

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.

"ZIA neon sign flashes in Arabic"

I must commend *The Daily Star* on bringing up the issue of the Arabic sign at ZIA airport ("ZIA neon sign flashes in Arabic", April 12). I was shocked to see that we have started putting Arabic signs on public buildings. This does not augur well for our secular institutions.

I also saw in the report that this is the first time such a sign has been put on a public installation and that this took place a month ago.

Wait a minute! The CAAB put up a neon sign in Arabic on top of ZIA Airport and *The Daily Star* took one month to report it?

Tali Dhaka

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Why on earth does ZIA sport a sign in Arabic? It would have been one thing if this sign had been there from the beginning but quite another to put it up now.

At a time when we should be promoting our secular institutions and trying to bring the fundamentalists in order, flashing Arabic signs might not be the best idea.

English is the lingua franca, Bengali is our language. What on earth does Arabic have to do with us?

Yossarian Dhaka

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I really am "shocked and awed" by the Aviation Ministry's decision to install an Arabic sign at the Zia International Airport.

I believe that the decision is a nonsense act that for obvious reasons, indicates lack of common sense.

First, does the policy makers really believe that installing an Arabic sign at the Zia International Airport would provide Bangladesh an Islamic identity or express an additional dosage of solidarity with the Muslim Ummah?

Our policy makers might lack common sense, but I am afraid to say, the rest of the world goes by common sense. Since in order to claim its Islamic/Muslim heritage, neither Bangladesh does need an Arabic sign, nor the sign would serve any practical purpose, as other than diplomatic communities of Arab origin and members of international organisations, hardly any Arabic speaking people do use Zia International airport for any purpose, whatsoever.

Second, what the Khaleda Zia government must realize, is the fact that unless they cannot deliver their electoral promise, despite Islamic/Muslim usage of symbolism would not save them from public wrath.

Third, its a shame that a nation, which stands unique for her pride as the only nation state in South Asia, where the language of the majority, is declared as the official language of the Republic, would display sign in another language. For, all international airports use signs in their official language.

Fourth, to communicate, not only airlines from non-Arab countries, but also each and every national airlines of the Arabic speaking countries use English. If that is the case, what is the point of using Arabic?

Lastly, for the incumbent government, it is of great importance to realise that as the Iraq War has come to an end, they have to steer the economy through an uphill battle, and unless they can satisfy the people by their action, despite such lahinary behaviour, they would face identical fate of the current opposition.

Shibly Azad New York City, USA

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Please make an extensive coverage of this Arabic signage. People has a right to know why suddenly an Arabic sign should appear at the International Airport!

It seems that *The Daily Star* was satisfied with the explanation given to justify that never-before-seen event. Please let the people know who has authorised such change in Govt policy and why.

And how much was spent to put up that signage? Why should the taxpayer bear the expenses for such non-sense act?

Please ask the concerned Minister to give a full explanation.

Wasim Sydney, Australia

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I was amused to read that the civil aviation authorities in Bangladesh had decided to put up a neon sign in Arabic at ZIA. Given that, Arabic is neither the official language nor a widely spoken language in Bangladesh this decision is certainly amusing. The excuse given to your esteemed daily by a member of CAAB that, they are trying to use different languages from around the world at ZIA sounds downright silly. If they truly wanted to do so then they would have chosen a more widely spoken language than Arabic. Perhaps French or Spanish.

Our policy makers no doubt wanted to reassess to the public their Islamic identity. This craven move would have carried a little more weight had the Government been a little more bold in their condemnation of a recent invasion of an Islamic country!

S. Abedin New York, USA



Surma River deaths

Our continuous complaining about the killing of innocent Iraqi civilians seems hypocritical when hardly a letter has been written in about the 62 drowning deaths of innocent Bangladeshi civilians as a result of the Chhatak boat incident of 4 April.

We are demanding that the US stop their violent campaign when we choose to turn our heads and ignore the plight of our own countrymen. Civilian deaths in Iraq is a terrible thing, whether you are pro-war, anti-war, or you don't know where you stand on war, but why isn't there any outcry, protest march, or demonstration against the deaths of our own civilians on our own soil?

