Dhaka, Friday, February 12, 1993

Warm Welcome to the Malaysian PM

Of the modern day leaders of the world Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad is among the most dynamic, most committed and most successful. Under his determined leadership Malaysia has emerged as a powerful developing country whose economic growth and social and cultural development has gained a rare respect for his country among the nations of the world. Not only for his own country. Dr. Mahathir has been in an uncompromising fighter for the rights of the developing South in its struggle with the developed North. For this role he is respected and loved throughout the developing world.

The modern day success of Malaysia has not come about easily. It is a country which suffered colonial exploitation and one that had the basic weakness of being divided into various racial. ethnic and religious groups. Much to the credit of Malaysian leadership, it was able to turn this weakness into a great strength. Instead of allowing the racial and religious differences to weaken it. Malaysia was able to devise a political, economic and social system that forged unity among the different groups and inspired them into working selflessly for the growth of modern Malaysia. Dynamism of the Malaysian people can be said to have flowered most under the inspiring leadership of Dr. Mahathir who became Prime Minister about a decade ago. Any recent visitor to Malaysia cannot but be awed by the achievements of Malaysia, much of which was triggered by Dr.

Mahathir's leadership. The Malaysian PM's visit to Bangladesh is a milestone in the growing friendship between our two countries. The visit is a clear statement of Malaysia's keen interest in developing new areas of relationship with us, a sentiment that we reciprocate in full earnestness. Given the economic strength, industrial advancement and managerial experiences gained by Malaysia in the last decade or so, there is lot that Bangladesh can and must learn from our Malaysian friends. We are impressed by the fact that the Malaysian Prime Minister has included, in his entourage no less than 28 businessmen who have expressed their willingness to increase trade with Bangladesh. As potential markets for each other's goods and services we have to explore new ways of effective cooperation. This visit, we hope, will produce newer opportunities to increase Malaysian investment here, and also bring about joint ventures wherever our entrepreneurs are forthcoming. The opening of the first ever Malaysian Trade Centre in Dhaka will no doubt boost trade between us. The signing of agreements between our two chambers will greatly advance our economic cooperation. We hope this agreement will facilitate increasing visits between the entrepreneurs of the two countries to identify for themselves as to where and when they would like to invest.

We extend our warmest felicitations to Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Dato Seri Datin Paduka Dr. Siti Hasmah and to the esteemed members of the delegation. We sincerely hope that the visit brings our two countries closer in a bond of friendship and economic ties which will be of mutual benefit to our two countries.

Dealing with Hartal

Another eight-hour hartal passed on Wednesday leaving at least two people, including a boy of six, dead and several scores injured. Reports have it that the boy was crushed under the wheel of a speeding police vehicle and the other death of a young man was caused by bullet fired from a minibus carrying armed gangs. Clearly, there were pro-hartal and anti-hartal people on the street and the encounter between the two was far from peaceful. No doubt, both sides have their own arguments in favour or against this particular type of protest. We have in the past commented in this column that hartal is a democratic means of protest enshrined in the Constitution, but resorting to this means as frequently as it is being done has a crippling effect on the economy in particular, and the country's progress in general. In fact, we were the first to suggest that it is time we looked for alternatives to hartals.

While we stand by our suggestion, we also take a strong view against what happened during Wednesday's hartal at Gulistan. Both reports and pictures carried in different newspapers speak volume of the reign of terror that was let loose at and around Gulistan. Armed and masked young men came in three minibuses and indiscriminately fired bullets and blasted bombs for hours. Most surprisingly though, the police watched from a few yards away while the terrorists were firing bullets and throwing bombs at the AL office and on the processionists. That this blatant violation of the recently enacted Anti-terrorism Act could go unchallenged by the police will give rise to serious misgivings in the public mind.

If hartal is a democratic right, so is the right to oppose or even resist it. But under no circumstances, either of these practices should be allowed to push overenthusiastically to infringe one another. On Wednesday, it seems the fire-arms wielders in the minibuses went much too far. The important question that ought to be asked if these terrorists themselves thought it their sacred duty to teach a lesson to those not subscribing to their views on hartals or bolstered by powerful quarters they dared make those daring armed swoops on their opponents. Evidently, the mysterious inaction by the police points to the latter.

