

"Where do you want to lead us to, Mr Editor?"

The opinion of Ambassador Mustafa Faruque Mohammed (April 26) is patently a case of creating cheap sensation. What is shocking is that someone is attacking *The Daily Star* and its editor for being too soft on the Islamist-fundamentalist clique. A few things can be further from the truth.

Editor Mahfuz Anam himself is a freedom fighter who has struggled physically and editorially against bigotry, fundamentalism, and fanaticism. I have found his bias to be slightly centre-left, if anything.

One of the singularly noticeable qualities of *The Daily Star's* editorial writings has been the measured speech, decent language, and decorous verbiage when writing on issues that generally bring out the worst emotions in most Bengalis. Mr Anam and his paper attempt to appeal to the head rather than the heart.

As someone who disagrees with the editor's opinions at least half the times, I cannot but admit that he runs the most open, factual, and decent shop in Bangladesh journalism today. Others can learn tolerance and decorum, if nothing else, from this paper and its editorial team.

ES
Missouri, USA

Commentary

Where are our leaders leading us to?

Commenting on commentary

I have just read the opinion by Mr. Mustafa Faruque Mohammed.

I am a regular reader of *The Daily Star* since its inception in the Internet. Over the last few years, you have written many articles criticising sharply the misdeeds of previous political government. On reading those articles, I felt that you have an independent journalistic conscious that draws my respect for you. However, I have been following also all of your articles that appeared in your paper since the recent changes in the political scenario. I would like to mention that your articles (and the overall performance of *The Daily Star* in general) in recent days have frustrated me so much that I am now convinced that you are a politically biased columnist.

HRCBM's report as their bible for their so-called analysis, then why can't we point it out that they (media) are not upholding the so-called stature of journalistic fairness as they claim to be?

I do not disagree with his other arguments, and wish had the stamina to jump like monkeys and clap gladly for the foreign media's kind attention to my god-forsaken country!

Nafees K
TX, USA

"Banning is not the

However, to draw this matter to a conclusion from my side, I shall be straight with you. Yes, we should work together for a prosperous Bangladesh. But NEVER EVER should we trust those who feel ecstatic and come out in full support of malicious propaganda against our whole nation. These people, who did not have an iota of humanity to write one single sentence against the repression and oppression during the past five years; or, for instance, on the Gujrat carnage that has shamed the whole humanity, find enough 'courage' to write in the newspapers and websites (using

al? Frequently, there are horrendous lies about Bangladesh on these websites run/patronised by some so-called Bangladeshis with full support from people living here and elsewhere. The motive is very clear. To malign Bangladesh - particularly to the donor countries to bring down the axe to suffocate its life line for political mileage. But who suffers except the poor and ordinary people?

Ashfaq Chowdhury
Banani, Dhaka

Picture of Chittagong

While going through your full-page weekly feature on Chittagong (April 24), I came across the photograph captioned "Traffic jam at Muradpur intersection in the city".

But it is actually the last point of the Sheikh Mujib Road near the place commonly known as Barik Building Crossing at the edge of Agrabad (Muradpur is at the exact opposite side of the city).

And the empty trucks in the picture have merely lined up to enter the Chittagong Port at designated hours. Presentation of facts should be more accurate and relevant to the problem under discussion.

A distressed observer
Chittagong

Factual journalism in Star

This is regarding the report from Islamabad titled, "Laden escaped hours before raid on Faisalabad hideout" (April 9, on Page 9).

The article starts "Terrorist mastermind..." My question to you is that how you and your journalists know for a fact that Bin Laden is a "Terrorist mastermind"? Have you done independent investigation to prove that he is guilty of being a terrorist mastermind? Do you have some secret information that others don't have?

People will have more faith in the paper if you stick to reporting facts. You could have simply started the sentence with "Laden..." or "Laden, who has been accused of masterminding the Sept 11 attack..." This would be responsible journalism.

Journalism that is not based on facts is biased journalism. I strongly object to such journalism!

Yousuf M Islam, on e-mail

South Breeze vs Sunbeams

This is in reply to Mr Tintin's (April 25).

Let me first inform you that I was one of the players in the game, playing for South Breeze school. Thus it mattered a great deal to me that the misinformation printed in *The Daily Star* was corrected.

