

The day that changed the world

Renewed pledge to fight terrorism

THE destruction of the Twin Towers changed the world. As the Twin Towers fell, so did many of our dreams, hopes and most importantly, beliefs about our present day life.

Regardless of our grievances against the West (Kosovo) and specifically against the US (Palestine) we cannot in any way be soft on our total rejection of actions that kill innocent public and attack civilian population of another country.

However, we must also regretfully note that the global agenda to fight terrorism is being given a singular direction by the US to focus on Iraq and as a result justifiable divisions are appearing in the global coalition against terror.

Echoing the position of our government, we state that we are opposed to any attack on Iraq without proof that Iraq is producing weapons of mass destruction. We must point out that not a single Iraqi was found linked with the Al Qaida members who attacked the WTC.

On this day we remember the thousands who died as a result of this mindless terrorism. They belonged to many nationalities including several from Bangladesh, and to all major religions of the world.

Meter in autorickshaws

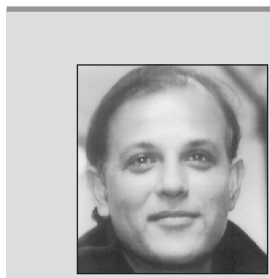
The sooner it is made mandatory the better

THE ban on pollutant-spewing two-stroke autorickshaws has indeed proved transport experts' projection right. Although easing up progressively, the public transport crunch, created by the September 1 withdrawal of 12,500 three-wheelers in the first phase of the ban, is very much there and commuters routinely feel the pinch.

Mandatory use of meters could certainly do away with nasty haggling over autorickshaw fare and the communication minister has recently said he will instruct importers to bring in CNG-run or four-stroke three-wheelers with fare meter. Sounds reasonable however, the possibility is it may lead to more problems.

Unfortunately, instead of being apologetic for its lapses, the government has resorted to complete denial of the ground reality and even worse, criticism of the news media for exaggerated reports on commuters' plight.

Cooking gas and unpaid bills



K.A.S. MURSHID

HERE are not many commodities these days whose prices are fixed or even regulated. The good old days of the rationing system is a distant memory -- a time when the urban middle classes were able to procure their basic food items at 'fair' prices.

able to release resources to target more closely directed anti-poverty programmes. To what extent the poor actually benefited from the dismantling of the rationing system was never investigated. Judging by the very slow rate at which poverty reduction is taking place, the impact could not have been great.

We are now faced with intense pressure to reform the energy sector. A critical element of such

der'. If we are net importers, the border price is described as 'import-parity' while if we are exporters this is of course, 'export-parity'. The problem is that we neither export nor import gas, so effectively we do not have a border price to refer to.

it this is a very persuasive argument as it appeals to our sense of patriotism. There are at least two major problems that we should consider in this context.

First, cheap energy results in wastage and losses. A good example is the preponderance of huge, gas-guzzling cars in Saudi Arabia and the USA where fuel prices are low. Secondly, cheap energy will inevitably result in the growth of an

brief comment on the IOC price formula agreed under the Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs). The reference price relates to a certain grade of fuel, ex-Singapore, designed to approximate the 'world price' of gas and carefully indexed against inflation. My problem with this is that while domestic pricing policy should certainly attempt to approximate the world or border price of a commodity, it is certainly

consumers. Indeed this is already being done to some extent, as reflected in the price structure for different categories of users. My main point here is that there are strong social reasons for subsidizing poor and middle class consumers who use gas only for cooking, as well as micro and small enterprises that would otherwise go bust.

The main problem with this suggestion relates to governance problems facing the sector. Unfortunately, the big guys take most of the gas but don't want to pay for it while the small guys pay up much more promptly.

Dr KAS Murshid is an economist and Research Director, BIDS.

BETWEEN YOURSELF AND ME

The main problem relates to governance problems facing the sector. Unfortunately, the big guys take most of the gas but don't want to pay for it while the small guys pay up much more promptly. In order to wriggle out of the cash crunch that this implies the Government has decided to raise prices for everyone.

reforms to 'rationalize' the price of gas and electricity, in order to reduce operating losses sustained by the national Gas Company. The opposition, predictably, has declared war and the media is sounding the alarm bells of impending disaster. So what should the government do?

Let me first state the 'theoretical' position very simply. The domestic price of gas (or energy in general) should approximate its 'border price', i.e. the price at which gas/energy is available at the 'bor-

energy-equivalent units). Once we become gas exporters, our reference price will then become the export-parity price, e.g. at Benapole. Whichever price one uses as the reference price, one thing is clear: our domestic prices for gas is very, very low. There is therefore a strong economic case for raising it.

