

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.

**"Bangladesh's eastern strategy is excellent"**

I feel like screaming every time I read a column by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed. In between other views, 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 excellent", 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!"

**Prof Sumit Mazumdar**  
University of Arizona, USA

**"Doing away with dowry"**

I read with interest Maleka Begum's write-up "Doing away with dowry" published on the occasion of International Women's Day (March 8). It is really a shame that in a Muslim majority country like Bangladesh, a social evil like dowry, which our religion Islam does not approve, is thriving.

But it is heartening to know that our government has actually promulgated Anti-Dowry Act in 1980. It is definitely a positive step, although not enough to discourage those greedy men to contemplate on siphoning some easy money from their in-laws. The reports of hun-

dreds of dowry-related unpleasant incidents are haunting our conscience. Yet the policies adopted so far to eradicate the dowry problem have failed miserably, as the writer asserted, "So many seminars, symposiums and conferences are being held on the issue, but there really is no change. There must be some error in the efforts of the intellectuals, the activists, the civil society, otherwise why is there no alleviation of this problem? We must find the loophole if we want any tangible solution to the problem."

Looks like not only that we need a new technique to

tackle the dowry issue, we require a new approach to raise public awareness too. Apparently, our intellectuals as well as religious people, (both upholding high moral standards) are unaffected by this social evil; they are maintaining a safe distance from it. Considering our limitations (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 dowry-related topics for Friday Juma' sermons to help raise public awareness.

**Shukla Mirza, Qatar**



When marriage becomes commodity

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 has 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 itself irrelevant.

*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 unpopular US president, whom we must thank for having defeated communism.

**Kishore Pasha**  
Dhaka

**Peace 'Yes', War 'NO'**



Just the other day I was 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.

Do the Americans really care about the Iraqis? Bush wants to invade Iraq and eventually its oil resource.

It was also said in the debate that France and Germany have covered by not showing support for the war. Well, they have at least shown their humane side.

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

well. Then there are the human costs. The Iraqis have already been through so much -- two wars, 12 years of sanctions and what not. The last thing they need is another war.

It is President Bush who is a bigger threat to world peace. How can he not pay heed to the protests of millions of people around the world? I agree with the way Time Magazine has portrayed him "He's just an empty warhead found in the White House."

**Rizwana Tasneem**  
Uttara, Dhaka

**24<sup>th</sup> BCS exam**

In a bold, decisive and swift manner, the PSC took the right decision and cancelled the controversial 24<sup>th</sup> 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 player 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 Minhajul 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 Hopner 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**  
Bonogrom Road, Dhaka

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 lose 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.

**Gulliva**  
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 Kenya and will also try to do another upset as they did against

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 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.

In this World Cup it was clear that our team had no strategy 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 team. But for our national team, we need coaches like Bob Woolmer, Bobby Simons or Zioff Marsh.

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 wickets and play some national league 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 Short.

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 Claire 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. cycle 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 3-wheelers 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-

not be bus service on every route (for example there is no bus route from Siddheshwari to Bangla Motor and beyond, where rickshaw ride was always pleasant and convenient 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?

**AF Rahman**  
Dhaka

**Shame on US**

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

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**  
Eskaton, Dhaka

**Saddam the evil and Bush the saviour!**

The proponents of this impending war 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 nations have only resorted to use military forces in pursuit of their own material interests. Despite so much noise about Saddam's use of chemical weapons, it was the 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 betrayed the Arabs when they fought against the Ottomans. Instead of granting real independence, the region was colonised by

the secret Sykes-Picot agreement, and Palestine was simply given to the Jews.

As for the US, it has not even been fair by its own standards, let alone display compassion. Evident from the selective forceful application of the UN mandate in Iraq, whilst turning a blind eye towards Israel. It needlessly massacred the retreating Iraqi soldiers on what became the "road of death".

The pro-war proponents should reflect on the motive of the corporate-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 to the GI-Joes!

**Yamin Zakaria**  
UK, London

**Fortune favours the bold**

Here we have Blair and Bush governments, 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 enviable. When they want a UN resolution, 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 Iraq, developing Muslim countries etc?

It is sickening to see while people are working overtime to destroy Muslims, the Muslim leaders are taking things easy, relaxing in their air-conditioned houses. And those leaders who are doing some work, are not working to save any Muslims. 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

**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 war is moral but because war is immoral.

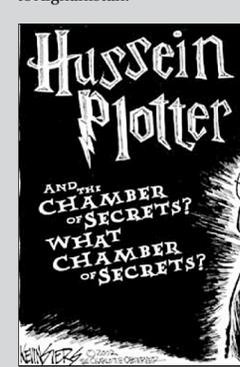
Firstly, the Iraqi regime is under a "temporary reprieve" to stay in power after the invasion of Kuwait AS LONG AS it agrees to, disarm, pay restitution to Kuwait, return all Kuwaiti prisoners, etc. It has been almost 13 years and it has still refused to comply, expect for some superficial compliance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

Finally, who speaks for those above and for the hundreds of thousands who have died because of Saddam and many more who will continue to die e.g. 500 -1000 are executed in Saddam's prisons daily according to estimates 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.



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

**Beram Kumar**  
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 that he has made an excellent point regarding the claim that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. Since its very inception, one of the justifications of it

actions given by Israel was the fact that it indeed is a democracy while the rest of the Arab regimes are generally brutal and dictatorial.

Removing Saddam and setting up a democratic government in Iraq would blunt the Israeli's 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.

We should stand by the US and Britain when they need our support. The next time 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.

**MA, Dhaka**