

US listing of Bangladesh as a terror-risk country calls for diplomatic reciprocity



MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

other for this disastrous political and diplomatic situation that Bangladesh is now in. Awami League blamed the government for its diplomatic failure and the government blamed Awami League Chief for her role in bringing this bad name to the country. However, civic bodies, trade bodies and other political, human rights and social organisations strongly protested the decision of the US Administration and rightly called upon the US government to drop Bangladesh from the list of the

The people of some of these affected countries protested, but several of these countries have, at the same time, accepted large contingents of US army which are poised to attack another country. It is a strange situation; the US calls them terrorist countries i.e. the people are terrorists, but their countries are being used as launching pads to attack a neighbouring country. Does it not look like a helpless situation?

The people of these countries are

the part of an affected country could indeed help the US in its search for its own nationals engaged in such terrorist activities. Undoubtedly there are American Al-Qaida like Richard Reid, serial killers like the ones seen in action some months ago in Maryland and Washington area and others who terrorised American public by releasing Anthrax for weeks. Such American terrorists including American Al-Qaida who might have links with the terror groups in Europe and Middle

their national security then Bangladesh should also be equally concerned about its own security and hence the recommendations for possible adoption of similar measures. If the world peace is in danger because of these "terrorists", then Bangladesh is also a part of this world and it should be free to look after its own interest and take suitable measures. But all these measures basically go against the principles of human rights and such measures must not be taken unless

may have to bear the brunt of this wrong and unjustified policy decisions. Another big loss would be the virtual reluctance of these countries to continue to cooperate with America in combating international terrorism which should have been the top priority of America. This was indeed highlighted by former Vice President Al-Gore while speaking on the subject earlier.

The US action undoubtedly smacks of superpower whims caring little about the rest of the world. This obviously leads one to argue that time has come to have another superpower so that there could be some balance in the political and strategic relations among the nations of the world. Today, it is totally one sided giving solid impression to the people that world is now heading towards international dictatorship. The UN is being rendered useless and meaningless. If the US and its close friend defy the UN and attack another country, there is no problem. The problem starts when another country, less powerful, defies the UN and "the world peace is in danger" if even empty and unused chemical warheads are found in any other location. Then the war becomes a must - no matter even if thousands of innocent people die. This is an unjust world. The proverb says in a jungle there could be only one king, the rest are all animal subjects.

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All health information to keep you up to date

ABC of cystic fibrosis

Cystic fibrosis is not an uncommon life-threatening disease. It is a recessive genetic disorder affecting the exocrine glands that produce body secretions such as sweat, mucus and enzymes. Cystic fibrosis (CF) primarily affects the respiratory system (lungs), digestive system (pancreas and liver) and the reproductive system. It causes a build up of mucus in the lungs, which may lead to repeated chest infections and long-term lung damage. One in every 2500 births in Australia produces a child with CF, it occurs equally in males and females and there is currently no cure. It is estimated there are about 3000 people living with CF in Australia today.

CF is a genetic disease, for a person to be born with the disease they need to have inherited a copy of the CF gene from both of their parents. If both parents carry the gene they have a one in four chance of having an affected child. It is estimated one in every 25 Australians is a symptomless carrier of the CF gene.

Whilst there is no cure for CF, early diagnosis, improved treatments and a better understanding of the disorder means many people with CF can lead relatively normal, healthy lives. The management and treatment of CF is lifelong and generally involves: Intensive physiotherapy to clear the lungs;

- 5 Enzyme replacement capsules with food to assist digestion;
 - 5 Antibiotic therapy to treat infection;
 - 5 Aerosol mist inhalations (nebulisers) to assist in the opening of the airways;
 - 5 Salt and vitamin supplements; and
 - 5 A high-calorie, high-fat diet
- 5It is common for children and adults with CF to visit a hospital clinic several times a year so specialists can monitor their condition.

Did you know

In USA, one-third of the people who block a sneeze or cough with their hand do not then wash their hands.

