

Protest of FEER Editor

The protest of the FEER editor (April 17) is revealing and shows arrogance.. He strenuously objects to the suggestion that the self-absorbed and unsubstantiated Bertil Lintner article on Bangladesh was instigated by anybody.

Perhaps Mr. Vatikiotis, the exalted Editor, can explain the compelling reasons for publishing an article that paints a fundamentalist label with a broad brush on a largely tolerant and secular nation at a time when a communal carnage in next door India has resulted in 800 gruesome deaths. Perhaps he can justify tagging a small country as a cocoon of terrorism on the basis of anecdotal hearsay and bluster of a few misguided individuals. Perhaps he can rationalise the deleterious effect on a poor country in terms of foreign investment, tourism and foreign aid because of a pack of lies penned by a journalist who did not bother to get the contrasting and more rational and accurate point of view.

The Bertil Lintner article is motivated and malicious and Far Eastern Economic Review, despite the equivocation on the part of its editor, will have to take full responsibility for publishing it.

Bangladesh Government and perhaps the person on the cover should sue the editor, the magazine and the author for prevarication, fabrication and defamation on the part of FEER.

Omar Khasru
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

This is in response to Michael Vatikiotis', Editor FEER protest letter.

Mr. Vatikiotis, let me start by saying any article in any of the news media by definition will have some influence by a political quarter. It is the nature of news and the media to have a political agenda, whether it is intentional or not. Mr. Editor you have served the Awami League agenda by making the present political party look bad.

The usual retort by people like Michael is, "Well, we did not mean to have a political agenda so it is unbiased." In other words if I cause an accident by mistake I relinquish all responsibilities. No you do not! Please accept what you have done. Now, other people reading this article will say, what does the writer propose; stop driving because you might cause an accident, stop reporting the news because it might cause problems? No, we cannot stop living because of the fear of making mistakes.

What I am trying to say is that Michael Vatikiotis should not give up his day job as Editor because his career as a comedian will be



FEER's friends and enemies

short lived. His comment on the unbiased nature of the FEER article was funny but we are laughing at him not with him. He is the joke.

To the Bengali population...please remember, you can dissolve this article by ignoring it. The more you publicise this story the truer it becomes, especially to the uninformed. Salman Rushdie has been transformed from a sideline writer to one of the most prolific of our time by having a bounty put on his head. He is even making cameo appearance in Hollywood movies.

In summation, you may not have been "sponsored" but you were most certainly "influenced". I know this because I am from Bangladesh. I do not think that we are a breeding ground for terrorism or Tablighi and I am sure I have a better perspective than you because I grew up there and I have strong ties there, whereas your Reporter just visited the place. Whether you were influenced by Awami League or not is not the point, you wrote a story, and it was just that, a "story", sitting somewhere between fiction and non-fiction.

Stick to your guns and don't come up with the lamebrain comment on how you are being ostracised and wronged. You media people do enough of that yourselves.

SAA
New York, USA

not a Western press and TI is headquartered in a Western Capital.

Dr. Mozammel H. Khan
School of Science and Technology

FEER: Them and us

Perhaps we are giving more credence and respect to Bertil Lintner and the FEER than they deserve; at least on this account. It was not likely that a weekly of such stature would publish such an unsubstantiated article.

Surprisingly whenever the western journalists refer to the traditional followers of Islam (as a religious group), they label Muslims as "fundamentalists". Over the last few decades the word fundamentalist has picked up an additional baggage with connotations which can be described as uncongenial, at best, and suspected terrorists, at its worst. But traditional adherents of Christianity or Judaism are designated as "orthodox".

What we need to understand is we need to develop as a nation. We don't want a label. It is only for the slow pace of our progression that a foreigner pays a three day visit and writes a piece on the state of the nation and hell breaks loose.

Well, Mr. Bertil said what he wanted to say, or what he was told to say -- so what? Let's carry on with our job in building a nation we can proudly call home.

IR
Uttara

Don't stop ETV

In a very short period of time ETV has established itself as a major source of entertainment for the mass. It has created a revolution in news broadcasting. It raises its voice against issues like anti-liberation forces, children and women repression and other social irregularities. Thus it has become the conscience of the viewers.

But an unwanted battle of legality of its terrestrial transmission is going on. We know that no one is above the law. If ETV's terrestrial transmission is found illegal, it should be punished in other ways than shutting it down considering its credibility to the nation.

Mind it, ETV should go on not only for itself but also for the nation.

Shams Md. Nabd Noman
Naya Sarak, Sylhet

ETV's corruption

No country can be ruled by emotional means. One should not intend to find 1971 spirit in ETV's license issue.

There are many private channels existing at home and abroad. ETV must follow the rule of the land as every other TV channel does.

