

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. Vatkiotis, 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 Tablibanism 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

Shams Md. Nabed 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?



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

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

And during the Padua 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 AAzad
New York, USA

Defining terrorism

Apparently, there is some controversy over defining who is a terrorist. Here is a simple definition: Anyone who deliberately, not accidentally, targets innocent civilians even during a war is a terrorist. The key

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

31st birthday, I like to see Bangladesh flourish as a democracy, and not slide to a slippery slope of torture and barbarity. Without rule of just law, democracy and civilisation cannot be secured.

A Dismayed Reader
Singapore

DCC and DMP - please assert your authority

We know it is mandatory to seek prior permission from the authority concerned (in Dhaka it is from Dhaka City Corporation) if somebody even any government organisation needs to dig a portion of a road for utility services.

However, we see a complete absence of authority over such activity in the old part of the city. We are frequently subject to inconveniences due to the utter negligence of the authority concerned. Take the example of what is going on in Rahmatgonj locality under ward no 65. Here the local people are helplessly witnessing the unlawful activities of members of a family.

They have already grabbed a portion of the Commissioner's office of ward no. 65. The holding of 180 Water Works Road beside the Commissioner's office has already been extended into the office premises. Now they are erecting a concrete overhead concrete structure at the main entrance of Haji Ballu Road, Rahmatgonj without taking permission from the authority concerned. Their plan is to turn the Haji Ballu Road into a family estate by erecting a number of such overhead structures along the entire stretch of Haji Ballu Road with murals of their predecessors. They have already dug the road that was carpeted a few days ago and erected two pillars to this end.

Once completed, this structure will prevent vehicles with high arms such as Fire Brigade from entering the locality. Moreover the electric wires, telephones lines are surely destined to be entangled with the pakka "Toran". It will also narrow the entrance of Haji Ballu Road. I don't know why the DCC and the local police have kept their eyes shut. They are supposed to be the watchdogs of whatever illegal activities taking place in the city but it seems things are not working properly.

I call upon the authority concerned to step in immediately and take stern actions against those responsible.

Dorji
Dhaka

Better issues...

It's very good to read in the newspapers daily how all the readers are responding to some silly baseless report published in FEER calling our country a cocoon of terrorism. Instead of responding to such useless issues we should build up a well-built country of which we can be very proud.

Upset citizen
Dhaka

Tareq Rahman
acquitted

I am reminded of the old canard "better a hundred guilty men go free than one innocent man be punished". It's a great victory for justice that Mr Tareq Rahman has been acquitted.

Of course one wouldn't expect Mr Rahman to be standing in the dock during the hearing or turn up at the court any time earlier. That would be an act of *lèse-majesté* on the part of the judiciary.

Basit
Dhaka

Misadventure

I was feeling nostalgic after reading the news (Miss-adventure, April 17) about a trio's attempt to escape study, school, rules, regulations and to make a train-trip to Sylhet. For those of us who have already grown up, there will never be any chance to enjoy this sort of adventure.

Now, we cannot do things that could give us the feeling of childhood excitement of knowing the unknowns, a relief from our daily duties or simply an escape from life-because reality pulls us down to earth. Life will never be like my early days anymore.

Khairul Hasan
Surrey, UK

MIGs and choppers

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

Name withheld on request
Dhaka

Nafees K
Texas, USA

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

destroy all of them.

Bridges and such infrastructure can be defended with a very old system that first developed in WW I, Barrage Balloons. This is used by the Pakistanis to protect their nuclear installations. Barrage balloons, secured with steel cables, deny the opposing attack aircraft the ability to descend onto a weapons release altitude. Denying the enemy the ability to strike their target is about as effective as one can desire. Another Pakistani tactic applicable to us is their formation of early warning systems that allow them to scramble their SAM batteries as well as Air Defence fighters to intercept the opposition.

The MIG 29 is a long-range interceptor for air to air combat. Given the right circumstances (money) several hundred MIGs and Mirage 2000s would be what we should have. Since Bangladesh don't have remotely that kind of money, we should invest in what we can afford.

In regards to first strike on Cal-

insane, would never go for the first strike option against our neighbours, ground based anti aircraft defence is what we should concentrate on.

Biggles
Dhaka

Airforce

This is in reply to SAS Sumit's letter (April 17). When I said that the Air Force or for the matter the military own half the land in Bangladesh, it was what is known as an example of a hyperbole-- an obvious and deliberate exaggeration or overstatement, intended for effect and not to be taken literally.

But yes, I am feeling slightly miffed with the air force. You would too, if you saw them training pilots to take off and land a C-130 in the middle of the city. Can you even imagine what would happen if a C-130 with a fuel load of about 9000 US gallons hits either the Rangs Tower or the I D B Bhaban? For one thing the IDB Bhaban houses the UN offices.

"Only America can guarantee global security"



After peace is exhausted

I would like to respond to Mr Akbar Hussian's (April 14). I respectfully disagree with him about his remark on Mr. Arafat "Arafat is still a prisoner of the old Fatah psychology and could not become a statesman." Mr. Arafat is the elected president of Palestine by the Palestinian people. Whether you like it or not if you want to see peace in Middle East then you can't cut Mr. Arafat off from any peace talk. As for Arafat, what can anyone do? If you kill him, the war escalates and he becomes a martyr. If you banish him, there's no one else to negotiate with. The current war in the Middle East is really an extension of a conflict that is more than 2,000 years old. If you want to spend your time trying to understand it, hey, it's your life.

Both the Palestinians and the Israelis have done wrong. President Bush understands that both sides in the conflict have done bad things and that both leaders, Arafat and Sharon, are flawed men. President Bush is looking out for America first, as he should be. The United States is the freest society on earth. On the other hand, no Muslim (Arab) nation has freedom. They often criticise America though America is the biggest buyer of their oil. There is a seething resentment in the Muslim world against America because, quite simply, Americans live much better than they do. But most of the Muslim nations are extremely poor. The Arab governments, who have failed dismally in bringing prosperity to their people, fan that resentment, so they blame their failure on USA.

Middle-East Conflict will not end until and unless Palestinians and Israelis trust each other. As long as peoples of Palestine and Israel don't stop hating each other peace in Middle East is a mirage. Arabs and Israelis must extend cooperation and love for each other. Only then America could play a significant role. All you know that the message of Sharon is simple, for every one of ours that you kill, you lose 10, or 20, or 100. Israel has inflicted a tremendous amount of damage on the Palestinian people so they will remember that there is a price to be paid for supporting mad bombers. That is the brutal truth of what is going on in the Middle East. There is no black and white in the situation. But make no mistake about it. Both sides have caused this war, and it will take both sides to end it.

Mazibur Khan
Portland, Oregon, USA

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

tion of taking 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
Dhanmandi, 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

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 Schluter, the first Conservative PM in a century, had to resign for lying about Tamil refugees in what was known as the Tamilgate 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 fair 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