

Involve the UN

Take all countries on board to fight terrorism

THE US fire power is perilously close to dropping its lethal payload in Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden is sought to be 'smoked out' from his hideout in that war-torn and drought-stricken beleaguered country. Speculations abound, however, that he may have already left the company of his benefactor Molla Omar, the supreme leader of the ruling Taliban regime in Afghanistan, for some other haven. If indeed this has happened then the Taliban regime will be facing the full fury of the US attack, not to mention the civilian casualties to be entailed.

What makes the scenario look dangerously loaded is a hint dropped by a *New York Times* report, based on a purported discord between the Secretary of State and the Assistant Secretary of Defence, that Saddam may be a target alongside Bin Laden. To the best of our knowledge, the US did not officially link Saddam Hussein to the terrorist attacks in the USA. But the only country to do so has been Israel from the very beginning. Tel Aviv has apparently played on the notion that only Saddam could have such a motivation. Whatever maybe the Israeli assumptions, the fact remains that if the US takes on the Iraqi leader afresh it will send a negative signal to the Arabs that the US paid heed to Israeli words. To that extent, they might feel put off in extending their crucial cooperation to the US to fight terrorism. In fact, several Arab states have already made it known that they would join the coalition against terrorism if Israel is not in it.

Over the last week when the US warships and fighter planes were being moved close to the Middle East and Afghanistan we thought the US was putting in place some arrangements for global policing. But the latest reports suggest that their operations code-named 'Infinite Justice' or 'Noble Eagle' are perhaps a whisker short of taking place in reality. President Bush's utterance -- "you are either with us or with the terrorists -- reverberates".

We are for a consensual international approach towards combating terrorism which in terms of its network has assumed the veritable character of a global scourge. The European Union representing NATO, so to speak, has called for initiative to fight terrorism under the auspices of the UNO. The basis for a UN role has been already postulated through the Security Council resolution No 1368 of 2001. It "condemned in strong terms the terrorist attacks in the US and called upon all states to work together to bring the perpetrators to justice". The UNGA is scheduled to discuss international terrorism on October 1. The occasion should be used to form a committee and assign it to follow up on the UNSC resolution so as to hammer out a comprehensive strategy to checkmate terrorism for the greater interest of the greatest number.

Turning a blind electronic eye

The non-use of airport surveillance TV points to a bigger malaise

THE Civil Aviation Authorities in Bangladesh (CAAB) are making a strange point by refusing to use their close circuit TVs (CCTVs) to ensure security in the ZIA airport. It means, you can drag a horse to the water tank but you can't make it drink. One may install all fancy electronic gadgetry at huge expenses, but who shall switch it on? The problem is deeper than an inefficient electronic eye. It is in the system of security that has virtually crashed at the airport.

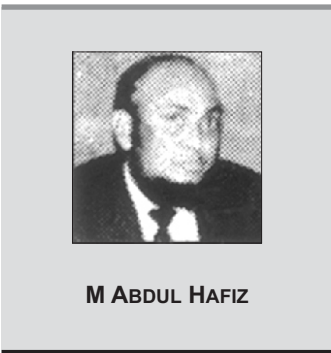
Had shutting off CCTVs been the only woe one could have repaired that problem. Unfortunately, it's only one of the ills that plague the ZIA complex. Apparently, these CCTVs are used but to spy on each other. Although there many instances of passenger harassment to downright smuggling recorded by the cameras they have never been used to end such situations. This is probably a case of turning the proverbial blind eye.

But why would that happen unless of course there is more to it than what meets the electronic or eyes of other sorts. This is no secret that much goes on at the airport that qualifies as "off limits" activities and this sort of refusal to use CCTVs could well be linked to that. Such accusations are inevitable when despite claiming to have electronic evidence, it's never used. Something certainly smells.

Transparency will happen only when the higher authorities too believe in it and practice them. It's difficult to have only a section within the airport management acting responsibly when the rest roll merrily along doing their own thing. It isn't just CAAB but the immigration, customs or baggage sections are also derelict denizens there. In fact the space outside the airport has been often called a high yielding variety crime zone that is protected by political muscle.

