Hartal

Thanks to Sheikh Hasina I had to take a rickshaw from Uttara to work. It took me two hours to reach my office. So there I was crawling along in my rickshaw with speeding buses passing by.

Just when I was good and mad, the police stopped my rickshaw and pulled me over to the road opposite the Twin Peaks Complex at the old airport. Why? Because the PM was coming to work from her residence in the Cantonment. This is by the way at 11.30 in the morning. All slow traffic was stopped for twenty min-

Standing in the hot sun it occurred to me that you can judge a police state by the size of their ruler's motorcades and the degree of inconvenience they cause to the general public. Funny enough the police also thought it was silly to stop all the traffic but they are just following orders. As one constable reminded me, we voted for them.

If the PM had glanced outside while passing by sitting in her airconditioned armour plated Mercedes, she would have seen my rude aestures

We are just pawns in this game for power. Vassals, slaves, cattle that's how they see us.

Beowulf

Dhaka

Uttara over-bridge

In spite of several deaths, repeated newspaper articles and several letters to the editor, the incomplete concrete guillotine is still up there in Rajlakhi, Uttara

This is an obvious and certain hazard to the thousands of people passing underneath it everyday.

Has the DCC, Gaffur Bhuiyan MP or anyone of the 60 odd ministers done anything? Even our Mayor elect hasn't said anything about it.

The only difference I see is that some campaigner put graffiti on it! So while you're praying the damn thing won't fall on you remember to vote for Jahidul Islam Jahid for the post of 1st Ward Commissioner.

Foreign investment

The news of opinion exchange between journalist and PDB chairman published in *The Daily Star* on April 4, 2002 has created lots of confusion among the investor interested in power sector. During the previous government, most of the power plants were built on supplier credit by giving the reason that foreign aid or foreign investment was not available for power sector. As per as my own experience ("A pathetic Bangladesh and Foreign Investment", April 3), the reason of taking the supplier credit to build power plant was not com"Beware of Bangladesh"



Reacting to FEER

Industrialisation and power

development are heavily dependent

to each other. Future power plant

development should be linked to

downstream manufacturing indus-

tries. This linkage can be done only

in private sector. There should be

some accurate relation between

power generation and power con-

sumption. Without industrial con-

sumption of energy, the difference in

power demand during peak period

and off-peak period will remain very

high. Even the energy demand in

summer and winter will differ a lot. A

few years before I was in Malaysia

for a few months. Malaysia should

be a model country for Bangladesh

to follow. There, most of the energy

intensive operation of an industry

run in off-peak period, and thus

minimise the power load difference

between peak and off-peak period.

This co-ordination can be done

effectively only by private sector. All

future power plant projects should

be linked to industrial consumption

of power in addition to domestic

In 1999 during my visit in Bangla-

desh, I have visited a small factory

that was producing activated carbon

from rice husk. There I saw stand-

bye power generator worth of few

lakhs of taka. According to the

owner, in Bangladesh, most of the

consumption.

Mohammedan Sporting Club and

Nigerian football players

The story is obviously by a person with superficial knowledge about our society. This again must be the most charitable way of looking at it, for the lurking suspicion remains that he has been motivated to serve the interests of those quarters, who for some reason or the other, do not wish Bangladesh well.

Admittedly, there are quarters in Bangladesh where religiosity dominates the political thought process. But the conflict between religiosity and ethnicity in the Bengali ethos has long been there. which the genius of the writer could not fathom with a modicum of objectivity. The existence of over-zealous elements is an attribute of any vibrant society. It is only when they take the driving seat and are allowed by the authorities to do so as in the case of Gujrat in India, that dangerous situations are created. Taliban ideas in Afghanistan have existed for ages. The tragedy occurred when they seized state power encouraged to do so by shortsighted yet powerful and self-proclaimed conscience keepers of the poor and

> Parliamentary reforms Mr M M Rezaul Karim's views on

> parliamentary reforms (April 7) seem more to be an exercise in avoiding the real problems rather than solving them. Instead of writing an academic treatise, Ambassador Karim can help initiate real reforms if he can convince his party colleadues to attend parliament regularly, give autonomy and oversight powers to parliamentary standing committees, and have straight answers to questions posed to ministers.

