

LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA THURSDAY JANUARY 30, 2003

Iraq's case hangs fire

War will be a disastrous course to take

HE UN arms inspectors have fallen short of giving a clean chit to Iraq on the Nuke issue. All that they could say at this stage is they have 'found no evidence of prohibited nuclear activity in Iraq.' They strongly feel further inspections are needed to bring the process to a conclusion with 'proactive cooperation from Baghdad' which is 'missing'. They have also found that the country had illegally imported 300 rocket engines that could be used for launching missiles.

So, Iraq's case is neither established nor fully demolished as far as its possession of weapons of mass destruction and a capacity to build them go. But the United States and the UK believe Iraq is in 'material breach' of its UN obligations -- a reference to the UN Resolution 1441 -- which is tantamount to courting a war.

The UNSC is set to deliberate on the report of the Blix mission on February 2. Obviously, it is the world body that should and can handle the problem. What will be interesting to note is how the UNSC members respond to the Blix report but there is little doubt majority of them are expressly averse to war and that's what should matter.

President Bush is, however, as determined to go to war against Iraq as any time before, if not more. And Britain is pressing the UNSC to issue a 'final' ultimatum to Iraq since after all the inspectors could not say that they were happy with Baghdad's attitude.

Although a clearer picture will emerge only after the UNSC takes a definite position, the US and the UK have already interpreted the words of Hans Blix as evidence of Baghdad not doing enough to go by the UN resolution. The United States will now have to decide whether it will go ahead with its war plans or let the UN inspectors have more time to reach a conclusion in their investigations.

The cost of another war in the Gulf will be too great to be justified by the 'conviction' of a country or an individual that there was no way to avoid it. US concern for the future of the world and that of the global community must have a meeting ground somewhere if we are to avert a catastrophe, the consequences of which we cannot contain for sure.

Disquieting news from CHT Rapid implementation of peace accord imperative

ECENT reports of abduction, extortion and murder from Chittagong Hill Tracts have raised a I fresh concern about lack of peace in the area. Clashes between activists of PCJSS which signed a peace accord with the former AL government and those of UPDF who opposed the treaty, have interminably erupted. At least 250 people have reportedly been killed since the signing of treaty in 1997. In fact, intelligence reports of fresh recruitment by UPDF and their training in batches point to possibilities of further unrest.

The present, rather bleak scenario could be ascribed to a continuous delay and, to some extent, the stalemate in the implementation of the peace accord during the last more than five years. The PCJSS repeatedly expressed frustrations at the 'taking-it-slow' attitude of the previous Awami League government to the accord which the former had actually signed with the latter. The present BNPled government had in the past opposed the treaty but have not been expressly averse to it since coming to power. But nothing has materially changed in terms of the implementation status of the peace agreement in the one and a half years of BNP rule. It must be remembered that two decades of an insurrection-ridden atmosphere thankfully yielded place to a reasonably normal ambi-

What prompted anti-Bangladesh US decision?

externally

ABDUL HANNAN

VER since the beginning of

US led alliance of war on

international terrorism,

Bangladesh has expressed its

unqualified support and solidarity

with it. Yet, it is unfortunate that

Bangladesh now has been included

in the US list of 'terror-risk' coun-

tries for reasons best known to the

US authorities. But why? It is not enough to ascribe the US decision

to perceived current US foreign

policy approaches to terrorism with

Islam as, significantly, not all the 57

Islamic countries within OIC have

been included in the list. Again,

unlike in the Middle East, Bali,

Islamabad or Karachi there has not

been a single incident of terrorist

attack against western targets in

Bangladesh. Then why is this dis-

crimination? In the absence of any

shred of compelling and credible

evidence on the ground (the pres-

ence of Madrassas and Moulanas is

no evidence of the presence of

terrorists) there is no doubting that

the US decision has largely been

influenced by the concatenation of a

coordinated and sustained propa-

ganda campaign, unleashed at

home and abroad by the leadership

of the main Opposition political

party, alleging tirelessly that a

fundamentalist government with

Taliban supporters in the cabinet

now in charge is a safe haven for

terrorists, regardless of conse-

quences of its adverse impact

(as in most other nations). Bevond

our commitment to republicanism.

the urgency of the Constitution Day

becomes vividly pronounced when

viewed against the track record

sullied by military take-overs and

one-party rule -- ironically imposed

by a democratically elected govern-

ment -- a classic example in the

not evolved yet to automatically

discourage any move to overthrow a

constitutional government elected

under a democratic dispensation

And because of this innate weak

ness. our civil society had to

weather a spell of extra-

constitutional ambitions, albeit

intermittently, in the space of thirty-

one years of our nationhood. More

than a cathartic relief, constitutional

rule, however, proved its resilience

Admittedly, our civil society has

constitutional history.

