

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

In ancient times, the business people in Bengal what is now modern day Bangladesh used a product known as 'hartali'. 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 hartali.

These days one will be hardpressed to find a piece of hartali in Bangladesh. But every now and then one will come across a word very similar to 'hartali'. The word is 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.

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.

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 hartal day.

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.

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 them to idle away one valuable day of their lives.

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.

From Hartal to What?

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

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

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.

Political parties which organize hartal consider it as a form of expression of democratic 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.

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.

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.

In this country politicians organize hartals in the name of protecting the rights of low income people such as rickshawpullers, baby taxi drivers, road side vendors and people like them.

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.

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 merchandise to a horde of looters.

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 rouses prevents people like us from protesting the hartals. In ultimate analysis hartal is basically a hostage taking terror tactics.

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.

to pple any government. People do.

Giant Challenge Ahead

Seven years from now Bangladesh will enter with the rest of the world into the 21st century. How would we like to see us as a nation at that time is a crucial question our politicians never seem 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.

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.

ACPF World Meet in Malaysia Need for Security Grows Greater

by M. Enamul Huq

both developed and developing, e.g. Malaysia and Bangladesh.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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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.

perity and peace for all without crime.

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.

The ACPF branch of Shizuoka, Japan played the role of signing memorandum of friendship between Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF) and ACPF Shizuoka on 12 January 1993 at Crown Princess Hotel in Kuala Lumpur which was attended by the Malaysian cabinet members, ACPF International Directors, academic counsellors, UN representative, UNAFEI staff members,

UNAFEI Alumni and hundreds 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 Kuala Lumpur 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 organisations. It is worthwhile to quote Dr Mahathir Bin Mohamad, Honble 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".

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 Counsellor of ACPF.

To the Editor

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.

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

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

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 activities.

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.

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