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'Liberated' at last?

Ending Iraq sanctions: At last!

UN Security Council had imposed comprehensive trade and economic sanctions on August 6, 1990, within days after Iraq invaded Kuwait. These sanctions have been one of the harshest and longest. Iraq was devastated; over a million of its children died; a thriving middle class was decimated; entire civil infrastructure including water, sanitation, and health services remained in a dilapidated state.

The social fabric of a country was destroyed. How ironic it is that the US President now calls for urgent lifting of these sanctions. Having "liberated" the Iraqis, now the US wants to extract the proverbial pound of Iraqi flesh. Now having destroyed what was left of Iraqi infrastructure, having liberated Iraq of its treasures, it is time for the US to give fat and juicy contracts to Bechtels and

Halliburtons to rebuild Iraq. Remember this, the only government building that was spared by the US bombing is the oil ministry; the only assets secured by the "coalition of weasels" are the oil wells of Iraq. Why? Because how else the Iraqis will pay for their long awaited liberation? Unless the UN sanctions are lifted how the US contractors will bring in material or how else Iraqi oil will be

exported? Those who value oil more than the culture and civilisation can only bring disaster. The world destiny is imperilled in such hands. The world must now do more than hope; must harness all its political and material resources to arrest this dangerous slide into international anarchy and law of the jungle. Dr. Zakir Husain Dhaka

Debate between AL and BNP leaders

Next time before an election we want to see a debate between the political leadership of the two parties - BNP and Awami League. We want to know how THEY will improve OUR lives when it comes to education, law and order, corruption, bank defaulters etc. Remember the only power we (the common people) have is our votes and for that we have the right to know why we should vote for them. A moderator should ask the hard questions and then let people call in with their questions. Rubel Ahsan Fremont, California, USA

On being anti-war

I suppose people like Mr. Saladin and Mr. Satyajit are unwittingly flaunting their ignorance, and feeling good of their pro-war stance ("War protest in our country" April 12). I am of Bangladeshi origin, living in the US for over 25 years. Yes, neither do I drive a taxicab in NYC. Don't even live there. I work as an electrical engineer at a high-tech company. Most of my Bangladeshi friends are nearly all with PhDs (like I am) or MDs. So, it is utterly preposterous and deplorable nonsense to make such an insensitive remark that it is the aspiration of almost every anti-American anti-war person in this country to eventually drive a cab in NY City! It does not earn any applause or acclaim, and it certainly offends Bangladeshis who may be driving taxis

to earn a living. Though, probably not designedly their plans, but practical expediency to support themselves and their dependants. Perhaps Mr. Saladin is inadvertently revealing his own aspiration. I have and am certainly anti-war, and I have and continue to participate in all forms of non-violent opposition to any war. I am most pleasantly surprised at how many thousands of especially white-Americans continue to be vehemently opposed to war. War is very costly but peace is priceless. Khan Kabir, NY State, USA

An open letter from a cricket lover

This is an open letter to the BCB officials, PM Khaleda Zia and the emerging (emerging and gaining experience for the past 20 yrs) cricketers of Bangladesh. Firstly, Mr. Asgar Ali, what benefit are you people getting bringing our country to shame? Why do a work that you are INCAPABLE of doing? Why not just resign respectfully and give the job to someone more competent like Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury. No matter what political background a person has everyone knows the competency of you and him. Now for Mr. Aliul Islam, do you really know anything about cricket? Yes you are the chief selector, but it's really distressing to see whenever people have power they tend to gain arrogance just like Asgar Ali and Aliul Islam. PM Khaleda Zia, can't you see what

is going on in the cricketing condition of Bangladesh? Will you loose a lot of popularity if you just replace a few incompetent people from their posts and appoint better people? I have to remind you that you came into power because our previous leader failed to realise the potential threat the incompetent and arrogant people can have on them. I hope you realise this and apply this aspect not only in cricket but also in various facets. Finally as for the cricketers, I think all of you should just decide not to play for the Bangladesh team. If I were a player I would've done that. Cricketers, you can make a difference. Do something before it's too late. Help the future of Bangladesh cricket prosper at least. You haven't been able to get a good performance and I know you people will be having a low morale, but this is the right time to bring about change. And I think failure is the pillar to success. At least you can protest by not playing anymore. What's the use of forcing yourselves to play when you aren't motivated enough? Shaddy, Ontario, Canada

"The UN needs reform"

I am writing with reference to the letter "The UN needs reform," by Jamil Ahmed (April 20) in response to my earlier letter. When I wrote that no nation has the right to kill its own people, I meant non-violent people. All governments have the right to use force if the people are involved in bombing, shooting, looting and other acts of violence. Violent protesters can be dealt with

force. However, in Israel, the Palestinian suicide bombers are carrying out lethal attacks on Israeli civilians, providing a pretext for the Israeli hardliners to clamp down on the Palestinians. That's why the US President George W. Bush has called for all sides to end their violent activities so that negotiations can take place. Saddam Hussein is a different case. Here is an odious dictator brutalising the peaceful Iraqi people for no apparent reason whatsoever. And that the Iraqis can now pull down those pictures of Saddam with out fear is a clear indication that they are now liberated. The US led military intervention has made this happen. By failing to stand up against the brutal Iraqi regime because of the threat of veto by France and Russia, the UN has lost its credibility. This calls for massive reforms. One reform would be that no one would be allowed to exercise its veto unless the issue is related to its own national interests or the interests of its ally. Mahmood Elahi, Ottawa, Canada

"Anti-war protestors"

