

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 the 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 world.

And history is the foundation of progress. During the last few days, voices from many quarters have been raised to remind responsibility of occupying forces 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 some 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 Shamoly, Dhaka

pretty much a walk in the park. Yes a few civilians are dying in the looting and violence, but far fewer than would have fallen 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. Shonku Dhaka

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 censorship! Sirajul Islam Shyamoli, Dhaka

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 UK, London



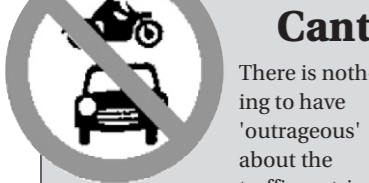
Flu flown into Bangladesh!

"First fatal flu patient lands in ZIA"

I am shocked and speechless, to say the least, after having read the news item about the country's first SARS patient 'sneaking' out of the airport! This incidence has not only portrayed how incompetent the airport officials at ZIA are, but also the fact that security at ZIA is extremely poor. So much for the heightened security and medical teams at ZIA! Its high time the Minister got his acts together and took proper action, instead of blabbering to the media about the useless cautions and steps he has taken to prevent the entry of the SARS virus into the country through ZIA. The Ministry has proved itself to be a total failure, unable to cope with one single patient who is a

threat to the whole nation at the very moment! By the way, would the Minister also kindly explain the use of Arabic alphabets at ZIA? Is it not a tad bit illogical? Or am I simply too dumb to understand its significance? Mehtab Rahman Queen Mary, University of London

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. Sohail Hasan River Valley Road, Singapore



Cantonment restrictions

There is nothing to have 'outrageous' about the traffic restriction 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 'thellias' and 'hackney-carriages'. It has expanded enormously along with people and transports.

So the authorities concerned should take immediate steps to shift the Cantonment to a far-flung location outside the busy

through the Cantonment. The army may have supposedly done a great service to the country during the Operation



hubs of the metropolis. A F Rahman, Dhaka

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

what about security in the rest of the country? To the army, we 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

Mohammed Kamal Uddin Baridhara, Dhaka

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? SA USA

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 supposed to be huge losses of civilian and American lives taking this city. Instead what we have seen has been

for the whole of Europe (\$313 billion) 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 anti-personnel 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

launching pad against Syria. True liberation emanates from within the nation and not from an invading foreign force with an alien culture. One wonders what Islamic verdict ('Fatwa') will 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

erty. 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 kilowatts of amperes. It may seem very surprising that a small current of milliampere 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 milliampere (a commonly used tubelight of 40W consumes about 200 milliampere - approximately seven times more current). 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 prevent 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 fires. Dinesh Pahuja Dhaka

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. I am 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 poor? 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 again, what chance have the tenants? Angela Robinson Dhaka

Shait Gumbaz Mosque I 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-Mughul Muslim architectural monuments in Bangladesh. ('Shatgambuj 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 been let. 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

"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 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

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 New York, USA

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?



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

stunt. Are we trying to attract tourists from Arab world or what? We want an explanation of this otherwise senseless action. Is it in accordance with a government

policy or an act of an individual? Government should clarify its policy on use of foreign language on public buildings. Monwar Hossain One-mail