What is happening at CAAB is only part of the problem, just one symptom of the malady. The disease is far deeper, which is a refusal by public organizations to be accountable to the people. That sense of service must be installed before they can be traced on surveillance cameras. And for that a TV channel switch isn't enough. A system switch is necessary.

A time for introspection not war



M ABDUL HAFIZ

WHEN on 11 September last the terror struck the United States smashing down two of its great symbols of power, the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, it significantly changed the traditionally held notions of the security of the nations. Because the world's most formidable military and the largest arsenal remained in their places while the devastation overtook the nation exploding, in the process, the myth of American power. It also turned a new leaf in the history of conflict as an invisible enemy sneaked through the intricate layers of the country's defence and a complex web of national surveillance to strike at the heart of 'fortress America' also guarded by the world's largest mass of water. The stunned Americans who have been dealt with a total surprise are still gasping to understand what awaits them next.

The Americans avenged their defeat at Pearl Harbour in 1945 when the history's first ever atomic bomb was dropped on Japan. But they could hardly get over the trauma of Vietnam which cost them 58,000 American lives. Now their disaster in the hands of a traceless enemy will haunt them for a long time to come and it will be far from easy to overcome its emotional shock on national psyche. Even when the life is back on the rail and the normalcy is fully restored, the United States will perhaps never be the same again; neither will the perception of the rest of the world remain unchanged about the world's sole superpower. A phantom

enemy, with its unprecedented skill, daring and precision in hitting its chosen targets changed those equations in international relations. It caused a geo-political earth quake drastically altering the familiar contours of the world's strategic landscape. Indeed, the world seems to have spinned out of its pivot that America has, so far, been with its supra-national stature.

The carnage in which thousands of innocent men, women and children perished was a human tragedy

introspection, sobriety and going deep into the possible dynamics behind repeated acts of terrorism against her. Instead, to bring a recalcitrant Taliban regime to its heel the US, reminiscent of nineteenth century gunboat diplomacy, is briskly mobilising troops, dispatching warships to the operational theatre, rallying support of the allies and arousing its own people with the battle cry for a long protracted war against the bases of international terrorism. In tandem, with this

grievances of the disadvantaged, backward and weak nations of the world it wants to silence them with sheer weight of the strength. It does work for a while but the backlash is bound to reappear in much more violent form.

We mourn for those who were dead in recent mayhem in America, sympathise with those who were maimed and crippled and share the griefs of those who lost their kith and kin. But do not the Americans also owe the display of similar senti-

perturbed at the violence of rock-throwing Palestinians but look the other way when Israel brings in F-16 to strafe the civilians in Palestinian West Bank. In the garb of honest broker in Middle East peace process she clearly takes the side of Israel and attempts to coerce an old decrepit Arafat into signing a document that neither gives Palestinians a viable state nor a control even Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem. The US also backs Israeli stand in blocking the return of the millions of Palestinians

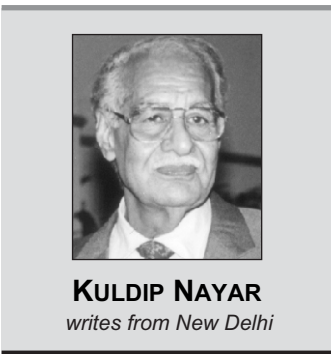
image as a 'crazy brave' mujahid fighting a Jihad against Soviet infidels. It is an irony that Laden is labeled a 'terrorist' by the same people! America is known for its double standard but it has reached a peak with regard to its role in Afghanistan. Afghans were 'Mujahideens' in the eye of the Americans only decade ago. Now they are terrorists because the assertion of their way of life no more suits American interests. No wonder that even George Washington was once called a terrorist.

Nevertheless, the Americans are a great nation, the torch bearer of the modern civilization and the champion of democracy and freedom at least, in their own country. One likes it or not, the destiny has placed them in a position to shape this world in certain mould. Therefore the international community has a great expectation from the Americans whose forefathers suffered persecution, deprivation and discrimination before they undertook perilous voyage to an unknown land and built up a great polity. The global community, weary of a conflict-torn world, is unanimous in their yearning for the end of terrorism, violence and coercion. But war is certainly not the way that would lead to the fulfilment of that yearning. If the history is any guide, no settlement through war had ever been enduring. It is aptly said that the treaty of Versailles itself contained the seed of the second world war. The result of fighting terrorism without stamping out the causes of it is bound to be illusory. It is impossible to fight an enemy having blind faith in his cause and little to lose.

