

Happy to be part of international effort

But US should act with extreme caution

BANGLADESH government has acceded to the US request for over-flight and re-fuelling facilities through her territory in the event that an international anti-terrorist operation is launched in the region. Last week we added our voice to the universal condemnation of the horrible terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. Both a principle and an emotion were attached to the outcry we posted to the worldwide consternation at the heinous act. We thought civilised norms were trampled underfoot by the disregard shown to the sacrosanct of human lives. That way it has been a matter of principle with us. And with the knowledge that Bangladeshi blood was spilled in the tragedy along with that of other nationalities, the international implications of the destructive potential of terrorism dawned on us never before.

Against this extraordinary backdrop, and in keeping with UN resolutions on the subject, Bangladesh government has decided to extend a helping hand to an international military campaign, seemingly in the works, against terrorist networks in the region. The most obvious targets of US retaliatory attacks seem to be Afghanistan, its Taliban regime and Bin Laden, the prime suspect in the terrorist attacks, the regime hosts. In view of such a confusing mix of targets we would warn against any victimisation of a whole country and its people. China, Russia, France, and a few other European allies of the USA while voicing a common resolve with America to fight terrorism have counselled her against mounting an action without any clear-cut mission. Strike at the root of terrorism by all means but to unleash a massive attack on fuzzy, unclear targets could not merely embroil the USA in a Soviet-style war of attrition in Afghanistan but also sound death knell to thousands of innocent people in the area. The good thing about procuring 'hard evidence' against the alleged culpability of an implacable enemy is that it makes the counter-action convincing, focused and effective.

As a cautionary advice, let's urge the USA to visualise the repercussions its action without any defined goals is bound to have on the fate of the region. Pakistan will be swamped by Afghan refugees on top of the two million it has been looking after since the end of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1989. The country could itself be politically destabilised. In fact, the entire region might well be thrown into a fresh vortex of unending trouble as impoverished Afghanistan, already reeling in four consecutive years of drought, is imperilled further.

Our hope is that the US will brace itself for a sustained fight against terrorism in concert with the rest of the world rather than settle for a quick-fix of a spectacular no-win situation.

Free garments factories from fire

Without safety standards garments sector faces serious threats

THE initiative to protect garments workers at their place of work from fire and other hazards is not only part of an ethical framework of industrialization or rights of labourers but also common business sense. The situation has to improve dramatically at the factories because international market demands compliance with minimum standards. Safety standards need to be improved if only to sustain export.

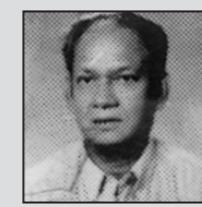
The recent workshop jointly organized by the BGMEA, Bangladesh Engineering University (BUET), Bangladesh Scouts and The Daily Star concluded that the best way to address the issue was to relocate the industries in an appropriate zone meant to house such factories. The problem was obviously spawned because of unplanned setting up of factories wherever possible. As it usually happens, the industrial boom outran common safety sense. The time however has come to change all that to save the sector itself.

While the concern was triggered by the recent spate of fires in the factories killing numerous workers, it's obvious that safety measures now have to be factored into the entire production process. The international compliance regime that is supported by the UN agencies will have more to say on which country or factory gets the right to export based on certain basic standards. That will mean the concern for workers' rights and welfare won't be part of any charity scheme but of the total export strategy. Ensuring safety through structural frameworks will be easier to promote as well.

No less than 126 girls have died in such fire incidents in the last decade. If these deaths help to lessen future body counts they will have some meaning. Their wretched lives and deaths may serve as a wake up call to investors and regulators.

Women in garment factories have fulfilled their quota of death by fire. It's time that they got a decent quota of safety and wages. One must applaud the efforts of the owners and other agencies to improve the state of life in the industry and hope that compliance practices too will come to the aid of the industry by providing positive guidelines to bring profit in line with equity.

Taleban on trial



ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

content to carry on their activities within their borders in Afghanistan. They have made an appearance in as far away a place as Bangladesh. It is unclear the degree of their penetration within Bangladesh. Yet they are a constant phenomenon in our media.

