

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.

Iraq: "after math' comes mathematics"

I guess it was one of my little nephews, who answered gleefully "after math' comes mathematics and then my favourite, physical education!" I guess he's right, at the moment it's all about simple mathematics; awarding billion dollar contracts to 'coalition' firms just to put out fire on oil fields, and that's only the beginning, rebuilding infrastructure specially the huge port in Umm Qasr, in fact the whole country-maybe that's why it was bombarded so heavily? The black gold; oil, oil and more oil...

Where do we see the role of international law and the UN here? What about the Iraqi POWs? What's going to happen to them? Is it time for their physical education in Guantanamo Bay? Whatever happened to the Geneva convention? Last of all, if chemicals in a pesticide factory are defined as weapons of mass destruction (which they actually are, but for pests-not humans!) then they should 'liberate' all the homes in Dhaka city, the residents are all armed with mosquito repellents!

Shaker Dhaka

Stop hoarding the change, please

Whenever I go to buy a newspaper or some bananas the shopkeepers won't sell right away if I have in my pocket a taka 100 bill, insisting that I pay only with a smaller bill. After some bickering eventually they open a drawer only to

We firmly believe that history is viable enough and able to take control over anyone or anything rather than being controlled.

Oindrila Aditri Rajshahi University

Import Policy

It has been almost a year and yet the Government couldn't declare a new Import Policy. The last Import Policy 1999-2002 was valid up till 30th June 2002.

In absence of an updated version, the concerned people are facing serious problems. In the last six years, so many features related to international trades have changed but the Import Policy of 1999 is still existing.

Ahmed Shahidul Huq Dhaka

"PMO staff mint money..."

I am glad to see that *The Daily Star* takes time out from its anti-war crusade to publish news closer to home. Of course no one is surprised to see the PMO staff stealing money openly. The funny thing is that we expect the same PM who can't stop her own office staff from stealing millions to lead our country!

Just one more point about the corrupt photographer, *The Daily Star* quotes him as saying "One cannot such huge prints of photographs". Excuse me!

Tali Dhaka SARSVirus at ZIA

History repeats itself in a very strange way. In the year 1258, Halaku Khan, the grandson of Monghal warrior Chinghiz Khan invaded Baghdad, the then seat of science and learning and the focal point of world civilisation.

That was a time when Europe was in the dark and America was almost unknown. It is recorded in the history that the brutal Halaku Khan not only killed thousands of people in Baghdad but also caused widespread looting and widespread destruction of everything connected with science, literature, and civilisation. It may be interesting to note that Halaku Khan attacked Baghdad on a phoney accusation that the then Caliph Al Mutasim did not cooperate with him in containing certain nomadic outlaws of that region.

Just seven hundred and fort-five years later, a neo-Halaku Khan named George W. Bush attacked Baghdad also on a fake excuse that its ruler Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. A Shia defector helped Halaku Khan to kill Caliph Al Mutasim, whereas it is reported that a turncoat General passed whereabouts of Saddam just at the beginning of the invasion and subjected him to the coalition missile attacks and presumably to his death. With the might of modern technology, this neo-Halaku ruler outpaced his "guru" in committing extensive massacre, looting and carnage over the innocent people including children.

It may be concluded without reservation that like Halaku Khan, Bush and his accomplice would be equally, if not

tion.' Each of these arguments was proven wrong in the case of Kosovo and in the end, it was the US bombing of Serbia that stopped genocide of Kosovars and ultimately allowed million refugees to return home."

Similarly, Saddam Hussein had been terrorising the Iraqi people. Saddam invaded Iran and Kuwait, gassed the Kurdish minority and massacred the Shiite majority. He should have been removed long ago. Yet, the United Nations failed to act mainly because both France and Russia threatened to veto any resolution authorising military intervention.

The UN has also failed to realise that disarming Saddam and regime change go together. If not removed from power, Saddam would rear later even if he agreed to disarm for now. It is the American military power that saved the people of Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq from oppression. The UN has failed miserably. It must be reformed so that it can take action against any regime found murdering and torturing its own people.

Mahmoud Elahi Ottawa, Canada

Plagiarised letter!