Next: Around the world.

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terror-risk countries. Foreign Minister Morshed Khan is going to Washington to find out why Dhaka is in terror-list. He however, said, "I will not request him (Colin Powell) to drop Bangladesh from the list as it is a unilateral decision of the US." This is not understandable. As this was a unilateral decision without any previous consultation or information Bangladesh should ask the US to drop its name from the list.

However, the only satisfaction is that President Bush has not expanded his list of countries in "axis of evil". If he did so, what could anyone do? He is the most powerful man on earth being the head of the only superpower. In the unipolar world, democracy at international stage is the main casualty. Even the UN or its powerful body UNSC becomes meaningless if such a country moves ahead in the world theatre defying rest of the UN members.

seen by the US as terrorists and as such their photographs, fingerprints are taken and they have to face intensive and tough questioning in specified locations, luckily not in Guantanamo Bay. These exercises are carried out as a result of the Bush Administration's decision, which for the foreign countries, fall under the foreign policy arena. If the effort to have our country taken out of the terrorist list fails, the only alternative one could see is to go for similar foreign policy action which can be termed as "diplomatic reciprocity". It should not necessarily mean diplomatic retaliation or tit-for-tat action. Bangladesh and also other affected countries, if they so decide, may impose similar restrictions on American nationals entering Bangladesh.

A family friend who has been residing in the US for the last several years said while discussing the issue that this sort of measure on

East may try to enter Bangladesh with certain bad motives and it would indeed be useful for the US authorities to locate and identify such persons. This could easily be done by the same process the US is now applying to Bangladeshis in the USA if suitable exceptions are made, then genuine visitors including those coming for trade and commerce and other good purposes would not face any problem. Indeed, fingerprints, photographs and other details obtained through interrogation could be transmitted to the US authorities so that the US could benefit in tracking down such doubtful characters. This might also cool down the genuine grievances of the people of Bangladesh.

This will however, not reduce the difficulties and indeed harassment faced by the people covered by such US actions. But if the US Administration considers the steps important from the point of view of

there is a genuine need for it and consensus is there in the world body -- the UN.

Indeed, for taking such actions on these nationals, it was not necessary for the Bush Administration to openly declare some specific countries as terrorist countries that brought bad name to them. It could have been a general requirement for all and then the US could announce the names of the countries for checking the INS required documents within some specific time table. Such actions should be within the rights of a sovereign country. The process could stop with some acceptable explanations at a stage when all the doubtful locations were covered. This could have been a better diplomatic move. The present egocentric policy decisions of Bush Administration dangerously antagonised so many countries and the innocent people of America, a great country,

SAARC: Focus must be on economic development

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

THE countries in the South Asian region produce, by and large, a mosaic of multiracial, multilingual and multi religious pattern. Yet the people in each of these countries not only share similar social and economic values, but also have common colonial experience. Again the bulk of them today are steeped in abject poverty.

Excepting the two island states - Sri Lanka and Maldives off Indian coast -- all the countries of South Asia have common borders or are situated in close proximity. India exclusively encompasses the two land locked countries of the region - Nepal and Bhutan. India thus enjoys an enviable position among the SAARC countries not only for her size, population and power potential but also for her location.

South Asia has been viewed as fraught with overpopulation, ethnic and religious conflict, scarcity of resources and natural disasters. Apart from these, mistrust and suspicion dominate the political scenario but the people in South Asia want to integrate with each other.

The region comprises more than one fifth of the world's population but it turns out to be the poorest in economic terms. Although the countries share common rivers, mountain system, ecological cycles but they are equally confronted with disputes of undemarcated land, maritime boundary or equitable share of waters from common rivers. Perennial Kashmir issue remains an irritant between Pakistan and India.

South Asian countries in fact maintain better linkages with Western countries than among themselves. For example, one can reach London on telephone in 5-10 minutes time whereas it is difficult to speak to Delhi or Thimphu from Dhaka. Nepal is probably the only country in South Asia to have direct air link with all other capitals in the region except Maldives.

