

"Bangladesh's eastern strategy is excellent"

I feel like screaming every time I read a column by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed. In between other veiws, he lays on negative comments about the Indians. For example, right after 9/11 Dr. Ahmed wrote that of all people who had been writing against Islam, Jews and Hindus had been the most cruel. Such a statement begs for a reference, -which Hindus was he talking about? Where and what did these Hindus write? In a later column Dr. Ahmed wrote how the New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman praised Bangladesh for being a democratic secular Muslim country. What Dr. Ahmed ignored to mention was that the entire article by Friedman was about Indian democracy -- there were no more than two sentences about Bangladesh!

In his column of March 5 "Bangladesh's eastern strategy is excel-lent", after saying that Bangladesh will be eternally grateful to India for its independence, he claims that the Indians stole Pakistani military equipment from the Bangladeshis in 1971. Again, where did he get this information from? He goes on to say that Advani and Indian political leaders actively campaigned for Bangladesh's inclusion in the US list of terror-risk nations. None denies that Advani's motivation behind the movement to drive out illegal Bangladeshis is political --but when and how did he campaign to include Bangladesh on an American list?

Dr. Ahmed's knowledge about Bengali history, folklore and literature leaves much to be desired. "Borgis" did not refer to the Burmese but to the Marathas, who had attacked Bengal during the reign of Alivardi Khan. Nothing in "Rajlakshmi and Srikanta" takes place in Myanmar. Myanmar comes in the "Abhaya" section of Saratchandra's "Srikanta". One cannot resist misquoting from "My Fair Lady" -- this is "cold blooded murder of the Bengali tongue!" **ProfSumitMazumdar**

University of Arizona, USA

"Doing away with dowry"

I read with interest Maleka Begum's write-up "Doing away with dowry" published haunting our conscience. Yet on the occasion of International Women's Day (March 8). It is really a shame that in a Muslim majority country like writer asserted, "So many Bangladesh, a social evil like seminars, symposiums and conferences are being held dowry, which our religion Islam does not approve, is on the issue, but there really thriving. some error in the efforts of But it is heartening to

the intellectuals, the activknow that our government ists, the civil society, otherhas actually promulgated wise why is there no allevia-Anti-Dowry Act in 1980. It is tion of this problem? We definitely a positive step, must find the loophole if we although not enough to diswant any tangible solution to courage those greedy men to the problem." contemplate on siphoning some easy money from their

Looks like not only that we in-laws. The reports of hunneed a new technique to

India about religious violence let's

look into Bangladesh once again

Muslim population increased to

20% from 6% in India. How about

Hindu population in Bangladesh?

Nevertheless, Bangladesh is an

portant neighbour to India and

both the countries must solve their

differences by mutual consulta-tions and dialogue and not by

The report on the rowdy behaviour

officers is disgusting (Pro-BNP

officers likely to besiege governor

today, March 11). I know that

neither BNP nor AL has the where-withal to control public sector trade unions like the ones at TNT or

DESA. But Bangladesh Bank offi-

cers should have been a different

human costs. The Iraqis have

already been through so

much-- two wars, 12 years of

sanctions and what not. The

It is President Bush who is

a bigger threat to world

peace. How can he not pay

heed to the protests of mil-

lions of people around the

world? I agree with the way

Time Magazine has por-

trayed him "He's just an

empty warhead found in the

One of the rewards of our inde-

endence is the fact that we have

ecome accustomed to seeing 4"

In better and more civilised

Bank officials would have been

suspended on the spot. In the new

Bangladesh, even the Government

I find it quite amusing that the 11-

party alliance, which at a pinch might come up with 11 supporters,

manages to pretty much call a

extends its support only at the last

minute. What could be the ratio-

I also find it strange that AL

can't control them.

Joyonto, Dhaka

successful hartal.

nale behind that?

Emile, Dhaka

Hartal

class workers at Dhaka Medical

College go on strike, meter readers

thing they need is

last

another war.

White House."

Uttara. Dhaka

Rizwana Tasneem

pro-BNP Bangladesh Bank

dragging China into dispute.

Bangladesh Bank

Murali Muddana

Tampa, USA

matter.

Did anybody think about that?

dreds of dowry-related tackle the dowry issue, we unpleasant incidents are require a new approach to raise public awareness too. the policies adopted so far to Apparently, our intellectuals eradicate the dowry problem as well as religious people, have failed miserably, as the (both upholding high moral standards) are unaffected by this social evil; they are maintaining a safe distance from it. Considering our limitais no change. There must be tions (we cannot turn everyone to scholars) we can use our religious sentiment to curb dowry demands. One of the things our Government can do is encourage the Imams to include dowryrelated topics for Friday Juma' sermons to help raise public awareness.