The Taleban seems to have overplayed their hand by harbouring the number one international terrorist Osama Bin Laden. Bin Laden has had brushes with number one world

Osama Bin Laden from Afghanistan. Bin Laden has repeatedly denied involvement in the recent bombings in New York and Washington DC. The US has demanded that Pakistan cooperates fully with the US in its campaign against the Taleban regime. After a lengthy debate within the military rulers of Pakistan, they have decided to extend full cooperation to the US. This would effectively mean sealing of the long, porous border with

important player in Afghanistan. A large part of the Afghan population is Persian speaking. The southern part of the former Soviet Union, specially Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, have very close ties with Afghanistan. Following the advent of the Taleban on the scene more than a decade ago, civil war erupted between the forces in the north led by the hero of the war against the Soviet Union, Ahmed Shah Masood and the Taleban

Washington Pakistan has faced an almost impossible choice. On the one hand Pakistan's offer of cooperation with the US is a sure step towards the destruction of Taleban, which was masterminded and created by Pakistan. It would mean return to square one. It would mean return to the situation that existed after the withdrawal of Soviet troops. In other words Afghanistan, during its long history of serving as battle ground for competing inter-

gious parties mount a challenge against the military regime in Pakistan? Popular sentiment within Pakistan is likely to be pro-Taleban, although there is also genuine sorrow at the death and destruction in New York and Washington DC.

The US authorities have also asked from Bangladesh permission for using our air space and port facilities should they stand in need. The administration of President George W Bush has stated that it is war and they are ready to wage a war if necessary a long one and on many fronts. This is the war of the 21st century war against terrorism. There is a world wide consensus against terrorism and the US is entering the field with a very large coalition. NATO has declared that a strike against any of its 19 members is a strike against all. Countries like India have declared total support to the US cause. Since India is a victim of cross border terrorism in Kashmir, she naturally wants to join hands. Throughout the world such instances can be multiplied by the dozen. It would not be an easy matter to know where to stop.

The US seems to have been cast against the Taleban. Their fiery entry on the world stage appears doomed to end. Instability in Pakistan and its neighbours appears to be the natural outcome. South Asia appears heading for a long period of instability.

Arshad-Uz Zaman is a former Ambassador

THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

The religious parties within Pakistan warned the military regime not to cooperate with the US and create difficulties for the Taleban. Yet the US appeared so totally determined that Pakistan had little choice in the matter. Will the religious parties mount a challenge against the military regime in Pakistan? Popular sentiment within Pakistan is likely to be pro-Taleban, although there is also genuine sorrow at the death and destruction in New York and Washington DC.

superpower, the USA. Now according to the highest authorities in the US Bin Laden has been directly involved in the latest horrendous bombing of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC. The US response has been swift for in the entire history of the US for the first time the symbols of US capitalism and power have been attacked and destroyed. Comparison has been drawn with the Japanese strike in Pearl Harbour in 1941, when the US navy was destroyed. Yet Pearl Harbour was not situated in American mainland.

The US has demanded from Pakistan that it helps in capturing

Afghanistan, allowing US troops to station in Pakistan bases and overflight to US planes. In other words it would effectively mean choking to death the Taleban regime.

The situation seems to come full circle. Pakistan had created the Taleban to fill the vacuum within Afghanistan following the humiliating withdrawal of the Soviet Union after its decade long campaign there. Landlocked Afghanistan, with whom Pakistan shares a long border and the majority of whose Pushto speaking population have their kith and kin in the Frontier province of Pakistan, has a long history of interaction. Iran is another

force. The north of Afghanistan remained outside the control of the authorities in Kabul. Within the last few days Masood has died in the hands of hired assassins.

Meanwhile a delegation from Pakistan has handed over their demands to the Taliban authorities in Kandahar in the south of Afghanistan, that they hand over Osama Bin Laden to the US authorities. The Taliban authorities have already declared that any state cooperating with the US will be treated as

In the unfolding drama following the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon in

ests, will return to that traditional position. For Pakistan the loss will be enormous. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Pakistan has been trying hard to enter the southern Republics of the former Soviet Union, who are Muslim and have close ties with Turkey and Iran.

The fall of the Taleban will mean a quantitative fall in the influence of Pakistan within Afghanistan.

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OPINION

All of a sudden our names have become our liability

A.H. JAFFOR ULLAH

In every sort of danger, there are various ways of winning through, if one is ready to do and say anything whatever." Socrates, quoted in Plato, 'Apology'

On September 11, 2001, the day America was under siege in morning hours, CBS anchorman Dan Rather was chatting with Fouad Ajami, a John Hopkins University professor, in the live broadcast from CBS's New York City studio over the day's unprecedented events.

Professor Ajami is a noted scholar on Islamic world.

Whenever Arab world

is implicated with anything *pro or cons*, Professor Ajami is summoned to the CBS studio.

Tuesday, September 12 was no different. The erudite professor was adamant when he said that if either Osama bin Laden or any Islamic terrorist groups from Middle-East were implicated in this crime against humanity, there will be massive repercussions against Muslim Americans for sure.