> Contrary to what the ambassador implies, the dubious and complicated system of proportional representation is neither a panacea for parliamentary ills nor especially suitable to a country where three fourths of the voters are illiterate. On the other end, it produces volatile governments and shaky coalitions dependent on fringe parties for sustenance, like in Italy, Israel, and Weimar Germany.

The learned diplomat is also on shaky turf when he describes the US system as 'presidential'. It is certainly not 'presidential' in the sense that Bangladesh has known the term. In fact, the American system is a delicately balanced contraption where Congress, President, and the courts share national political power and none of the three branches of government is constitutionally supreme to the other two.

If serious parliamentary reform is indeed what Ambassador Karim is looking for, he needs look no further than the confines of Louis Kahn's edifice in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Let him convince his party bosses to respect the Constitution of the country and the bylaws and traditions of the parliament. If he is successful, he would have reformed the system more than anybody else since the re-establishment of parliamentary democracy in 1991.

Missouri, USA

MIG's and helicopters It was interesting to view Mr. Dorji's

letter about Mig-29's. If Mr. Dorji has any idea he should know Migs are fighters not helicopters. Indian Air Force has Mig-29's as well. Mig-29s are better than Chinese aircraft and even US fighters. It is also cheap than the US fighters.

Indian Air Force may be stronger than ours but US Air Force is the strongest in the world. But other nation even tiny country like Singapore has an Air Force. They have F-16s, which we do not have. Burmese Air Force was weaker than ours few years ago. Do Mr. Dorji wants our Air Force to be weaker?

Sabir Abdus Samee London, UK

"Perhaps this is my last trip to Bangladesh"

I would like to record my reaction on the letter "Perhaps this is my last trip

to Bangladesh" (April 5). Mr. David Swartz does not like to visit Bangladesh till Begum Zia decides to change! He has not cited any bitter experience, which he was subjected to, and take such a harsh decision! The only reason that one can dig out from his letter is his friends' insecurity in Bangladesh. He is visiting Bangladesh for last 20 years for business purpose though it appears that he is more concerned about politics than business.

I like to make it clear to my honourable visitor to Bangladesh, it is our country, we are proud of it. Begum Zia is an elected leader, and we respect her. Any derogatory remark by a foreigner cannot be welcomed. If you want to come for a visit for business purpose, you are welcome. If the purpose is politics I would humbly suggest not to venture. Our country, our leaders both

Commodore AMA Alam (retd.)

the weak nations.

The writer of the article seems to be unaware that in our Parliament there have always been members of religious (not fundamentalists) parties. For instance, there were 18 members of the religious parties in the 1991 Parliament as against 17 in the present one. And this, in a House of 300. In the outgoing 1996 Parliament, there were only 6 of them. This seems to have caused the writer concern. But he must understand that changes in party representation is a part of any democratic process. One should appreciate the fact that it is good to temper extremist ideas within a moderate and democratic framework, rather than forcibly suppress them. I think we in Bangladesh are going about it the right way and better be left alone to pursue our own devices. There is of course room for criticisms and improvements. Constructive criticism helps, whereas distortion of facts hinders any healthy process. And in this case distortion of facts have been spewed on the pages of a prestigious journal such as the "Far Eastern Economic

The correspondent conveniently ignores the fact that the killing of Muslims, still continuing in Gujrat, has not caused any ripple in Bangladesh, not to speak of a backlash. The isolated post election incidents were largely caused by a handful of miscreants, operating in an unsatisfactory law and order situation, which the authorities here, have so far regrettably failed to fully control. But it has to be observed that Muslims are as much victims of the situation as are the Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, The writer, who talks of middle class "apathy" in Bangladesh towards communal actions has had apparently no access to our secular and vibrant media. To say the least, it was painful to read this superficial, and what may well be a motivated article, that does not deserve a cover story in the Far Eastern Economic Review.