So far as the day's events are concerned, there is no doubt that those have been most shabbily handled by the government. If armed goons dare attack the opposition party's central office in broad daylight — and that too in presence of the law enforcing agencies— the authority will lose much of its credibility as a protector of democratic institution. The anti-hartal group could very well campaign against the programme and build opinion against it. If people ignored the hartal call, their efforts would have been successful. But instead of following the democratic principles, a few were incited to do the most illegal thing in the law book.

The fact that the Anti-terrorism Act has been most flagrantly violated in presence of the police is what erodes people's confidence in the efficacy of the system. This sense of insecurity is most dangerous. If such illegal action is allowed, its influence on other areas of society is bound to be telling. The government should take into consideration all these points and take on the gun-trotting gang in a ruthless manner. Only then the prospect of democracy will become bright and social progress can be ensured.

From Hartal to What?

by Manjur A. Chowdhury, Ph. D. and Lt. Col. Mohammed A. Latif Khan (Retd)

N ancient times, the business people in Bengal what is now modern day Bangladesh used a product known as 'haritali'. It was a chalk like substance. Whenever it became necessary to keep their business places closed for a day or so, they used to put a mark on the storefronts with a piece of haritali. At that times, no doubt, haritali was a useful and necessary thing for most business people. In modern times, however, business people no longer use or need haritali to tell their clients "Sorry, we are closed". Now they have beautiful little plastic singboards far better than the archaic system of marking storefronts with haritali.

These days one will be hardpressed to find a piece of haritali in Bangladesh. But ev ery now and then one will come across a word very simi lar to 'haritali'. The word is HARTAL. In grammatical sense the word 'hartal' is a derivative of 'haritali'. In another sense, it is the degeneration of a useful commercial system into a destructive political process called 'hartal'

Generally hartal hours coincide with working hours Weekends and holidays are exempt from hartal. A typical hartal day is a pathetic scene repeated all over the large and small cities across the country. During the hartal hours all working persons are supposed to stay away from their offices, factories, shops and spend the time in the cool comfort of their homes. Some may, if they want to, join a procession or attend a rally during the hartal hours. However, participation in the procession or rally is completely voluntary. But staying away from work during the hartal hours is mandatory for every working person excepting the newspaper vendors. Those who have VCR watch Hindi movies or visit friends within walking distance during

a typical hartal day. A hartal day in Dhaka is a remarkably calm day. No trucks rushes ahead at a dangerously high speed. No overloaded buses or tempoes ply the busy streets. Not a single private car could be seen on the road. Private cars on hartal day are strictly forbidden.

OR long it has been ques

tioned whether it is

possible for a nation to

achieve prosperity without

experiencing any incidence of

crime. Sometimes it has been

expressed that crime and

prosperity or development in

particular are inter-related —

in that underdevelopment and

lack of social opportunities

would generate crime. On the

other hand, increasing deve-

lopment will improve the

average living standard of the

people and diminish certain

incentives for resorting to

crime as well as create

conditions which may help to

prevent crime. However, in-

creasing development appears

to create more opportunities

for new forms of crime. On the

contrary, countries in need of

assistance in their economic

and social development should

continue to benefit from the

experiences of other countries.

One of the most important fac-

tors that need to be empha-

sised here is the moral issue.

Economic growth should go

hand in hand with the suste-

nance of moral standards of

the people. Thus this issue

should be integrated in the

national and economic plan.