Our own national interest and moral obligations demand that we do no less which are as follows:

1. We must respect the verdict of the High Court.
2. ETV authority must be responsible according to the court verdict.
3. ETV authority must renew its

word is "deliberate."

While the U.S. Air Force pilots tried their best to avoid civilian targets in Afghanistan, and most civilian casualties were accidental, civilians were the principal targets of the terrorists who attacked the WTC in New York.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Rule of law

Recently I have seen to my horror disturbing news reports about torture of political detainees under trial in Bangladesh. This is shameful for the entire nation, to say the least.

The conscientious citizens of Bangladesh should call for an immediate and independent inquiry

BBC Bangladesh Bashing Corporation?

BBC
ONLINE

The so-called epitome of fair journalism takes a nose a dive whenever I visit BBC web pages and go to the South Asia section.

It is a rare phenomenon to see any positive news about Bangladesh, rather than depiction of all the ills of our society (as if, nothing good happens to us!). Even, the problems with

dying snails on the coast, attracts a special feature titled, "Bangladesh snail stink!"

And during the Padma border incident, BBC's coverage was so biased towards India that it felt like as if the BDR invaded and killed the "innocent" BSF soldiers. I wonder why this reputable organisation is becoming more and more subjective and tilting towards a certain country while bashing the other in this region?

The time has come to get united against misinformation and lies depicted by international media about Bangladesh. Recent reports of FEER and World Street Journal need

license if they want to continue their business like any other private owned TV channel.

We hope to see ETV soon with proper license.

Mohammed A Azad
New York, USA

into the allegations of torture. Under colonial rule, as in the Gulags of the Socialist system torture was part of the "bad governance". Now those systems have found their rightful places in the junkyard of history.

Torture has no place in the civilised world, for it violates not only the laws of the country but also a host of international laws and conventions. Torture is contrary to the very foundation of democracy, because without civility and the mechanism for a civilised discourse democracy becomes a travesty, a sham.

As Bangladesh celebrates its

On arrival visas

My clients comment this way : In contrast to Vietnam, when one lands in Dhaka one has to go through a slow and tedious visa process, then wait an hour for the luggage and upon exit is surrounded by screaming mad hordes of people. The very first impression is one of chaos and filth.

Another client of mine told me that the visa-issuing officers at the airport don't seem to know the exchange rates for the Euro since

to be properly addressed, and we must use every technologies and options available to tackle this upsurge or hysteria against Bangladesh.

Also, we must investigate who are the agent provocateurs amongst us, and fuelling this anti-Bangladesh Propaganda. Let it be known that supporting such acts for cheap political gains share the same negative connotation as the Rajakars (Jamaat-e-Islami & Co) of 1971.

Nafees K
Texas, USA

Misadventure

This is in reply to Mr Ashraf Matin's letter (MIGs and choppers, April 17).

Army aviation would be more than sufficient to maintain and fly the helicopters, both the standard Huey's as well as the attack helicopters that we might need for relief work and close ground support.

There really is no rationale for having such a cumbersome Air Force.

In regards to the Mobile SAM batteries, there were some inconsistencies in the earlier writer's letters. Mobile SAM batteries, wheeled or tracked, are more suitable for moving with ground forces. What may be the right fit for us would be Static SAM sites all along the air corridors from our threat perception. We should have concentric rings of SAM sites that would prevent the opposing air force to take control of the skies.

During the NATO actions in Serbia, the Serbian air force quickly threw in the towel. But their static SAM batteries, Shoulder Fired SAM's and light AAA stayed in the fight.

Remember Saddam Hussein's SAM batteries? Repeated attacks by the USAF could not locate and

cutta, our half a squadron would hardly make a dent on that city. The ordinance carried by a few MIGs are not that significant and the retaliatory damage that would be caused by the Indian Eastern Command would be devastating. Not to mention that it's been 50 years since anyone in the Centre cared about what happens to Calcutta.

Since Bangladesh, unless

we'd definitely be a target for US Cruise missiles then!

Tintin
Dhaka

Colonel Akbar and the Danes

It's ironic that the controversy regarding the Danish allegations are unfolding on their National Day. There seem to be a lot of issues yet to be clarified regarding this, but my first question is why did a local person contact the Ministry on behalf of the Danish Embassy? Secondly, it may have been a bit indiscreet of the Minister to meet with the local contractors to understand the details of the bidding, without the Danish Embassy representatives present. But that may not necessarily be wrong if he can submit the original minutes of that meeting to the press.

The parties involved in this imbroglio should also make their own press statements to either prove or refute what the Danes are accusing the Minister of.