Faruq Choudhury

(Retd. Ambassador Ex. Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh),

New DOHS, Dhaka

Appointment of ombudsman

The Ombudsman Act 1980 has been affected from 6th January 2002 by a gazette notification. It is expected that it will be passed in the parliament after necessary amend-

There is no doubt that authoritarian power of the public servants is the main cause of corruption and PARC (Public Administration Reform Committee) already suggested immediate appointment of ombudsman to check corruption and malpractice. To eradicate corruption in the

administration, to bring accountability in the executive branch of the government and to establish fairness in the public represented government, immediate appointment of an ombudsman is a must. We hope the government will proceed in the right way and take ernment is trying to push the problems aside instead of solving those. A couple of days ago, I heard a

few Awami League activists talking to each other. BNP had seized a shop that they owned. They were saying how they would take revenge when BNP government goes out of power. Will this revenge game go on

Drabir Alam

Brain drain

The United States uses more than its share of the world's resources, including one that often goes uncounted: the brain power of people from developing countries.

The Congress has passed a law that allows American computer giants to import 150,000 computer programmers as long as they pay them a beginning wage of \$70,000 rather than training American computer programmers who would certainly love to have those kinds of

iobs. It is an instant 'brain drain' on

the developing world, because the

150,000 that they have got came out

of India, and that program is in effect

India's "brain drain" leaves fewer

problem solvers in a country beset

with poverty and overpopulation

Such programs find political support

in the United States because the

incoming brainpower spurs Amer-

for the next three years.

ica's economy.

employment ranks."

ent. He says, developing countries lose some of their best and brightest The in-migration adds to a swell-

with a cost to both donor and recipi-

ing American population. According to the US Census Bureau, the US population will grow from its current level of 285 million up to 600 million during this century, due in large part to immigration.

M. A. Obaydullah Banani.

Whom to give credit for the declaration of Independence?

There seems to be a constant struggle between two groups of people pertaining to 'who' exactly proclaimed Independence. The answer is simple

The first declaration was by Sheikh Mujib, whose recorded voice was transmitted via a faint radio signal from a ship sitting off the Chittagong Harbour. Not many people heard the initial declaration, which Sheikh Mujib organised in the case that he was arrested and detained. (If Mujib declared Independence during the Speech at Ramna, the Pakistanis would have tried and executed him for treason).

The second, and more 'popular' declaration, was made by the then Major Ziaur Rahman, who captured the Radio Station at Chittagong, and transmitted a declaration of independence (a few days later) declaring himself as Head of

A third transmission was made when Maj. Zia corrected and retransmitted the message and declared independence on behalf of Sheikh Mujib, Head of State (in absence).

The problem is, there is no 'official' version of history available because every government tried to promote their own people's participation while distorting the facts of the opposition. In order to ascertain some form of unbiased cohesion with the events that took place, you'll have to do what I've been doing for over 10 years and that's to collect as many books on the subject and try to piece together what happened.

Acitizen, on e-mail Should I go home or not?

brave even my own home (!). It is sad. It is sullen. ΜZ

USA

Shamsher Chowdhury and like him many Bangladeshi parents sacrificed so many things for their children's future and sent them abroad for higher education. The biggest loss was their companionship.

Now these children are all grown up. Now the parents have every right to ask their children to come back. If they come back "Alhamdulillah" (thanks to the Almighty) if they don't, still

Revenue (NBR) in your esteemed daily. I also notice the web page address. I have visited the web page with interest to know my income tax status. I thought that every TIN holder should have the latest information regarding his/her income tax. Unfortunately no such thing was found in the page.

NBR can introduce TIN based individual sheets for each TIN holder and his/her (or company's) latest income tax related matter should be included in these sheet. Each TIN holder should have an ID, which will be protected by individual

Please don't kill each other



Israelis and Palestinians please stop killing each other. The God of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) is the God of Muslims and Jews alike. When they follow the same God, why should they let their quarrel drag on indefinitely? Please live as good neighbours, if not as good friends. Please replace hatred and vengeance with respect and love. One should not let the past history blind oneself.

If Israel needs more land for new settlements it can reclaim it from the Sea as Netherlands and Singapore are reclaiming new lands. The lands designated to the Palestinians by the UNO should not be encroached upon by it.

No city, even if it is Jerusalem, can be holier than human blood. So please don't kill people in the name of fighting for the Holy City.