Shukla Mirza, Qatar

Support for the CEC

BNP started playing the same game against the CEC as they had played before removing former president Dr. B Chowdhury. The high command designs the game and some of the parliament members start making comments against the targeted victim. Didn't BNP learn how the civil society unanimously disapproved of the unethical removal process that time?

It is rather expected that BNP and its law-makers will be ever grateful to the present CEC for his courage and honesty, and his outstanding skills in organising, planning, conducting and controlling of the last parliament election in which they could get elected. If the CEC has to go, he will be the latest addition to the list which include Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, Justice Latifur Rahman, Dr. B Chowdhury who were humiliated and insulted for their commitment, integrity and honesty. Hasanat Alamgir

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

24th BCS exam

In a bold, decisive and swift manner, the PSC took the right decision and cancelled the controversial 24th BCS exam.

Irrespective of whether the questions have been leaked out or not, the mere allegation of the same was reason enough to cancel the exam and put an end to the controversy. **Mamun,** *Dhaka*

More on cricket

Our prospect in cricket seemed really bright when we hammered the cricket giant Pakistan in the last World Cup back in 1999. However, it has been four long years since we won an international match. After being awarded Test status, Bangladesh showed minimal response to become worthy of this status. For the last four years, Bangladesh has lost in all the international matches, but the most shocking was their defeat against minnow like Canada in the ongoing World Cup tournament. Now we have to gather all our energy and take immediate steps to improve the situation. If I were one of the selectors, I would have selected a senior payer as the captain of our team. Not to mention, we have many senior players in our bag who are playing in the league matches. The ones who are capable of leading the team are Faruq Ahmed, Atahar Ali Khan, Minhazul Abedin Nannu. It is to mention that in the last World Cup, we were about to lose against the minnow Scotland as Bangladesh were 25 for 5 wickets and it was Minhaiul Abedin Nannu who played a consistent inning and fetch a sweet victory for Bangladesh. West Indies have also appointed one of their most senior players i.e. Carl Hopper as their captain and recently, the West Indies team is doing pretty well in the field. Therefore, the selectors should appoint one of the senior players as the captain and include more senior players in team. Abdul Fatha Asif Bonogram Road, Dhaka



Pakistan in 1999 World Cup. But after the preliminary round is over we find Kenya in the prestigious Super Six and Bangladesh losing all their matches and giving the world another chance to comment heavily against our Test status.

The most important thing we need now is a competent coach, who was not a great cricketer but played the game and have some coaching experience. There is no doubt that the pair of Mohsin Kamal and Ali Zia was a flop. These days, every team hire a coach who coaches in a scientific manner using all the modern technology available. Language problem should not be considered as a big problem. The players playing in the national level are good enough in English. If some player have some problem, it can be overcome with

In this World Cup it was clear that our team had no strategy team. But for our national team, we

The next World Cup will be held in West Indies, where the wickets will be very similar to that of South Africa. So, the next thing we should do is to make at least two fast wick-

not be bus service on every route (for example there is no bus route from Siddeshwari to Bangla Motor and beyond, where rickshaw ride was always pleasant and conve-nient for the office-goers and school children, which is proposed to be off-limits to rickshaw). How then thousands of commuters will commute between these two points?

AFRahman

Shame on US It is a great shame that in order to invade Iraq, the US Government has mobilised a quarter of a million

For every 90 Iraqis, most of whom are women and children, there will be one US armed personnel. Is it befitting for the only superpower that very often boasts of its human rights track record? Khairul Masud

Saddam the evil and Bush the saviour!

Eskaton, Dhaka

The proponents of this impending able. When they want a UN resoluwar against Iraq have sought to justify their stance on the basis that Saddam is an evil tyrant. There will probably be very few voices dissenting on Saddam's track record but does that automatically justify a pro-war stance? Can we simply take it at face value, that colonial nations like US and Britain are motivated by benevolence towards the Arabs and Muslims? Therefore Bush is a "saviour" of Iraq!

History tells us that colonial ple are working overtime to destroy nations have only resorted to use Muslims, the Muslim leaders are military forces in pursuit of their taking things easy, relaxing in their own material interests. Despite so air-conditioned houses. And those much noise about Saddam's use of leaders who are doing some work, chemical weapons, it was the

people like them who joined their enemies to save their neck, only to get their neck crushed by the same enemy later. Azad Miah Oldham, UK

Avoid war at any cost

Chief weapon inspector Hans Blix disclosed that no evidence of banned arms have been found in Iraq and it is co-operating fully with the inspectors. We hoped that it would satisfy President Bush but we are stunned by the news that the US President vows to wage war even without UN approval and he does not care about the protest from France, Germany, Russia and China.