One could argue (and many do) that since we have a lot of gas we should make it available to domestic consumers at a 'low' price to encourage industrialization. On the face of

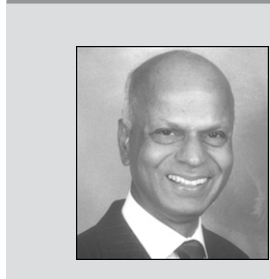
inefficient and wasteful energy infrastructure. Now, there would be nothing wrong with that if we had a huge surplus of gas, or in other words, if our supplies were 'inexhaustible'. Unfortunately, that is not quite the case at present. Our gas supplies are limited as are our reserves, and our pricing policy must reflect that reality. Put it another way, we do not have enough gas to throw away, not least because we have to pay the IOCs at its "world price".

At this point allow me to make a

not clear why the same should apply to IOCs. For IOCs the relevant issue is whether they are going to get a 'fair' return on their investment, implying a formula that takes into account costs incurred and reasonable profits on investments. This would have made even greater sense since risks were small, e.g. of not finding any gas.

Now lest I seem totally heartless, I should hasten to add that there might be a case to distinguish between different types of domestic

Rising question about US policy



CHAKLADER MAHBOOB-UL ALAM writes from Madrid

JUST over a year ago, in August, 2001, my wife and I spent our summer holidays visiting the south-western parts of the United States. As a professional manager, I had already visited the mid-west and the north-east on several occasions for business purposes.

I have always been fascinated by this great nation, by its ethnic complexity, its pluralistic culture, its rich literature, its contribution to philosophy, architecture and science, its innovative spirit, its economic power, its geographical diversity and above all, by its tremendous vitality. So, on my retirement, my wife and I decided to visit this country or at least parts of it (for it is a vast country), to meet with people at the grassroots level.

I found most ordinary Americans as friendly but dangerously complacent about their lot. They lived in a kind of cocoon. For them, the United States was the most civilised, democratic, just and "Christian" country in the world. They felt completely secure in their military and economic power. American mindset was incapable of even imagining a scenario in which American mainland could come under attack from outside.

The rest of the story is well-known to everyone. Afghanistan's fanatically medieval government has been overthrown. Thousands of Taliban soldiers have been killed by US bombing. Thousands more have been massacred after surrendering to the American-led coalition forces. Many thousands are being held in Guantanamo and Afghan jails without any trial. No one exactly knows (and very few care about it)

on foreign affairs for viewers within the US are substantially different to the ones broadcast from London, which keeps them happily ignorant of what really goes on in the world, have made the ordinary Americans uninterested in their government's foreign policy (full of double standards and hypocrisy) and strangely indifferent to the inhuman sufferings caused by their government to peoples outside America's borders.

Then came Sept. 11 and America lost its innocence. All of a sudden it realised that it too was vulnerable. Ordinary Americans, who could not understand why there were some in this world who did not love them, were gripped by fear of further terrorist attacks. They were easily persuaded to believe that the people who did not love them represented "the evil". President George W. Bush called the attack as an unprovoked act of war against "civilisation, democracy and liberty" and swore revenge. There was a groundswell of sympathy all over the world for the three thousand odd

how many civilians have been killed by indiscriminate US bombing. In short, according to American perception, forces of "good" have triumphed over the forces of "evil". So it is logical to assume that America should now be basking in its allies' unconditional support and rapturous applause. But this assumption is incorrect. Although there is still much sympathy for the innocent victims of the Sept. 11 attack, support for the US government is dwindling. Actually, there is a rising tide of Anti-Americanism all over the world. Why?

After World War II, the rise of the Soviet Union as a major nuclear power and the subsequent beginning of the Cold War made America feel more insecure than ever. National security became the main concern of the government. As a result, instead of pursuing a policy of disarmament, America adopted a policy of massive rearmament. It signed military alliances with more than one hundred nations, built bases around the world, sent hundreds of ships, jetfighters, missiles, nuclear weapons to these bases and stationed hundreds of thousands of soldiers abroad. All this was done to defend "the free world",

to "find military solutions to political problems", America felt constrained to use it because of a genuine fear that while trying to destroy its major nuclear adversary, the Soviet Union, it also ran the risk of being destroyed by the Soviets. In other words, both the Soviets and the Americans were assured of their mutually destructive power. This mutual fear led to a policy of containment. Not that during these fifty odd years, the Americans did not militarily intervene in foreign conflicts, ( besides the overt and covert operations undertaken by the CIA, there were interventions in Central America, Lebanon, Indochina, Korea, Nicaragua, Panama, Grenada, Cuba, Dominican Republic etc.), but America did not go the whole hog. Even in Vietnam, America did not feel free to use its full military might ( meaning nuclear weapons ) to destroy the enemy.