Secondly, my parents had nothing to do with my previous letter and "no", it is not "misplaced" school pride either. I don't understand how you brought about the issue of "parental pressure" in this whole matter. My letter was only about the score and had nothing to do with winning or losing. So all those irrelevant facts about the US was just a waste of your ink.

Purna Hassan
Dhaka

I am replying to Tintin's response to Purna Hassan's letter.

First of all I am sure that her parents had nothing to do with her letter, she was on the team and it was natural for her to want the wrong information in the paper corrected. South Breeze came very close to winning, but the paper made it sound as if they were losing all the way.

And secondly, I am sure that no one on the South Breeze team thinks 'winning is everything'. It was a simple matter of correcting wrong information. No question about 'parental pressure' or 'misplaced school pride'.

By the way, Tintin, I am also sure that Purna's father is not going to kill anyone over this basketball match.

Yeshim Iqbal
Dhaka

MIGS and helicopters

This is in reply to Mr Maruf's letter (April 26) regarding defence issues and how clueless he thinks I am.

In the first place economic prosperity coupled with strategic needs are what should govern defence expenditures, rather than jingoism. For instance recently, prosperous New Zealand abolished its air force,

During the period of previous political government, you were always sharply criticising the government on their mistakes even though some of those mistakes were very light in the context of overall political situation. On the other hand, your recent writings seem very blunt and shallow in criticising even on the grave misdeeds of the present government.

Dewan Syed Abdul Majid, MD
New Orleans, USA

This is in reference to Mr. Mostafa Faruque Mohammed's opinion (April 26).

The writer put forward some vague logic in his writing. He wrote that some hundreds Bangladeshi fought for the Taliban. But, it proves nothing. Some British and French citizens were also caught red-handed for fighting in favour of the Taliban. Would the writer also declare England and France terrorist countries?

Oli Md. Abdullah Chowdhury
Sylhet Law College, Sylhet

as it saw no threat that required the maintenance of one.

The examples of the poorer countries with high defence expenditures are actually arguments for why we should not go down that road. Out of Mr Maruf's examples, a great deal of Pakistan's problems (and 25 per cent of their GDP) and all of Burma's problems emanate from their armed forces. I'd rather suspect that their citizens would have preferred to live without such magnificent armies.

I must admit that if Maruf thinks China is not a threat to India he's spending way too much time in Bourbon Street. China and India fought a war in 1965 and even now in certain Chinese maps Kashmir is shown as neither belonging to India or Pakistan. You have to keep in mind that China invaded India and occupied a significant area and even now has a disputed border.

They have nuclear tipped missiles based in the Jianshui Launch Complex near Vietnam that can hit India. As a matter of fact one of the reasons India instigated their Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme was in perception of a threat from China.

The sad fact is that in a conventional war Pakistan, although beggared by their defence spending, has no chance against India.

The examples of the development of Bangkok or the lifestyles of (specifically) rich urban residents of Bombay and Delhi was not in order to compare their relative GNPs to that of Malaysia or the city budget of NY.

The point I was trying to make is that while Bangladesh spends what little it has in buying guns, erstwhile cesspits like Bangkok and Bombay are becoming world class places to live in. I am specifying again as I had in my last letter, that I am referring to the rich urban residents.

Dhaka is one of the few cities in the world where even the rich have no access to world class amenities.

In regards to Vietnam, keep in mind that contrary to popular per-

ception, the US never lost the war in Vietnam. It was the ARVN who lost the war; militarily the North Vietnamese never won a single battle against the Americans.

The conflict ended because Americans lost the will to fight and their conduct of the military aspects of the war didn't help matters. China fought a border war, that prefix is

"Taliban in Bangladesh"



Who are they?

I was disheartened to read your three-part commentary "Taliban in Bangladesh". Unlike your other commentaries that are always rich in reason and objective analysis, these were highly emotional and, if I may be permitted to say, somewhat partisan in terms of their thrust.

You said, for example, that a senior Awami League leader

cheap militia force.

Biggles
Dhaka

We want security of life

The condition of our country is simply frightening and the Prime Minister must be aware of it.

When one starts reading the newspaper or watching TV or turns on the radio-- there is only the news of killing, mugging, raping, acid throwing, footbridge collapsing etc.