Bangladesh foreign policy recognises that the states of South Asia have more similarities to bind them together than dissimilarity to divide them. It is this perception that worked behind the idea of regional cooperation.

Viewed in the context of vast potential that exists in the region for cooperation and consequential benefit that may accrue from such cooperation, late President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh discussed the idea of regional cooperation in the course of his visits to various capitals of the region during the period from 1977 to 1980. The concept floated by him was

treaty.

In South Asia, countries are at different levels of development. Some are relatively less developed than others. Per capita income of the people in the member countries of SAARC significantly varies. In the European Union developed countries contribute subsidies to the underdeveloped partners to make them at par with the economy of the developed ones. Are the developed countries in South Asia prepared to offer subsidies to bring less developed countries in the region at par.

There is a problem of eliminating threat perception between the

countries. On the other hand, South Asia will play dominant role in international relations if the countries in the region attain sustainable economic growth. Here lies the importance of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation through its economic agenda.

The agreement on SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) was signed on 11 April 1993, and is intended to "promote regional preferential trading arrangements for strengthening intra-regional economic cooperation and development of national economies". One can look upon the prospect for South Asian Free

Minister for External Affairs charted out a plan for South Asian Union upgrading SAARC because SAARC, according to him, did not succeed 'to move or make progress with regard to its primary objective of economic cooperation'. It is partially true that SAARC could not make much progress in terms of economic development between its members during its 17 years of existence primarily because of political rivalry between Pakistan and India. Both the countries have acquired nuclear weapons instead of concentrating on economic development of their countries and addressing the poverty of the people. Following series of seminars and discussions action plan was prepared by SAARC's poverty alleviation commission.

Both Pakistan and India should realise the gravity of the situation over the issue of Kashmir. The leaders in both countries should consider holding tripartite conference under the auspices of the United Nations for resolving the issue. It is because of differences of opinion between the two countries that the SAARC is confronted with serious problem. If SAARC could not achieve success in economic front, the formation of Union will remain a wishful thinking because of wide range of gap between developed and developing countries in terms of economic parity.

Experience in regional cooperation elsewhere in the world demonstrates that such cooperation can grow in spite of bilateral problems. Even when disputes come up, this should not stand in the way of regional cooperation in economic, social, technical and cultural fields. Present SAARC game in Dhaka is a glaring example of cooperation among the countries in South Asia.

Cooperation on a regional basis may generate a climate of congeniality conducive to a better understanding of what the countries in the region have in common. Since the formation of SAARC, Bangladesh has made sustained contributions for promotion of the regional cooperation in different fields of activities. In this connection, one may recall the tripartite summit of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan at the initiative of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to seek cooperation for economic development of the region. As a founder member Bangladesh should initiate action in reviving the spirit of cooperation within the framework of SAARC. To start with, Bangladesh government may consider sending special envoy to Islamabad and New Delhi to re-convene the summit level meeting of SAARC to thrash out programmes for economic development.

Mohammad Amjad Hossain is a former diplomat.

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received favourably by them in the congenial politico-strategic scenario of 1977-79. The year 1985 has gone down in the history of South Asia as eventful and fruitful year for institutionalising the concept of SAARC.

Seventeen years are not long in the history of regional cooperation. It may be recalled that it took ten years to convene a summit level meeting of the ASEAN. The objective of ASEAN is purely economic development of the South-east Asian region. Despite differences of opinion on certain specific situation or world political events, members of ASEAN are determined to carry out programmes for economic development. Membership of ASEAN has already expanded which now includes Myanmar, Vietnam and Laos. It has been a long drawn process to transform the European Community into a Union under 1992 Maastricht

countries in the region. Both India and Pakistan have refrained from signing non-proliferation treaty (NPT) and comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty (CTBT). Both the countries are diverting huge financial resources for development of defence infrastructure. New transnational threats have emerged in the region in the meantime. These are: ethnic conflicts, organised crime, corruption and terrorism that are causing a threat to stability in many parts of this region. Therefore, a concerted effort under the umbrella of SAARC could be initiated to stop such threat.

