"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 any-

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 Bangladeshi journalism today. Others can learn tolerance and decorum, if nothing else, from this paper and its

Missouri, USA

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 Minis-

try, projecting a different story.

Whatever may be the case, charges

against the minister will tarnish the

image of Bangladesh among the

it depends on foreign aid for eco-

nomic 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

into this matter and take necessary

Danida corruption:

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

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 Passen-

ger cum Rescue vessels. Mr

Hanson's remark at the press con-

ference that "it is for the poor people

of Bangladesh they are doing this" is

Danida has brought their allegation

to the highest authority in the gov-

ernment. We are sure that the

allegations will be enquired prop-

erly. If Danida is at fault then the

GOB should not hesitate to cease

future co-operation with them.

As reported in your paper that

more like shedding crocodile tears.

From my experience both in the

Guilty or not?

Hope the Prime Minister will look

the situation

Col. S H Rahman

As Bangladesh is a poor country,

international community.

HRCBM's report as their bible for "Are we subject to their so-called analysis, then why disgrace" can't we point it out that they (media) Corruption charges brought against are not upholding the so-called a cabinet minister of a sovereign stature of journalistic fairness as country by a foreign dignitary is

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 coun-

Nafees K

"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

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. Dumbfounded 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

Faruque Hasan Dhanmandi, 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

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

The political piece, borrowed from a well known political party about "the defeated forces of 1971" (thankfully you did not add "antiliberation 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

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 Talibans. 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 The point I was trying to make is

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

that while Bangladesh spends what

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 cheap militia force. **Biggles**

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 continuos threats

Md Delwar Hossair Bhuiyan

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 Muiahihideen 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 Facil-

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.

camps in Lalkhan bazaar in

"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 wrote in an article that there was Taliban network and AL-Qaeda pockets in Bangladesh without providing any evidence. I do not know what kind of evidence you are looking for but a report in The Daily Star, in my view, is a reasonably reliable source of information. Daily Star reports of January 1999 will provide you with a lot of information on training

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

important because it implies that China never engaged its full might. But I agree that the Chinese did get a black eye although that says more about how bad the Chinese army is rather than how good the Vietnamese are. Come to think about it, the Vietnamese army in the '70's supports my arguments for the type of military we need. A lean, light and

vehicle for soliciting public attention.

Of late some of the writings on the walls have been a matter of real concern to me. Only the other day I came across a writing which reads "Join Shibir the Caravan of Peace". A little further ahead yet another, this was a call to the younger generation "Establish the Islamic rule of law' and the innumerable other sermons

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

"An open letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan"

In "An open letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan" (April 26) Mo Fleming of New Jersey, makes some valid points. Indeed, the Jewish people have been victimised in Europe and elsewhere only for being Jewish. Hitler managed to work up a considerable number of his compatriots to a frenzy of homicidal fury against the Jews, when the latter amounted to only one per cent of the population. And the post-war Polish regime did even better: that paranoid and bungling communist regime produced anti-Semitism without any Jews at all as most of Poland's once thriving Jewish community were either killed during the war or migrated after the

Most people seem to need somebody to hate and they always look for scapegoats for their own shortcomings and minorities provide them such a scapegoat. Jews fitted this stereotype because their numbers are small and they seem to be hardworking and successful in various professions. But in the case of the present conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis, the slur of ant-Semitism is not that clear cut.

First of all, the Palestinians are the minority and much weaker economically, politically and militarily. And the Jews in Israel and occupied territories are the ruling class. The Arab countries, despite their lip service, are not in a position to provide much help for the Palestinians. But the Palestinians themselves might not have helped themselves by opting for terrorism, instead of political struggle. Ms. Fleming might recall that black Americans fought against racial discrimination through non-violent political action and not resorting to terrorism.

By resorting to terrorism, the Palestinians have weakened their bargaining position. This has only provided an excuse for the Israeli hard-liners to clamp down on the Palestinians more harshly. After years of suicide bombing, the Tamils in Sri Lanka have come to realise that they are going nowhere by their terrorist actions and they have now decided to give up such bombing and opted for a non-violent resolution of the conflict. There is now a real possibility that the conflict can be resolved without further bloodshed.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT A LASTING PEAC IS POSSIBLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

Similarly, a non-violent resolution of the conflict in the Middle East will become a reality once both sides become tired of violent

Mahmood Elahi Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

"An Indian view on Palestine"

In response to the letter of Meeta Sanyal (April 26), I would like to ask her a question, "What would be your reaction if the brutalised Palestinians were Indians?" She would surely cry for help.