The virtual collapse of the Soviet empire in 1990 (although it lingered on until 1991) and the official end of the Cold War in November, 1990 changed all that. All of a sudden, America found itself to be the world's sole surviving superpower. There was no longer any need to pursue a policy of containment.

necessary, sustains dictatorships with clear records of persistent human rights violations ), and now the open ended Bush doctrine of pre-emptive strike against any nation it chooses have pushed anti-Americanism in many countries including Europe, to limits , almost inconceivable a year ago. Because of the fact that the Muslims have been singled out as America's enemies ( the other ) and the collective humiliation inflicted on them on a daily basis ( according to a proposal made by John Ashcroft, the US attorney-general , any Muslim, upon arrival at any entry point in the US, will be photographed and finger-printed as though he is a criminal ), in many parts of the Muslim world, admiration for America has been replaced by fear, desperate defiance and an urge to take revenge. What is incredible is that the American administration seems to be completely oblivious of the intensity of this feeling or insensitive to it. Let me give you just one example. When, in early August, an Israeli university was bombed and several Israelis were killed by the Palestinians as a retaliation to an earlier massacre of a large number of innocent Palestinians , ( most of them children ) by using American

decision making right) to invade Iraq with the declared intention of changing the regime apparently because President Saddam Hussein is developing weapons of mass destruction.

The fact that hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians will die on account of the invasion does not worry the Bush administration. After all, they are not Americans or Israelis, but only lesser human beings. What is incredible is that the Bush administration does not realise that while its unconditional ally Israel, in clear violation of all the United Nations resolutions, is engaged on a daily basis in killing, deporting and humiliating Palestinians, destroying their homes and economy, imposing curfew on their towns and villages and detaining thousands of them without trial, an attack on Iraq will only fuel the anger against the United States that already exists. The Europeans, who have a much closer contact with their neighbours on the other side of the Mediterranean have a better appreciation of the anger and frustration of the Arabs and the Muslims. This is one of the reasons why the gap between Europe and America is widening.

In my opinion, Bush's policy on Iraq has also got a hidden agenda. Israel happens to be the only nuclear power in the Middle East and the Bush Administration wants to keep it that way. In order to guarantee Israel's de facto annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories (" to redraw the map of the middle East" ) and also to ensure oil supplies from the Middle East and now from central Asia, no Muslim country must be allowed to have nuclear arms. There has always been a suspicion in American government circles ( fanned by the powerful Jewish lobby and the fundamentalist Christian right ) that Iraq was trying to develop nuclear arms. Hence this Israeli-American insistence on killing President Saddam Hussein and replacing him by a puppet regime. Actually, some analysts in the Muslim world believe that once Iraq is destroyed, Iran , which has already been part of the "axis of evil" will be the next target.

Besides causing inhuman suffering and destruction in Iraq, this 'Gulf War' will further inflict collective humiliation on the Muslim world, in general and the Arab world , in particular. If the war has negative effects on the world economy, anti-Americanism will rise even further in Europe. Over the years, the number of recruits to the Bin Laden cause will , no doubt grow. The world will be a much more insecure place for everyone, including the Americans because instead of removing the real causes of terrorism, this war will simply exacerbate the situation.

LETTER FROM EUROPE

innocent victims of the attack. The western world rallied behind the US . Much of the rest of the world was coaxed , pressured ( you are either with us or against us ) or simply bribed to join the coalition to take revenge. But against whom? Against terrorism, -was the answer . Now that communism was gone, American foreign policy had to find a target, a foreign enemy to keep its military-industrial complex satisfied. It was happy to find one. America had the military and economic power to impose its own definition of terrorism which conveniently excluded all covert and overt operations undertaken by the CIA, the FBI , its close allies and the daily acts of state terrorism performed by the Israeli government against Palestinian civilians. Even Putin's murderous campaign against the Chechens was excluded. Only the Muslims were singled out as terrorists . Even General Musharraf , a close ally of the US, while urging the US not to attack Iraq recently commented that everywhere, the Muslims seemed to be "at the receiving end".