Later, unfortunately, important political leaders across the border including L K Advani, George Fernandez, Yaswant Sinha and Jyoti Basu in blatant disregard of the imperatives of good neighbourly relations (since being criticized by the former prime minister I. K. Guzral) echoing the voice accused Bangladesh of harbouring terrorists. But when some inspired Indian and

foreign media reports including

those of the Far Eastern Economic

Street Journal and the Time maga-

zine (the Far Eastern Economic

Review reporter and the two

aborted channel 4 reporters who

visited the country incognito with

false identity, obviously had

malafide motives other than fair

iournalism) joined forces with the

campaign, it was clear that a deep

seated organised and concerted

effort was at work ostensibly to

malign, denigrate and destabilise an

elected government in the estima-

tion of the Western powers, particu-

Review reproduced in The Wall

larly the Bush Administration, wrestling ineffectually with the shadow of terrorism in the luminous void of the Muslim world

No wonder, the attributed accusation and suspicion gained ground in strength and, in all likelihood, precipitated the decision of Bush Administration. Yet, given the nature of an orchestrated all-out year-long smear campaign, the US decision was not entirely unexpected. As

of papers for residency in America so that they are not subjected to harassment...

early as February 2002 when the

West Bengal chief minister

Buddhadev Bhattacharya accused

Bangladesh of involvement in

terrorist attack on the American

Centre in Calcutta, this writer antici-

pated and gave fore warning of what

was coming in an article entitled

"Challenge to Bangladesh diplo-

macy"(The Daily Star 16 February

2002). But what is disappointing, the

government, nay the foreign office.

the external publicity wing and our

embassy in Washington far from

remaining alert and active to

respond to the gathering propa-

ganda offensive with a well thought

out planning and strategy of action programme was caught napping in a state of complacency, inaction and torpor. Its response was episodic. perfunctory, ill conceived and short sighted confined as it was to bizarre routine denials and disclaimers in press briefings and spasmodic reactionary measures.

The arrests, detention and release of opposition political leaders, writers and local and foreign

journalists and ban on foreign

magazines and journals and visa

restrictions served self defeating

purposes alone, betrayed incompe-

tence and nervousness, and sent

wrong signals conveying the

impression that we were trying to

hide something. The drift and finally

the climb down was an embarrass-

ment to the government. But then,

there is no disputing that Bangla-

desh is an overwhelmingly open,

free, secular, liberal and democratic

society. It is for others to come to

see to believe it. Instead of putting

restrictive measures in place, we

should have thrown carte blanche

There is no point in crying over the spilt milk. What is now urgently needed is damage control. It may be well nigh

impossible to expect a reversal of the US decision any time soon. We should at the appropriate level take up immedi-

ately in right earnest with the US Attorney General cases of tens of thousands of our innocent law abiding nationals

who are contributing to the economic growth of America in various capacities and awaiting proper documentation

invitations to foreign journalists. observers and if needed, intelligence agencies to come and see for themselves about the absur-

dity of the unfounded allegations. Above all, a government that is headed by a lady Prime minister who is modern and liberal in thoughts and ideas, outlook and vision, and independent in the conduct of the high public office, if anything, regardless of the compo-

sition of the cabinet, cannot by any

stretch of imagination, be a funda-

extremists and terrorists. Sadly, our

diplomats failed to convey this true

message through to Washington

controlled government

shelter to religious

mentalist

providing

and Brussels

appropriate overtures to Brussels and Washington to apprise them of the correct situation in the country in order to be able to preempt any potential action harmful to the country. The performance of the foreign office was dismal. Something is wrong. Foreign policy cannot be pursued in a vacuum without professional specialists.

