

## Big earthquake round the corner?

*Form a high-power body to assess quality of buildings*

It is a great deal worrying to learn that Chittagong and Rangamati have been jolted by earthquakes quite a few times in the last one week. People in the region are passing their days amid uncertainty and shock, fearing that a major seismic convulsion may occur any time.

The real extent of the damage caused by Friday's tremor in Rangamati is yet to be known, nor are the experts in a position to determine whether it boded any serious earthquake in the near future as they were not equipped with micro-seismic devices. It is on the whole believed that the country needed to brace for a major earthquake, thanks to the tectonic plate it is sitting on, which is said to be in a state of volatility.

The question of earthquake preparedness arises for obvious reasons at this point in time. A number of steps might be needed to minimise the losses caused by a major earthquake. It is disturbing to know that more than 90 per cent high-rise buildings in the city might not be able to absorb the shock of a quake of medium intensity. The buildings above the 10-storey level are particularly suspect as those were not built keeping in view the danger of an earthquake. Even the smaller buildings built on the brick masonry methodology are far from safe. Regrettably, the masons are still not paying any attention to what experts are saying about the looming danger of an earthquake. The buildings at risk fall in two broad categories -- the apartment buildings in the residential areas and the towers and high-rise structures in the business district. So, the casualties in the event of an earthquake could be unusually high in our context unless we can enhance our preparedness to the desired level.

We suggest the government form a technically competent high-powered committee to assess the quality of buildings focusing on how resistant these are to earthquakes of moderate to high intensity in terms of design, construction materials and engineering viability. Do the buildings have any built-in safety precautions against fire hazards and escape routes for the residents in case of emergency? The government owes it to the citizens to let them know what kind of high-rise buildings they are living and working in, especially in Dhaka and Chittagong metropolises.

## Abductors ruling the roost in Chittagong

*Political will needed to neutralise them*

THE kidnapped Chittagong business magnate going untraceable even after eight days of manhunt has brought to the fore the chilling sense of insecurity permeating the whole trading community in the port city. All-out efforts by the police force and the continuous flow of assurances to his family by several ministers have so far failed to bring Jamaluddin Ahmed Chowdhury back to his anxious family. Even the police sources have turned out to be of little help. The obvious question would be -- why? Who are these kidnappers? How could they dodge the police time and again, even though their hideouts have apparently been identified and raided?

All these questions could lead to one simple answer, or at least that's what we can deduce from a report published in Bangla daily Prothom Alo on Saturday. According to the report, there are at least nine active groups of kidnappers who have close links with political parties. On the other hand, politicians accuse policemen of being in nexus with criminals. In the middle of all these, the abductors have been able to get away with their crime. In fact, the main source of income for the gangsters has been kidnapping for ransom. And it wasn't only businessmen, members of their families had also been victims in the past.

Because of being the economic hub of the country, Chittagong has always been the most favourite place for the kidnappers. In addition to that -- thanks to lack of security and protection -- the business community has been living in fear for many years. It is said that several abduction cases might have got solved in the past without even involving the police. One thing is for sure, if political parties continued to give the gangsters shelter, then no one would be able to catch them or put a stop to their criminal activities. Now is the time, therefore, for the political parties to withdraw the oxygen of support to criminals. The abductors of Mr Chowdhury will have to be caught and Mr Chowdhury himself rescued safe and sound. Otherwise, not just the businessmen, it won't be long before other people fell victim to the ransom-seeking rackets.

## 'Post-Atlanticism' and the world order

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

ARGUABLY the forty year old paradigm of "transatlanticism" is all but over. Justin Vaisse (From transatlanticism to post atlanticism-July 28, 2003- Globe Politics) characterises the emergence of a new regime in US-Europe relations as "post-atlanticism". Reasons for the tectonic shift in transatlanticism are varied. Readily one could count the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the unparalleled military might of the US, and perhaps, most significantly, the terrorist attacks of nine-eleven as reasons for this structural change. Under the old system the Europeans and the Americans used to consult one another, were sensitive to each other's views, were respectful to international laws, and paid obeisance to international institutions particularly the United Nations. Under the new system the US decides unilaterally and European allies, often without proper information and discussion, are expected to obey. Justin Vaisse compares the present system with a royal court of the by-gone days when the power of each courtier was based not on his capabilities but on proximity to the person of the king and on unconditional loyalty to the king.