Is an Iraqi life worth more than a Bangladeshi one? Why aren't these river-plying vessels equipped with life vests? In my opinion this would have been a better use of the two million dollars that Bangladesh sent to Iraq for humanitarian aid.

Ali Dhaka

Cantonment restriction

Like a lot of other people I have also been hugely inconvenienced by the sudden restrictions on civilian traffic through the cantonment.

As *The Daily Star* puts it, the decision was taken without any consultation with the DUTP or the DMP and without any regard for the untold human sufferings this is causing.

As a conscientious citizen, I am insulted by this display of arrogance and superiority by Army headquarters. After all, my taxes pay their salaries.

To give voice to my anger, I write letters to the editor. But that is not enough. Emile Dhaka

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I was shocked and stunned to see the report in our paper this Friday.

According to this report, the Army decided to restrict civilian traffic without regard to the human suffering it is causing so many of us. The report also alleges that officials of the DUTP and the DMP were unable to make the men in uniform see the injustice of their decision.

But what scares me is that PMO is hoping the matter will be dealt with soon. Are you trying to imply that the PMO has expressed the desire to see the road link restored and the army isn't listening? Are you trying to say that the PMO is trying to convince the Army to change their minds?

The PM drives in supersonic speed through the cantonment to her office everyday. As a leader voted by us, maybe she could try out the drive through Moakhal one of these days?

Kireti Dhaka

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Finally *The Daily Star* has come out with the news about the Cantonment restrictions. Until now only one news article was published about this hugely unfair and arrogant decision.

Reading *The Daily Star's* report has just outraged me even more. Representatives of the DUTP and the DMP were unable to change the minds of our army masters. According to one official, the army had entirely ignored the human suffering and traffic jams that have cropped up due to this unilateral decision.

How can we respect an army whose sole interest is to preserve their own empty roads? The cantonment could be an excellent diversion from Jahangir Gate all the way to Uttara.

Why are we even building a flyover? Gora, Dhaka "Ignorance and democracy don't go hand in hand"

Nobo Borsher Gaan

One of the best reads on Bangladesh written by James J. Novak ("Banga Desh Reflections on the Water", Indiana University Press 1993) describes her people not by the physical boundaries or linguistic identity but rather by the many seasons that adorn her: *Grishho* (Summer), *Borsha* (Monsoon), *Shoroth* (Fall), *Hemonto* (Autumn), *Seeth* (Winter), *Bosonto* (Spring).... the seasons so clearly defining the spirit and the



Shuvo Nobo Borsho

This is in reference to Saladin's letter "War protest in our country" (April 12).

The irony of democracy is that the majority always wins even if the majority is uninformed, misinformed, biased, devoid of moral and the list goes on! Hence it's up to the people in any democratic country to ensure that the democratic process in "application" is not tainted. The Americans have failed to do so repeatedly when it comes to America's foreign policy although most Americans often boast of democracy and freedom! Jane Fonda recently commented about her country, "I don't know if a country where the people are so ignorant of reality and of history, if you can call that a free world."

Economic prosperity is not necessarily synonymous to fairness and wisdom. End does not justify means. Might is not right.

Dictatorship in Iraq is awful for the people of Iraq; "ignorant" democracy in America is awful for the people of the world.

If every anti-American, anti-war person wants to go to New York eventually, it won't be a bad idea after all! Why do you think there exists a special law in America which prevents anyone from taking pictures of Israel at one-meter resolution (as per the information in Azad Miah's letter on April 12)? Let me try to quote Jew comedian David Granirer from memory, "Israel finally wants to give back the Palestinians their state but the Palestinians don't want New York!"

Omar Sharif Canada

**Post war life in Kabul**  
I just got an Internet connection in my office here in Kabul and the first thing I did was log on to *The Daily Star*. I have been here a month, as my company is implementing a GSM mobile phone projection Afghanistan. I think I missed *The Daily Star* nearly as much as I miss my family back home.