The Baily Star

There is no point in crying over the spilt milk. What is now urgently needed is damage control. It may be well nigh impossible to expect a reversal of the US decision any time soon. We should at the appropriate level take up immediately in right earnest with the US Attorney General cases of tens of thousands of our innocent law abiding nationals who are contributing to the economic growth of America in various capacities and awaiting proper documentation of papers for residency in America so that they are not subjected to harassment, harm, persecution or deportation but speedily regularised. The US authorities must know that the major cause of the rise of international terrorism is frustration and alienation out of a deep sense of injustice and deprivation. They will only serve the cause of peace by serving these

In response to the harsh criticism of Bangladesh administration by the European parliament for its alleged persecution of minorities and hapless Bangladeshis. human rights violations and harbouring of Islamic terrorists, the Abdul Hannan is a former press counsellor.

foreign office should also have Bangladesh U.N. mission in New York called a briefing meeting of EU ambassadors in Dhaka and sent

Constitution day and more

obligations to the state. One, how-SYED BADRUL HAQUE

ever, should not be amiss to appre-N a nation's life, the date to ciate that the Day is also endowed to commemorate the adoption of handsomely contribute to broadening the political horizon of the citithe constitution is a benchmark zenry in general. The objectives of in its calendar. This date, November the Day shall have to be highlighted 4 is, however, conspicuously missnot only on the date of its obsering in the array of our designated national dates. It is traumatic to find vance, instead it should be a continuous campaign till such time the this date disappear from consciouscitizens became familiar with them. ness and ignore it to go past unno-Obviously in this task, the prime ticed, uncelebrated. However much responsibility shall rest with both the it cuts across the political divide, we print and electronic media. On a patently failed to dedicate this date broader perspective, the Day's as Constitution Day for more than consciousness constructed on a three decades because of our strong basis of constitutional values inadequacy to comprehend the should inspire the civil society not to significance of this date in our civil life and accord it a national status

Our constitution, however, merits a fresh look in relation to certain issues, some of which need to be readiusted to meet the norms of democracy.

In article 8 (1) the terms 'democracy' and 'socialism' have been used to convey the one and the same meaning which seems rather incongruous after our ungualified commitment to democratic pluralism and market-oriented economy. In common understanding, the two terms have opposite connotations. Socialism is, therefore, now a wrong notion in statecraft.

Clause (C) of Article 25 reads: "Support oppressed people

the Speaker of the Constituent Assembly. Clause (3) says: "A text certified in accordance with Clause (2) shall be conclusive evidence of the provision of this Constitution:

Provided that in the event of conflict between the Bengali and the English text, the Bengali text shall prevail.

The contradictions are all too manifest and for final acceptance, the text issue could well be left to the decision of the Speaker of the Parliament than on a particular language text overriding the other. The constitution provides for the

establishment of the office of Ombudsman and separation of

future. Worse still, our leaders find it a convenient and handy in tool to score some extra mileage in favour of their party which they, in their myopic leadership, believe cannot be gained through the acknowledged democratic norms of political behaviour and again, no less to embarrass the party in power, no matter what it costs to the nation. The paradoxical upshot of this syndrome is that the mainstream political parties when in opposition legitimise it as a 'democratic right' and curiously enough when in power they unfailingly seize the high moral ground and go on a denial

enough to rescue the nation at times of national predicament, notwithstanding if they at all relate to the basic character of the constitution. (To mention, in 1975 when oneparty rule was introduced changing the very structure of the constitution, no referendum was held to elicit public opinion on the issue). It is important to recognise that while the electoral process is an instrument of aovernment, the referendum is designed to be an instrument of the