Reading her letter I lost my words to express my disgust and shock. Where the whole world is crying for help for the Palestinans the writer expresses such an opposite view! Such communalism is beyond criticism.

Sabbir Ahmed Chowdhury University of Dhaka

This letter is in response to Ms. Meeta Sanyal's provocative letter from India.

India claims to be a "secular" state and its people take pride of being progressive and open-minded. But I'm sorry to say that the context in Ms. Sanyal's letter does not reflect the admirable selfaffirmations. She whole-heartedly supports the warm relationship between Israel and India. Nothing wrong with that. But doesn't she feel any sympathy for the struggling Palestinians?

The whole issue of Palestine-Israel conflict is a very complex one. It has twists religion-wise and political-wise. I don't support Israel not based on religion, but solely on humanitarian ground. I protest the war crimes they have been practising since 1967.

Israel claims Palestine to be its so-called "Promised Land", as written in the Jews' Holy Book. The UK and USA promised the Jews a land in latter's favoured place just before the World War I to garner support for themselves. I believe the general public should not see this whole issue solely based on the existing religious and political theories. Because, the religions of the world was supposed to advocate peace and harmony, but in reality are responsible for many wars, conflicts and riots. The Jews themselves were persecuted by the Pharaohs and later by the Chris-

Ms. Sanyal, you did not need to reproach all the Muslim majority countries for the terrorism acts in India. You also did not need to support indirectly the war crimes of Israel. Because your country does not have a soft foreign policy as you have claimed. Nor India is saint. Your BSF has been killing our BDR men and civilians almost every other day in the volatile border zones. I condemn the recent riots in Gujarat, which reflected the majorities' intolerant attitude that has been fuelled by VHP and RSS. I feel sorry for the Kashmiris, who have been trapped viciously by both India and Pakistan.

So I request Ms. Meeta Sanyal to live up to her culturally rich nation's secular structure, which the great Indian leaders dreamt of. Please judge the world by reason and logic not by belief and

Mishael Ahmad

Dhaka

tians just because they belonged to a different religion.

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 socalled 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

rior motives? Please, visit their website for details) Now, if BBC or FFER takes

(Human Rights Commissions for

Bangladesh Minorities- a Calcutta

base group), ride on their rights to

express reports "Til K Taal Koraay",

and write to Amnesty International,

United Nations, and the President of

United States to support their ulte-

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

* Commentary

Commenting on commentary

leading us to?

Where are our leaders

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

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

al? Frequently, there are horren-

dous 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

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

the Sheikh Mujib Road near the

place commonly known as Barik

Building Crossing at the edge of

Agrabad (Muradpur is at the exact

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.

Factual journalism

hideout" (April 9, on Page 9).

This is regarding the report from

Islamabad titled, "Laden escaped

hours before raid on Faisalabad

The article starts "Terrorist mas-

termind..." My question to you is that

how you and your journalists know

for a fact that Bin Laden is a "Terror-

ist 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

paper if you stick to reporting facts.

You could have simply started the

sentence with "Laden... " or "Laden.

who has been accused of master-

minding the Sept 11 attack..." This

Journalism that is not based on

facts is biased journalism. I strongly

This is in reply to Mr Tintin's (April

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

ing to do with my previous letter and

"no", it is not "misplaced" school

pride either. I don't understand how

vou 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

I am replying to Tintin's response to

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

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

that Purna's father is not going to kill

anyone over this basketball match.

MIGS and helicopters

This is in reply to Mr Maruf's letter

(April 26) regarding defence issues

In the first place economic pros-

perity coupled with strategic needs

are what should govern defence

expenditures, rather than jingoism.

For instance recently, prosperous

New Zealand abolished its air force,

and how clueless he thinks I am.

By the way, Tintin, I am also sure

And secondly, I am sure that no

just a waste of your ink.

Purna Hassan's letter.

Purna Hassan

school pride'.

Yeshim Iqbal

Dhaka

Secondly, my parents had noth-

The Daily Starwas corrected.

Let me first inform you that I was

would be responsible journalism.

object to such journalism!

Yousuf M Islam, on e-mail

South Breeze vs

Sunbeams

People will have more faith in the

A distressed observer

Chittagong

And the empty trucks in the

But it is actually the last point of

Ashfaque Chowdhury

intersection in the city"

opposite side of the city).

now convinced that you are a politically biased columnist.