When France refused to play along in the UNSC for a second resolution on Iraq sanctifying automatic military intervention, Colin Powell expressed "disappointment that France has played frankly an unhelpful role in keeping pressure on Saddam Hussein". Echoing Powell's disappointment British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw expressed sadness that because of one country UNSC could not act. "President Chirac's unequivocal announcement" he said "that France would veto a second resolution whatever the circumstances inevitably created a sense of paralysis in our negotiations. I deeply regret that France has put Security Council consensus beyond reach". It has since been speculated whether France would have threatened a veto on an issue of vital national interest to the US had the transatlantic regime and the Soviet threat existed. Almost certainly not. Equally it is doubtful that the US would have tried to put through a second resolution without first clearing the text with her allies.

Clearly the Europeans enriched with centuries old experiences of war had reached the conclusion about the superiority of compromise over conviction (as expressed by European External Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten), as no less the

other parts of the world are uncomfortable with the precepts of "post-atlanticism". By now the entire world is familiar with the Bush National Security Strategy (NSS). John Lewis Gaddis of Yale University credits President Bush with following Periclean precedent that in a democracy even a grand strategy is a matter of public discussion. He, however, finds differences between Bush NSS and policy objectives of Clinton administration. President Bush told the West Pointers (June 1, 2002) that he would defend peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants, preserve peace by building good relations with great powers, and extend peace by encouraging free and open societies everywhere. By contrast President Clinton promised to enhance America's security,

dominant global power for its smooth functioning. Swedish Professor Bjorn Hettne warns that a hegemony being a consensual order can decline as a consequence of legitimacy deficit of the hegemon even if the coercive power resources remain intact. Hettne maintains that even reduction in military capability is compatible with maintenance of hegemonic position to the extent that the leadership of the hegemon continues to be accepted by the lesser powers. Bush NSS plans acceptance of American hegemony through cooperation with major powers -- a sharp contrast from Clintonian focus on justice for small powers. At this point one cannot but be reminded of Madeline Albright's observation to the Democratic members of the US

of peace and relative prosperity, the realisation of Kant's "perpetual Peace" (Power and Weakness -- Policy Review no. 113). In greater detail James Steinberg of The Brookings Institution has given other reasons for the transatlantic divide. Demographic changes linked to new waves of immigration both into Europe and the US have weakened the traditional ties of kinship and culture while creating new constituencies with little historical connection with transatlantic partners.

The nine-eleven events encouraged the US to establish close links with countries like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan etc. that shared US commitment of war against terror despite their leaders' undemocratic credentials. In order to secure Pakistan's cooperation,

skepticism (which) inevitably constrain the ability of the US to make most of its primacy (The End of Atlanticism -- Ivo Daalder -- Survival, Summer 2003). The policy of either you are with us or against us applied no less to the traditional allies on the other side of the Atlantic. Donald Rumsfeld's distinction between "old" and "new" Europe primarily referred to US attempts to win over support in the UNSC before Anglo-US invasion of Iraq. He was so incensed with German opposition that he had no compunction in relegating Germany to the proverbial dog house and to put Germany in the same category as Cuba and Libya of countries opposing the US invasion of Iraq.

American obsession with the trinity of terrorists, tyrants and

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America's economic prosperity, and promote democracy and human rights abroad. The first major innovation, writes Professor Gaddis, is Bush's equation of terrorists and tyrants as source of danger, an understandable outgrowth of nine-eleven. Cold War strategy of containment and deterrence obviously did not work in the case of shadowy individuals who could inflict great loss in human and material terms and incalculable tragedy spending an amount less than the price of a single battle tank.

NSS devised its own legal basis for preemption on the ground that nations need not suffer an attack before they can lawfully defend themselves against the aggressor. This legal basis has expanded the relatively non-controversial concept of preemption -- striking first against an imminent, specific, certain attack -- to one striking first to prevent the possibility of a longer term threat from developing. Preemption, therefore, becomes preventive war. Preemption, argues John Gaddis, requires hegemony. NSS makes it clear that American forces would be "strong enough to dissuade political adversaries from pursuing a military build up in hope of surpassing or equalling the power of the United States". In his West Point speech President Bush declared "America has and intends to keep military strength beyond challenge".

While the international community has already been introduced to Kinzelberger's Theory of Hegemonic Stability (1973) where an open world economy requires a

Congress that never in American history has there been such a sharp change in the US foreign and defence policies as between Bush and Clinton administrations.

