. Right intention: saving victims of genocidal wars, as in the cases of Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia to oust Pol Pot in 1978 or India's intervention on behalf of Bangladeshi freedom fighters in 1971. Pure vengeance or empire building do not merit as right intentions. 3. Proportionality: War is a necessary evil. The evils of war cannot be disproportional to the injustices the war is trying to redress. 4. Authority: The war must be waged and backed by a legiti-

mate authority (The Gulf War had the backing of the United Nations). 5. Last resort: a war can be considered just when all the non-military such as diplomatic options have been exhausted. 6. Restraint: the combatants must show restraint so that unnecessary civilian casualties are avoided. Walzer claims that lack of identification does not give a government the right to kill indiscriminately -- the onus is on the

channels including the visit to Iraq by the Secretary General of the United Nations.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 evoked an unambiguous response from the lay public to left/liberal academia in the United States. The whole nation was appalled as much as the sensible world at this mindless attack. A letter supporting the US war against terrorism bore the signatures of

allegation that Saddam has weapons of mass destruction is yet to be proven. UN weapons inspectors are yet to provide any evidence to that end. Whether Saddam Hussein is a bloodthirsty dictator or lives in expensive mansions do not justify an invasion. The rhetoric of "regime change" in Iraq is in violation of the principle of national sovereignty. Not only the idea of "preemptive strike" is without moral justification,

exploiting the tragedy of September 11 to whip up an attitude of belligerence and vengeance thus blurring the difference between justice and retribution. The resistance that is coming from the liberal minority in the United States is feeble at best. In a recent article in *Harper's* former Presidential candidate and the doyen of American liberalism, George McGovern has taken Bush administration to task for spreading fear and pursuing a recklessly belligerent path. Earlier after a major speech of President Bush outlining his policies of regime change and rebuilding post-war Iraq, House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi asked matter of factly: "But, who is going to rebuild our (US) economy?"

If a world-wide opinion poll is taken, the great majority will find US aggression against Iraq as unjust. (At the same time many -- myself included -- find the Iraqi regime as one of the most authoritarian regimes in recent history). Yet an unjust war levied against Iraq will cost US in terms of its moral authority in the post-Cold War world. A belligerent USA can play havoc to global stability. A sensible and moral USA is needed not just for the sake of USA and its great people but for the stability, prosperity and peace of the world. If US hegemony is in decline, as Wallerstein suggests, it should decline gradually and not with a bang risking an already tenuous global order.

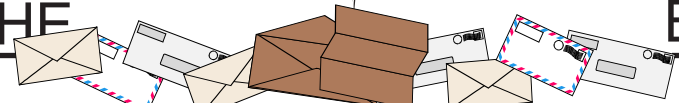
Habibul Haque Khondker teaches Sociology at the National University of Singapore.

government to identify the combatants. The Gulf War was an example of a just war to a great extent. On the one hand, Iraq's claim to Kuwait was [and is] genuine in terms of history, such use of historical justice, if implemented all over the world, will lead to major redrawing of maps of the countries. In August 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait in violation of all international laws that protect rights to sovereignty and national self-determination. The cause of expelling war was legitimated by the resolutions of the United Nations, thus it was just and the intention was to dislodge Iraqi grip and as soon as the objectives were met the US-led allied forces pulled out of Iraq. They did not seek to unseat Saddam nor did they go for an occupation followed by Nuremberg-style trials and so on. Besides, the war was an almost last straw having exhausted various diplomatic

such luminaries as Michael Walzer and Theda Skocpol. To a large extent, US war initiatives against al-Qaeda and its so-called backers was a just war. I qualify this because the civilian casualties in Afghanistan cannot be justified in Walzer's terms. In launching war against terrorism, US had a just cause; after all, it was an aggrieved party. Comparisons were made between Pearl Harbour and September 11. In both instances, surprise attacks were launched against US targets. US like any other nation has the right to self-defence, not to mention the justification of pursuing its enemies to the farthest corners of the world. The United States had a just cause - not to mention extraordinary means -- to take on the extremists. However, the premise for invading Iraq is different. Until now, no one has provided any evidence of Iraqi support for al-Qaeda. The US

it might establish a precedence with dangerous consequences worldwide. US grievance against Iraq is largely hypothetical. Iraq may have "weapons of mass destruction" and Iraq "may use those weapons against the American people". All this while, other dictators in possession of "weapons of mass destruction" can be dealt with diplomatically. There is no reason or rhyme in US arguments. Yet, there is a popular support for the invasion of Iraq in USA today. Why? The September 11 attacks dealt a severe blow to the national ego and public sentiment, and although many Americans want to see justice done, they are unable to make a distinction between vengeance and justice. Rather than taking a principled position, the Bush administration is riding on the crest of this moral ambiguity. What is unfortunate is that some hawks on the US administration are cynically

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

INS list

What's with our government blaming the opposition for every downfall the country's been through? I highly doubt that any "irresponsible comment" made by the opposition leader prompted the U.S. government to put Bangladesh down on the top 25 "at risk" countries' list. If half of us don't listen to what she says, why would the U.S.?

In case some of you people out there haven't noticed; every single country with a Muslim majority is on that list. It's not the end of the world so let's just stop blaming the Awami League for every bad thing that has occurred in Bangladesh since the last elections. It's not like the BNP hasn't made any mistakes since they came to power.

SS
Dhaka

With the combined effort of Indian media and Bangladesh opposition, it has been added to the list of countries whose adult non-immigrant males must register with US immigration authorities. This law applies to thousands of Bangladeshi students studying in the US colleges and universities. Even the Muslims of other nations in the US were

stunned to learned the news and are simply asking "why Bangladesh?" This is indeed a tragedy for the Bangladeshis and one simply fails to understand why the politicians do not care for the same people they vow to serve once elected!