It is only with love, compassion and a deep understanding of the suffering, deprivation and injustices meted out to the weaks and vulnerable that one can adopt a positive approach to combat terrorism. The revenge, hatred and use of force will only breed further terrorism and intensify it. And it is always the privilege of the powerful to be magnanimous, compassionate and understanding.

Brig (Retd) Hafiz is a former DG of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies.

A wishy-washy foreign policy



KULDEEP NAYAR
writes from New Delhi

HOW one wishes there had been a Jawaharlal Nehru! When the UK and France attacked the Suez in 1956 to capture it, he said that the big powers were trying to reintroduce colonial control. Again, when the communists took over Hungary, he pointed out that the desire for national freedom was stronger than any ideology and could not be suppressed.

His was the voice which no threat or consideration could silence. Probably, that is the reason why India's opinion counted in the world affairs at that time. Things have dramatically changed now. There is none, not even a Mrs Indira Gandhi, to question America. Washington is justifiably infuriated after the terrorist attacks against the civil society. And no words are strong enough to condemn those who have killed thousands of innocent people. They must be punished, wherever they are.

But America should not forget that it is part of the international community. It cannot take a decision first and then ask the world, however willing, to follow it. When all nations have more or less announced their support to the fight

against terrorism, why is it averse to endorsement by an international forum? Many countries are suffering from the acts of terrorists. All would like to participate in any action to chastise the terrorists. But if the US acts unilaterally, it sends the message that it cares little if others come or not.

India under a Nehru would have asked for a UN meeting.

But the Atal Behari Vajpayee government is so concerned over America's tilt towards Pakistan that

are two sides of the same coin. His approach is different. He relies on force as one of the levers to obtain the objective in the foreign field. Little does he realise that violence cannot lead to a solution of any major problem today. It can only breed violence. If an ideal society cannot be created by big-scale violence, can small-scale violence help? It will only produce an atmosphere of conflict and destruction. The end of the cold war gave India an advantage.

tion accompanying him. Making America understand the ethos of India, its political morality, was more important than certain technologies or advanced computers which the sanctions had denied New Delhi.

The US itself began to say that in certain fields it had overreacted. India was regaining its prestige and respect for its foreign policy. New Delhi felt gratified when even the Bush administration said that "it had a different type of relations" with India. It is not clear what came over

the cold war days, Pakistan. Whether it is only a short-term arrangement or not is yet to be seen. But when Washington begins to share the intelligence with Islamabad, it means a type of kinship the two aligned countries have. The Musharraf government may exploit the new relationship to the disadvantage of India. New Delhi has only to blame itself for jettisoning non-alignment.

On the economic front too, all the concessions, proposed by the

man's doctrine, an assistance of billions of dollars that put Europe back on its feet. Europe is indebted to America. Its favourable attitude towards Washington and America's leadership of NATO is understandable. But India has no such obligation. Why does New Delhi kow-tow before Washington?

The foreign minister believes that the advisors he has appointed in his ministry are his sounding board. They may be experienced people but their training and tenure were during the cold war. India needs a dynamic foreign policy, with the moral content which Nehru tried to give it. The advisors are also coming in the way of foreign ministry's normal functioning. The work of the ambassador-at-large in Washington came to light when the Sikhs and other members of the Indian community were attacked after the New York incidents. And how do haphazard transfers help? The ambassador in Colombo has been moved to London when he is needed in Lanka at a time the country is passing through a crisis. The person put in his place was once removed from his No. 2 position from Colombo because the then High Commissioner thought he had "unauthorised contacts with outsiders." One cannot understand why the High Commissioner in London has been given an extension of two years when the ambassador in Washington three.

Jaswant Singh may have his own logic. But this kind of wishy-washy foreign policy does not go with India's ethos. We must have a foreign policy with a moral content. As we had in the days of Nehru.

Kuldeep Nayar is a leading Indian columnist.

PHOTORIAL

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STAR PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Mike menace!