Consensus on major national concerns, national policies, updating archaic laws, administrative reforms, separation of judiciary ombudsman, corruption, hartal and such other issues have stayed thick virtually from day one of our independence. Evidently, our efforts to make the leap to reforms and modernity took back seat as we had been aging over the decades now. To be sure, until we get our priorities in order, our journey ahead will be strewn with roadblocks. Perhaps muddling through is our preferred way. Such preferences come at a price. Each generation of declinemanagers in the post-liberation period has been flying on deficient radar, applied more to cosmetic targets and producing images weak in substance. In our rugged political culture passages of cynicism and doubt have haunted the national psyche at intervals since our independence. Lack of sustained deter-

mination to confront the reality in the

round and adjust was much too

evident. And the obvious fallout has

been our failure to engineer a

benign cycle of economic growth

and social easement. Surely, the

debates that centre our constitution

and other issues of national impor-

tance will continue. But they ought

to be pregnant with a conscious-

ness that we all are engaged in a

If the ruling party has to sculpt its

face boldly, it needs to address the

unresolved issues urgently, even

ruthlessly with a vision, -- beyond

the next general election. In our

culture it is never too late. About

areat national task

anything.

Z In our rugged political culture passages of cynicism and doubt have haunted the national psyche at intervals since our independence. Lack of sustained determination to confront the reality in the round and adjust was much too evident. And the obvious fallout has been our failure to engineer a benign cycle of economic growth and social easement. Surely, the debates that centre our constitution and other issues of national importance will continue. But they ought to be pregnant with a consciousness that we all are engaged in a great national task.

bow to those who reject freedom and democracy.

In guiding the nation, constitution is ordained to serve as a bulwark against anti-republican tendencies; presume the general government in its whole constitutional vigour and it no less serves as the symbol of peace in society. As indeed, our constitution had to embrace as many as thirteen amendments given the time-span might

throughout the world waging a just struggle against imperialism, colonialism or radicalism." Instead. let us be economical in words and be a good achiever Clause (3) of Article 56 restricts

the choice of the Prime Minister to the Member of the Parliament who appears to command the support of majority of the Members of the Parliament and clause (4) restricts appointment of mini to onetenth of their number from among those who are not Members of the Parliament. To follow the normative prescription of democracy, both of these restrictions need to be waived by a rider that any non-MP minister shall have to get elected to the Parliament within a time-limit, say, a maximum of six months. Clause (3) of Article 65 reserves 30 seats of the Parliament exclusively for women members. This weightage is against the principle of one-person-one-vote and should be discontinued at the earliest. Efforts should also be made to ensure, as long as the practice subsists, that these seats represent special interests and do not go to the winning party as bonus. Article 153(2) reads: "There shall

deemed for more than thirty plus years, notwithstanding democratic governance for most part of it. Street sentiment about these issues is of weary cynicism. Even after the directive of the Supreme Court in December 1999 no one really knows when the constitutional provision for judiciary shall be plemented. both the orovisions linger unfulfilled beyond the tenure of the present government like its democratic predecessors. these could be left quite legitimately to the charge of the non-party caretaker government for final resolution. In the event, the government shall be relieved of its burden in those areas and also benefit the citizens in a remarkable way, albeit after a long wait. Hartal (shutdown) is a nightmare to us. It distracts the nation of its larger ambition, helps create an environment that scares off capital and overshadows our search for progress too often. By now it has besmirched country's image a good deal and otherwise sympathetic aid donors to tighten their purse strings. On a less obvious level, public mind is caught up with a sense of powerlessness and a seepage of confidence sets in the minds about their

lies the seeds of public disillusion iudiciary from executive. But both these provisions remain unreand frustration. Obviously they view hartal through the prism of narrow partisan angle and compromise it with the national interest. A paradigm shift in their mental perception is clearly long overdue. Indeed if either of the mainstream political parties had agreed to give up hartal as a political instrument, it would not only be living up to its responsibilities to the na but might even acquire an enduring competitive edge in political terms. As we continue to remain hostage to the hartal syndrome especially due to the intransigence of the two mainstream political parties, it is time we give a serious thought to the people's right of direct democracy, -the right of referendum -- as the only option now left hopefully to rid the nation of the impasse once for all. But our representative system is an "arms-length" democracy where the people are consulted once only every five years. Having cast their votes, they are no better than bystanders with no further part to play in the governance of this country, whose affairs are perceived as being in the hands of single chamber government dominated by party machines. In such a context, our constitution should be flexible

people binge. And within this dichotomy

ence in the region because of the peace accord.