Faruque Hasan Dhanmandi, Dhaka

"Alhamdulillah"

Granted in the US or Western world there is stability, opportunity for work and growth and the higher education cannot be matched with ours. But there are also dark sides of staying in these countries. Think about your grandkids for a while. They will never be a Bangladeshi. Parents don't have time for their

password, so that only TIN holder can have an access to it.

This will help identify each TIN holder's position and he/she can check his/her status at any time. During the age of IT, things should be like this. Hope the NBR considers this matter seriously.

I respect the decision taken by the

Honourable High Court that ETV

was operating without legal author-

ity. ETV can now appeal to the

However, to modernise Bangla-

desh we need at least one private

TV station and one radio station at

every Upazila. The government

controls BTV and Radio. Therefore,

these two state-run media cannot

play any positive role to meet our

needs. In our Constitution there was

commitment to build up rural electri-

fication and develop rural life. But it

was ignored. So people started to

come to Dhaka for better life. And

they created serious problem as

their own areas we need to provide them modern facilities. I request

Bangladesh government to pass a

law to make it easier to set up pri-

vate TV and radio station in rural

areas. We have many affluent

people, they can take up this task

easily. In this regard, the responsi-

bility of the government would be

only monitoring it.

Mohammed Mohiuddin

Dhaka is now overpopulated. To send back these people to

Supreme Court for redress.

Sekendar Uttara, Dhaka

Modernising

Bangladesh

DCC Elections



this government. By publishing that silly article it has given the BNP a drum to beat on and something to distract people with.

Unless I missed something, Sadek Hossain Khoka has so far

not commented on the terrorists nominated by his party. Then again that is the job for the so-called Opposition.

AL has wisely decided to boycott the elections, since BNP hoodlums would have slaughtered their ward commissioner candidates with police complicity if not outright assistance. As for the mayoral candidate, the incumbent was certain to have lost any re-election bid anyway.

to vote. A spectacularly low voter turnout in a country that typically has high turnouts would make the election results morally void.



necessary steps in this regard.

Digital dilemma

calls to avoid tampering.

almost impossible.

Indira Road, Dhaka

posed to do?

Recently some analogue tele-

phones of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar

exchange starting with '32' digits

have been converted into digital

system. But the subscribers have

not been provided with the new

compatible phone sets, which gives

the provision of locking the outgoing

exchange, we were told to buy new

sets on our own. Moreover those

connections have been converted

into digital, using the existing old

cables, most of which are faulty and

no more suitable for use. After a

good shower, water enters through

the leakage of the cables and cre-

ates noise, causing both telephonic

conversation and Internet browsing

BTTB at least to change the existing

old cables and install new cables

for the convenience of the subscrib-

What are we sup-

I have been following the Letters to

the Editor for quite a few months and

I just couldn't keep quiet any more

How many people have died in the

past few months? How many girls

have been raped and tortured? How

many mothers have lost their son?

Frankly, I don't know. But whatever

the number is, it is not supposed to

scared to shout out our anger

towards the government. We are

scared to ask for our rights. I know

some people are thinking that this

letter has no point. Well, they are

right because I don't know what to

write about. There is chaos every-

where. And it seems that the gov-

We are too scared. We are

Mohammad Faizur Rahman

I would like to draw attention of

When we contacted the

M.H. Bari

Khulna

The Far Eastern Economic Review has done quite a favour for

But we should not allow such an obvious ploy to divert our attention from the upcoming DCC elections, which are already more like a beauty contest for terrorists.

So I would suggest that the only way to mark your protest is not

I would also suggest an email to bnpbd@e-fsbd.net (skip the

visit to the BNP website); just for your information email from www.hotmail.com cannot be traced and if the details you give when creating an account are false your anonymity is guaran-

If you don't want to neglect AL, then email contact@joybangla.net; their www.albd.org website does not work too well but you can have a good laugh at their English.