If the countries in South Asia succeed in reducing poverty, defusing artificial tension, avoiding hegemonistic or chauvinistic attitude towards neighbours, these will help prevent regional conflicts, in containing arms race, and the region will become the haven for direct investments from foreign

Trade Arrangement (SAFTA) if the provisions in SAPTA are implemented. In this respect, one can endorse the opinion of India's Foreign Minister with regard to free trade arrangement but it should be in line with Article-3(a) of SAPTA. This Article stipulates that SAPTA shall be based and applied on the principles of overall reciprocity and mutuality of advantages in such a way as to benefit equitably all contracting states. Actually all member countries in South Asia are committed to move from SAPTA to SAFTA by the year 2005. As a matter of fact, Bangladesh is keen to take more economic programmes to integrate economics within the framework of SAARC.

At a seminar on South Asian cooperation organised by South Asian Centre for policy studies, Dhaka in New Delhi on 10 January 2003 Yashwant Sinha, India's

The paradox of freedom

MOHAMMAD MOZAHIDUR RAHAMAN

IT was a bright shiny morning, the business of day life had just begun in this melting pot of the civilized world. Piercing that morning sky, standing there were the twin towers, the magnificent icon of the free world, the emblem of power, prosperity and pride of the mighty giant. Suddenly there was a huge fireball and the free world changed forever. I wonder! Why no body ever asks the question...why do some people hate American freedom so much?

The most sensitive, the most demanding, the most dangerous and also the most profitable buzz today is "Freedom". The people in Palestine are blasting themselves off in suicide bombing to let us know that the world should care more about their freedom. Tamil tigers in Sri Lanka, IRA in Northern Ireland, Kurds in Southern Iraq and other numerous entities justify their actions or terror in the name of their version of freedom. And sometimes freedom becomes an excuse for the powerful to interfere into the powerless' affairs in sheer pursuit of self-interest. And as we stand proudly today as the citizens of a free world let us not forget that our freedom fighters delivered that precious freedom to us. Throughout human history this very concept of freedom motivated millions of people to sacrifice their lives. What really freedom brings to the society? What we as a civilization gained from our freedom that was inherited by our predecessors? And most importantly, as the contemporary events are unfolding, why do we need freedom if that very freedom is pushing us to the edge of insecurity?

Once a prominent sociologist said... if you could walk along the street without being pushed by others then you are a free man. But it does not mean that you have the right to push others. The very concept of freedom is reciprocal in nature. If you expect someone to respect your opinion, in return you have to respect his or her opinion as well. In short, freedom is not as free as it sounds. Freedom comes with responsibility and what Francis Fukuyama calls it as 'a lose tray of sand' i.e. we have to stand together but not necessarily we have to love each other. If freedom is not as free as it sounds why in the world, people are fighting for freedom?

Perhaps freedom brings prosperity and progress. But if so, why is China growing faster than any economies in the world for the last two decades? In 1989, China never hesitated to run over the freedom-loving students with the brutal iron tanks. Yet China invites most of the foreign direct investment in the world. In another case, India and Malaysia got independence roughly at the same time. India instituted its constitution based on freedom while Malaysia was never free in the truest sense of freedom. But in terms of economic prosperity, Malaysia enjoys prosperity way better than the Indians do. While Indians are still stuck with the age-old problem of ethnicism, Malaysians are taking pride on the world's tallest building, twin towers in Kuala Lumpur. If not prosperity may be freedom brings social order and peace of life. A free society can learn to respect and tolerate each

other and should live in peace and harmony. If so, then why is the land of freedom, America has experienced a 560% increase in violent crime, a 419% increase in illegitimate birth, a 400% increase in divorce rates, a 300% increase in children living in single-parent homes and a drop of almost 80 points in Scholastic Aptitude Test Scores over the last three decades? On the contrary, not so free societies like Singapore and Saudi Arabia have the lowest crime rate and violence. A young lady can walk freely without fear in the streets of Singapore at midnight and in some free societies we need policeman to protect policemen let alone the common people.

