

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.

Suicide squad and secular Bangladesh

I was terrified to read the report on the recruitment of 1200 suicide bombers in Bangladesh. Time magazine, the Far Eastern Economic Review etc. all the foreign media that accused Bangladesh of being a hotbed of Taliban and other fundamentalist elements were right. How else are fundamentalists recruiting suicide bombers in Muktagong?

Who else other than a government controlled by fundamentalists would allow the public recruitment of suicide bombers in the open?

What is going to happen when these fanatics can't go to Iraq? Will they then go and blow themselves up in front of the American Embassy?

We can differ on our opinions on the war, but everyone must realise that the open recruitment of suicide bombers may well be the beginning of the end of a secular Bangladesh. **Saladin, Dhaka**

"Indian withdrawal of water"

I congratulate you for publishing the report on the seminar regarding unilateral Indian decision to withhold water from the North-Eastern region. Although, the news have been circulated in the Indian media sporadically; however, for some strange unforeseen reasons, the Bangladeshi media is yet to bring public attention to the issue.

For, should India even implements a fraction of its original plan, it certainly would make Bangladesh a dust bowl, as the current plan is thousand times intricate with potentials to cause severe consequence than the existing Farakka Dam. And without prior consultation to Bangladesh, this decision of India to withdraw water not only violates the Barcelona Agreement of which India was one of the original signatories, but also the decision would violate fundamentals of customary international law as well as international human rights law embedded in the UN charter.

In order to preserve legitimate interests of Bangladesh, what the Bangladeshi media must do, is initiate a positive journalistic activism so that the people of Bangladesh understand where his/her interest lies. In other words, the Bangladeshi media must make aware the people of its legitimate right. **Shibly Azad**  
Columbia University, USA

Supercomputers and hartal!

On 1st April, BBC reported that India has launched a supercomputer called "Param Padma". It seems that India was upset and began developing supercomputers in the late '80s after being refused by the USA. Now here is a lesson for us. Instead of waiting for the mercy of others, India decided to build one itself. This achievement puts India in a league with Japan, USA etc. Well done India!

As for Bangladesh, well I hope our two beloved leaders; Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia get the news about this achievement by our neighbour. Thanks to them, Bangladesh is now living in stone-age! And in case our leaders are wondering what a super-computer is, let me assure them, it is NOT made out of little components called "hartals"!

But then again, who needs super-computers when you have hartals! How nice it is to see millions of Bengali "javans" imposing hartals on everyone and sacrificing themselves for

their party leaders! But do these leaders even think about us? I think they do. Why else would they take the trouble to come out of their air-conditioned heavens, travel hundreds of miles to other towns and give hours of speech in the bleeding sun? They donate grams of foods, pieces of clothes and they give us half-constructed roads and so much more. Our leaders have been working so hard for the last 30 years with poverty, that we are now one of the poorest countries in the world! Keep up the good work. **Azad Miah, Oldham, UK**

"Senators Byrd and McCain"

I am a regular reader of your esteemed daily. It seems Mr. Nazmul Karim's only job is finding fault with others. He unnecessarily created an uncalled-for controversy over a word of a song sung by Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya. Then during the time when the argument was continuing he again pointed out a mistake in a line of a song/poem of Tagore as was quoted in a letter written by Mr. Akbar Hossain from Toronto,

doing so Mr. Karim has termed Senator McCain to be a Democrat another mistake.

Mr. Riki in his letter dated April 7 pointed out the error of Mr. Karim on the political affinity of Senator McCain but unfortunately he did not apologise for his own mistake. In our society it takes a lot of courage to admit one's fault. Now it is Mr. Karim's turn. **Rubaya Naeed**  
New Jersey, USA

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Mr. S. Abedin, Mr. Yahya and Mr. Riki for their letters of April 07 and sighting out the incorrect information in my letter where I labelled Senator McCain to be a Democrat.

I am sorry and gracefully accept my mistake. **Nazmul Karim**  
Dhaka

"G Dubya and American Muslims"

This is in response to Yahya's letter "G Dubya and American Muslims" (April 3) where he claims he has not met any

against family planning or abortion. Coming from a humble background in Bangladesh, I have very little in common with these people.

As for the Jew-phobia, I happened to have visited a concentration camp, happened to have attended a Jewish university and have met many Jewish people over time who feel for the down-trodden and the Palestinians much more than the Saudi and the Kuwaiti governments can show for! I believe a Gore/Liebermann government would have definitely listened to Chirac and Schroeder and not plunged the world into darkness like the Bush Administration has.

Just a reminder. Bush was not even elected by the American people. He was selected by 5 people- the 5 Republican-appointed Supreme Court Justices.