CBS's veteran anchorperson Dan Rather immediately sensed the implication of Prof. Ajami's statement; he was quick to remind the viewers that overwhelming Muslims living in America have nothing to do with terrorism; therefore, we should not stereotype the Muslim people with terrorism. It is comforting to know that CBS's Dan Rather would go an extra mile to warn the viewers that we should not equate Muslim folks living in America with terrorism.

In spite of all the forewarning given to the viewers in all the news channels, this scribe has serious doubts that every one in the West will pay heed to TV sages such as Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, or anyone like them. Thus, Muslims living in the West for that matter, Caucasian Asian people with dark skin should brace for tough time ahead.

Professor Ajami's prediction came true sooner than one could think.

Of course, we all know that on February 26, 1993, some Muslim terror-

ists bombed the World Trade Center and in the aftermath of that bombing Arab Muslims in America had to endure a deluge of verbal insults and humiliation. But this time, in the wake of Black Tuesday's demolition of WTC's Twin Tower and parts of Pentagon Building by suspected Arab terrorists the situation is one-hundred times more grievous than the past one. Therefore, the Muslim communities in America and even in Europe are bracing for bad times ahead.

Barely two days after the suicidal terrorists' carnage we heard the news in the radio (CNN) that Muslim people became the object of ridicule and derisiveness. In Dallas, a mosque took some bullets; whereas in Chicago, an Arab business was hit by Molotov Cocktail. Also, elsewhere in America a Pakistani woman dressed in ethnic garb was about to be run over by an irate driver. Because of all these incidents happening in four corners of America, we have received e-mails from various sources in which specific instructions were given how to avoid unpleasant circumstances. Here in America not only the people from Middle-Eastern background were singled out for retaliatory action, but immigrants from South Asia also were receiving epithets and physical threats. In New York City, where emotions are running high, turban-clad Sikhs were singled out mistakenly as Arabs. Some of those folks also received physical threats. Here in Louisiana, a school teacher asked my spouse point blank whether her name is an Islamic one. Although there was no threat associated with such questioning, but the experience could be bone chilling.

Just 72 hours after the demolition of skyscrapers in New York City, the FBI has released the name of 18 suspected terrorists who engineered the vile attack. Here I reproduce the names of these terrorists. The suspected hijackers aboard American Airlines Flight 11, which

hit the north tower of the World Trade Center, were: 1. Walid Al Shehri; 2. Wail Alsheri aka Waleed Alsheri; 3. Mohammad Atta; 4. Abdul Alomari; 5. Satam al-Suqami. Aboard United Airlines Flight 175, which hit the south tower of the World Trade Center, the suspected hijackers were: 6. Marwan Alshehhi; 7. Fayed Ahmed; 8. Mohald Alshehri; 9. Hamza Al Ghadami; 10. Ahmed Al Ghadami. Those believed to be the hijackers aboard American Airlines Flight 77, which hit the Pentagon, were: 11. Khalid Almihdhar; 12. Majed Moqed; 13. Nawaf Al Hazmi; 14. Salem Al Hazmi. The suspected hijackers aboard United Airlines Flight 93, which crashed in rural Pennsylvania, were: 15. Ahmed Al Haznawi; 16. Ahmed Alnami; 17. Ziad Jarrah; 18. Saeed Alghamdi.

There is a reason for listing those names of the suspected terrorists. One can easily see that most of those suspected terrorists have Arabic names. Muslim people irrespective of where they come from have names such as Abdul, Mohammed, Ahmed, Saeed, Khaid, etc. The Americans who have very little contact with outside world (believe me, there are plenty of them everywhere) may have gotten the impression that Arabic sounding names belong to terrorists and as such people having such names in their communities may have something to do with terrorism. This is what is called "guilt by association." This is a real nightmare for many Asian immigrants who live in urban areas known to be ethnic and physical threats. Here in Louisiana, a school teacher asked my spouse point blank whether her name is an Islamic one. Although there was no threat associated with such questioning, but the experience could be bone chilling.

In the aftermath of Black Tuesday, September 11, 2001, we find ourselves very vulnerable and this is all because of the action of a handful of Arab terrorists.

Suddenly, our Arabic sounding names have become our greatest liability.

Quite a few South Asian Muslims have instructed their children who attend schools not to associate their names with Arabs. Suddenly, our South Asian identity has taken

different meaning. Mind you, not too long ago, some of our folks from Bangladesh used to relish on our Middle-Eastern roots via Islam, our main religion in our motherland. All that is changing very fast. Some new parents are making some compromise by picking names such as Adam, Daniel, Sarah, Miriam to camouflage their Muslim identity. Not a bad trick, may I add? On the extreme side, though, some folks whom I have talked have indicated that changing the names is a distinct possibility. Some have started

thinking in that direction. On Friday, September 14, 2001, I saw a write-up in *News From Bangladesh*, an Internet newspaper for expatriates, in which a writer by the name Jahed Ahmed has publicly changed his name to Ray Jahed Akash. It is an interesting name having three components each comprising of a Western, Arabic, and Indic names. Therefore, it will be easy for Jahed Ahmed to be known as Ray. Thereby, he may be excluded from any future wrath directed to folks with unusual Middle-Eastern name.