The authorities should tell us exactly what is obstructing the implementation process. We would like to say it categorically that we don't want a return of insurgency to the area in any shape and form. The delay has already divided the tribal leadership to a great extent; we just hope that it doesn't blow up into a bigger conflict.

We said it in the past and we are saying it again -- it was the peace accord that brought down the insurgency and the unrest of more than two decades and our best chances for moving things forward lie with it. The government has to build on this achievement much the same way that the tribal leadership should unitedly rally behind the cause of peace and development in the area. Only then the frustrations and disappointments of last five years could be washed away and the people of the hill tracts will be able to feel safe and secure, both mentally and physically as the region forged ahead.

by its triumphant return and flourished on the basis of people's consent. Should our lawmakers dedicate this day as a statement of the enduring values of the constitution that certainly would be a befitting tribute to our loyalty to constitutionalism. Away from expediency or novelty, the Day so dedicated is destined to serve as a worthy reminder to the ruling party of the parameters of power within which they are to operate and the government is run with due regard o such limitations as imposed by the constitution.

In a landscape like ours where constitution-awareness is waferthin with a vast cartel of illiterates and immature political democracy, the Day, in its exclusivity, should be an eminent occasion to inform the citizens of the supremacy of the constitution in regard to their governance along with the rights and

pick up some of these poor country-

men. The return flights are typically

achieved with minimal cost and

would go a long way in helping an

police with the respect that they

otherwise helpless few.

Wasim Choudhury

DMP morale

New York. USA

seem to be on the high side. Which, of course, does not suggest that the grand document is beyond amendment. Rather to treat the constitution with utmost reverence and feeling scared to touch it virtually makes it unworkable. It is one thing to engage in a debate over the wisdom of a particular constitutional provision and quite another to consider the value of the constitution over a long period of time. In fact, nothing is unchangeable barring the essential matrix of human rights and the supreme importance of human freedom which is universal. Notably, our constitution is quite in step with those fundamental exigencies -thanks to our constitution framers who in those euphoric dawns of independence did a splendid job on behalf of the nation, and it continues to give us meaning in our civil life.

be an authentic text of this Constitution in Bengali and in English, both of which shall be certified as such by Syed Badrul Haque is a former Public Relations Officer to the President, People's Republic of Bangladesh

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO Th

TO THE EDITOR 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.

Condensed Milk

The Daily Star has apparently taken a vow of neutrality on the condensed milk imbroglio, not taking any sides but just printing the press releases

According to the Canadian Dairy Council, "condensed milk is whole milk, partly skimmed milk or skimmed milk from which approximately 50 percent of the moisture has been removed. It must contain no less than 28 percent milk solids and 8 percent milk fat if whole milk was the raw material. The condensed skimmed milk must not contain more than 0.3 percent fat."

No vegetable fat for the Canadians then. However, the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the United States Department of Agriculture seems to accept vegetable fat in condensed milk as do the Europe ans

I am still thoroughly confused. I wish The Daily Star would go ahead and take a position on this issue Gora Dhaka

Whither!

This refers to Mr. Kim's letter on the above subject (January 28). The

use of the word 'whither' might seem archaic to Mr. Kim, but it is in no way obsolete, otherwise he would not have come across its frequent uses remain as illegally in the UAE rather by letter writers in The Daily Star. is largely used to introduce questhan risk being discovered at airports on their way out of the country. tions. However, according to Web ster's New Twentieth Century Dic-The amnesty allows the illegal to tionary (unabridged, second edition, leave the country without paying a 1979, p. 2088): "Whither is now fine until April 30. Many of the illegal in UAE are from largely replaced by where except in poetical or rhetorical usage". The Bangladesh, and as it is, they do not above word has been used in rhetohave employment or resources to ric sense. get back home on their own. Per-I wonder why did Mr. Kim miss the haps the government and Biman could arrange for Hajj flights going

main theme of the letter in question? Dr. K. Maudood Elahi Professor, Jahangirnagar Univer-

Bring back the stranded Bangladeshis

sitv

The government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is giving an amnesty to foreigners who live in that country illegally. Under current law, if a foreigner enters or stays in the country illegally -- typically by staying behind with an expired visa changing jobs without authorisation -- that foreigner is

subject to a steep fine for each day

he/she maintains the illegal status. deserve we will deserve the state This fine has been so high that most we're now in illegal are unable to afford the fine, In almost every aspect, the and they have hence chosen to

armed forces get more pay and astronomically better privileges than our police. By and large people seem to support this state of affairs. People in our country seem to have this concept that the army should be cocooned in privileges and the police should just stand and direct traffic.