So much for a democratic system after 227 years of practice! **Alamgir**  
Colorado, USA

"Forgotten facts"

Mr. Shomit Chowdhury has stated that

Cantonment restriction



Awaiting entrance!

With the exception of one back page article, *The Daily Star* has completely ignored the sufferings of thousands of Dhaka citizens.

The Army unilaterally decided to put restrictions on the times that civilian traffic can enter the cantonment.

This paper, while wailing about poor Saddam being

bombed by the Americans hasn't even bothered to address this issue.

Please address domestic issues before getting into a huff about Iraq or oil or the UN. **Joyonto, Dhaka**

I found the letter from Rokonuddin Ahmed (April 8) very timely and to the point. He

was absolutely right. It is indeed very unfortunate that our army which is supposed to be serving the country and the people tend to overlook our interest.

Do the army notice the mile-long severe traffic jam created because of the recent restriction to enter the Cantonment? Don't they notice how people are suffering?

But how can I blame the army only? Are we at all interested about our domestic needs? No! We are more concerned about what's happening in Iraq where the undemocratic leader has waged an unjust war against a dictator!

But how does it help us in any way vandalising and destroying business house and establishments in the name of protesting this war when our own people have to wait for hours just to pass a few kilometre! **MA, Dhaka**

safe place to land it and get out". Mr. Affleck's character asks, "sir, what would you do if your plane was hit?" To which the reply was, "I wasn't born to be a prisoner of war... I'd ask my crew to bail out, find the biggest target I could, and fly straight into it."

That sounds a lot like what the Iraqi soldiers are doing, doesn't it?

I know it's only a movie dialogue, and it may not have actually happened. But the fact remains it came from a US movie, and an American scriptwriter. I'm pretty sure most of those who are now shouting "terrorist Iraqis", while watching the movie were thinking "Oh My! What an American hero!" **Afzal**  
One-e-mail

Iraqi crisis in an environmental perspective

The Iraq crisis has already caused damage beyond imagination! Not only in terms of human casualties, infrastructure and economic destabilisation but has also caused an environmental disaster. Ecological scars it bore will take a long while to heal. The natural course of surroundings and the ecosystem has been disrupted, not to mention the constant, 'unwanted' fireworks which adds more to the harm already done. According to reports, our planet has been experiencing climatic changes in the past few years, unfortunately these rapid changes, due to global warming has made us take notice of the difficult times ahead.

The threat is far too great to ignore; the crack on the ozone layer, the changes in the pattern of seasons- the weather is different every year, the icebergs in the poles have shown signs of warming- considerable portion of them has melted already, the past few years has been declared as the 'hottest' years in meteorological history. Plants and animals are constantly under threat, especially rare species which faces extinction.

Uncalled events like war plays a devastating role in this sort of crisis, which is often overlooked for political and other factors, not to mention the value of human lives-which is the primary concern. In the long run, if we do not take the environmental issue into account, eventually it is going to be us (the inhabitants of the planet) who will have to pay dearly! **Shaker**  
One-e-mail

War in Iraq and destruction in Bangladesh!

Anyone reading the online edition of the Letters Page would certainly be able to realise that something was missing in the issue of April 8. One might be wondering what the missing item was. It was the 'War on Iraq'. The letter page of the online edition did not have any letter on the war, a notable difference given the fact that almost every letter in recent past were on the war. The letters in April 8 issue demanded attention to more pressing problems in our home like the right to use Cantonment roads or the need of looking for answers to the questions that the granddaughter of a freedom fighter had (Nahid Afreen's letter).

Now the war is not over, but maybe it's time for something to be over. And that is our reluctance to give more attention to our own domestic affairs. How are we going to stop the war thousands of miles away (dictated by someone who perhaps has no knowledge of the existence of a country like

Bangladesh) by damaging vehicles and business properties in our own country? What are we trying to achieve here?

There is no doubt these are the turbulent times when an unjust war is being held in an unjust manner. But we cannot do much to stop that. We should not do more harm to ourselves by damaging our own properties. It is time for us to think more rationally and look for answers like how our fragile economy will sustain the negative factors of war like the possibility of a shortage in the supply of oil, reduced remittance from the Middle East, shrinkage in the demand of ready-made garments... The list goes on and on. **K M Zubair Sadeque**  
Dykesne University, USA

"Not everyone is against the war"

I am shocked to read Kim's letter "Not everyone is against the war" (April 2). President Bush can suddenly call a war on Iraq but this does not mean that we should support his actions!