The letter "To the average Americans" (April 16) by Sirajul Islam has been copied partially from my article titled "Dictatorship vs. Democracy - the Irony" which was originally published in the "Star Weekend Magazine" on March 21, 2003.

I don't mind at all if someone wants to use my article for further dissemina-

quette. They don't even bother to signal right or left, nor do they bother putting a lamp while plying at night. This causes a major problem to other automobile drivers, who are cornered on the right side of the street and they (rickshawpullers) enjoys two-third of the street.

Secondly, the bus (coaster) drivers congest the street in order to get more passengers by blocking their colleagues. Sometime the competition of getting more passengers becomes really risky. They don't care the slightest of how long the traffic queue could be due to it.

Well something got to be done right away to educate our rickshawpullers and bus drivers about traffic rules and etiquette. They also have to be educated about their safety as well as public safety.

Nabil Huda Purana Paltan, Dhaka

Iraq war

The Daily Star is the only newspaper I subscribe to and more or less read thoroughly especially the Editorial and Letters Page. However, over the last few weeks I have noticed with dismay and disbelief the relentless anti-war diatribe carried out by the newspaper.

What on earth was *The Daily Star* doing since 1991 after America left Iraq resulting in the butchering of hundreds of thousands of Shias in the South and Kurds in the north? *The Daily Star* also failed to gauge the depth of American hurt feelings and resultant strong resolve to fight the perpetrators of 9/11. Its denouncement of Osama and the fundamentalists was at best.

The Anglo American forces captured Iraq in record time. The catastrophic human loss has been overplayed. What are you supposed to do when you have a regime who use humans as shields in the warfront?

If it weren't for the Americans Milosevic would still probably be in power and still carrying out ethnic cleansing. Lest we forget, the Europeans were begging America to intervene. I cannot remember if America had UN backing to bomb Belgrade. But I cannot remember either if Europe protested.

The sights of our streets lined with schoolchildren waving anti-war placards absolutely amazes me. Why do we not see such displays on the real matters which affect our daily lives--corruption, abuse of human rights, women's repression, acid throwing cases, drug trafficking etc!

Irshad Hossain Gulshan, Dhaka

Protests against the Anglo-American war on Iraq have been quite vigorous. But I fail to understand how the boycott of US products will help in the expression of solidarity with the Iraqi people.

Mr. A. Farjad Ahmed (April 11) rightly points out that the boycott will serve no real purpose. People should think more carefully before suggesting senseless and utterly bogus protests against something with which they do not agree.

Rahat Bari Tooheen Dhanmondi, Dhaka

The so-called majority

Mr. Saladin pointed out ("War protest in our country", April 12) that British and American governments are majority of their people's voice. Does it sound logical? Then what he says about Spain, the staunch American ally in the Continental Europe.

As we know, majority Spaniards were against the invasion. Even 57 per cent Spaniards now believe that the American way of thinking and its execution are harmful to the world.

Now the title question, were the majority Americans prudent enough to support the evil war? It is true that more than 70 per cent Americans approved the invasion; whereas 87 per cent Americans didn't know the location of Iraq on a world map (National Geographic/01/2003).

From the very beginning of the crisis, they have been engulfed by biased reporting and misinformation. But they have no enthusiasm to find

out the wrongdoing of their government, particularly on foreign policy. In comparison they are less pragmatic than the Europeans. The Americans believe that supporting Israel is a moral obligation, while their European counterparts argue that Palestine issue is the root cause of all terrorism.

After the Iraq invasion, rest of the world hold very little respect about their much-vaunted pluralism. But that doesn't really matter. America already made it clear that its decisions are not based on wisdom, rather based on its hegemony.

Shaheen Mahmood College Road, Chandana, Gazipur

The party

My stepfather's father, who was from an aristocratic family in Sweden, came over in the USA in the 1880s, and discovered some of the problems that America had.

Its population boomed from four million in 1800 to 100 million in 1900. The people who had nowhere else to go, came here, and they had a party. It was around 1885 when he was riding through Kentucky and came by a tavern where they were making a loud noise, and he could tell they were having a party. Then he saw somebody come running out of the tavern, and another man after him. The man after him shot him in the back. My stepfather's aristocratic father believed the man was dead, but he did not stop to investigate. Three days later he came back by the same road and they were still having the party and the man was still lying there dead.