The rest of the story is well-known to everyone. Afghanistan's fanatically medieval government has been overthrown. Thousands of Taliban soldiers have been killed by US bombing. Thousands more have been massacred after surrendering to the American-led coalition forces. Many thousands are being held in Guantanamo and Afghan jails without any trial. No one exactly knows (and very few care about it)

which by and large accepted the American values and identified their own national interests with those of the United States. A new world order was established, which was at least in principle based on democracy, open government, the rule of law and due process. America helped create the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. On the economic front, international institutions such the IMF, the IBRD etc were created which were effectively controlled by America. There were no limits to American power. American empire had come into being.

Despite the shaky moral foundations of the American republic and its violent birth ( true, most empires had similar beginnings), much of the world tended to admire its vitality and accepted its transformation into a mega-empire as something inevitable and positive. It was , indeed, an empire but a benevolent one or as benevolent as an empire can be. Much of the world accepted American leadership. American goods flooded the world markets . In culture, science, literature and in every other field of human activity, the word America became synonym for excellence. America dominated the world. It became the primary ambition of parents all over the world including Europe to educate their children in the United States. ( It is a pity that America has squandered all this goodwill.) America was on a high.

No, although there was always the temptation to use its vast power

Before the beginning of the Gulf War in 1991, the US was already convinced of its unchallenged military might but felt the need to legitimise its military actions by seeking approval from the United Nations and the international community. America's quick victory in the Gulf war in 1991, the consolidation of its position as "the mega-empire" over the next ten years and the recent success of its strategy of massive military intervention using high technology with few American casualties in Afghanistan, have contributed to the American conviction that it is so powerful that it does not need any allies nor any legal sanctions of a world body to go to war against anyone, create havoc anywhere and rapidly withdraw "from the ruin without feeling a commensurate sense of responsibility". It behaves as though it is above the law. No longer , there is any fear of retaliation on a massive scale from anyone. In a book called The Imperial Temptation, Professors Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson made a brilliant analysis of this new situation and warned that if America were to follow this policy , it would lose its soul.

I am afraid, this is precisely what is happening. In effect, in many countries, the US is perceived as a super-power bully, a global gangster bent on pursuing a unilateral policy of omni-directional belligerence. Its arrogance, insensitivity and double standards ( it preaches democracy at home but wherever

supplied F 16 jetfighters , President George W. Bush personally ( not through a spokesman ) expressed his incredible contempt for the Palestinians by saying, " I am just as angry as Israel is right now.... However, through my fury, even though I am mad, I still believe peace is possible." In the earlier case of far greater Palestinian deaths, he through a spokesman could only manage to say that the Israeli bombing was " heavy-handed".

Examples of this new arrogant foreign policy are abundant. The US has unilaterally withdrawn from the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, it has not ratified the Rio Pact on biodiversity, it has cancelled the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, started a new missile defence policy, is opposing the ban on land mines, the provisions of biological warfare convention , and the establishment of the International Criminal Court etc. The persistent violation of human rights in Afghanistan and Guantanamo, the suspension of the rule of law and due process, ( which are publicised as being American values ) and of course, America's unconditional support to Israeli brutality in the occupied territories have further alienated public sympathy in Europe and elsewhere. But the issue that has really united world public opinion against the United States is its obsession with Iraq--its go-it-alone policy ( now they say Bush does not even have to consult the American Congress, thus depriving it of its constitutional

Two wrongs do not make a right

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

THE people in the New York City in particular and those in other parts of the United States in general including Washington, DC recall this day the traumatic event that destroyed the World Trade Centre and partially the Pentagon.

An American Airlines Boeing 767 and a United Airlines Boeing 767, both destined to Los Angeles from Boston were hijacked and crashed into the north and south towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City. Shortly, after 37 minutes, an American Airlines Boeing 757, which was destined to Los Angeles from Washington, DC crashed into the Pentagon. A fourth hijacked plane, of United Airlines, crashed in a field near Shanksville, Pittsburgh. All 266 passengers and crew aboard the planes were killed. The total death toll stood at more than 3000 which included a considerable number of Muslims. It was a tragic

event which received condemnation from all over the world. As some early reports suggest intelligence agencies in the United States and Israel had prior information for possible attacks but it remained a mystery why Bush administration did not take precautionary measures to stop such horrendous happenings.

