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.

#### War against humanity

Although it is generally believed that the war in the Middle East is a war fought by Iraq against the American and the British forces, but actually it is a war fought by the humanity in general. The whole world became a battlefield. Think about Britain, which is officially at war with Iraq. Three ministers including Sir Robin Cook resigned from the Blair cabinet. Besides, there were a lot of protests and demonstrations taking place almost every day in Britain where people of all religions and ethnic divide and political opinions took part. Even the BBC was not spared. The angry demonstrators stormed the BBC building for what they called fabricated news presentation. All were not Muslims in the demonstrations.

In America itself, whose President wants to decimate Iraq, there were protests of people of all strata and religious beliefs who took to the streets to express their outrage against the war. Two renowned Nobel Laureates were arrested who protested against the war. The Oscar Award ceremony was subdued because of the war and sentiment expressed by the director Moore was the manifestation of his deep outrage and anguish

The Vatican had vehemently been opposing the war and the Pope took a very stern stand against the war France, Germany, Russia, China India, Pakistan, Egypt, Syria and other countries of the five continents were also opposing the war.

So this is not a war of a Muslim population only fighting Bush and Blair, but a war fought by all the sane and peace loving people around the

And history is the foundation of prog-

During the last few days, voices from many quarters have been raised to remind responsibility of occupying ces and powers about their duty to safeguard human lives and property of an occupied land. It is very unfortunate what we are seeing in the streets of Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk and other cities of Iraq occupation forces remaining indifferent. Donald Ramsfield's angry reaction about press reports raised a question in my mind whether the Americans also were under tyrannical rule when they resorted to same kind of looting and arson in the darkness of that fearful night in New York when there was no electricity for six hours during a period when Saddam took power to become one of the most cruel dictators of modern time. Or let Mr. Jack Straw have the courage to withdraw civil or any other kind of administration from a part of London city to see the outcome, up to what extent we are civilised as we claim to be.

I think the coalition powers mainly the USA must be responsible for all the destruction and losses of priceless historical artifacts and antiquities which are a common property of the entire mankind and there is no escape for them under this or that pretext. Dewan G.Ahmed

#### Parliament should condemn War in Iraq

I fully endorse the idea floated by renowned politicians, educationist and intellectuals that Parliament should condemn the war in Iraq that appeared in your esteemed daily on

pretty much a walk in the park. Yes a few civilians are dying in the looting and violence, but far fewer than would have in street to street fighting.

The fall of Baghdad has been one of the most anti-climactic battles in history. Naturally the press will now look for something else to bleat about.

# To the average

# **Americans**

Why didn't the average Americans question the soundness of its government's foreign policy? Why didn't they protest when their federal government abuses the governments and people worldwide? The basic reason is the Americans are a free country where most of the citizens are exercising their rights to remain uninformed of their government's foreign policy. Let me present some of the American demographics:

 The total economic cost of alcohol and drug in the US was estimated to be \$245.7 billion in 1992 according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse in the

2. As per the US Department of Justice, the number of American adults in prison in 1998 was 1.8 million which comes down to 1 in every 150 residents being behind bars in the US.

3. Two-third of the US adults is either overweight or obese. The health problem is estimated to cost the country \$117 billion a year according to news released by BBC.

4. The US entertainment and media industry is projected to approach \$443 billion in 2004 according to a study by Pricewaterhouse Coopers. This figure is higher than what has been projected help some of their companies to secure just only over \$12 billion in agreements for new international arms sales? (Source: William D Hartung, the President's Fellow, World Policy Institute). Did the common Americans know their government justifies the nearly \$3 billion in annual military aid to Israel on the grounds of protecting that country from its Arab neighbours, even though their very country supplies 80 per cent of the arms to these Arab states? (Source: Stephen Zunes, Peace and Justice Studies Program, University of San Francisco).