For the last two hundred years, we have been having a party. The war of 1812, the Indian wars, the Mexican War, the Civil War, the Spanish American War, the World War I, the World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the Iraq War have been interesting diversions. Roosevelt's revolution, and the destruction of government under Reagan, and George W Bush, was also somewhat interesting. However, they did not louse up our party.

If George Bush Junior, makes himself a dictator, it will not bother us very much. Also, if we have a Russian style revolutions where all the people with over a million dollars, are killed that will not bother us much either. Once, we learned how to live with each other, we can live with anything!

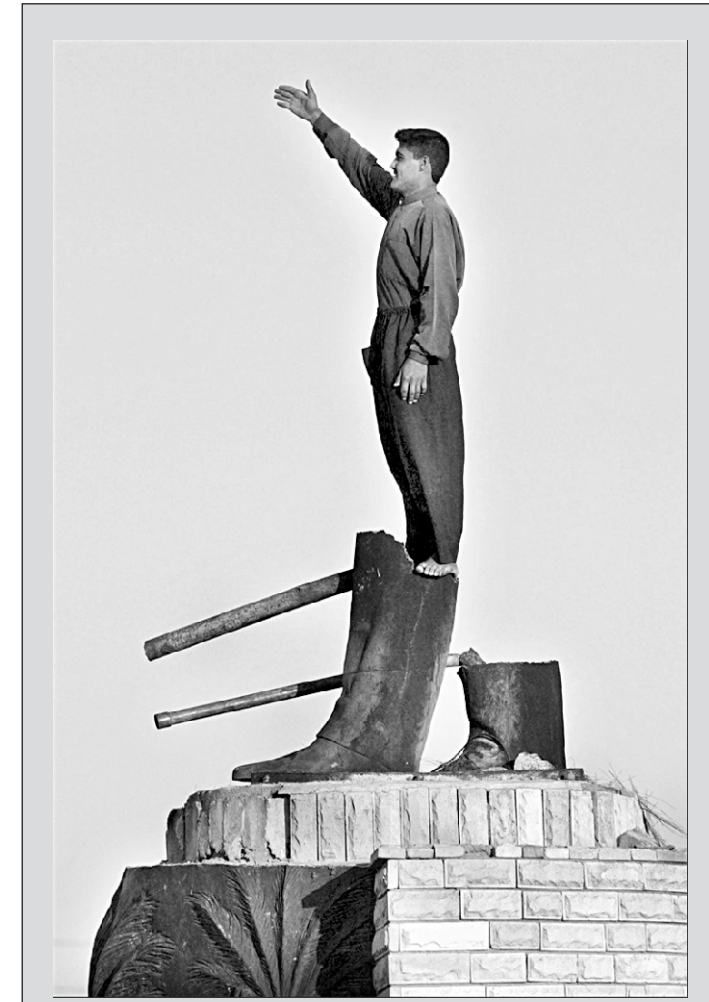
Robert W. Carlson USA

Who should pay for the reconstruction of Iraq?

The war against Iraq is hardly over but the vultures are already vying with one another for a piece of the lucrative pie of the reconstruction fund. However, understandably the US is refusing to share the contracts with others outside the so-called coalition forces. If the money is going to come from the US sources then there is nothing to object. But if Iraq oil is to be used for financing the reconstruction of the war ravaged country then the future Iraqi government should decide who should get the contracts.

On the one hand, the US-UK forces are destroying the Iraqi cities through indiscriminate bombing and shelling and on the other hand, they are drawing up plans for rebuilding Iraq! This would be most diabolical developmental intervention in international arena, particularly if the money is to come from Iraqi oil proceeds. It is highly unlikely that the US taxpayers would foot the bills.

Furthermore, by allowing widespread looting of govt. buildings, offices, private businesses, etc. in post-Saddam Iraq, the Americans, perhaps, made it clear that they wanted civil administration to collapse completely so that they could supply afresh everything from paper clips to computers, office equipment, all kinds of furniture, vehicles, hospital equipment, medicines and what not and there by enrich their corporate supporters, particularly those in the oil and arms business, of this unjustified and illegal war.



Ready for reconstruction?