Life in Kabul is quite normal now and since the fall of the Taliban, they have made a remarkable recovery. But as usual the foreign media paints Kabul as a dangerous and unstable city which is not true. People are going about their business, and it is business as usual. They have more cars than Dhaka but not as chaotic as the traffic in Dhaka.

The Bangladeshis have a good reputation here, especially with our good old BRAC doing a wonderful job of poverty alleviation, primary education, micro credit etc. The UN and another US company have many Bangladeshis working in Kabul. This is an ideal time for the Bangladeshi Business companies to invest in Kabul, as they are a third world country starting from the scratch. The Pakistanis, Iranians and Indians are doing brisk business at the moment.

The war in Iraq has not had any visible impact here, not even a single demonstration. But I hear we have already dipped into our quota of hartals to protest the war. The Afghans seem relieved to be rid of the Taliban and now are just trying to get on with their lives.

Joey Kabul, Afghanistan

**To the UN Security General**  
I am sure many will be in full agreement with me when I say that I am truly appalled at the state of the nations of the world today. Not only have a few countries, with abundant power to start another war, which will end with catastrophic results, have made up their minds to rob a nation of its most

coveted natural resource, but are also trying to strip a man of his rightful position as the leader of the mentioned country. It is truly insane to assume that the USA can attack any country it wishes to attack, due to a few terrorist attacks that were unfairly bestowed upon the USA. I agree that the demolition of the Twin Towers, the pride of New York city, was a criminal offence of the highest order, and justice should be sought for it. However, is it not vulgar to destroy another country because of this?

I believe that the President of the USA is mature enough to understand that a war is a futile and unfruitful attempt at trying to resolve a disagreement. War will not straighten issues out, rather it will take away lives of innocent civilians and will lead to further arguments and finally, a global conflict, such as the one we are witnessing. Is it too much to ask for tranquility, peace and brotherly love for all? Are Iraqi oil reserves so important to own that bloodshed of innocent Muslims seem meagre? I am sorry to say this but the all-powerful leaders of today are behaving childishly in trying to force Saddam Hussein out of his country and trying to take over the oil reserves.

It is now time for you to take notice of all the protests against war occurring around you and to try to prevent further damage before it is too late.

Reeham W. Motaher Dhaka

**"Forgotten facts"**  
AS Byatt says that through the September 11 attacks, the US "has experienced war on its soil". If the September 11 event is a war (as opposed to a terrorist act), is Bush's 'War against Terrorism', actually a 'War against War'? Now, that doesn't sound right, does it?

NM Wisconsin, USA

**Justifying war!**  
I am truly amazed at the honest sentiments expressed in your column regarding the Iraqi invasion by the US. I just wanted to say that to succumb to judging Saddam Hussein in justifying the war is perilous. An invasion into another country, without any international support, is an act of oppression and defiance. The means are not justified by the outcome. The journey towards democracy should be home grown in the soil of Iraq and not force fed and beaten into the Iraqis by foreign forces. The process is all important.

The whole world watched this act of violence happen in front of their eyes. I think the implication of this is huge.

One important thing to note is the lack of cohesion amongst the Arab leaders. Even though most of the Arab people are opposed to the invasion, many Arab governments have merely watched the invasion take place, if not openly support it. The Arab leaders need to come together to defend its territories and natural resources. They need to stop selling oil cheaply to Western countries and come together in regional collaboration that goes far beyond their narrow national interests. The leaders need to foster democracy and education between and within the countries.

It is this weakness that has to be addressed if outsiders are to be prevented from *scapegoating* isolated countries in the future. Hopefully, this mass destruction and threats of future invasions will make visionary, progressive and dynamic leaders emerge in the Arab world. The Arab world needs them desperately.

Nusrat Rabbee

Boston, USA

"Senators Byrd and McCain"

I refer to the letter (April 7) by Mr Riki. Though Mr Riki expressed his 'regret' to have to set Mr. Nazmul Karim (April 3) right on the Republican and Democratic issue but more notably he failed to show his gratitude to Mr. Karim who set Mr. Riki right on the boy and girl confusion.