All the information is publicly available in the US, and in the Internet and they are not under any censor-

Siraiul Islam Shvamoli. Dhaka

#### **Expel the US military** base of Kuwait

The only "Arab/Islamic" country where the leadership and its privileged elite overtly endorsed the carnage in Iraqi under the veil that the war waged is exclusively against Saddam and his regime. One of its newspapers (www.Desert-Voice.net) stated,

"Their hearts are with the Armed

One cannot support the war without supporting the military actions in the battlefield. So the carnage inflicted in the markets, hospitals, schools, where the innocent perished, do these Kuwaitis consider a fair price for the 'liberation" of Iraq? "Liberated" perhaps for the US multinationals who are engaged in the real looting of the countries' oil. "Liberated" perhaps to establish another military base and like Kuwait eventually to be used as a

their children may not live to enjoy the rich oil resources of region, which are at present being squandered and used to fuel the US/Israeli weapons of mass destruction. Yamin Zakaria

## **Restructuring BTTB**

It is very natural that any move to restructure BTTB will make the employees angry. I am sure even if the Government intends to transfer all camp and switch room employees; the employees' union will resist that move too. I do agree with the union leaders that BTTB is the only Govt. institution which earns revenue of Tk. 1,400 crore per year (even after all this mismanagement), but at the same time I feel this is the lifeline of our economy. Hence, this sector deserves better

Can our CBA leaders tell how British Telecom serves 30million subscribers with mere 60,000 staffs? In anywhere in England, one can avail of a landline connection in 48 hours. Here in Bangladesh, geographical coverage area is small, but even then, a staggering 20,000 employees require 10 years to put up a connection. Nevertheless, if you can pay extra baksheesh you can manage it by one/two months. In the process of any new connection, seven different staff members has to sign multiple of forms, and these forms have to shuttle physically in between different offices before the new connection is activated. Surprisingly all these employees authorised to put signatures in the process, believes that for every signature he is supposed to get extra money from the subscribers.

The government has to take the decision, whether to nurture these 20,000 corrupt employees and make the whole nation suffer or privatise BTTB and earn five times, than what BTTB is contributing now

Mushtaq Ahmed Lalmatia, Dhaka

#### Gas export

I am writing to you today to address the topic of the construction of the Bangladesh Natural Gas Pipeline Project proposed by Unocal Corporation in November 2000. Ever since this has been a topic of debate and scrutiny in our country the National Committee on Gas Resources Utilisation (NCGR) has sent its final report to the government, reporting that gas should not be exported India. The committee has also said that foreign energy firms in Bangladesh could be allowed to make limited sales to India, but only if they have first discovered new reserves. Though I do agree that our country is in need of finance, however I think that it is rather impractical for us to overlook our future needs to satisfy current economical issues.

According to the Petrobangla committee (National Committee on Gas Resources Utilization - NCGR) Bangladesh will require about 63 TcF of gas from 2001 to 2050. Of this demand, about 40 TcF would be needed for power generation, 4.75 TcF for fertiliser, 13.5 TcF for industries and 5 TcF for domestic, commercial and others use. It also said the current known reserves would sustain production till 2020 and thereafter the country would have to rely on oil imports. The demand projection indicates that about 40 TcF gas would be required to generate electrical power from the years 2001 through 2050. The demand forecast for the power sector is absolutely gas-based and this total dependency could cripple the power sector of the country if the gas supply fails for any reason in the future. As it is even today we face very big problems concerning electricity shortages and I do not think we should risk this any further. Allowing exports to India or any other country for that matter may result in future shortages for Bangladesh. And it might even so happen that we would in the near future have to purchase means for energy ourselves. If that becomes the case I would hardly think of that as economically profit-Nazia, USA

## Tejgaon fire

This is to bring to your kind attention the recent news item regarding the outbreak of fire at a Tejgaon warehouse which completely destroyed the place and caused a heavy loss to propthreat to the whole nation at the very moment! By the way, would the Minis-

say the least, after having read the news item about the counter also kindly explain the use of try's first SARS patient 'sneak-Arabic alphabets at ZIA? Is it not ing' out of the airport! This incidence has not only pora tad bit illogical? Or am I simply trayed how incompetent the too dumb to understand its airport officials at ZIA are, but significance? Mehtah Rahman also the fact that security at ZIA Queen Mary, University