It is very important for us to know the real reasons behind the war so that we can judge it correctly. There has been a rupture of relationship between Saudi Arabia, the main supplier of oil in the Middle East and USA after the 9/11 incident. So President Bush had to find an alternative oil supplier in the Middle East. The easiest way to do this is by installing a pawn government under American tutelage in Iraq, which cannot be achieved without a war. Why they have chosen Iraq, is a big question. The answer is very simple. It is a developing country, which does not have the support of powerful nations. President Bush has a lame excuse to justify the attack to the International community, although no "weapons of mass destruction" was found in Iraq.

Bush's other excuse is that he wants to free the people of Iraq from the tyranny of President Saddam Hussein. How very considerate and thoughtful of him! Has it occurred to anyone why he suddenly cares so much about Iraq? Is he really the 'Saviour of Iraq'? The answer is a big NO. **N. Khandker**  
Sunbeams School, Dhaka

Mr Kim wishes to stand in the queue for 'rewards' after the American victory in Iraq. He is welcome and I am not contesting. Just to remember, however, that ahead of him in the line will be Blair and Chalabi.

The invasion is not over yet. "The operational pause" in the 'six-day cakewalk' of shock and awe may turn into a prelude to second Vietnam. The Yankees may be in for a logistical nightmare. It is not only the body bags home, but may be George Whining Bush to the International Court for War Crimes. Now, don't laugh yet. Did Hitler's horses hordes surmise that there will be a Nuremberg? Didn't Milosevic's bloody ways take him to the Hague! Pinochet escaped on the mule of senescence, but our duo of bullies--Bush and Blair--are young and agile, hale and hearty. **Bilou Gahapur**  
One-mail

This is in response to Kim's letter of April 2.

Let us start from the last two sentences of the letter. He warns us, "When this war is over, America will reward its friends and allies. I wonder where Bangladesh will be on that list?" Why should we get worried about and refrain from doing what we ought to do for fear of being kept out of the list of war spoils and booty in the form of oil from Iraq and beneficiary of contract related jobs for rebuilding (?) the war ravaged country?

Mr. Kim tells us that 70 per cent of Americans support Bush-war. What we see on the ground is that the common American's support came out of the miss-information and half true stories their TV channels and national government are continuously dishing out for public consumption.

The two warmongers failed to prove that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. The administration has successfully convinced its people that the US lead war machinery is avoiding destruction of ordinary people's life and property. It tells of "collateral damage" a newly coined phrase to reduce the impact on the people at large while keeping the nation completely unaware of what is actually happening in all the cities of Iraq. With these convincing stories the general Americans will support the war (aggression) by default.

But the people of Iraq do not want replacement of their home grown dictator by an occupation army and oil hungry foreign rulers. **Syed Waliullah, Dhaka**

What about Saddam Hussein?

The only one who is responsible for the tragedy unfolding in Iraq is Saddam himself. He brutally killed all his opponents leaving no room for democratic change within Iraq. He stubbornly resisted the call to step down and save his people from this unnecessary military action. It is Saddam who is the "Hitler of Iraq" and if we do not condemn him then we are not learning any lesson from history. It took an allied force to defeat

Anti-war protest



'Protest' Bangladesh style!

It wasn't surprising to see Bata trying to distance itself from the Americans by taking out that front-page advertisement on *The Daily Star* (April 7).

I would have expected those violent anti-war protesters to know that Bata is Canadian.

One of the other multinationals that were targeted was DHL whose van was set alight. Ironically DHL is owned by Deutsche Post, the pacifist Germans.

Although I do find it ironic that the US based DHL Airways which is owned by DHL claims it had "played a significant role in advancing US national security and military objectives as our nation approaches military conflict with Iraq".

I rather doubt if our protesters knew that! **Shonku, Dhaka**

I am sure our left wing parties are overjoyed at the sight of the proletariat burning the symbols of the American and British imperialists.

A few words of advice for the protesters. First, Bata was originally Czech and later Canadian not American or British. Canada has been far more anti-war than any other country given their proximity and dependence on the US. This is also the first time apart from Vietnam that the Canadians have been so opposed to an American war.

Bata, amazingly enough for a multinational, has been one of the most loyal companies doing business in our country. How many managers of foreign companies fought in '71?

The ransacking of Alico's office was also unfortunate. First of all, it was an agency office i.e. wholly owned by a Bangladeshi who had worked like anything flogging life insurance to come up to this level. Our anti-war protesters only hurt a fellow Bangladeshi.

I saw that a DHL van was set alight. As a garments exporter, thus by definition a real patriot and social worker, I can appreciate the shock of seeing a DHL van burnt. My export documents may be in that van. My urgent samples that needed to be in Paris yesterday could have been in that van.