New kind of business

In the good old days, people used to open their business and wait for the customers to come and buy things. But if you have some friends in the White House then lucky you! There is a much profitable way of selling your products! What you do is: you bomb a country of your choosing, destroy all their infrastructure and then let them buy things from you to rebuild their country.

Poor countries throughout the world have no choice but to buy essentials from the developed countries at their asking price. But if these poor countries want to sell something to the developed countries, they face trade-barriers and other tariff related complications.

What the American Government is now doing is, creating situations where not only the "liberated" countries will buy things at asking price, but they will buy from American companies "only"! That is the reason why America is so reluctant to bring UN, because it wants to get all the big contracts signed before Iraq becomes a proper democracy (if ever). Just imagine what the new government of Iraq will need to buy in order to bring stability in the country. Expensive equipment for police, army, hospitals, roads, power stations, schools, universities, almost everything. And all these items will be bought from America alone (and probably Britain). So even if they don't take Iraq's oil, they will still make billions in the name of repairing oil fields and rebuilding Iraq.

Azad Miah, Oldham, UK

As the predominant power of the Coalition Forces, the US cannot evade its responsibility to maintain minimum semblance of law and order in the areas where from the previous regime has been ousted. After all they came to Iraq to liberate it from the despotic rule and to give a better life to the Iraqis not to plunge their country into anarchy. The Americans came to Iraq on their own without being invited by the Iraqis. In fact, they came against the will of the international community. Now they must live up to their promises. They cannot make Saddam Hussein a scapegoat for every thing gone awry after his fall!

Abul Mohsin Shiddheswari Circular Road, Dhaka

Sanction on Iraq

UN sanctions on Iraq should not be withdrawn till the WMD are recovered. But it may be considered if the erstwhile accusers now admit that they were mistaken earlier and only guessed so and carried out the carnage.

MAH Dhaka

American foreign policy

Thank you Mr. Ali (April 11) for writing exactly what I wanted to write. Now I would like to pick up the thread from where you left.

You are right, although Bush-

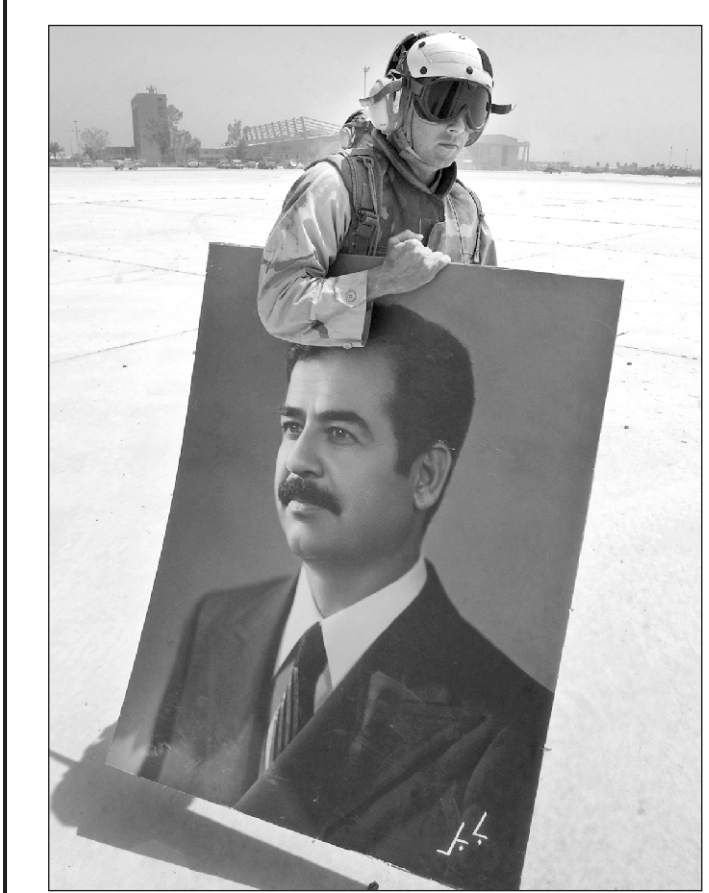
bashing is our favourite pastime, American policy towards Middle East and Muslims have hardly changed over the years. Former President Bill Clinton ordered to fire missiles to kill Bin Laden that killed innocent Afghan civilians long before Bush's "crusade" started. Covert assassination of an adversary in a foreign land is always the hallmark of American foreign policy, independent of its President.