President Bush in his so-called bid to rout out terrorism actually terrorising the entire world and acting most unjustly which in turn will give birth to more terrorism.

Why isn't America destroying its weapons of mass destruction and asking Israel and other countries which possess such weapons? Why are they pointing their finger at Iraq only? Israel has got the licence to kill and it is doing it very efficiently, wiping out Palestinians by bulldozers, helicopter gunships, missiles etc. Ariel Sharon justifies his actions by saying that it is in retaliation of suicide bombers. But we want to ask him who are the aggressors, the Palestinians have no choice but to resort to such an act.

We want to attract the attention of President Bush, Tony Blair and others who are supporting the war that humanity must not be trodden upon, the result will be disastrous. Nur Jahan Chittagong

Revolt against Tony Blair

I rather think that The Daily Star is the one which is getting paranoid in its opposition to a war in Iraq. The editorial says it perfectly, that Iraq is showing signs of complying with the UN resolution. The UN does not require Iraq to show signs of compliance. It has demanded such for twelve years now and thanks to France and Russia, Iraq has never been brought to task.

A new UN resolution I believe is unnecessary, but I respect the allies for trying to get one. The Americans, British and Spanish are trying mightily to keep the UN relevant in a post Cold War world. The UN is trying mightily to try and make itselfirrelevant

The Daily Star also makes a weak allusion to how Mrs. Thatcher lost power and Mr. Blair's current problems. Well The Daily Star would do well to remember that just prior to the Falklands War, which I am sure this paper would have opposed, Mrs. Thatcher was the most unpopular PM in British history. The war secured her hold on power and gave her the mandate to reform socialist Britain. Her greatest ally then was another must thank for having defeated communism. **Kishore Pasha** Dhaka

China's motive behind that interest. One should not forget the fact that despite close military (and nuclear-ship) relationship with

rocate.

Subarna Samanta

sisters of Bangladesh.

from the Indian side.

The College of New Jersey, USA

After reading the two articles "Ban-

gladesh's eastern strategy is excel-

ent!" and "Relations with neigh-

bours: Stresses and strains" as a

concerned Indian (living in the

USA) I thought of sharing my

thoughts with fellow brothers and

These articles are trying to pic-

ture India as solely responsible for

Indo-Bangla troubled relations, as

if there is nothing wrong on Ban-

gladesh side and all the trouble is

Dr. Fakhruddin suggesting for

improved relations with eastern

neighbours of Bangladesh particu-

larly with China. While encouraged

by China's (sudden) interest on

Bangladesh friendship, Dr.

Fakhruddin seems to be ignoring

Peace 'Yes', War 'NO'



about the Iraqis? Bush wants

to invade Iraq and eventually

It was also said in the

debate that France and Ger-

many have cowered by not

showing support for the war.

Well, they have at least

The war should be thought

of in economic and most

importantly, humanitarian

terms. If there's a war, then

the already-rising world oil

prices will shoot up even higher and eventually those

of other commodities as

shown their humane side.

its oil resource.

Dhaka troops.

the help of other senior cricketers. We should not appoint coaches from the sub-continent only because their language is more familiar to our cricketer than English

against any team, and they also didn't learn from their mistakes. In every match, starting from the very first game against Canada, our batsmen sacrificed their wickets by giving catches behind the wicket. But surprisingly no one was there to solve this problem, to tell the batsmen what to do in this regard. Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India, all teams are have foreign coach. Then why shouldn't we? We can appoint coaches from the sub-continent for the under-15 and under-19

need coaches like Bob Woolmer, Bobby Simpsons or Zioff Marsh.

Just the other day I was Do the Americans really care well. Then there are the watching a debate on BBC on the war on Iraq. There, this American Journalist, in favour of the war said, "Violence begets violence. But, violence also begets peace." How could he say something so preposterous? If there's a war, then it will set the platform for more terrorism. Then, will the world peace the Bush Administration is so desperately looking for really have been achieved? I think not! The Journalist had also said that America wants to go to war to free the Iraqi people from its tyrant ruler.

I read *The Daily Star* News almost everyday and I find the paper to be a good one reflecting honest journalism.