About 18 years ago I flew to this distant shore. Since then a lot of water flowed through the Hudson and also in my native river Surma. I still remained estranged, partly by choice in this country. Living a rather palsied "Trishonku-life" in the USA. I frequently think of going back home But timidity prevents me. I think of corruption, traffic jam, lack of effec-

I also think of my children, who do According to press reports, Alan not feel the cultural estrangement Greenspan, Chairman of the Fedas I do. Last time we visited home, it eral Reserve, was asked just two was not very pleasant because of weeks ago how long the American hartal, traffic jam and pollution. I economic miracle would last and he know, because of my profession, said "as long as we can bring the have a lot to offer. I can make a real brains of other countries into our difference in the lives of many asthma and allergy sufferers. But Importing that brainpower comes honestly speaking I am too timid to

tive law enforcement etc.

children and when these children become teenagers, the parents ask themselves where did they go wrong? Would you believe if I say 60 per cent of the arranged marriage in US Muslims gets divorced in the first two years of marriage. With the care and love of a child's

parents, grand parents and relatives, a child has a better chance to grow up with dignity in Bangladesh than growing up with Nintendo, TV, guns and drugs.

Arkansas, USA

Often I find many advertisements and notices of the National Board of

National Board of Revenue

Only America can guarantee global security

The September 11 attack on the United States was an opening salvo by brutal atavistic forces against the world's only super power. As they cannot face the American military, the terrorist groups, led by bin Laden and his followers, have declared their war on America's civilian population. These terrorists want the US to withdraw from the Middle East allowing them to impose

they considered pernicious Western influences like television, cinema, music, sports, female education, was the model. The terrorists think that if America is forced to withdraw from the Middle East, they can easily overthrow the pro-western governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Kuwait and Talibanise the

But we know that any American withdrawal from the Middle East would lead to total chaos. Such a withdrawal would be immediately followed by a new invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein who will not let such an opportunity to slip. The second Iraqi conquest of Kuwait would raise the fear of Iran, which was a victim of Iragi invasion before, and Iran would be prompted to strike at Iraq. Others are likely to join and states in the Middle East would be at each others' throats, endangering the global oil supplies. Most European countries, Japan and non-oil producing Third World countries would face an economic catastrophe, which would affect all.

Only the United States has the military and political clout to

Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski recently pointed out: "The bottom line is that in facing the challenge posed by terrorism, the heavy lifting has to be done by the United States largely on its own. Only an America that can muster the strategic will to wage both a comprehensive political and military campaign can prevail, and that reality in itself is a sobering reminder of the fact that American preponderance is currently the only practical alternative to global anarchy."

Mahmood Elahi Ottawa, Ontario, Canada



Does the US wants to save the world?

their atavistic rule in the region. Afghanistan, under the fanatical Talibans who banished what

stem this global anarchy that will follow in the event of an American withdrawal. As former US President Jimmy Carter's National

Dallas, America Mijanul Akbar

after finishing the league the Mohammedan Sporting Club refused to pay the players. It's about eight months ago and the players are still jobless as well as penniless. Moreover, their house rent is not paid by the club for five months which is about 70,000 (seventy thousand) taka and so their electric line is cut off and so as the water supply.

not go out for they have no money again they cannot stay inside their house for there is no light or water. If any other foreign players come to know about this, will they

ever agree to visit Bangladesh? Will MSC officials please

They are in a miserable situation in a foreign country. They can-

Recently I met three Nigerian football players in New DOHS area

(House # 390, Road # 29,3rd floor) and I came to know that

Mohammedan Sporting Club hired four Nigerian football players

for the previous National League. They played the league but

A citizen Dhaka

pletely true.

joint venture initiative with Russia, India and European country. He has not mentioned whether the joint venture power project will be operated by PDB or private sector under BOO basis. PDB should not build any more power plants on supplier credit and operate. All power plant should be built and operate under private sector, PDB might keep

minor stake in the project.

small industries need a stand-bye The total power demand in Banpower generator to continue progladesh will even exceed 6.000 MW duction due to uncertainty of power in the next five years, if real indussupply from PDB. Mill owner should trialisation starts with improvement not invest on stand-bye power plant. in government policy, infrastructure. PDB must give the power supply law and order situation. PDB Chairguarantee for industry/mill man has indicated the possibility of Bangladesh power sector is a

> mess. There is no co-ordination between industrial development and power sector development. It is true that Bangladesh is a milking cow. The problem is that the milking cow is guarded by the individual or group of individuals for getting the benefit of milk without hard work.

An expatriate