I also refer to the letter of Ms. Rubaya Naheed (April 9) where she observed that 'in our society it takes a lot of courage to admit one's fault' and that 'now it is Mr. Karim's turn.' In this connection I refer to the letter of Mr. Nazmul Karim (April 9) who expressed his regret and very placidly admitted his fault. I hope Ms. Naheed will now appreciate that in our society some people do have the courage to admit his/her fault.

Now I refer to the letter of April 9 by Ms. Sabreena Chowdhury. According to her Mr. Karim unnecessarily created an uncalled for controversy over a word of a song sung by Mrs. Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya. If I remember correctly Mr. Karim just pointed out a wrong word Mrs. Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya sang in one of her songs. Who were those readers who spontaneously responded? Who were those readers who expressed their opinion and continued the controversy for such a long time till the Editor had to interfere? Did Mr. Karim instigate those readers?

Lastly, Ms. Chowdhury has requested Mr. Karim to stop finding faults in others from now on? Ms. Chowdhury has no right to give such advice to any reader, particularly Mr. Karim.

**Misinformed, dark world**  
Amidst worldwide protests, there seems to be a few minuscule of 'opinions' in favour of the illegal and unjust war in Iraq! Sadly, the so-called 'concerned' champions of war are unaware of the real world around them. Here are a few facts to shed some light on your dark world...the US actually had a very fruitful relationship with its Iraqi counterpart all throughout the 80's, the very period when the neighbours across the border (Iran) were being 'taken care of' and so were the ones, who opposed at home. Where were the concerns for human rights from the so-called liberators? The huge stockpile of weapons and colossal arms contracts didn't prove too helpful in bringing down the death toll either. In return...what else, oil?

Hitler of Nazi Germany (where does he come in the picture?) didn't come into power by force (get your facts straight)! After much struggle, he finally became the chancellor and didn't really bring any hardships (until the war) as mentioned by some of you. In fact, Germany was in a transition period and was waking up from depression from the World War I, and Hitler brought stability and turned it into the most powerful military power at that time! The German people didn't have any sufferings, in fact the economy was at its best in the early years at least.

So, please DON'T come up with baseless, incorrect and irrelevant information. Do your homework first then try to save the world with your 'enlightening' theories!

**Shaker One-mail Anti-war protestors**  
I was shocked to read one of the letters published in your esteemed daily by Mr. Saladin ("War protest in our country", April 12) criticising the anti-war protestors in Bangladesh.

Mr. Saladin further asserts that the

soul of the Bangalee people.

For the better part of last 2500 years or even earlier time, Bangalee's yearly routine has been dominated by this celebration of the season so lovingly called Nobo Borsho or Bangla New Year. Although the celebration of this great day has different meaning for different folks, importance or rather the lack of it to the cultural elite of Bangla is very eye opening to many.

Looking into the cultural history of the Bangalee people, we find so many types of School of Songs like *Baul*, *Bhatiyali*, *Bhaoyaiya*, *Kirtan*, *Jari*, *Sari*, *Rag*, *Maij Bhandari*. Each of these types of songs and music has been in tradition for hundreds of years and some, maybe even thousands.

Bangla's rich cultural atmosphere also allowed a sort of religious synthesis of ideas. Buddhist Tantric philosophy, Hindu Vaiishnavism and Muslim Sufism prompted Bangla to fight relentlessly against religious fundamentalism and fanaticism. Today one sees this social dynamics especially true in rural Bangla where life is still rooted in cultural synthesis and religious tolerance along with celebrations of secular ideals like the Nobo Borsho.

Unfortunately, when we turn towards the urban, educated and the ruling elite of Bangla, one have to gasp at the native elements that has been lost. The so-called elite follow a more western or colonial style. The cultural elite with their colonial mentality sees Bangla culture, not through the tremendous achievements of her past, but rather through the looking glass of a colonial or western educated mentality (perspective) who take more pride in implementing western ideas rather than the *Gram* or village oriented ideas.