* * *

However, I came across a posteditorial "Letter From America" by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed (March 5) and I couldn't stand idle while someone propagates a lie. In his write-up, Dr. Ahmed has said that, "Indian soldiers stunned and dismayed Bangladeshis by taking away most of the military equipment left behind by the Pakistanis in 1971." I remember 1971 vividly, as I was a first year student in my college then. Never did I read nor heard that Indian soldiers stunned the Bangladeshis at that time. I also have not read in the paper or heard in the radio that Indian soldiers took away all arms left behind by the Pakistanis. I am sure that Pakistanis were no fool to leave the arms in working conditions.

Dr. Ahmed does not have to malign India to justify Bangladesh's foreign policy. If you read the post-editorial printed next to Dr Ahmed ("Relations with neighbours: Stresses and strains" by Mohammad Amiad Hossain, March 5), you will find that initially India extended its hand of friendship to Bangladesh after the last election. However, Bangladesh Government decided not to recip-

China, Pakistan is nowhere in the world in both economy and military. If not Pakistan, look at North Korea and where it stands in the today's world despite close rela-

to be millionaires, customs inspections with China. tors to have houses in Gulshan etc. Changing friends may be easy, In other words, we have become a but changing the neighbours is not nation where the concept of social possible. My dear friends, developing a close military relation with class is deteriorating. In civil life there is no longer the certainty that China will not help Bangladesh and the peon will stand up and greet it will open costly military buildyou politely at the government ups on the Indo-Bangla border. offices; more likely than not, he'll Don't be foolish to think that China rudely demand money first. Even will interfere between India and in the army, traditions have been Bangladesh conflict if it ever haperoded. pens. This is not beneficial to either Îndia or its neighbours. Only China times, these rowdy Bangladesh will be beneficial by such kind of

engagements If you recall, Chinese President did the same kind of feat recently. He visited all India's neighbours but not India. Indian PM matched it by visiting and making military pacts with most of the China's neighbours including Vietnam. Of course it will be a great concern to India that the Bangladesh PM visited China without visiting India despite invitation by Indian Government. This is definitely showing a big shift in Bangladesh foreign

policy. One thing is clear Bangladesh is all set to become a sandwich between politics of two big countries.

Before pointing fingers towards

It is not mere lobbying that prompted the ICC to award us Test status. We do have the capability to enter the Test arena. Though we know that our team has performed poorly in a number of occasions, same was the case with Sri Lanka, New Zealand and Zimbabwe once.

* * *

We have talents and it is good to see that more talents are coming up. All we need is to utilise these talents and advance through a systematic manner. I never believe that our team is so weak that they would lost to Canada. It is the increasing pressure and uncertainty to make a place in the first eleven that is responsible for their dismal performance.

We have to be patient and encourage the team and stop humiliating them and blaming

them on every occasion. Gullive

Indira Road, Dhaka * * *

Before the World Cup began, Captain Khaled Mashud promised that his team will try to win at least two group matches against Canada and Kenva and will also try to do another upset as they did against

matches in a regular basis on that wicket. As a Test playing nation we must know how to play in pitches where there will be bounce and pace

Arafat Aziz India

British Minister

I was quite unimpressed by the threatened resignation of Claire While she and many other

Labour MPs may feel strongly about the war, they shouldn't start resigning so soon. It will be a while before the wisdom of Blair's actions can be judged.

How will Clare Short look if vast quantities of weapons of mass destruction are found?

Keep in mind that this woman also resigned from a Labour party post in the 1991 Gulf War. Even the most die-hard of anti-war activists supported the '91 war. Satyajit, Dhaka

Roads off-limits to rickshaws

The Communication Minister declared in the JS that the Government plans to make more city roads off-limits to slow-moving vehicles i.e. cvcle rickshaws, in order to enable him (reportedly) to comply with the World Bank directives.

It's encouraging that he intends to please or appease the donors; but unfortunately he ignores and overlooks the miseries and sufferings of the middle-class and the lower middle-class who comprise of the largest segment of population of Dhaka city. The Minister could follow his plan of withdrawing rickshaws slowly and gradually if he could ensure sufficient number of CNG 3-wheelers, tempos, buses etc. in all the roads linking the city areas.