And in that backdrop it may

be worth perusal how a fast

growing economic giant has

taken pains to ensure not only

her own affair but also has

given due thoughts about the

overall criminal justice system

of the region as a whole so that

others can take lesson out of it

and mould their national pla-

nning in the desired per-

spective of economic growth

with moral blending. To be

more specific I refer here to

the role of Japan vis a vis

United Nations Asia and Far

East Institute (UNAFEI). Asia

Crime Prevention Foundation

(ACPF), Japan International

Cooperation Agency (JICA) and

through their activities the

other participant countries,

Occasionally a rickshaw could be seen plying the back roads at a furtive pace. During the hartal hours the main thoroughfares take an early silent look. The bustling city has suddenly come to a surrealistic standstill because a political party has declared: it is a har-

Celebration on Non-work Perhaps only in Bangladesh where so many working persons could so systematically stay away from their work for a long eight hour period and no one seems to be ashamed of it. A hartal day in Bangladesh is a day when anyone with a regular job will not work for that day still he is supposed to get paid for the work he did not do. A hartal day is day when anyone who wants to work will be prevented from working by all means necessary, even by physical force, if required a hartal day in Bangladesh is a day of celebration of non-work.

The process of hartal does not quite end with the end of the day. A ritual still needs to be performed: Next day the hartal organizing political party routinely claims that the hartal was a 100% successful one. Yes, they are right. They were successful at preventing millions of working people from going to their respective work places, and forced then to idle away one valuable day of their lives. The hartal happy political party may claim a grand success because million of students were compelled to waste one precious day of their academic year.

In economic areas, the adverse effect of hartals is all pervasive. Before a nationwide hartal day is over, thousands of crores of Taka will be lost due to missed productivity in factories, mills, markets, transport system. Urgent export shipments are delayed or cancelled altogether by overseas buyers. Perishable commodities rot at the depots bankrupting tradesmen. The impact of hartals is far more

serious on foreign investors. We will probably never know how many potential investors decided against investing in Bangladesh because of this ruinous hartal syndrome.

Political Responsibility

The political leaders who initiate these hartals are generally knowledgeable and wise persons. They know very well how fragile is the economy of this country. They also know that how desperately we need a stable work environment to strengthen our economic infrastructure. It is quite unacceptable to assume that the collective political leadership in this country does not realize that these repeated hartals will eventually ruin our economy, drive the foreign investors away and finally plunge this nation into a political turmoil. Still then why do they so often resort to hartal as a political weapon. One may argue that the political parties resort to repeated hartals so that the economy will be so weakened and consequent public sufferings so severe that the general public out of sheer frustration will eventually drive a ruling party out of power thus opening up an opportunity for opposition party or parties to form a new government. Any sensible person will reject, justifiably so, this explanation as the underlying causes of hartal syndrome this nation is going through But, if indeed, this is the real operative principle behind these hartals. then Allah, no one except but Allah, can save this nation from complete destruction.

Political parties which or ganize hartal consider it as a form of expression of demo cratic rights guaranteed by our constitution. They are quick to point out that whenever and wherever there is oppression or injustice, they protest it politically and hartal is just one of the political weapons used in the protest. According to them hartal is basically a political weapon to restore and protect

individual's right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. But those who experienced hartals know better. Hartal is in reality a mass terror tactics masquerading as an expression of democratic rights. A hartal day is a day when most people temporarily lose much of their precious individual rights they

Take for example, a person who is not interested in observing a hartal and wants to continue with his daily routine works. Let's suppose that he also owns a car and decides to drive to his work place during a hartal day. Could he do it. Is there any guarantee that this hapless person will be able to reach his work place with his car intact and his body unharmed. If the past hartal situation are any guide then chances are good that some where along his route he will be dragged out of his car and will be forced to watch as the hordes of hooligans completely burn the car with long practised efficiently. Upper and middle income groups suffer during the hartals. But there is one consolation: hartal or no hartal, they will get their usual salary at the end of the month. But that's not the case with the rickshawpullers, baby taxi drivers, road side vendors. In their case the harsh reality is: no work - no money.

In this country politicians organize hartals in the name of protecting the rights of low income people such as rickshawpullers, baby taxt drivers, road side vendors and people like them. But in reality the politicians through hartals cruelly take the inherent rights of these poor people to work and earn a living to support them and their families.