Today, land of Bangla is considered poor or often mentioned in the Western press as "Impoverished". This is a disease not of the monetary kind but rather of the mind. The "impoverished" mind that is influenced by Hollywood's weekly series or cartoon shows or music videos or Bollywood's musical movies etc. Some of the elite are even busy planning for Georgian New Year's Celebration rather than planning for their own Nobo Borsho celebrations. The same Nobo Borsho that celebrates so much of what is thier own self!

This writer calls it the "Colonial Mentality" but the reader is free to choose any word that explains this phenomenon. And it should be pointed out that the writer himself has been suffering from this disease and only recently got this 'other' perspective when he started reading books of Bangla's past.

Shuvo Nobo Borsho Rashad Chowdhury Rockville, Maryland

not play to win why do we play at all? M. Rahim USA

Post war thought

It seems that even logical pro-war people never wanted this kind of Iraq full of thieves and looters. On the other hand conscious anti-war people always emphasised that winning the war would be relatively easy but maintaining the peace would be very difficult. They were precisely correct. But Bush and Blair wanted something more than peace and they have finally got it. At this critical juncture of world politics we desperately need some intelligent leaders, who will at least respect public opinion and will go that extra miles to establish peace. Only an intelligent leader can simplify the complex, others are more likely to complicate the situation.

**Shaheen Mahmood Gazipur**

A Letter to Mr. Bush

Mr. Bush, have you so far found any WMD in Iraq? The world would like to hear your confession in this regard. Following the 9/11 incident, you have started with eliminating the Taliban rule in Afghanistan and sadly failed to capture Osama-bin-Laden. With frustration and anger, you have found out a stooge of a friend, Mr. Blair to discover the Axis of Evil and decided to swoop upon Iraq branding Saddam Hussein as an oppressor accusing him amassing WMD to subjugate his people and the world (to you meaning USA). Now the world sees all the WMDs are with you and that you have effectively used them in Iraq, and in the process of eliminating Saddam you have not only destroyed a culture and heritage sites of a major religion but also acted as the creator of potential hatred between two major religions - Islam and Christianity.

I was really surprised to see what our captain had to say (in a pre-match discussion) about our goals for the match. He said he was not even dreaming of victory, he just wants his team to fight (!). My question to him is, if we do

In doing so, you did not heed to world opinion, because your are always right. Not only that, you are also shredding off the fabrics of Iraqi tradition and social order by inviting the divisive forces of the Middle East in and letting loose the looters before the very eyes of your soldiers - the angels of peace! You have, indeed, liberated Iraq and how far the people should go for freedom and democracy before you disarm yourself of your WMDs?

**Dr. K. Maudood Elahi** Jahangirnagar University

**The US Ambassador to Canada**  
The US Ambassador to Canada, Paul Celluci, finds it "incomprehensible" that Canada's ships in the Persian Gulf would not automatically turn over possible Iraqi war or human rights criminals to the US. I find it "incomprehensible" that the US should have such an undiplomatic ambassador.

There is now a world court for war criminals, the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands. The US signed the ICC treaty in December 2000, though it hasn't ratified it yet. The US State department should keep its ambassadors informed.

No wonder Bush isn't coming to Canada. With advice from this ambassador, many stupid decisions are possible.

**Tom Trotter** Ottawa, Canada

Peace and "Pro-war letters"

This letter is in support of Mr. A Syed's letter. Yes, massacre did and are still going on in Iraq, but how about the other massacres in other parts of the world? Only last week almost 1000 people were killed in Congo. Few years ago half a million people died in Rwanda within six months. 5000 Muslims died in the massacre of Bosnia. And how about the on going massacres in Indonesia and Chechnya.

Many of these people are not Muslims or Arabs - does this make their life less valuable? The media is absolutely silent about these atrocities. It is not just our media, but the Western media as well do not like to talk about it. No one care about the poor Tutsi child in Africa, but everybody is interested on the exclusive coverage and a picture of a dead Iraqi child. I also do not understand

the war protesters. Are they doing this because their heart bleeds, watching destruction of mankind or just because they hate the West? Did anyone tell them that hatred and peace couldn't dwell together? How could they even imagine bringing peace to this world, when their heart is so full of hatred and anger? **Mahmud Zaman, Uttara, Dhaka**



War and Peace!