We are all praise when we talk about how America saved Bosnia selflessly. True, there isn't any oil in there, but preventing the creation of a Muslim country in the heart of Europe was not a small feat when "Islam is the only enemy left after the fall of Soviet Union".

America is doing a great service to the "civilised" world by continuing with the task embarked on by its European ancestors who carved up the Middle East into small vassal states headed by mostly traitors who collaborated with them to dismantle the Ottoman Empire. Now we hear that America wants to "secularise" the Middle East (Dan Rather quoted US policy makers on TV).

The evil design of the western powers to systematically subjugate or annihilate the Muslims is finally getting exposed because of America's current militarily challenged President.

Shukla Mirza Qatar



Enter US, exit Saddam!

World beware!

There is a predator let loose; it has gobbled up Iraq and looking for its next prey. Baghdad may have fallen. But it is the world that has failed. Iraq was invaded in spite of the world opinion. This war flouted the UN Charter. Failed too the UN Security Council to halt this unauthorised war, to call for a cease-fire and be on record to have done its duty to protect a sovereign member state of the UN. Equally astounding is the failure of other regional and global alliances and associations notably in this case, the Arab League and the Islamic Conference. This failure has convinced the predator at loose to contemplate yet other aggressive conquests in an openly imperial mood.

The world opinion remains an opinion and not crystallising into specific countervailing force. The opposition by France and Russia is yet to coalesce into anything concrete to counter the unipolar trend dominated by the USA. The outline of a balancing centre of gravity is not yet in sight. Till then the predator may be on a rampage to enforce its will by force and attack its chosen targets. That is bad enough. Worse would be the acquiescence of European and Asian power centres to correct the present imbalance by concerted political, economic, and military co-operation.

Much damage has been done yet all is not lost and events are not irreversible. By virtue of its unmatched power and might, the US still is in a historically unique position to defend its own interests without diminishing those of others; it can respect and enforce the international law and norms of behaviour, rely upon mutually accommodating and multilateral means rather than unilateral pursuit of narrow and short sighted agenda at the cost of others. Great power is best displayed when it is combined with discretion and prudence; it is not enhanced by predatory behaviour.

Hussai, Dhaka

reveal dozens upon dozens of 10 taka notes as well as heaps of coins.

If they only stopped hoarding these smaller taka units then I would probably not be approaching the news stand everyday with only a 100-taka bill and everyone would have smaller change to spend.

Spending these smaller notes, rather than hoarding them, is thus more beneficial to everyone involved.

Ali Dhaka

History

History takes its own recourse. But our political parties especially The Awami League and BNP tend to try taking control over history. This is the irony of fate. The history of Bangladesh has long been attacked by a vested quarter who possibly don't know that "history" itself never cares its twisting. From pre-historical age, people in power tried to change the discourse of history but failed and finally truth came to light and strived atop in its own power and charisma.

It is deeply distressing to read the report "First Fatal Flu Patient Lands at ZIA" by Naimul Huq. The distress not only stems from the fact that Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a highly virulent, fast-spreading disease, but more so because the passenger in question managed to dodge health and civil aviation officials and simply "sneaked out of the airport".

The problem is so very endemic of Bangladesh. A quarantine of this nature should not be voluntary; it has to be applied to any passenger showing symptoms -- and it should be applied with full support of law enforcement if necessary.

It is incredible that a passenger with symptoms of SARS can somehow "sneak out" of the airport. Instead of putting up Arabic signs, perhaps the Civil Aviation Ministry can ensure the protection of all Bangladeshis by making sure a case such as this never happens again.

Wasim Choudhury New York, USA

History repeats itself

more, despised by the mankind for generations to come and thrown into the trash of history. It would, therefore, be morally wrong to deal with this neo-Halaku Khan in any manner whatsoever.

Hafejul Alam Dhaka

The UN needs reform

The UN, like its predecessor the League of Nations, has failed to stand up against tyranny in Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq.