What brought about this change? Simply put: the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet empire. In the words of Robert Kagan "The collapse of the Soviet empire led to a fundamental reordering of the international system, and to the current situation in which American global hegemony is the leading factor that shapes the present and almost certainly the future." In Kagan's view transatlantic problem is not a George Bush problem but a power problem in which Americans like to confront real or potential adversaries through policies of coercion. Europeans, on the other hand, would approach problems with greater nuance and sophistication, subtlety and indirection, greater tolerance of failure and preferring negotiations, diplomacy and persuasion to coercion.

End of the cold war spelt the loss of strategic centrality of Europe. The great transatlantic divide, therefore, is deep, long in development and likely to endure. The 1990s, a period now remembered as post-cold war era (as described by Ivo Daalder of the Brookings Institution) witnessed the rise of an European superpower but a decline of Europe into relative weakness as Europe (in the words of Robert Kagan) moved "beyond power into a self-contained world of laws and rules and transnational negotiations... entering a post-historical paradise

adds James Steinberg, in the war against terror, the US considerably downplayed its concerns about Pakistan's proliferation activities and the continuing restriction on democracy by a military government. The danger that terrorists might acquire WMD increased Bush administration's predisposition towards unilateralism. Despite NATO's immediate invocation of article 5 of the NATO charter declaring attack against one as attack against all members immediately after nine-eleven and its expressed willingness to act "out-of-the-area" the US accorded NATO a secondary role.

"Coalition of the Willing" replaced the traditional allies while "sovereignty" meant the freedom of action for the US and the concept of non-interference in the territory of another country was subordinated to the need by the US to act against perceived threats. President Bush's announcement to the US Congress in the aftermath of nine-eleven that henceforth US relations with other countries would be judged by whether they were "for us or against us" in the war against terror became the cornerstone of American foreign policy.

As Charles Krauthammer wrote (Washington Post -- June 8 2001) "After a decade of Prometheus playing pigmy, the first task of Bush administration would be to precisely reassert American freedom of action". Framers of hegemonic foreign policy began to regard international institutions, regimes and treaties with considerable

technology of WMD has not only challenged the Westphalian concept of sovereignty which served the world well since 1648 ending the Thirty Years' War but has also trampled on many international laws framed with great care in concert with the great Americans of the past, marginalised the UN, NATO and European Union. Legality of the Iraq war continues to be discussed in the media and the academia. Veiled threats to other members of the axis of evil and few other truant states (in the eyes of the US) are disturbing to peace mongers. Marginalisation of the UN despite Kofi Anan's advice to President Bush that the UN lends unique legitimacy to extra-territorial actions has caused unease in the international community.

That the situation is critical is not in doubt. The question remains as to how to resolve the crisis. Justin Vaisse sees three plausible European reactions. The first reaction is to play by the new rules as there is no other alternative. The second reaction would be to stick by the old transatlantic rules hoping that the Iraq episode was an aberration. The third reaction could be to foster European unity and independence in order to regain some leverage and follow a foreign policy more adapted to Europe's collective ideals and interests and cooperate with Washington on a case by case basis. Even triumphalist Robert Kagan advises the US "to show more understanding of the sensibilities of the others, a little more of the generosity of spirit that characterised American foreign policy during

## Reforming police administration

MOHAMMED IMAM UDDIN

THE common perception of people about the police is that they collect money, torture people, do not record complaints as per rules and procedures, have relationship with criminals/mastans and enjoy largesse from smuggling and drug trafficking. TIB News Scan Analysis report of 2002 identified police or law enforcing agency as the most corrupt sector in Bangladesh. TIB's report stated that the most common form of police corruption is abuse of power. The second most form of police corruption was bribery and third was extortion.

TIB had carried out a nationwide household survey on the prevailing corruption scenario in seven sectors of the country in 2002. The respondents were asked to name the most corrupt sector in two ways, one was opinion-based and the other, was on the basis of rate of falling prey to corruption. The police, i.e. the law enforcement agencies have been found to be most corrupt according to both criteria of the household survey.

The principal task of the police administration is to maintain law and order in the country; but they also have some direct and indirect responsibility of containing corruption. Despite that, there are many complaints against the police. As a

consequence, the distance between the police and the people is gradually widening.

The number of police has not grown at the same rate ratio as the country's population. Presently, the number of policeman in the country is one lakh nine thousand. In terms of proportion, there is only one police for every 13 thousand persons. Besides, a large chunk of the police force remains busy with

members of the police force; 157 have been dismissed. They range from Additional IG to Constable. But there is no change in the situation.

