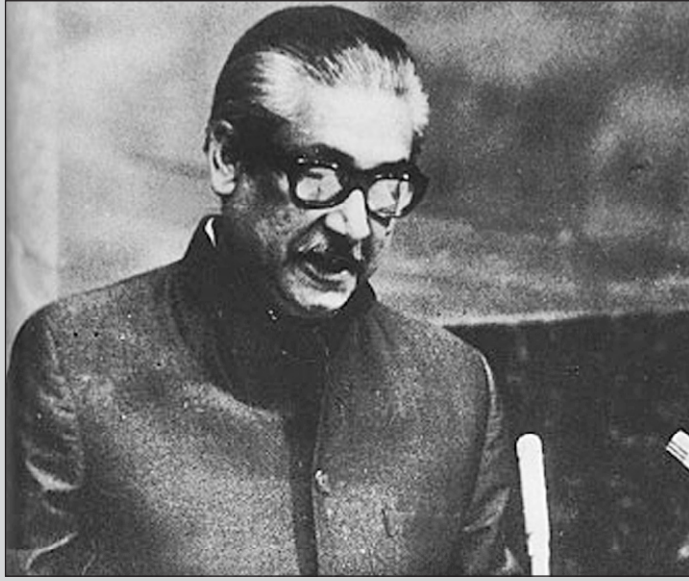


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

"Independence Award for Bangabandhu, Zia"



Another controversy in the offing?

The decision of Cabinet Committee on National Awards to post-humously honour Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ziaur Rahman with Independence Award is yet another move by BNP to start a national controversy.

Bangabandhu cannot be equated with Ziaur Rahman. Bangabandhu's role in independence movement is above all and should not be equated or demeaned. A constitutionally declared Father of the Nation do not need to be awarded again.

Ziauddin Ahmed, Banani, Dhaka

I think the decision of BNP government to honour Bangabandhu and Ziaur Rahman with Independence Award is praiseworthy.



Unlike Awami League, at least BNP is recognising Bangabandhu.

One may consider this decision of BNP as a controversial one. I see it as a step towards improving the relations between the two parties which have been each others enemy for a long time. No matter how great the contribution of Bangabandhu is, we cannot overlook Ziaur Rahman's contribution. So what's wrong with honouring them together?

Shamim Ahmed, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

I welcome the decision of BNP to honour Bangabandhu and Zia together. Let's not try to find a hidden motive behind every decision of the Government. It is indeed a good gesture of the Gov-

ernment to honour the leader of the party with which they are at dagger's drawn.

Layla Banu  
Purana Paltan, Dhaka

I don't mind honouring Bangabandhu and Zia together with Independence Award. No matter how hard any one tries nobody can overshadow the contribution of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. At the same time, we must not overlook the contribution of Ziaur Rahman. Both of them were the valiant sons of the soil.

Since there isn't any pre-condition that all the nominees' contribution should be of equal status, there's nothing wrong in honouring Sheikh Mujib and Zia with Independence Award.

Abdul Aziz  
Shantinagar, Dhaka

It is heartening to note that the founder of Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the builder of Bangladesh who is also the proclaimer of Independence Shaheed Ziaur Rahman have been nominated for the Independence Award 2003 for their contribution towards the independence of Bangladesh. I am happy to know that at last Khaleda Zia's BNP Government has acknowledged the contribution of Sheikh Mujib for the independence of Bangladesh.

Giving his reaction to the BBC on February 19 Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil said that Zia was nominated for the award though he had got no background. Here I want to mention that in 1997 when AL was in power Begum Fazilatunnessa Mujib was given the Independence Award along with Tajuddin Ahmed who was the Prime Minister of the Mujibnagar Government in 1971 and others.

Now Mr Jalil would you kindly let us know what background Begum Fazilatunnessa Mujib had that she was given this award!  
Iqbal Ahmed, Dhaka

21st February and our responsibility

21st February is a solemn occasion of national mourning. On this very day, the proud sons of this nation gave their lives for their mother tongue. 21st February has also become the International Mother Language Day. But, that is not enough. We, the Bangladeshis, have some responsibilities to do.