Although without a doubt Bangladesh is one of the most corrupt countries in the world, the Danes are not perfect either. In 1993 Poul Schlueter, the first Conservative PM in a century, had to resign for lying about Tamil refugees in what was known as the Tamilegal Scandal. However, the Danes are still one of the least corrupt countries in the world.

The fairest conclusion I think that can be drawn, until further information is revealed, is that local agents misled the Danish Embassy into suspecting the Minister of corruption. Typical of the people from that part of the world, the Danes I suspect look at everything in black and white, Bangladeshi politicians being black. Just the same way that life is supposed to be so much better in Denmark, although 46 per cent of children are born out of wedlock and the consumption of alcohol and suicide rates are among the highest in Europe.

It was very impolite of the Danish embassy to publicly accuse the Minister of corruption, but to the Danes, they have very little reason to treat us with any respect. Denmark has been involved with development work in Bangladesh since 1971 and

the results of their money must be quite disappointing.

I suspect that the answer to this scandal may lie closer to the Danish Embassy. An interesting issue to investigate would be to find the local people who would have benefited from granting the inflated contract to the JV Company.

Beowulf

Dhaka

Danish allegation!

Claims of corruption are nothing new in Bangladesh. This time it draws attention and embarrassment for the government of Bangladesh since an individual minister is named.

The government should investigate the allegation thoroughly and bring responsible person(s) to justice in order to restore relation with Danish Government. Also, the Shipping Minister should temporarily be restrained conducting any ministerial work until this case is resolved.

If this case is not determined soon, there is speculation that Denmark may withdraw from other aid commitments in Bangladesh, likely that other Scandinavian countries may follow suit.

Shabbir Khan

MN, USA

Dane's allegations-- is this the beginning?

Since the year 1982 we have been watching that whenever a new government comes in power, it files a lot of corruption cases, in the court of justice, against the ministers of the previous government. Not a single ex-minister, if I am not mistaken, has till

been spared, since the time above mentioned, from being accused, by a subsequent government, of doing multiple corruption while he/she (the minister) was in power.

Are all these corruption cases against the ex-ministers, false and fabricated? Have those been filed with the malicious intention to take vengeance against the political opponents? It is enough to shudder, if even ten per cent of those cases are true. The Danes have brought an allegation of 'serious intention of corruption', not an allegation of corruption done, against one of our incumbent ministers. This allegation is the first of its kind, from the viewpoint that it was bought by a foreign government directly against an incumbent minister of our country. Is it the beginning of a new process to be followed by the other donor countries and agencies in the days to come?

The scenario of providing foreign aids to the poor countries by the well off is changing fast. Tough times are waiting ahead for us. Aids will no more be automatically pouring in our country. Well we will not be in need of foreign aids, if we can tame the corruption in our society. But who will bell the cat?

Faruque Hasan
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

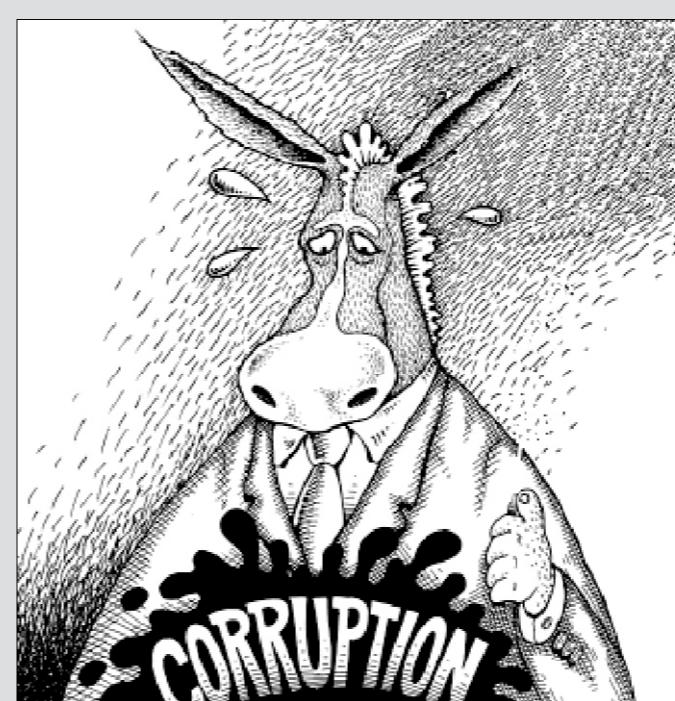
The Shipping Minister and the Danish allegation

Until an impartial investigation is complete any sort of judgement should be withheld.

However, until such investigation is complete, the Shipping Minister should voluntarily stay away from any responsible governmental position. It is important for the dignity of the country and for the dignity of the present administration. It is also important for the Minister's own dignity.

MZ

Cary, North Carolina, USA



Where does blame lie?

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