The administrative thanas or police stations of the country play an important role in efforts to control lawlessness, reduce criminality and check corruption. But there is a dearth of efficient, trained and meritorious police officers for running the police stations. There are

Aminur Rahman Khan. The main responsibility of that Commission was to submit necessary recommendations after identifying the prevailing problems in the police force. The Commission submitted recommendations consisting of 300 pages, but most of these had not been implemented. Presently, the proposal for establishing a counter intelligence unit headed by an Additional IG and comprising 500

to public service are selected for the job. By reducing their involvement in the private security of VIPs, the police can be engaged more for the service of the people. The quality of work at the police stations is expected to improve if its responsibility is given to an Assistant Superintendent of Police who had qualified in a BCS examination. Many people are of the view that corruption would decrease manifold if the

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providing security for the VIPs. It can be easily understood that the size of the police force is indeed small compared to their responsibility of maintaining law and order in such a huge population. The law and order situation in the country deteriorates and avenues for corruption are created due to many reasons. The existing administrative arrangements in the police force are also responsible to a large extent for its corrupt tendencies. Each year, thousands of cases are lodged against the police in the police headquarters. Between 1 October 2001 and 30 September 2002, punitive measures have been taken against 19 thousand mem-

also multifarious problems relating to infrastructure. At different times, the governments of the day use the police force for political purposes, as a result of which the legal basis of their work as well as their efficiency and morale suffer serious damage. The recently published UNDP report on 'Human security in Bangladesh' quotes the police as saying that there is regular interference in their work from the political parties, leaders and higher authorities. This research mentions that the police are quite dissatisfied with their existing salary-allowance structure and other facilities.

A Police Commission was constituted in 1988 headed by Justice

members, in order to improve the image of the police force and bring back transparency in its working, is under consideration of the Home Ministry.

Reforming the police force has now become urgent in the backdrop of the existing socio-economic realities. Its rules and regulations need to be modernised. Police administration should be decentralised and the basic force should work at sub-district level. The number of police should be raised to control law and order, reduce criminality and curb corruption. The recruitment process for the police force should be such that only meritorious, honest and people committed

police are not allowed to use Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code indiscriminately. A regulating mechanism involving judges and ombudsman should be evolved to protect innocent people and political opponents from arrest without warrant.

Laws may also be framed for keeping the police officers free from invisible influences. Police officials should be protected from political leaders and influential offenders by provisions such as, making it mandatory to record all instructions from any higher authority and regular monitoring of these records by the office of ombudsman. This will reduce fear of intimidation, which

the cold war... It could pay its respects to multilateralism and the rule of law and try to build some international political capital for those moments when multilateralism is impossible and unilateral action becomes unavoidable".

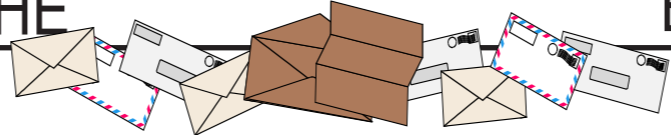
Andrew Moravcsik (Striking a new transatlantic balance -- Foreign Affairs -- July/August 2003) urges the Americans to learn a lesson from the Iraq war that winning peace is much harder than winning war. Intervention is cheap in the short run but expensive in the long run. And when it comes to essential instruments of avoiding chaos or quagmire Europe becomes indispensable and thus the unipolar world becomes bipolar or even multipolar. Should Europe keep its distance and leave the US to its own devices then the US which lacks both the will and institutional capacity for nation building will be left out in the cold.

It has, however, been argued that security challenges facing the US and Europe are more shared than divergent. While the US remains the prime target for terrorist attacks one should not forget the attacks on French tanker in the Persian Gulf and the French workers in Pakistan; bombing of the discotheque at Bali and the Al-Qaida threats to attack western targets in general. Besides, transformation of Russia into a cooperative and stable member of the international society should be of equal interest to both the US and Europe. Of no lesser interest should be to guard against possibility of WMD materials from the Soviet era falling into wrong hands. Both transatlantic partners should have a stake in the stabilisation of the Balkans and perhaps more importantly in the successful implementation of the Middle East road map.