We, especially the young generation hardly know anything about those brave young men who sacrificed their lives for their mother tongue. How many of us know about Salam, Barkat or Jabbar? We only remember them on 21st February and for the rest of the year, they remain in oblivion. Their families are also ignored and the government does not pay much attention about them either. Should they be ignored like this?

Minhaj Ahmed  
Uttara, Dhaka

Bush and his 'Bush-firer'

"It (second UN resolution) is not necessary as far as I (Bush) am concerned" to wage a Bush-Blair war against Iraq (February 19).

mission as Saddam has continued to, in their words, "cheat and retreat". There can be no arguing with that and no excuses can be allowed. But what is monumentally hypocritical about the official US position is that everything US administration has accused the Iraqi regime of has been the stock in trade of every Israeli government since 1948.

Another avowed objective of the American and British war campaign is to free the people of Iraq from a dictator and tyrant like Saddam Hussein. It would be clear to any astute observer that the US and its allies seek only to install an Iraqi "Hamid Karzai" who would be loyal to them rather than to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people.

One of the central ideas behind the Bush Administration's wish for "regime change" is controlling oil prices. Most people are aware that oil plays a role in the Bush Administration's possible invasion of Iraq, but many do not quite understand how. High oil prices damage the economies of countries that are dependent on foreign oil, such as the US. If oil prices were to drop dramatically, it would be as though a great weight had been lifted off the chest of the US economy, possible

without its permission! Does this illegal entry into an independent and sovereign country, not break any international law? Or perhaps I should rephrase my question and ask instead, are British and American soldiers above the law? Or is it the good old "double standards" at play here again?

If some Iraqi soldiers dared to enter US/UK territories in a similar manner, what would Bush/Blair do? One can imagine the headlines on CNN "An Act of War" or "America's Freedom Invaded". How long would Bush/Blair wait before firing thousands of Smart-bombs and declaring full-scale war with Iraq?  
Azad Miah  
Oldham, UK

War priority-- against Iraq or HIV/AIDS?

Which is more important and urgent? War against Iraq or against HIV/AIDS?  
War against Iraq is likely to kill a million or more of innocent civilians. On the other hand HIV/AIDS has spread like wild-fire in Africa and is also spreading fast in Asia and according to the UN, HIV/AIDS has attained "Catastrophic Dimensions" and millions of people may die of

destruction and arrange destroy such WMD if/when found. Our request to President Bush and other leaders is to avoid another human "Catastrophe" and to bring under control the spread of HIV/AIDS which has already attained "Catastrophic dimensions".  
Shuja Alim  
On e-mail

Where is Saddam?

Does the Bush administration really believe that they'll bring Saddam down through war? If war on Iraq does occur, Saddam will probably just shave off his moustache, bleach his hair Eminem style and slip off incognito to some other country.

Saddam really doesn't seem like the kind of person who'll start caring about all the innocent Iraqis getting killed by the US, go on a guilt trip and turn himself in. Is he even alive? Maybe he died a while ago, and we've just been seeing his "clones"; he really does have people who look like him to go to meetings and posing as him (just in case someone wants to kill him). What's going on here? Is Bush not the brightest apple in the bunch or am I not the sharpest pencil in the box because I honestly don't get what the US's goals are at all.

Nur Jahan  
Chittagong

"Ethics"

I am getting amazed having seen the variety of subjects along with the quality and wisdom of your letter writers in this Page. I visualise a very healthy state of minds prevailing here when people are expressing just opposite views in the same column. This is freedom of expression. It is our inherent right!

One may like it or not the original writer of "ethics" expressed his deeper understanding about mind, body and spirit in the right time. I thank him! I thank also Dr Rashid Hyder who did not like his writing about "ethics". But when he advised the editor not to publish such writing in this column, I was shocked. I found it 'unethical'. We all need to rejuvenate our sense of righteousness and ethics. We should all reflect in our mind and try to moist our heart with love to every body. Irrespective of religion, caste or nationality.