It is too early to say whether Jahed Ahmed has started a new trend or not. However, it is for sure that tens and thousands of people living in the West who have Arabic names are now thinking seriously about the implications of having an Arabic name in the wake of devastating terrorists' attack in American soil. Suddenly, we are facing the reality that our very names that were given to us by our parents at birth have become our greatest liability.

A.H. Jaffor Ullah, a senior scientist, writes from New Orleans, USA

PHOTORIAL

Readers are invited to send in exclusive pictures, colour or black and white, of editorial value, with all relevant information including date, place and significance of subject matter. Pictures received will not be returned.



Peaceful coexistence?

To an extent it is, so to say, under circumstances, BNP activists and supporters using 'boat', the symbol of AL, to campaign for 'sheaf of paddy'. Ironical indeed, but there's a message. Whatever their degree of opposition to the rival's symbol, as they most often show in their actions, they cannot do without it as in this waterlogged countryside. Similarly their opponents also cannot do without what they have chosen for symbol: Who can do without paddy (or rice) the main staple? So they have to coexist, and peacefully too. Do they, both of them and all of them, get the message?

STAR PHOTO: A.K.M. MOHSIN

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

Attack against whom?

I have heartfelt sympathies for the Americans, where I once lived, ones who have lost their near and dear ones at the grave and grim carnage of the century. And I condemn such act of terrorism.

I also welcome international cooperation against terrorism; but cannot appreciate the attitude of the US and their allies, when they are making up mind, to attack or to wage war against a particular country or a community. It's not clear verbatim resolution of the US and NATO to attack Afghanistan in particular and the Muslims in general. As report goes many Muslims and establishments in the US are already under attack or interrogation and even the mosques are not spared! Isn't it then a hollow statement when the British PM in the House of Commons declared that "Islam is not responsible" or "any blind retaliation on innocent Muslim or Arab cannot be tolerated". Whereas on the other hand the US is adamant and reportedly getting ready to go ahead on war footing with or without the support of her allies.

Whenever there was such heinous activity perpetrated, the blame rightaway came on the Muslims, (as depicted in BBC video coverage).

directly or indirectly. In no time (as the US prepare for the war) the Western governments might try to punish Afghanistan, who knows may be Palestine, Iraq or Libya (as the listed countries) as they fight for the Muslim cause and they talk fundamentals (irrespective of their compassion and claim of no connection with the Tuesday's incident).

And now America, for the arrogance and vengeance, is preparing for the war against 'elusive' and 'invisible' enemy. Tell me please, if the US or for that matter the Western powers wage a war on the poor and ravaged Muslim country already in ruins, would it not be an attack on humanity? Would it not kill innumerable innocent people similar to the carnage at the pride & might of the so-called superpower?

Why should some unconcerned unfortunate people of the world be punished for the act of some individuals? And if the reported action is to follow then how would they claim to be civilized and differentiate them from the terrorists? What will then be 'good' and what will be 'evil'? They should by now learn that Osama bin Laden is one but there are many 'bin Ladens' all over (as depicted in BBC video coverage).

How many will they contain? Shame on the US prowess, who seek cooperation and assistance from the whole world to fight an individual who has declared 'holy war' against the infidels (as they did in Iraq to fight only one Saddam Hussein)!

As I said I have every sympathy for the innocent lives and the world 'landmark' lost (I will miss the WTC for life), but I ask the world community where do you take your slumber when each and every day US fighters destroy huts and humans in Iraq or that or that plead (or for their vested interests) and Israelis demolish Palestinian homes and shell barbarously to kill innocent children, women and men who are practically unconcerned (sad, tanks reply the stone-throwing populace, without any interception by the so-called civilized nations)? Is it not true that the process of annihilation of the Muslims are going unabated when the 'civilized' world community under the leadership of the US are talking about peace, accord and summit meetings and dilly dallying the statehood of the Palestinians? Will it be too much, if the Arab Muslims left with no alternative (having no one at their side sin-

cerely) take to streets or take a suicide attack on the State which patronizes injustice and punishes innocents?

A dedicated Muslim

crashed in Pennsylvania woodland on the same day almost the same time. Two black boxes have reportedly been recovered but the US government investigators are not opening their mouth. The speculations are going high in media. No confirmations have been received yet regarding the suicide attackers, but the newspapers are already carrying the devastating headlines like "WE