A Hostage Taking Act Often times politicians

claim that most people support hartals. They point out the deserted streets, empty offices, vacant market places, closed shops during the har-

tals as signs of sympathetic support. Is it the mass fear or popular support that makes a hartal successful needs closer scrutiny. During any hartal day no car owner brings his car to the road. He does the same thing no matter which political party organizes the hartal. What does it mean? Does it mean that all car owners voluntarily keep their cars off the roads as a sign of solidarity during the hartal no matter which political party organizes it? Or is it the fear? The fear of

losing a car in mob violence. During any hartal day one will find that most shops remain closed. Is it because that most shop owners are a hartal happy bunch of political activists. Or is it the fear? The fear of losing all of his mer chandise to a horde of looters. The fear is the real operative force behind any successful

The fear of mob violence keeps all cars off the roads, all shops closed and all workers away from work place. The fear of losing a limb or life at the hands of rowdy rouges prevents people like us from protesting the hartals. In ultimate analysis hartal is basically a hostage taking terror tactics. The only difference is that it takes a huge number of hostages. It is ironic, to some extent insulting, that the politicians pretends to protect our rights and freedom through creation of mass fear and terror. Democracy does not flourish or even survive in an environment filled with fear and terror.

As a political weapon hartal is not effective. Hartal does not affect the ministers or secretaries. Hartal hurts the common people. Hartal does not hamper the activities of ruling party. Hartal only harms the economy of the country. Hartal does not help the political party organizing it, either. Hartal only alienates it further from the very people it professes to help. Hartal does not

Giant Challenge Ahead Seven years from now

toppie any government. People"

Bangladesh will enter with the

rest of the world into the 21st

century. How would we like to

sec us as a nation at that time is a crucial question our politiclans never sum to think about. Are we going to greet the 21st century as the biggest Asian beggar nation or as a nation with political stability and economic self-sufficiency. History was never kind to us. During the last two centuries, at first the British imperial forces and later the Pakistanis sucked the economic life blood out of this unfortunate land. Only two decades ago we became free. Free at last to determine our own destiny. This generation is lucky to live in a free country This generation has also a historic responsibility to curve out a respectable place for this nation in the world community. If we fail because of our narrow interest or penchant for power, posterity will not forgive us. The political leadership in this country has a collective responsibility to transform the anger and frustration of the masses accumulated over the centuries into constructive forces of production and progress. Millions of suffering people of this tortured land deserve better than the politics of non-production and hartals offer. While the East Asian countries making economic history, in this country we are creating political hysteria. This nation needs, without much delay, to overcome this crippling disease called hartal

A giant challenge lies ahead. A challenge to become economically self-sufficient before the present century ends. A challenge is before each of us to remove the name of our country permanently off the short list of beggar nations. There are no external forces or factors that may prevent us from meeting these challenge. If we fail it will be because of us. The recent sordid political eptsodes do not make anyone very optimistic about the future of this country. It reminds us of a famous line from a general. I have sighted the enemy.

UNAFEL Alumni and hundreds

ACPF World Meet in Malaysia

by M. Enamul Huq

Need for Security Grows Greater

both developed and develop-

ing, e.g. Malaysia and Bangla-UNAFEI's embryo came into existence thirty years ago in YANGON in 1954 when, first time after World War II, a resolution was adopted calling for the establishment of a regional training centre and research institute in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. In 1961 an offer was made by the Government of Japan to establish such institute as was accepted by the entire region as well as by the United Nations. And finally the headquarters of UNAFEI started functioning in Fuchusuberb of Tokyo in 1961. Having obtained that countries in all regions were experiencing rapid social changes which necessitated a constant vigilance against newly emerging criminal phenomena, there appeared a need for closer coordination among the countries towards aborting the same. Ministry of Justice, Govt. of Japan has been extending assistance to the institute towards the realization of its novel projects - activities towards crime prevention and control, treatment of offenders to give better life to all those and thereby ensure progress and prosperity without crimi-