First one has to love himself, love his family and then love every living creatures in this world. If some one does not love himself how can he love others? Almighty Allah created the universe out of love, all creatures are product of love. They respond better to love than any other attributes. This is the rule of our survival. Anything devoid of love is unethical!  
M. Ayub Khan  
Ottawa, Canada

Bangladesh Cricket

Mohammed Rafique in my opinion is the unsung hero of Bangladesh Cricket. I say this because he is the only person out of the 11 players coming down to the field, who has aggression, confidence and ruthlessness in his looks and attitudes.

His shots are clean, and usually he comes in so late that he has no option but to strike. He doesn't have the fear and nervousness like all other players.

I remember he once opened the batting for Bangladesh against Kenya and we ended up winning the game. Since then I haven't seen him open again. Why is that? I also remember that on a few occasions his bowling performance has also been "remarkable".

A player like Rafique should be nominated as the captain for the Bangladesh team. Captains should be chosen not on merit or experience basis, but on leadership qualities, confidence in the team and on himself.  
Shadman  
Toronto, Canada

It was indeed very disappointing to see Bangladesh losing to a team comprising of department store employees, graphic artists, students, and of course, the wrecker-in-chief of a plumber! If that wasn't enough, we've created history by being the first team to lose three wickets in the first three balls in any form of cricket.

The dismal performance of Bangladesh in the World Cup so far should be a lesson to the players not to be too laid back when they play lesser known countries, and not to play just for a respectable margin of defeat whenever they play against the big teams.

However, I feel that the main culprits are the members of the cricket governing body, who opted for too much youth and inexperienced ones at such an inappropriate time. While I agree with many that there should have been more experienced players in the World Cup, I would request the selectors not to unceremoniously throw out most of the younger players once the competition comes to a close!  
This year, too many youngsters were in the wrong place at the wrong

time. We need young players to gradually take over the helm from the old guard. The team should always have a balanced combination of youth and experienced. There shouldn't be too much chop and change and experimentation, particularly before a major competition such as the World Cup. Most importantly, the team selection should be based on merit rather than on petty politics.  
Samir Mainuddin  
Canada

BCCB is a joke, they have no clue how to run cricket, or how to develop the game. And the selection committee are so pathetic! They do not understand the basic of cricket forget about running the organisation.

Here in Canada they play cricket only for 3-4 months in summer and only once week, that is about 16-18 games at most but they play hard. They understand the game and they play to the situation though they don't have the cricket condition as we have Bangladesh. They select the players according to their performance not by their names.

And to our manager Farooq who did not attend the press conference after the Sri Lanka match, let me ask him when was the last time he scored any good score in international game that he never showed up in the podium. He should be sacked right now. Even Mohammad Arbaaz Nayeem of class 11 (February 21) understands more cricket than those in the board.  
B. Atcha  
Canada

Hypocrisy and double standards

As the Bush/Blair axis of war prepare for conflict, here is a truncated version of a questionnaire compiled by Brigadier General James J David (retired), Company Commander of the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam (1969-70) and a veteran of three years active duty in the Middle East (1967-70)

Which country alone in the Middle East has Nuclear Weapons? Answer: Israel.

Which country refuses to sign a non-proliferation treaty and bars international inspectors? Answer: Israel.

Which country has seized the sovereign territory of other nations by military force which it continues to hold in defiance of UN resolutions? Answer: Israel.

Which country is in defiance of 69 UN resolutions and has been protected in 20 of these cases by a US veto on the Security Council? Answer: Israel.

Which country has dispossessed 4,000 Palestinians by demolishing their homes, has created 762,000 refugees, refusing them permission to return to their farms and businesses? Answer: Israel.

Which country regularly breaks the Geneva Convention by imposing collective "punishments" on whole towns and villages? Answer: Israel.

Which country has used a weapon of mass destruction (i.e., "smart bomb") on a densely populated civilian area, killing 15 civilians, including 9 children? Answer: Israel.

Which country receives weaponry from the United States for free, which it sells to China in defiance of protests from the US? Answer: Israel.