"First fatal flu patient lands in ZIA"

 $of \, London$ So much for the heightened security and medical teams at I was terribly shocked to read ZIA! Its high time the Minister the news that a possible SARS got his acts together and took proper action, instead of blabbering to the media about

patient had sneaked into Bangladesh without being quarantined. This is a total failure of the concerned authorities to act to save our own people. Once again our officials at ZIA proved how ineffective they could be even though they had suspected the patient being a SARS virus infected. It's a total disbelief to

me, no matter how I want to think, how can such a patient sneak into in front of so many security personnel from various departments at ZIA.

The officials have proved that they are unable to perform their duties and they should be punished immediately. There is no such thing of refusing to be quarantined. If the person is really SARS infected, he put a serious threat to his own family and relatives by sneaking out of the Airport. Then he threatened the health officials at different clinics and in Hospitals. Such act should also be punished.

Please make sure that we quarantine any future suspected patient. We have to understand that this is for our own good. Sohel Hasan

 ${\it River Valley Road, Singapore}$ 

### Cantonment restrictions

There is nothing to have outrageous' about the traffic restric-

tion within the Cantonment Area. It's not uncommon anywhere in the world, to have restricted movement of people and transports throughout the area covered by a Cantonment. It's for the better interest and security. We should not confuse the cantonment with the civil areas

But for our present cause-to ease the traffic and deplete traffic jam due to construction of fly-over in the Banani-Mohakhali area, Cantonment roads should have been kept open for unrestricted movement of vehicular traffic without a question. It is essentially required for the convenience of the civil society.

However, the important point of debate has been missed by your writers. Should we have the Cantonment located at the centre of the city? Dhaka is no more the older city of 'thellas' and 'hackney-carriages'. It has expanded enormously along with people and transports.

So the authorities concerned should take immediate steps to army may have supposedly shift the Cantonment to a farflung location outside the busy

through the Cantonment. The done a great service to the

country during the Operation

RESTRICTED AREA

hubs of the metropolis. A F Rahman, Dhaka

The army is acting in an autocratic manner in its imposition of the vehicle restriction

Clean Heart, but its arrogance in this matter may make the citizens lose confidence in it as an impartial entity.

It talks about ensuring security in the Cantonment. But

for the whole of Europe (\$313 billion)

may be only mere 'civilians' so to speak, but in reality we are the principal resource of the country. Besides, I was under the impression that the army was for the protection of the country, and consequently the citizens, but the army seems to think otherwise. The army has to be answerable to the citizens, because our taxes maintain them and the government. Rahat Bari Tooheen Dhanmondi, Dhaka

what about security in the rest

of the country? To the army, we

It is quite disgraceful for the army to put on a restriction for the civilians to close down the detour without prior notice. I was amazed when I came to know about this restriction. Isn't the Army supposed to put a notice in the daily newspapers way ahead of this new time line-up? Or they don't care about our convenience/inconvenience?

I need not remind them that it is we the 'civilians', who pay the tax money to support the Nabil Huda

launching pad against Syria. True

liberation emanates from within the

Purana Paltan, Dhaka

However, what is regarded as the fire due to an electric short circuit is in fact mostly the fire due to leakage of electric current to earth in small amounts like 100mA or 200mA, whereas the short circuit generally runs into kilos of amperes.

Flu flown into Bangladesh!

is extremely poor.