Veton Surroi, editor of the Kosovo newspaper, Koha Ditore, wrote recently in the International Herald Tribune, "If I were a member of the Iraqi opposition today, I would feel as I did five years ago, when I listened to the arguments, mainly from Europeans, about why military force should not be used against Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia. The arguments back then were similar to today's: 'Give peace a chance.' Bombs cannot bring democracy." The United States is using its military muscle to establish domina-

tion of information as I wrote it to enlighten people in the first place. However, any such act of information dissemination should acknowledge the source.

While I don't expect that you can realistically screen every letter you receive for plagiarism, I can't help mentioning that in this case, the article has been copied from an letter published in your own weekend magazine! Someone should have noticed it!

Omar Sharif Simon Fraser University, Canada

Traffic jam control

Traffic jam has become a social disease in Dhaka city. Everybody has excuses for being late due to traffic jam. How does the traffic jam arise in spite of having 60 to 200 feet wide streets? How come other neighbouring countries do not have intolerable traffic jams even though they have narrower streets?

First of all, we need to control our rickshaw traffic. They are the only ones who could care less about maintaining any traffic rules, let alone traffic eti-

"ZIA neon sign flashes in Arabic"

With a profound sense of "shock and awe," I am writing regarding the responses made in favour of installing an Arabic sign at ZIA, as the arguments (April 16) put forward are not only fallacious, superficial, and irrelevant, but also lack any correlation, pragmatism, and common sense.

First, to justify the use of Arabic sign, what A. Elanipier wrote about the historic status of Arabic language betrays the reality in modern times. For, Arabic is not an official language but an associate language in the UN for intellectual discourse in contemporary Arab worlds, instead of Arabic, either French (in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon & in the five Maghreb states) or English (in the Gulf states) are used

among the modern Arab academicians.

Therefore, the apparent pseudo-secular justification does not stand out. Should antiquity were the question, arguments for Sanskrit, Pali, Greek, and Latin as much as other official languages of the UN such as Chinese, French, Spanish, and Russian can be placed as well.

What A. Elanipier misses, is the point that the government decision had noting to do with cultural values. It is a simple attempt to exploit religious symbolism, although Islam and Arabic, as the defenders of the decision would like to make, are not mutually exclusive.

Second, just because a few airlines from Arab speaking

countries maintain flights to Zia does not provide any "commercial" logic to use Arabic either, since, these airlines use English for communication. May I ask, prior to use of Arabic, what sort of economic loss did we have had? Or, when these airlines land in non-Arabic speaking countries, how do they communicate?

To make it simple, as a sovereign nation, are we supposed to adjust to the needs of few foreign origin airlines, or are they supposed to follow our rules?

Third, it is absolutely wrong to state that just because Islam has been declared as the state religion, Bangladesh has lost its secular character. Secularism in the Western tradition, refers to the separation of Church and



state in which legal authority rests with the independent judiciary. Since difference between ideal and reality exists; absolute secular or theocratic states are non-existent, as all states fall in between.

On the other hand, what Mr. Babar and Mr. Bashar argue, indicates a lack of common sense, as the former equates use of an Arabic sign to that of Bengali vocabularies of Arabic origin. For, writing in Arabic script is alien to our culture, whereas, vocabularies of Arabic origin have become assimilated in Bengali. In fact, what Mr. Babar is unaware of the fact is that as opposed to Arabic, Farsi and Turkish have more influence on Bengali. And for pragmatism, I

believe that Bengali should be introduced in the madrassahs as well as in the Mosques as much as classics of Islamic theology should be translated in Bengali in order to teach students in Bengali, since inadequate linguistic skills in Arabic cannot bear any fruit, it did not, and will not. Should Mr. Babar would have taken a survey, he would have known that in the epicentres of Muslim civilisations such as Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, India, Indonesian, Malaysia etc. Islam is taught in native vernaculars. As a result, as opposed to Bangladesh, these countries have produced far superior scholars on Islam. And historically, it was the Ulema of Bengal such as Maulana Islamabadi, Akram Khan,



Abdullahel Baki, Abul Hashim, Moulana Bhasani and others had advocated for the introduction of Bengali!

To claim that as the majority of Bangladeshis read Koran in Arabic as a justification for the use of Arabic, is a pure nonsense. What Islam has to do with a mere sign in Arabic? **Shibly Azad Columbia University, USA**