In the ultimate analysis, foreign policy of all powers -- major and minor -- has to be globalist in character. In today's globalised world trade and banking, security and insecurity have become borderless. Therefore while separation in the fifty-year old marriage may occur complete divorce is inconceivable. Though the swagger, the pugnaeous language, and deep religiosity (not that Europeans are atheists or agnostics) of President Bush is foreign to many Europeans, in the post-atlanticist era transatlantic cooperation and mutual respect as shown in the earlier period is *sine qua non* for the prosperous future of the world.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

## 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.

### India-Bangladesh relationship

India is the biggest country in South Asia and it has nuclear power. Its relations with the neighbouring countries, especially with Bangladesh, for the last 30 years, have not been up to the expectation due to reasons best known to the Indian authority. The people of Bangladesh always express their profound gratitude to India for their support and cooperation in providing shelter to about one crore of people in their land during the distressing days of the Liberation war. The existing relationship between the two countries is gradually deteriorating mainly due to the big brotherly attitude of India. Bangladesh whose territory is

surrounded by India always tries to maintain a good relationship. On the contrary, India always intends to dominate this country almost in every possible respect. The freedom-loving people of Bangladesh find it very hard to be dominated by any other. India should remember that she is a big country and has some responsibilities towards smaller countries like Bangladesh. Mutual trust and respect will help to create confidence in both the Bangladeshi and Indian peoples. **A. Shahadat Rajshahi**

### Iraq blues

Militarily the Iraq war was a cakewalk for the combined British-American forces, but the post-war Iraq proves a different terrain, if the

continual number of body bags that are being sent back home are any indication. Sir John Bagot Glubb in 1959 in his book, Britain And the Arabs wrote, "The Arabic-speaking countries are easy to conquer... The troubles of the would-be invader only begin when the conquest is over." **Syed Badrul Haque Lalmatia, Dhaka**

### How to improve Inland Ship Safety

Our minister of shipping Akbar Hossain should admit his failure after the tragic river incident of MV Salahuddin followed by MV Nasrin recently. It is a fact for almost last hundred years the IG0-RSN and

later EP shipping corporation had been operating passenger services in Dhaka, Chandpur and Barisal sector without any serious accident. That was possible because those passenger ships were built with high degree of stability and sufficient engine power. Whereas, the present set of locally built passenger ships are generally unstable and under powered. They capsize during storms or collisions giving no time to passengers to grab lifejackets. Because of their low horsepower, they cannot encounter adverse river currents.

A few suggestions about how to improve inland passenger ships in our rivers safe:

(1) No passenger ship should be allowed to leave the terminals overloaded with passengers.

(2) We cannot eliminate the large number of ships that are already on the rivers. These should be inspected by people with technical knowledge of this sector and subjected to modification if required to improve stability.

(3) As a long-term measure, immediately set up the Inland Ships Safety Administration, ISSA. After exhaustive study of IWT sector, the World Bank gave concrete proposal back in 1994 to create the body ISSA to bring under one umbrella the entire management of this sector. ISSA should be provided with qualified staffs like marine engineers, naval architects, navigators etc. with sufficient clout to give a professional service. Design and drawing of new ships and construction will be under the supervision of

this board. After completion ISSA surveyors will carry out stability tests, like speed trials and make the necessary inventory of life saving and fire fighting appliances. They will assign the final registration. In short, ISSA should be the watchdog of all inland ships. **Sakhawat Hossain Gulshan, Dhaka**

### Recognising contribution

Though belated, I believe there is still time for us to honour the foreigners who was on our side during the Liberation war. More than thirty years have passed after independence but no move has been made so far by any of the governments to recognise the contribution of our foreign friends officially except

Ouderland who is honoured with a Birprotic title. But that is not enough. Many of them have already passed away.

We must recall that India gave us a shoulder under the leadership of then prime minister the late Indira Gandhi; George Harrison who was an icon of rock music drew the attention of the world towards our liberation war. But sadly no monument got erected or no road or institution was named after them. Hundreds of Indian soldiers lost their lives to liberate us but still no mausoleum is erected to honour their sacrifice. **Naushad Shahriar Bashabo**

### Late Barrister Sayed Ishtiaq

We remember late Barrister Sayed

Ishtiaq Ahmed, the eminent lawyer and an outstanding personality. While his tenure as one of the advisors in the last caretaker government he made sincere effort to separate the judiciary from the executive branch, one of the most fundamental demands of the citizens, and the electoral commitment to both AL and BNP. Unfortunately our politicians did not respond to the issue in the right earnest, rather they have been rendering only lip service to it. Two years have gone by without any progress to the matter and the law and parliamentary affairs minister Barrister Maudud Ahmed is now saying that it will take 710 years to separate the judiciary. I wonder if the minister is taking us for a ride? **Md. Abu Musa Chittagong**