There is no security of life and anytime anybody can be the victim of such incidents.

In this situation, I really want to know whether the Prime Minister would ever take any measure to save us from the continuous threats of life?

MD Delwar Hossain Bhuiyan
DU

Writings on the wall

As a schoolboy I often used to hear my elders talk about 'the writings on the wall'. This appeared rather Greek to me at that time. As I grew older things began to dawn on me.

I believe the terminology may have originated stretching from the subcontinent to the developing world where the actual writings on the walls are both a tradition and a

under the banner of Hirkatul Jihad, Hizbul Mujahideen and the likes. Interestingly enough writings of the nature were rarely seen even a few months ago.

I see ominous signs in these writings. It is evident that some powerful elements are encouraging and sponsoring these self-styled destructive propagators of so-called political philosophies.

It is high time that the government read these writings on the wall before it is too late.

Let us take note of the early warnings and act accordingly.

Shamsher Chowdhury
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Matching Grant Facility

The Government of Bangladesh in association with the World Bank runs a project called the Matching Grant Facility.

Whereby exporters can apply for grants to assist in the marketing of their products.

Up to date the Matching Grant facility has disbursed over \$1,000,000 to the RMG sector alone. This is the only significant assistance that the exporters receive to improve their systems and their marketing.

The project will be expiring in July unless the GOB requests for it to be extended.

camp in Lalkhan bazaar in Chittagong where 25 thousand young men belonging to Harkat-ul-Jehad were given training in guerrilla warfare including use of explosives. There are many other reports including one by the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Commission indicating international links of the extremist Islamic groups of Bangladesh.

If you want to shut your eyes to the coming deluge, it is your choice but it is most unfair to condemn others if they want to keep their eyes open. It was certainly not fair to attribute evil motive to those who simply wanted to warn the members of the public about the ominous signs that are visible to all discerning eyes.

Shah AMS Kibria
(Ex-Finance Minister of Awami League)
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Given the sorry state of our export industry and the economy in general the GOB should continue this laudable role.

Dorji
Dhaka

"Are we subject to disgrace"

Corruption charges brought against a cabinet minister of a sovereign country by a foreign dignitary is never heard and thought of. It has bewildered the entire nation. One must understand that a foreign dignitary may charge a minister on such ground only when a situation goes beyond limit. The minister in his prompt reaction and subsequent press briefing has denied the charges and has counter charged Mr. Peter Lysholt Hansen, Under Secretary of Danish Foreign Ministry, projecting a different story. Whatever may be the case, charges against the minister will tarnish the image of Bangladesh among the international community.

As Bangladesh is a poor country, it depends on foreign aid for economic progress. But IMF, World Bank and some donor agencies have held up aid due to worst law and order situation, corruption and bad governance. Repeated appeals of the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister have failed to secure foreign aids. So corruption charges against a minister at this stage undoubtedly would worsen the situation.

Hope the Prime Minister will look into this matter and take necessary steps.

Col. SH Rahman
Dhaka

Danida corruption: Guilty or not?

I was surprised if not shocked to read the lead news on April 14. The headlines, interview of the Danida representative in big bold letters and the Shipping Minister's protest in regular letters, gave the immediate impression that the donor agency was right. But after reading it appeared to be quite different and charges of Mr Hanson seemed baseless.

From my experience both in the government and outside I know that the donor agencies tend to dictate too much on the recipient. For most of the cases a bilateral aid is an indirect subsidy to the industries of the donor country and in this case it seems to be a direct subsidy. As far as I can recollect and if my memory serves me well, Danida first came here in the late '70s to supply two ocean going ships for Bangladesh Shipping Corporation. While half way through their negotiation with the government of Bangladesh, Danida backed out on the pretext that the ship owners in Denmark disagreed. But the shipyards were waiting to work for cargo vessels, which would be restricted to coastal trading and not in international trading. Grabbing the opportunity it was GOB who proposed supply of Ro-Ro ferries and Coastal Passenger cum Rescue vessels. Mr Hanson's remark at the press conference that "it is for the poor people of Bangladesh they are doing this" is more like shedding crocodile tears.