Which country, believed to be the 16th richest in the world, receives a third of all US overseas aid? Answer: Israel.  
Naveed A Chaudhuri  
London, UK

"War in Iraq"

MA correctly points out that the US is under no obligation to perform altruistic tasks for the world (February 21). It has probably escaped his scrutiny that in fact there is no altruism in the US policy. If there were, then the US would not be giving the UN an ultimatum, or threatening to "go it alone" should the UN disagree on war.

In his efforts to point out the "altruistic" side of the US foreign policy, it is quite apparent that MA is only too willing to tow the official media line. In order to stay within the 300-word limit imposed by the Editors of this esteemed daily, I will address a few of them:

Contrary to the motive MA might give as to why Saddam was not usurped, the reason the coalition did not march to Baghdad in 1991 was that in their eyes, it was better to quarantine Saddam than dispose of him. Because no one then as now, wanted to deal with the issues of the Kurds, or what would happen in the absence of Saddam, since there was no single person or party that could maintain the unity of Iraq. It was therefore better to leave Iraq as it was and besides, the oil for medicine deal suited the beneficiaries quite well.

In the case of Rwanda, while half a million Tutsis were being killed, the UN peacekeepers stood by. They were not empowered to keep the peace, because, as Mr MA rightly points out, there was and is no oil.

The US role in Bosnia is to say the least, overblown. The facts are opposite to what Mr. MA would like to believe. During the war the Muslims in Bosnia were under a US led embargo against buying arms to defend themselves. While the Serbs engaged on a murderous rampage, the countries being credited now for saving the Muslims, did nothing. If Mr. MA keeps up with the news, he will know that thousands of Muslims and conscientious citizens of the US held protests outside the White House and in the city of New York, demanding that Mr. Clinton lift the embargo. During that time many Muslim countries threatened to ship arms to the Muslims against the UN Sanctions.

MA is also right in saying that Germany would not have survived the Cold war were it not for Britain and the US. However, it is not true that protection of Germany was in the interest of these countries as well?

Mr MA might assume that the "paceniks" are missing the point, and that the aggression being designed in the name of liberty is perhaps well deserved. Then by that same token, I suppose, we deserve our colonial past. After all, how else would we have inherited a railway system?  
Shomit Chowdhury, Dhaka

This is in reference to MA's letter (January 21). The standard diatribe representing the US as good and everyone else as evil is naïve and simply wrong. The US and UK governments supported the coup that brought Saddam Hussein to power and supported him in killing a million people in the Iran-Iraq war, reaping a handsome profit in doing so. The doctrine was for neither side to win, but to keep them fighting forever. America's interest is not to protect the flow of oil, but to control it.

Sanctions have crippled Iraq and left the population destitute. Draconian rules deny them essential equipment including incubators and X-ray machines a criminal policy resulting in more than a million deaths. Half the money in the "food-for-oil" programme has been siphoned off to compensate US and UK companies for lost business. Iraqi children starve while fat-cats prosper.

Bosnia and Kosovo, both without oil, were abandoned to their fate. For three years the world watched in horror as unspeakable crimes were committed against the Bosnians including ethnic cleansing, genocide and mass-rapes. It was the constant and vocal protest of honest, decent people the world over. MA's paceniks-- that forced intervention.  
Shah Shamsad, UK

With reference to Mr Satyajits' letter of 17th February.

Does he really believe that if America and Britain attack Iraq many millions will not suffer? I also wonder if he truly believes that the Americans have succeeded where others have failed before in conquering Afghanistan. What they did there was exactly what they will do in Iraq if they choose to go ahead with this war. They will simply kill many innocent people, including children, by allowing their bombs to drop as inaccurately as always.

The lives of the people of Afghanistan have not improved as dramatically as was promised since the Taliban was defeated and I do not believe that the lives of those poor people of Iraq will change if America 'liberates' them, as they claim they will.

I do not say that Saddam Hussein should not be removed but I cannot accept that the only way to do it is to drop bombs on the innocent. Believe me when I say that many think as I do. Perhaps Mr Satyajit should have been in London on 15th February, as I was, marching with over one million others, with one mind. Bombs are not the answer. Yes, Bush and Blair could bomb Iraq into oblivion if they wanted to but at what cost? In my mind they would be no better than Saddam and I for one do not want the murder of Iraqi children to be committed in my name, by my Government.  
Kathleen Haq, UK



It's all about oil?