I am shocked and speechless, to

the useless cautions and steps

he has taken to prevent the

entry of the SARS virus into the

country through ZIA. The Min-

istry has proved itself to be a

total failure, unable to cope with

one single patient who is a

It may seem very surprising that a small current of milliamperes could cause such devastation and loss of property and life, but the fact is that not only the loss of property, such small currents are also the cause of electrocution of human beings. It may seem ironic that the strongest of human beings could fall prey to a current as low as 30 milliamperes (a commonly used tubelight of 40W consumes about 200 milliamperes approximately seven times more

Unfortunately, most of us are ignorant about these leakage of currents and fail to take sufficient safeguards against these hazards of electricity and as a result avoidable tragedies often takes place in our country. These incidents are more common during the monsoon due to increased incidence of leakage of currents. The good news is that we can pre-

vent such accidents by taking preventive and precautionary measures. The first and foremost, we need to have a proper earthing system for our electric installation and further precaution could be taken by use of electrical devices known as earth leakage circuit breakers which sense these leakage currents and cause of isolation of faulty circuits. It is strongly recommended to use these devices both in industries and domestic applications to prevent the occurrence of electric Dinesh Pahuja

## **Consumer rights**

I read the most interesting articles in your edition of March 16th concerning consumer rights in Bangladesh but saw no mention of the one thing essential to develop such rights,

namely, the presence of a solid minority of people who are prepared to spend time and energy complaining, when they do not get the goods and services that they have paid for. This is the only way to ensure the gradual introduction of a system to come that ensures that those who provide poor goods and services have to face the consequences of the inefficiency of themselves and/or their suppliers. People shrug and smile and say, "This is Bangladesh!" If consumerism is not to become an idol that consumes its worshippers, then it takes high levels of corporate responsibility.

Lam shocked at the number of really nice Bangladeshis from the middle and upper classes who are quite shameless about their refusal to bother to complain! They will not take back to the shops items they have bought that are not satisfactory or otherwise insist on getting value for money. The culture here is so non-confrontational that people shrink from doing the necessary. One writer said that the absence of appropriate laws meant that 'millions of illiterate people in our country are being exploited' but, if the middle and upper classes refuse to complain, and are indifferent to the money they lose, what chance have the

May I also plead with those who are building new properties to insist that services that they have paid for, are properly provided? I have heard of landlords of new properties who take little interest in the fact that window frames, complete with beautiful mosquito netting, do not fit properly so the mosquitoes, and the rain, come in; also, the amount of electricity, according to the number of electrical plugs and fittings, does not match what the load can take; also, gas pressure is far too great, lifts fail and other things simply do not work. If the landlord refuses to make the builders come back and do the work what chance have the tenants? Angela Robinson

#### Shait Gumbaz Mosque

was delighted to read that the local people of Bagerhat are demonstrating their awareness and pride of the Shait Gumbaz Mosque, one of the most important pre-Moghul Muslim architectural monuments in Bangladesh. "Shatgambuij mosque shut to female tourists", March 13).

I have visited the Shait Gumbaz Mosque in March 2001 as a member of the Dhaka-based Asian Studies group which unites Bangladeshis and expatriates around a shared appreciation of South-Asian, and specifically Bangladeshi culture, art and spirituality. Even then, several of us were aghast at the damage done on this historical mosque in the name of "renovation" This applies to the careless replacement of ancient brick by new, but especially to the inappropriate application of plaster and whitewash over historical brickwork. We were left wondering why a contract for such crude, inept and historically uninformed "renovation" would ever have

In addition, it looked even then as if this historical monument of national and international importance had been "appropriated" by local mosque officials who had not hesitated to install their paraphernalia as it suited them: loudspeakers and electric fixtures with their dangling cables, prayer schedules etc had all been affixed to the historical brick walls with whatever bolt would have been handy at the time.

Local people, will be powerless to stop such defacement and appropriation, which deprives current and future generations of Bangladesh of the authenticity and original grandeur of Bangladesh's architectural heritage. Is it futile to ask the Department of Archaeology for a historically informed and effective intervention? Petra Osinski Gulshan, Dhaka

Mohammed Kamal Uddin

#### Responsibility of the **Coalition Forces**

For us, the Muslims, around the globe a debate about Saddam Hussein whether he was a hero or a tyrant will continue for more few years but Baghdad as a cradle of civilisation for the entire humankind will unquestionably will remain alive in the minds of the Muslims and non-Muslims alike so long our mother earth is full of lives.