In light of the rising fundamentalism and left wing sabotage, I would request our esteemed editor and the rest of our many anti-American contributors to call for peace and respect for the law, not in Iraq but in Dhaka. **Azad, Dhaka**

Well I am glad to see that our left wing press and many contributors like Arid Klokherhaug have finally achieved their aims. Did you enjoy the scenes on TV the other day? Protesters running riot, burning vehicles, destroying property and of course protesting the war. Interesting to see that the police took no special precautions even though emotions are running high and post Friday prayers is a favourite time for such protests.

The riot should be a wake up call for our government. After the war when there is a reckoning, who will stand by us? We will pay dearly for the obvious strength of the fundamentalist forces in our country and government. **Masood Rana, Dhaka**

As the citizens of a democratic country, we have a right to express our opinion and oppose the US-British war on Iraq. But we do not have the right to get violent and burn down business establishments and personal properties.

By boycotting Western goods we will only be hurting ourselves since the employees of these establishments here are thousands of Bangladeshi workers. We cannot let our emotion ruin our country's future by being violent against the West. The West do not need us, we need them. We have to think about our own future first instead of crying for the so-called Muslim umma. When was the last time those so-called Muslim brothers fought for or supported our causes?

We can disagree with the West on different issues but we must shun the violent path to protest it. **Sahalam Hoque, Los Angeles, California, USA**

Hitler in Germany, the Germans themselves could not remove Hitler from power. Would the world be a better place with Saddam Hussein in Iraq killing his own people? The mistake of not displacing the Talibans in Afghanistan took a heavy toll on the Afghans. The Iraqi people deserve a better future and after this war it will be them who will decide their own future. Since we do not live in the text book world, sometimes it takes special pre-emptive measures to protect our world from tyrants and terrorists like Saddam and others. Atomic bombs had to be dropped in Japan to end the World War II and save the lives of billions-- a lot more than what was lost. We live in a difficult world-- a world that was completely changed on September 11.

We have two choices- either we can face the reality and take our country forward by aligning our country with the allied forces or we can choose to be left behind in the backward desert of yesteryears. **Shahed Ahmed**  
Moghbar, Dhaka

Liberation of Iraq!

I am sick and tired of listening to Mr. Bush's obnoxious speech about liberating Iraqi people. The only thing he has liberated so far are those innocent people who have lost their life due to the coalition's bombing. **Kabir Ahmed**  
Dhaka



Liberation at gunpoint?

the Iraqis have vast reserve of oil and almost no teeth to secure that wealth?

Again, you compared the poor villages of Iraq with those of India and Bangladesh. Please be informed that about two hundred and fifty years ago, these villages

had much more resource than your cities of to-day. However, when the British Imperialism "liberated" the Indians or Bangladeshis, they had no other alternative but to be starkly poor. Likewise, if you can manage to "liberate" the Iraqis, they will be

even poorer for generations. It's a common sense that foreign powers can only colonise, never liberate people. Please read it loud and clear. **Hafeejul Alam, Dhaka**

Congratulation on acquiring "conscience" overnight!

This is in reference to Marian Noronha's letter "We are reading you loud and clear - what are you reading?" (April 7).

Could you explain why Donald Rumsfeld travelled to Baghdad to send a message of "friendship" to Saddam in December 1983? Richard Murphy, a State Department official pondered over Iraq, "certainly there was pressure to sell (arms) and there was the argument, if the contract doesn't go to an American you can be darn sure it's gonna go to a German, British, French manufacturer and trucks were ONE example."

According to Dr. Stephen Bryen, a Pentagon official, "as early as 1983 the Reagan administration was already well aware that Iraq was using chemical weapons in its war against Iran. There were also intelligence reports the Iraqis were using chemical weapons in the north of their own country, in the battle against the Kurds."

After the chemical attack on Halabja in 1988 that killed thousands of Kurds, America's business with Iraq actually increased. By 1989, Iraq was the largest importer of US rice and the second largest participant in the US agricultural credit program.

Why don't you make an effort to "understand" us instead of

"reading us loud and clear?" I would also request you to avoid gathering your "facts" from the US media which only provides selective, distorted and partial "facts." **Omar Sharif**  
Simon Fraser University, USA

There is no doubt that the saner people of this globe will take exception to the letter of Marian Noronha of USA.

I had been in the USA as a student for about a year in 1997 and was greatly shocked when I found that the Americans in general possessed an utterly poor knowledge about the world they are supposedly leading. Marian's aforesaid letter just proved it once again. No wonder, it was very easy for Bush Administration to hood-wink the American people at large by making them understand that America is fighting to "liberate" Iraq from a dictator with Taliban link. Well, if you Americans are so eager to "liberate" people from the dictatorship, why don't you try to "liberate" people of other countries where there is no democracy? Then why don't you "liberate" the people of age-old monarchies? Then tell us frankly as to why you people are so insidiously inclined to "bestow" liberation on the Iraqis? Is it because