Since UNAFEI is not at present in a position to solely operate training and seminar programmes with its limited budget, hence it has to substantially rely on JICA Funds while the latter makes a budget plan based on the need assessment survey conducted annually by it in developing

nal interference and adverse

countries and continues to assist in accordance with the established principle of the official development assistance scheme. But if a country does not give priority to crime prevention and criminal justice, JICA will not provide the said country with the needed training. A seminar programme with that aim in view - overseas joint seminar and programme - has been conducted by UNAFEI twice a year since 1981 in cooperation with host country and the JICA, with the belief that such seminars would provide a number of criminal justice administrators in a particular country with the opportunity to get together and discuss various issues of mutual benefit and concern and the integrated approach of the pundits in the field may produce better solution to

lenge of criminality. As a corollary ACPF was founded on 17 February, 1982 to respond to and answer for urgent needs and supports given by various sectors, particularly by the Alumni members of the UNAFEI the number of which at that time had already reached 139 including 29 from Pacific and 17 from Latin America and 14 from Africa regions. These Alumni members occupied key positions in criminal justice system of their respective countries. Needs for after-care and feed back between UNAFEI and Alumni members of the training and seminar courses as well as for the national, re-

combat the increasing chal-

research in the countries represented in such courses had been strongly felt by all concerned. UNAFEI was badly in need of the extra budgetary resources so as to meet its ever growing needs. Thanks to its respectable Chairman, Justice

Nagashima and Adviser Sikita, ACPF activities have been enlarged to the worldwide level including direct support to the activities of the UN Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice programme, as the available budgets increased due to wider support coming from interested individual contributors and juridical persons. ACPF was granted in May 1991 the consultative status with the United Nations

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice as an International NGO. This exceptional honour and privilege which includes the right to attend and express its opinion at the meeting of ECOSOC, its subordinate commissions as well as quinquennial UN Congress on the prevention of crime and treatment of offenders, has been granted by the unanimous decision of ECOSOC in appreciation of its contribution towards the activities of UN in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice in the past decade. This is a singular honour granted in the name of ACPF for all those who worked together under the umbrella of UNFAEI and ACPF family affiliation towards the common cause of better life for human beings with the motto of pros-

perity and peace for all without

In response to the growing expectations for further contribution from ACPF in Asian or Pacific Region ACPF has decided to strengthen its international structure by way of revitalizing itself under the new ACPF constitution and accordingly the International Board of Directors has been formally established and the Advisory Professional Academic Council newly created and the members nominated either from among the eminent administrators or professionals belonging to the criminal justice system or from among the experts in academic field in mainly Japan and the Asian region. In line with this movement, Alumni Association in Japan and in other countries started to organise themselves into a branch or an affiliated organisation of ACPF with the participation of people from various strata of society. In Japan, 10 branches and 2 units in Tokyo have already been established while two affiliated branches outside Japan are in Indonesia and Pakistan

cently been inaugurated in Malaysia. The ACPF branch of Shizooka, Japan played the role of signing memorandum of friendship between Malavsian Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF) and ACPF Shizooka on 12 January 1993 at Crown Princess Hotel in Kualalumpur which was attended by the Malaysian cabinet members, ACPF International Directors, academic councillors, UN representative, UNAFEI staff members,

and the latest one has very re-

of distinguished participants from the host country and abroad. IGP Malaysia played the key role and thanks are due him and to his fellow colleagues. The philanthropist business magnets of Kualalumpur who committed huge amount to MCPF with the hope that the Asian countries are now ready to enforce effective planning and policies for crime prevention and contribute their mite in the relevant activities sponsored by the UN and its affiliated organisation. It is worthwhile to quote Dr Mahathir Bin Mohamad, Hon ble Prime Minister who formally inaugurated the world meeting of ACPF, "crime in its various forms plagues whole nations, countries as well as individuals and hampers sound economic growth

.... diminishing benefits achieved through socio-economic development. Increasingly natural need to prevent and control crime and to secure a satisfactory quality of life for our people is therefore very great". He expected that the discussion and exchange of pertinent view points at those meetings and conclusion thereof will certainly benefit our respective societies. Let us hope as mentioned in Buddhist Scrip "It is better to light one more run than to wait in darkness" that the forward looking initiative of ACPF and its supporting members, including Bangladesh, would illuminate the passageway towards a better world and new civilisation with less crime and more prosperity and justice.