Night club fire

At the recent night club fire in Rhode Island, USA, several survivors said that the emergency lights and exit signs went out shortly after the fire started. How could that be, when these battery-powered lights were just tested two months earlier?

The answer lies in where they were located, above the exit doors. They were lost in the smoke that filled the ceiling before it reached to the floor.

There should be exit signs and lights above doors where patrons can see them before any fire starts, or if the problem is just a power failure. However, more exit signs and lights should be at floor level near the exits, so that those crawling along the floor to escape the smoke can head for them.

The airlines have learned this lesson. Along the aisle on the floor are lights which show which are the exit rows by light, and by feel.

All places of public patronage should have emergency exit lights at floor level that will not be hidden by smoke.  
Tom Trottier, Ottawa, Canada



Similarly Hitler, Hirohito duo did not need such a resolution to start World War II. So was the case of Chingis Khan, Napoleon and many others. It seems Bush-Blair duo is determined to make a place along with Hitler and his kind to contribute in the tragic part of human history.  
Syed Waliullah  
Dhaka

War on Iraq and US unilateralism

America and Britain have repeatedly argued that Iraq's possession of WMD and its desire to acquire a nuclear capability somehow illustrates a kind of default evil intention that requires countering. What they fail to mention is that Iraq, being crippled with staunch economic sanctions for long 12 years, is simply not an imminent and credible threat to any of its neighbours let alone to the US.

The US and Britain claim that an attack on Iraq is justified as it has not complied with the UN inspection rule and has violated numerous human rights. They also claim that the UN inspection has failed in its

leading to global economic upturn. Because the US and UK do not want an end to the UN sanctions, a viable alternative is to remove Saddam Hussein and put their friendly government in power that will increase oil supply in the global market and this would cause a drop in oil prices. Economists predict that after a successful Iraq campaign, the price will drop dramatically from the current \$30-\$34 a barrel to \$15 to \$20 a barrel: nearly a 50 percent increase. The effects of this on the U.S economy, which depends heavily on oil, will be tremendous.  
Monirul Haque  
Banani, Dhaka

Illegal entry into Iraq!

It is being increasingly reported that CIA and British intelligence operatives are already in certain parts of Iraq, choosing their targets, making plans etc. The UN passed its resolution, giving permission 'only' to UN weapons inspectors to go in Iraq and carry out their search. It did NOT give any universal visa to Britain or America to walk in Iraq

HIV/AIDS within next few years.

As we believe or rather as we have been given to believe, from statements by American Govt. Officials and President Bush himself that they (President Bush and the US Govt.) wants a regime change in Iraq so that the people of Iraq is free from the "tyrant dictatorship of President Saddam Hussein". And this statement alone persuades one to believe that President Bush has humane feelings for people of other countries/nationalities, otherwise he would not have bothered about "freeing" Iraqi people from the "tyranny" of Saddam Hussein.

If the above is true then Bush and Blair should abandon the idea of war on Iraq and divert all their resources, finance as well as logistics, to the African countries to wage a war against HIV/AIDS and try save millions of people from certain death. Asia can also get some benefit once the war frenzy is stopped and finance made available to poor countries to fight the dreaded HIV/AIDS disease.  
Let this Iraq issue lie low for the present time and let the UN inspectors try locate the weapons of mass

Sharmeen  
Bandhara, DOHS, Dhaka

USA must act humanely

We do not understand why President Bush is beating about the bush regarding Iraq attack. He is the President of most powerful country and he should speak his mind in clear terms. Why can't he simply say that America wants the oil reserve of Iraq, so why all these talk of 'weapons of mass destruction'? President Bush does not care for humanity, justice or any other fine feelings, his only aim is to get hold of Iraq, the oil rich country.

Every time we watch on TV the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, we feel pity for him-- a person unsure of himself and up on his toe to please America.

We thank France, Germany, China, Russia and the Arab countries which are opposing the war and also thank the people around the world who are staging anti-war rallies. It is heartening to learn that humanity has not vanished and people want peace not war.