Call it like that if you please. For microphones or loudspeakers have been a source of suffering for many in most of the localities since long. Whenever one is pleased to hold a function, even as private as within one's household, he would resort to air his 'choice' through loud speakers playing at shrill full volume continuously past midnight, caring a fig for others' plight and privacy. Now indiscriminate use of microphone by party campaigners during this election time has added fuel to the fire in volumes much more than the suffering public can bear, while the authorities have already turned a deaf ear to their plight.

Electronic transparency

The preceding elected regime did not practice electronic transparency, as exposed by the Daily Star (September 11). These political appointments in the BTV could not be hidden from the public eyes. Now AL is complaining regularly to the EC alleging misdeeds which they practised for five long years.

As a voter I find it is necessary tell the senior politicians that the image of politics in this country has to be improved quickly, if they care for continued support of the electorate. Now the voters are getting intolerant of the caprices of tainted politics. The politicians are milking away too much commission from their public assignments. Political killing has also now risen to three to five daily (lust for power for misuse).

They are not commenting of the visible presence of political vultures circling everywhere. They say nothing about improving themselves. Hate campaigns dilute censorship. This vile political standard may continue so long the majority of the voters continue to operate from near the poverty line, and till they can get out of the illiter-

acy trap (compare with other LDCs).

The nation is facing formidable political deadlines, but the politicians have so far failed to deliver. Start political pilgrimages locally with public twaba.

AMA
Dhaka

Awami League's complaint

It is reported (complained) in the newspaper by the leader of the immediate past ruling party that BNP is hatching conspiracy to snatch Awami League's victory by rigging and using black money. Everyday, such remark is made by the AL Chief, Sk Hasina. But this repeated accusation has, in fact, lost its importance on the publics.

Again SAMS Kibria, the former Finance Minister, brought to the notice of CEC that state-run TV is giving low coverage to Awami League. It is a deliberate act of misrepresentation of the fact. Mr Kibria further said that BNP's election manifesto was read out in the BTV news giving it lead coverage and Awami League's election manifesto was last in the line of the news items. His contention does not

appeal to our mind, since AL manifesto was not ignored.

Under the caretaker government, BTV broadcast news of the major and minor political parties everyday without any discrimination.

Shamsuz-Zaman
Baitul Aman Housing Society,
Dhaka

Osmany Uddyan!

Surely it was not the work of Aladdin's magic lamp genie that cut down over three hundred trees at the Osmany Uddyan! In and around the Uddyan there were many people belonging to government offices. Besides, there were also those law-enforcement personnel to look after the area. Then how could such a thing take place?

Formation of any committee with Law and Justice Affairs Ministry etc. to investigate the incidents leading to the felling of the trees will not help the trees to rise up and be as they were for as many years. Why does not the present government work quickly and honestly and 'book' the real mischief mongers so that deterrent punishment may be meted out to the real culprits? Mere

paper work and noting down testimonies and other information from the public will in no way help to justify nor remedy the wrong doing. If the persons engaged by the authorities concerned thoroughly investigate and, in particular, question all the persons concerned who had been ordered to cut the trees with all fairness the truth will be revealed. We do hope and pray justice itself does not go in vain.

Mujibul Houque
Sobhangbag, Dhaka

Corruption free Bangladesh

How do we let our politicians know that we vote them to serve the people and the country not to serve themselves? What should we do to make them work for us and serve the country? Heavy punishment? No, it will not work in the present system.

Every time a Prime Minister loses power he/she becomes an opposition leader. Which makes it difficult for the elected PM to take any action against ex-PM as the present PM need to think carefully here to maintain his/her position. No matter whatever power he/she

gains as PM, the opposition leader also he/she holds some power by people. Any action taken against the ex-PM would create strike sometimes leading to killing of people.

We need to bring some new rules and regulations that once any political party lost in an election their leader has to resign from the party. That will give the new generation a chance to serve the country. At the same time whoever would become a PM has to think not to do any injustice, as she/he shall have to pay the price when a new government would take charge. We need to do the recycling of politicians. It will improve situation in our country significantly I think.

We don't want to see any more hackneyed politics. We want something new. We want to give a fair go to every politician. You never know in the process one day we might be able to say that we are not number one corrupt country in the world or even not a corrupt country at all.

Now is time for every body to think what we want and what to give our next generation. We have a fair future still, and we don't want to lose that.

Syed Zaman
Sydney, Australia