The writer who is the former Inspector General of Police, Bangladesh and member of Executive Committee, INTERPOL, attended the world meeting at Malaysia as Academic Councillor of ACPF.

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Interesting contradictions!

Sir, Newspapers sometimes make very interesting reading. For instance, take The Daily Star of 21.1.93. Mahfuz Anam's Commentary on Page 1, brings out the glaring contradictions in our political culture. He rightly pleads, "what we claim, we should prove".

On page 3, the main news headline reads, "biswas asks people to combat smoking. drug abuse". The President's speech delivered at a discussion meeting organised by the Anti-Drug and Anti-Smoking Society very emphatically

shows the dangers of drug

abuse and smoking. He urges a united movement against these two health-hazards.

On the same Page-3, there is a quarter-page advertisement on the 3rd International Gold Leaf Short-film Festival sponsored by a cigarette manufacturing company, proudly displaying a half-open packet of cigarettes, however, with the statutory warning in Bangla at the bottom "smoking is injurious to health".

So, sir, coming back to Mahfuz Anam's Commentary, contradictions in our society are not the sole property of our political culture. Our leaders, both in the government and in the opposition, our intellectuals, and the guardians

of our sports and culture, with rare exceptions, are all aloud against dangers of smoking but are often found to be accepting donations from cigarette manulacturers, who in their turn proudly announce their sponsorship through bold newspa per advertisements, road-side banners and hoardings!

gional or sub-regional survey or

So, why those in the noble profession of journalism should lament, when contradictions at the present time form the core of our culture?

A citizen

No to hartal

Sir, Has not the time come for our leaders and politicians to stand up and say 'no' to 'hartal' and find other means less disruptive to show popular support to their causes? As it is every Tom, Dick and Harry seems to be calling for a hartal, either nationwide or in some part or other, almost every other day. I don't have to go into details of how much our country and the people are suffering due to this kind of non-constructive political ac-

The time has come for our leaders to sit down and work out a modus operandi to vent out their displeasure or objection towards each other or the government. But please leave us ordinary people alone and let us continue doing what we need to do or like to do in peace. We are intelligent people and if we feel that any of the causes are legitimate or will benefit us we surely will extend our support. But we don't want to be held hostage anymore. We, the people, will decide at the end what we want of our free will

Akku Chowdhury Nakhalpara, Dhaka

President Clinton

and peace Sir, The historic bell has rung at 1700 hours GMT on 20th January, 1993 and William Jefferson Clinton has been elevated from Little Rock,

Arkansas state to Capitol Hill, Washington D C, the highest office in the USA and the

center of power on this earth. During his election campaign, Clinton insisted for a change. A change not for change's sake, but for a new America. The monumental change has now taken place not only in transfer of power but also in leadership from old to a new generation. After taking the oath of office President Clinton said "Thomas Jefferson believed that to preserve the very foundation of our nation we need dramatic change from time to time."

The long cherished desire of Clinton has been fulfilled and now it is time for the US President to implement the change he has in mind. Undoubtedly he has assumed the responsibility for the US economic woes, its awesome nuclear arsenal and the management of world's troubled spots from Iraq to Bosnia to Somalia. But the new President has courageously accepted the fact that "No clear division to-

day between what is foreign and what is domestic; to renew America, we must meet challenges abroad as well as at home". We would like to add here that not only the Americans need human right, democracy and freedom but these are equally essential for the entire mankind. We fully support President Clinton when he vows, "There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured, by what is right, by America." We would, therefore, want President Clinton to build the edifice of world peace on the solid foundations of truth.

African National Congress President Nelson Mandela has rightly said "we expect Clinton as a leader of a superpower... promoting peace throughout the world". Indeed we all must change and change our hatred, mistrust and revenge to love, affection and friendship and live in equality, peace and justice on this good earth.

Dhaka 1203

O H Kabir