However, Al-Qaida network of Osama bin Laden, a Saudi dissident multi billionaire, in Afghanistan was suspected for masterminding such attacks, but not much concrete evidential proof was made public. According to Arundhati Roy, a novelist of repute and columnist, who has been contributing to the Guardian, "Before it has properly identified or even begun to comprehend the nature of its enemy, the US government has, in a rush of publicity and embarrassing rhetoric, cobbled together an 'international coalition against terror', mobilised its army, its airforce, its navy and its media, and committed them to

battle."

The war in Afghanistan began against terrorism before the international community reached a clear cut definition of terrorism. There, of course, should be a clear definition of what constitutes terrorism and who is a terrorist. The Webster New World Dictionary, however, gives a definition of terrorism which states, "the act of terrorizing, use of force or threats to demoralize, intimidate, subjugate especially as a political weapon or policy." According to this interpretation, when Israel or Russian Federation commits acts of aggression against civilian populations in Palestinian controlled territories or Chechnya does not that constitute terrorism?

If we look back at the developments of extremist groups in West Asia, Africa, and Latin America we find that there has never been successful war against terrorism. It failed in Britain. The same is the case with Israel. The United states

did not succeed in Colombia or Mexico. Egypt seems to be the only country that had achieved success to some extent domestically in driving out terrorism.

It gives an understanding that under the umbrella of the war against terrorism, a new holy alliance had emerged which makes the president of the United States George W Bush the supreme judge to decide who is terrorist and who is not and declare the countries as 'axis of evil'. Arundhati Roy may be quoted again to corroborate this fact. Roy pin pointed that people are being asked to make two leaps of faith here. First, to assume that the enemy is who the US government says it is, even though it has no substantial evidence to support that claim. And second, to assume that the enemy's motives are what the US government says they are, and there is nothing to support that either.

Another ominous sign has

emerged in America following the aftermath of terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon, that Muslim religious leaders and social welfare organisations are targeted for scathing criticism by many a Christian and Jew. According to one newspaper's assessment a disproportionate amount of attacks are coming from the Jewish side. American Muslims are already besieged by Bush administration's treatment as suspects and the additional attacks from their cousins (Jews and Muslims are biblical cousins from the two sons of prophet Abraham) are making things worse. More than thousand people were reportedly detained as suspects without proper evidences by the security police after September 11. In a recent ruling a Federal appeals court said that Bush administration acted illegally in holding an undisclosed number of secret deportation hearings. This reminds of grave concern expressed by

former US President Jimmy Carter and the United Nations Human Rights chief Mary Robinson in December 2001 over new anti-terrorism legislation. In a rare criticism Carter slammed Bush's military order authorising the trial of suspected terrorists captured during the war against terrorism by secret military courts, saying that it defies the basic principles on which the United States is founded. Practically Bush's inept decisions and actions gave birth to hatred and suspicion campaign against American Muslims. By inference Bush's policy may destroy cohesion and democratic values in the long run. A section of people in New York City refuse to travel in taxi cab if the driver's name turns out to be Muslim. Even sikhs were not spared from humiliations because they keep beard and wear turban.

After 11 September traumatic event there has been competitiveness to enlist the name of terrorists.

Vladimir Putin, President of Russian Federation, declared Chechnyan rebels, Spain the Basque ETA, Turkey the Kurds, India the Kashmiri mujahideen, Sri Lanka the Tamil Tigers, Israel even the Palestinian leader Arafat as terrorists hoping that Bush administration will help to get rid of them. In this connection, we may recall the history of events nearly 200 years back. After the fall of Napoleon, who promoted liberty throughout Europe, the rulers of continent decided to set up an insurmountable wall to any further aspirations of national and social liberation. "All this nonsense about democracy, freedom, equality and constitution has to stop once and for all. They told each other." In 1815, the Czar of Russia, the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria signed an agreement, which is known as Holy Alliance, to institute the rule of God in Europe. Instead they created an international mafia of iron fist.

The war against terrorism in Afghanistan caused many civilian casualties, apart from displacement of hundreds of thousands Afghans. The Afghan people have suffered the misery of war for so long and become pawns in the game played by big powers on its political chessboard. Afghan people paid by sacrificing two million in the war against Soviet invasion. There is no country on earth that has done United States a greater favour than Afghanistan. "The fact that the United States has killed one million Iraqi people in the Gulf war in 1991, and supported the murder of thousands of Palestinians does not justify the killing of one civilian in New York or Washington, DC. And the killing of six thousand American civilians does not justify the killing of one innocent Afghani. Two wrongs do not make a right," announced Sheikh Awlaki, a Imam of a mosque in Virginia, in a religious sermon.

Mohammad Amjad Hossain is a former diplomat