It was really a tragic affair when we saw in BBC and other media reports museums of Baghdad are also becoming targets of looters and bandits under the nose of Coalition Forces mainly the US Marines. Museums are the common property of the entire mankind whether dedicated to a particular geographical area or to an individual tyrant or to notorious clans because all these are part of history.

April 7.

When the parliament of a non-Muslim country like India can condemn the Anglo-US invasion in Iraq, then why has the parliament in Bangladesh lagged so far behind both public sentiment and world morality?

## Fall of Baghdad

The pages of this esteemed paper are full of articles and pictures about the looting and arson in Baghdad. Even the BBC seems to have jumped the bandwagon and started screaming

 $about \, looters \, burning \, down \, the \, city.$ But what this paper has so conveniently forgotten is the street to street fighting that was supposed to take place. Baghdad was supposed to be another Mogadishu. There was supsed to be huge losses of civilian and American lives taking this city.

Instead what we have seen has been

as well as the Asia Pacific region (\$217 billion) during the same time period. 5. According to Forbes reports, the legal adult entertainment industry worldwide is worth \$56 billion whereas the US sales of adult entertainment products, including magazines, movies and the Internet, amount to about \$11 billion. 6. In a National Geographic survey,

about 11 per cent young (18-24) citizens in the US could not locate their own country on the map. The purpose of this presentation is

not to criticise the Americans but did they know why their government did not sign Ottawa Treaty (a convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of antipersonnel mines and on their destruction) that was signed so far by 146 countries? Did they know their government spent more than \$7.9 billion of their hard-earned money in 1996 to

nation and not from an invading foreign force with an alien culture. One wonders what Islamic verdict ("Fatwa") wills the scholars issue regarding those who support this criminal aggression in Iraq. How many more acts of aggression will it take for the Kuwait regime and the likes to realise that USA in collusion with Israel is reshaping the Middle East to bolster the US-Israeli axis, at the expense of the Arabs/Muslims?

Perhaps the powerful members in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and others in the region will take heed from the US administration's vision of a "Free Democratic" Iraq as a "beacon of light" for the entire region. Therefore it is only a matter of time when the US starts to knock on their doors with the same reasons, lack of "democracy", and violation of human rights etc. Hence the possibility is very real that

# "ZIA neon sign flashes in Arabic"

Please make an extensive coverage of this Arabic signage. People have a right to know why suddenly an Arabic sign should appear at the International Air-

It seems that The Daily Star was satisfied with the explanation given to justify that never-beforeseen 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

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 reassert 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

item about a new sign in Zia

International Airport that reads in

This is in reference to the news

Arabic. I cannot imagine why we would need a signboard in Arabic to herald in the few tourists who come to Bangladesh (most of whom let us face it, are not Arabs!)

While very few Arabs come to Bangladesh, the hundreds and thousands of Bangladeshis who work in the Middle East and other parts of the Arab speaking world can barely read and write Bangla, let alone Arabic so really there seems to be no logic behind putting up signs in a foreign language that has no relevance to Bangladesh. Since when is Arabic one of our official languages?

What's next? Arabic as a third language in schools? Shouldn't the government spend more time in teaching more than half of our illiterate citizenry how to read and write the mother tongue instead of putting up signboards in languages no one understands?

If we do not protest such unilateral and inexplicable but insidious moves by a coalition government that let's face it, has been the biggest disappointment since the last government, we will have to face events much more serious than a sign board in Arabic.

Scherezad Latif, On e-mail

The story well documented with a photo of ZIA extension came as a puzzle. I fail to understand the

necessity of this unique publicity

on public buildings. Monwar Hossain accordance with a government On e-mail

Arabic? stunt. Are we trying to attract policy or an act of an individual? Government should clarify its tourists from Arab world or what? policy on use of foreign language We want an explanation of this otherwise senseless action. Is it in