As reported in your paper that Danida has brought their allegation to the highest authority in the government. We are sure that the allegations will be enquired properly. If Danida is at fault then the GOB should not hesitate to cease future co-operation with them.

Captain Nurul Huq B.N. (Retd)
Dhaka

How about the freedom of countering an opinion?

Mr. Bastiat wrote well ("Protest of FEER Editor and BBC", April 24), but the argument is not about the freedom of expression. It is about the subjective nature of these so-called analytical reports, or should I say, the typical western analysis of a culture or situation based on prejudice, or simply, poor research with the spark of sensationalism (tagging words like Islamic Terrorists, as an example) for easy consumption.

If I do take Mr. Bastiat's option, then Bangladesh government as well as all Bangladeshis should sit tight and let hate mongers like HRCBM (Human Rights Commissions for Bangladesh Minorities- a Calcutta base group), ride on their rights to express reports "Til K Taal Koray", and write to Amnesty International, United Nations, and the President of United States to support their ulterior motives? Please, visit their website for details).

Now, if BBC or FEER takes

Vote for the voters

A joke for Mayor Khoka

The joke goes as this way: once the late Prime Minister of China, Mr. Chuo-en Lai came to India on a state visit. While his motorcade was proceeding through the streets of New Delhi, he saw many people were passing urine at the roadside. He attracted the attention of his guest, the then Prime Minister of India, Mr. Nehru, to those people and asked, "How is this? You claim yourselves a civilised nation!" Mr. Nehru cast his face down. What else could he do?

Next, Nehru was paying a return visit to China. His motorcade was passing through the streets of Peking amidst thunderous roar from the people. Nehru was not paying attention to the greetings of the mass. His eyes were looking for something else. Yes, at last he got it: a man was passing urine on the footpath. He attracted his host's attention to that man. Dumb-founded Chuo kept mum, dying with shame. On his return to office, he ordered his secret service to find out that man who humiliated the whole nation in the eyes of a state guest. Soon the secret police found out the man.

In the state dinner Mr. Chou whispered to the ear of Mr. Nehru, "I am sorry to say you that the man you saw pissing on the footpath was actually an Indian, working at Indian embassy. So, Sir..."

Mr Mayor, We would like to be a civilised nation, at least to some extent. You may appoint community police and impose fine to stop pissing at the roadside. But please don't forget that we need adequate number of public toilet in this metropolis.

Mr. Mayor, I will not ask you to suppress terrorism from the City; because the decision to suppress terrorism from the country, as well as from this City, is a political decision to be taken by the political party in power. Furthermore, all the contestants, whether terrorists or not, for the posts of Ward Commissioners, pledged to make their respective wards terror free, if got elected. So we can automatically expect that soon Dhaka City will become terrorist free!

Without a political decision you can save us from mosquito menace as well. These little creatures have been terrorising us since long. Our last Mayor has been too limp to fire cannon to kill the mosquitoes!

And last but not the least, please don't allow any rickshaw to ply on the streets of the City without light after the darkness falls.

Faruque Hasan
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

DCC election

Thanks to *The Daily Star* for its bravery in publishing in detail the names of the criminals 'elected' as commissioners of the Dhaka Municipal Corporation.

What a shame for a civilised society to see and tolerate such audacity of the criminals. This development is ominous and dangerous. This is a proof that the law and order situation has totally broken down. Democracy has become a farce. The government is totally incapable of upholding the dignity of law in the country.

There is none in the country to raise voice against the prevailing situation, everybody has been overcome by the fear of life. The only hope is *The Daily Star*. Carry on the mantle, we are with you.

Akbar Hussain
Toronto, Canada

way to fight criticism"

This refers to Mr. Ahmed K.Rashid's letter in your esteemed daily (April 24).

The political piece, borrowed from a well known political party about "the defeated forces of 1971" (thankfully you did not add "anti-liberation forces" also) has become rather too stale. The October, 2001 election result should be a good pointer. To go forward, one has to look ahead - NOT back.

pseudonym) even about some minor incidents that took place in some distant villages in to create negative impact on Bangladesh.

Sometimes, these are taken from newspaper reports that are accessible to anyone on the websites. Then, why, can one ask these reports, already published, are again forwarded to various websites with added spice with express request to circulate them further - even to Congressmen/Senators et