The present Bangladesh government would do a better job to protect the image of the country and act with the help of Bangladesh lobby in the US congress and force the Bush administration to reverse its decision on Bangladesh. At the same time Bangladesh media must nullify all propaganda of foreign media especially India. May Allah protect the image of Bangladesh.

Tariq Abd'allah
Chicago, USA

"PM will be wise to withdraw the ordinance"

In his recent commentary, Mr. Mahfuz Anam finds Bangladesh's place now virtually assured in the Guinness Book of World Records as "perhaps the only country in the present-day world to have a law to protect killing, torture, jailing of thousands and random beating and public humiliation of many."

But I think Bangladesh's place in

the prestigious Guinness Book should also be assured for one more reason, that is, Bangladesh is the only country in the world where the leaders of the ruling party and of the opposition are not on talking terms.

Syed Badrul Haque
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Tangail bombing

Your Editorial of 19th January attracted my attention. I am in full agreement with your suggestion of involving some international police agencies in unearthing these mysterious bombing incidents costing valuable innocent lives. The local police have made no progress whatsoever till date. The government also seems to be doing nothing about the matter except for creating one superimposed agency over the other like the RAT. Personally, I would feel more comfortable putting the security of my life in the hands of anyone else other than the Police.

With the growing image problem of our country, it is high time for us to engage the services of some international police agencies to investigate all such criminal activities. We have nothing to lose. In the meantime I wish the government to take some long-term measures in

revamping our police forces. Obviously mere playing musical chairs through shifting and transferring of individual officers is not taking us anywhere. The government must realise that mere routine investigation and wishful thinking including empty political demagoguery will not make such incidents disappear. Those who are responsible for these incidents are no ordinary criminals. They want to send a message across the society-- a message of fear and terror with a particular agenda of their own.

Shamsher Chowdhury
Dhaka

"My visit to Bangladesh--An American view."

This is a response to the letter by Ms. Sharmen Shehabuddin (January 18). I respect her patriotic response but we do need to understand that whatever the American lady has expressed about our airport facilities are not totally wrong. Not only the foreigners but also the natives face similar consequences. The airport staff is far from being helpful and the customs department welcomes you with all sorts of odd problems. No matter if

he or she is a child, teenager or a senior citizen they will be treated as they have committed a crime. And I do not think this sort of behaviour should be "applauded". It is our duty to make sure that the foreigners who are guests in our country are treated with the respect they deserve.

So before we blame others it is better for us to know about the circumstances and then grumble. It was not "whining" but every word of that letter is true. As for Bangladeshis, no one has asked them not to complain, as right of expression is a part of our democracy, which is same for an American. The only difference is she has exercised her right, which we do not even care to do.

Khalid Rahman
Dhaka

Grammatical mistakes!

Lately, we have been noticing cumbersome mistakes in the headlines of *The Daily Star* news items. The other day, the lead item said: "Dry run for gas burners". Now, "dry run" is a noun which means to have a final rehearsal of a show just before making the final presentation. We can also use the word in cases of

products. The headline should have said: "Gas burners run dry"; isn't it? Then on January 17, another news said: "Muntasir, Sharier relates *The Daily Star* to their predicament". However, nowhere in the news did Prof. Muntasir Mamun or Mr. Sharier Kabir "relate" *The Daily Star* to their predicament. Shouldn't that have been "narrates" instead of "relates"?

Armeen
Class VI, Playpen School

"Driving while wearing a lungi"

This is a reply to the letter of Mr. Siddique (January 14) as he have described that *lungi* is an unsmart dress. Actually it is not the garment which is unsmart but how one carries himself the dress he/she is wearing. My question to Mr. Siddique is if *lungi* was an unsmart garb the why the Srilankans, Tamilians and Keralians wear it to the highest degrees of sophistication like to the parliament and international summit. Tradition should not be described as unsmart but should be worn with utmost pride as it portrays the ethnicity of a race.

And Mr. Ziauddin Ahmed, (January 15) as for the accidents it is not the garments which is to be blamed

but the carelessness of the drivers. In Japan, the citizens drive wearing Kimono's which is much more troublesome than *lungi*. A poor Rickshawpuller will be penalised for riding wearing a *lungi* but a rich lad will not even be asked for his crime if he can slip in a note in the policeman's pocket.

Khalid Rahman
Dhaka

"War is not the Answer"

This is in reply to the letter by Azad Miah and Abu Nasher (January 15).

Mr. Abu Nasher, living in UK a democratic country - and questioning whether democracy is required (if I am not mistaken) doesn't say much about you. How about abandoning UK and immigrating to North Korea or Iraq and then writing back here? Also, can you enrich our knowledge by stating the name of one outstanding civilisation that was not built on the blood of the defeated? Making it a habit to bring up the unfortunate fate of Native Indians to smear the American civilisation too often may not be very practical after all. In addition, you should also do some study on slavery and you might find amazing facts that might divert some of your

anger from USA to others.

To Mr. Azad Miah don't confuse democracy with stern treatment to suspected terrorists and traitors. Every country has the right to take certain measures to ensure that its inhabitants are safe from external attacks. When you mentioned about the activities in Guantanamo Bay you forgot to realise that they are being treated, perhaps, better than any other country in the world would have treated them. In their part of the world Middle East - most would possibly be killed by now for similar allegations. It seems to me that while you are ready to ignore clear signs of abuse and cruelty by certain countries, you are trying to compare USA to a non-existing standard of democracy. Nobody claimed that USA is a utopia. What we - the BLIND SUPPORTERS OF THE WEST - say is that we have a chance for bettering the current form of democracy with the west, using currently available democratic procedures, something that I care most about.

Shuja
Canada