Most of the buses and mini buses ply on the main roads and yet these are not sufficient and so also the CNG 3-wheelers. More importantly, those available refuse to go to short-distance destinations and

at times refuse to go by the meter. So I want to request the authorities concerned not to make the communication system more difficult and fragile for the suffering mass and first make available plenty of buses, tempos, CNG 3wheelers and regulate strictly the CNG 3-wheelers and taxi cabs so that they don't charge beyond meters and can never refuse any passenger. By the way, there can-

British that used this weapon on the Kurds in Iraq (Mosul), to maintain its grip on the newly discovered oil fields. It was the British that betraved the Arabs when they fought against the Ottomans. Instead of granting real independence, the region was colonised by

A just war

Is war on Iraq justified? Yes, in my view, war to disarm and change the regime in Iraq is justified NOT because many more who will conwar is moral but because inaction is immoral. executed in Saddam's pris-

Firstly, the Iraqi regime is under a "temporary reprieve" to stay in power after the invasion of Kuwait AS LONG AS it agrees to, disarm, pay restitution to Kuwait, return all Kuwaiti prisoners, etc. It has been almost 13 years and it has still refused to comply, expect for some superficial compliance to win "cheap publicity".

Secondly, to all those who equate international legitimacy with the UN, look no further than a couple of years back when US and its allies took military action against Yugoslavia "outside of the UN". Why? Because China and Russia in the Security Council would have blocked any such war.

Thirdly, the talk about US hypocrisy with respect to "Iraq and North Korea". Well, the war on Iraq gains greater credence because of the situation we now find ourselves with North Korea, i.e. we need to stop Saddam getting to that position of power by which time, we cannot disarm but appease.

Fourthly, hundreds of children, elderly and the sick die in Iraqi hospitals every day NOT BECAUSE OF THE SANCTIONS but because they are powerful "publicity stunts" for Saddam. Iraq can import as much food and medicine they need under the UN sanctions but it refuses to do so! Why? Because their suffering serves Saddam better!

any Mus lims. Instead they are negotiating very hard for a few billion dollars extra, before joining their "friends" in mass murder of their own people! These leaders only think in short-terms. They fail to see that, human history is filled with selfish

those above and for the hun-

dreds of thousands who have

died because of Saddam and

tinue to die e.g. 500 -1000 are

ons daily according to esti-

mates by the Kurds and the

Iraqi exiles..... (by the way about 30% of Iraqis are

exiles) ... surely not the anti-

war choir, many of whom, a

year plus ago were singing

the same song with regards

to Afghanistan.

the secret Sykes-Picot agreement,

and Palestine was simply given to

As for the US, it has not even

been fair by its own standards, let

alone display compassion. Evident

from the selective forceful applica-

tion of the UN mandate in Iraq,

whilst turning a blind eye towards

Israel. It needlessly massacred the

retreating Iraqi soldiers on what

reflect on the motive of the corpo-

rate-US and ask the question as to

why the US is hated by the vast

majority of the masses. Even

Kuwait that was "liberated", where

the recent opinion poll suggested

that 74% prefers Osama Bin Laden

Here we have Blair and Bush gov-

ernments, working day and night to get every bit of support they can

from absolutely anyone. Even if

what they are trying to do (starting

a war) is wrong, the amount of

effort they are putting in, is envi-

tion, they use all sorts of tricky and

deceptive words to confuse their

opponents and to manipulate

things in their favour. If these

people can put so much effort and

hard work to do a 'wrong' thing,

then why our Muslim leaders can't

put bit more effort to do the right

things e.g. saving Palestine, saving

It is sickening to see while peo-

Iraq, developing Muslim countries

The pro-war proponents should

became the "road of death".

to the GI-loes!

UK, London

thebold

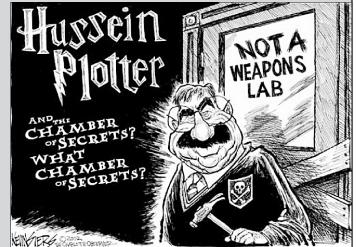
Yamin Zakaria

Fortune favours

Finally, who speaks for actions given by Israel was the fact that it indeed is a democracy while the rest of the Arab regimes are gener-

> ally brutal and dictatorial. Removing Saddam and setting up a democratic government in Iraq would blunt the Israelis argument.

He is also absolutely right in asking for Bangladesh to give its full support to the war. Manzoor is right in that we are probably, sadly, the most democratic of Muslim countries.



In the world I live in, sadly, war is a necessary evil. **Beram Kumar**

that he has made an excel-

lent point regarding the

claim that Israel is the only

democracy in the Middle

East. Since its very inception,

one of the justifications of it

Johor Bahru, Malaysia This is in regards to Manzoor Ashraf's letter (March 10) stating his support for a war to remove Saddam. I am quite impressed with the fact

when France is in trouble or when the Russian economy implodes, the US will probably not come to their rescue. Chile and Mexico will also rue the day that they decided to support the anti-war camp than their greatest and closest ally and trading partner.

We should stand by the US

and Britain when they need

our support. The next time

MA, Dhaka