With a finite amount of money, we can never afford to reform the police without transferring funds now wasted on the army

to Jeddah with pilgrims to stop on T Ali the return leg at Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Dhaka Shariah and other UAE airports and

World Cup and empty and the flights fly over UAE Bangladesh anyway. I think this process can be

World cup cricket will kick off within few days in South Africa. Like the other cricketing nations of the world, the people of Bangladesh is also eagerly waiting for this event

However, the performance of the national team ahead of the world cup is anything but encouraging. Bangladesh cricket team is finding i The DMP is trying to boost its morale hard to play against ICC associate through seminars. That's a waste of member Namibia. time. Until we start treating the

Batsmen are continuously failing

a bowler. It is also surprising that Namibia has a famous coach like Bob Woolmer whereas our cricket board has given the responsibility of the national team to a less-known Pakistani coach. It is expected that Bandladesh will win against Canada. But it now seems unlikely that the national team will win against their arch-rival Kenya. We hope Bangladesh will win their match against Kenya and show the cricketing world that we are indeed a better team than

to perform their duty. Perhaps, it is

because of having a coach who was

Kenya. Good luck, Bangladesh. Mohibul Dhaka

About army pullout

The army had been deployed for 87 days. The joint-drive operation was successful, more or less, no doubt. But the decision about the army pullout was indeed surprising, especially when the UP election is

The army pull out is very likely to create hindrance in holding a free and fair election. Besides, the terrorists and criminals who fled away during Operation Clean Heart is likely to return and make people's

life as miserable as ever. Will the government be able to handle the situation and maintain peace in the societv?

Md Rezaul Haque (Sumon) Dept of Economics, DU

No to war

I don't think The Daily Star is making a clear case against war in Irag. In its editorial of January 25 it says that this paper has advocated a robust UN role in resolving the crisis. But what was this paper advocating for the last ten years while the UN was plodding along in its usual robust manner

subsequent sniping with the UN

Why doesn't this paper call on Saddam to resign and go into exile leaving an interim government in charge under the UN's auspices?

The Daily Star writes that aviation, tourism and banking will be hard hit by a war against Iraq. I wonder what the Star's editorial

wrote before the last Gulf war. Was the paper even then asking for recognition of Iraq's 19th province and UN moderation?

The Economist magazine recently published several articles trying to quantify the cost of war. Under most scenarios the war would be over within three to four weeks. Such a short war would not have an unacceptable cost on the US or the world economy. I would hold that the reconstruction of a free Iraq would be a great boom, not only for the western consultants but also for our Bangladeshi labourers.

I would call for a quick and decisive war in Iraq. The world will be a better place with one less Saddam Hussein Satyajit

Dhaka Beatification of

Mother Teresa

"The Herald" a weekly journal ran by the Christian society of Kolkata stated on January 03, 2003 that the Missionaries Of Charity revealed that Pope John Paul 2nd has officially recognised Mother Teresa and approved the miracle obtained

through her intercession. The Beatification will officially take place in Rome on Mission Sunday, October 25th 2003.

After three and a half years of investigation and study, the Church (Holy Church of Rome) confirmed that Mother Teresa had heroically lived the Christian life. Mother Teresa's life was dedicated to the service of the poor and needy and it inspired many to follow the same path

According to the Missionaries of Charity it was stated "When Mother Teresa was with us, we were witnesses to her shining example of all the Christian Virtues." People of every religion still cherish her messages. Ever day Pilgrims from around the world come to pray at her tomb and many more follow her example of humble service and

love For information regarding the Beatification visit the official website www.motherteresacause.info

Khalid Rahman

Dhaka

The Daily Star is calling for a war on poverty to defeat terrorism. Well I agree with that, except for the fact that the Iragis are poor thanks to their own leader. If it were not for Saddam's disastrous war with Iran and his invasion of Kuwait and

Iraq would be a rich country now.

going on.