To me the answer to this paradox is fairly simple. People fight for freedom because freedom gives them recognition. Freedom instills the sense of pride in humans that

Today we live in a world where what matters is the dignity of human life, where humanity comes before ethnicity, where progress comes before inertia, and constructive argument and acceptance comes before dogma. Humanity has evolved from the Stone Age to an increasingly assimilated global village and the most precious gift of our social evolution is our freedom and the free world has become the hub of security for the oppressed.

they are being accepted as a dignified part of the contemporary order. The inherent thrive for recognition among humans motivated them over centuries to shed blood as we have witnessed throughout human history. Our freedom fighters shed blood not because they wanted to be richer in a new world but because they wanted to give us a gift. And that gift is the pride we have today. We stand out among others as the citizens of a free world. We express our will on the issue of leadership and when a new child is born, she comes with New Hope of happiness that she will grow up in a free society with dignity. Freedom is a gift to us from our predecessor and we have to preserve and protect that gift. But the question is how do we protect and preserve our freedom. As the contemporary events are unfolding, how much security we need to trade to preserve our freedom?

Freedom was never free in the first place. It came to societies at the cost of millions of lives of martyrs. The free world is about to lose its essence as it came in touch with the horror from which the oppressed people turned away and sought refuge to the free world. The contemporary trend is forcing us towards a 'crusade' where freedom and security are at war with each other. The very freedom that has made the free world the hub of

global security is begetting insecurity, as it seems. It seems today, as the master of the free world puts, that where freedom ends, security begins and it has become imperative to cur freedom of some people to ensure security of the free world and draw a thin line between the two no matter how subjective it is. I hope our freedom does not fall pray to the material greed of the powerful in the name of security and.

Under the mounting pressure from the powerful the powerless are overwhelmed with this burden to draw that thin line between freedom and security. We are already worried about telling secrets through telephone while somebody might be taping it. It's not hard for anyone to penetrate our encrypted Internet messages and retrieve vital information. I wouldn't be surprised if some one has already implanted secret cameras or audio devices in every newly built house and apartment. Who knows every newborn baby might be implanted with a microchip in its brain to create a collective consciousness. We even won't have the freedom to think while acting on the instructions of master. The dignified humans will increasingly become sophisticated cyber organism i.e. half human and half machine. We will be secure at the cost of our individuality, we will be protected at the cost of our freedom and we will be safe not in a free world but in a world where master and subordinate govern the social norm.

The thin line between freedom and security was never defined and it can't be defined. If we venture to define that thin line we are venturing into the realm of unknown, which the humanity fear and love the most. I am shattered with the burden of making a decision between the known world of freedom and the unknown venture in the future. What I decide today, I will become tomorrow. The circular complexity of choosing security over freedom made me wonder once again why do some people hate freedom so much!

The war between freedom and security is never ending. It has been in the past, it is today and it will continue to be the debate of tomorrow. Today we live in a world where what matters is the dignity of human life, where humanity comes before ethnicity, where progress comes before inertia, and constructive argument and acceptance comes before dogma. Humanity has evolved from the Stone Age to an increasingly assimilated global village and the most precious gift of our social evolution is our freedom and the free world has become the hub of security for the oppressed. We have earned our freedom after defying the secure hub of the dictatorial master. We rebelled time and time again to disturb the peace of the universe to earn our freedom. The war of today is not new to us. Perhaps what we need is to better understand the need, cause, purpose and meaning of our freedom. Freedom is not as free as it sounds. Freedom comes with responsibility. Perhaps, the master of the free world should care more about the freedom of the oppressed.

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