In reference to Mr. Nipun Wasir Rahman's letter (April 14), I would like to point out that Mr. Rahman got little carried away with the judgement of his friends about the sanctity of the war! Most of the recent credible poll suggests that more than 70 per cent of the American people have supported the war and they do approve the way President Bush handled the war. As a fellow Bangladeshi, I am really proud to see Mr. Rahman working for a

fortune 50 and doing well professionally. It is evident from his letter that he has already managed to successfully befriend lots of powerful Democrats and Republican leaders having lived in the USA for only five years. I wish we had more people like Mr. Rahman who could guide our compatriot unfortunate Bangladeshi taxi cab drivers (in case our readers are unaware, we do have a large number of Bangladeshi taxi cab drivers in NYC) who failed to excel professionally towards a better career path. On a personal note, I do work for a Big 5 Accounting company and majority of the people (Black/White/Muslim/Non-Muslims), I have come across in my professional and personal life were very much in favour of the war. As for Mr. Saladin's letter ("War protest in our country", April 12), I do agree with his observation. I do believe that given an opportunity, majority of the people participating in the anti-war activities and anti-American tirade, would love to come to America. No matter how crooked and brutal Saddam had/had been on his people, I am against this unjustified war which caused innocent lives of civilians, nevertheless, having recently taken oath as an American citizen, I am not ashamed to extend my full support to My President during this crisis and I am proud of my marines who dedicated their lives for a war that was not be! Chanchal Mahmud Manhattan, NY, USA

due importance since a reasonable tonnage of a merchant fleet is a great asset also very much a second line of defence in time of emergency/natural disasters when we may not have to depend on foreign flags for the purposes. As for the comments in this respect by MMD, CPA and the Chittagong City Corporation, my humble opinion with all due respects for them is that these are in no way and not at all relevant to the context. These statutory bodies/Govt Dept. have their own specific functions/responsibilities which are entirely different from shipping/trades and should confine themselves to their own affairs primarily. Consumer interests of common man and the port congestion are of course very pertinent but in this instance do not have a direct bearing or conflict with flag protection. Z. Rahman, Gulshan, Dhaka

War crimes, terrorism and freedom fighters

Recent buzz words in the run up of 'Gulf War II' are weapons of mass destruction, regime change, crime against humanity, terrorism, harbouring and aiding Hizbullah or Hamas fighters. After September 11 according to the USA, all the resistance fighting for the quest of freedom are defined as if an act of terrorism. Even defending one's own country against external aggression is now considered an act of war crime as it has happened recently for the republican guards in Iraq. Geneva Convention will be sidelined by volley of rhetoric from the spin-doctors of present ultra right wing group in the White House. War crimes are always perpetrated by the loser in war. Though both sides may commit crimes, the victors have always been able to turn might into right, ignoring their own violations and penalising their enemy. Even our short time memories are still haunted by the scenes of napalm and Agent Orange used in the Vietnam War. Are not these chemical or biological weapons? Mohammad Salahuddin Dhaka, UK

Warmonger Bush

It seems that the war in Iraq did not quench the insatiable thirst for war for Mr. Bush. Is he after waging another World War? It seems that there are plenty more countries which are going to suffer like Iraq. But how successful Bush has been in this Iraq war? Has he been able to find Saddam? People in general knew from the very beginning that Saddam would never be found, as they did not find Bin Laden. What Bush really did to Iraq is killed innocent civilians in the name of war, stole all the artefacts and is on the way to capture Iraq's oil resource. America is not a nation of braves it is a nation of warmonger leaders. Badal Hasib Mohammapur, Dhaka

"Shipping in the present market economy"

This is in reference to the news item "Move to scrap ordinance - Local Ship Owners disappointed" (April 19). Reactions/resentments of the local ship owners are genuine and well understood also very much in national interest that must be realised by our policy-makers. Free market economy is a global process which has to be adopted like many other international conventions, rules etc with utmost considerations for the national interest. And this must not be done in a hurry to the detriment of our economy even when the demerits in the long run for any practice for protection is generally appreciated that has to be eventually discouraged. We should look around the world before taking such a decision that will totally destroy whatever little of the share in sea-borne world trade still conducted by our flag ships mostly on feeder trade between Chittagong/Singapore/Colombo. Main Line Operations (MLO) in fact are the real international shipping (in container trade of today) which with all its benefits are more or less the exclusive/monopoly business for the interests of developed world. Reference to the latest news item of imposition by foreign flags in respect to various surcharges at their own will in the absence of a viable national tonnage is also a very important factor to be appreciated by the trade interests as well as our Govt. for the sake of our long-term national economy. Notwithstanding the enormous employment opportunities for our seamen, this is also a matter that has to be given

leaders they want to lead their country. So for example, Vhajpayee can specialise in religion, Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia in hartal (strike). As for Mr Bush, well we all know he specialises in world affairs don't we? Azad Miah, Oldham, UK

Is Syria under threat?

Why is Bush all of a sudden so much concerned whether Syria has chemical weapons or not? It is for sure that Israel is the only country in the Middle East who has got weapons of mass destruction. So now the question is will USA one day attack Israel? Very unlikely. Minhaj Ahmed Uttara, Dhaka

What does Secular mean?

There seems to be some confusion among Daily Star readers as to whether or not Bangladesh is a secular state. A. Elanipier (April 17) writes that Bangladesh is not a secular state because Islam is the state religion, and that means 'unconditional belief in Allah'. The statement is false because a) even though Islam is the state religion, religious doctrine does not determine law, the constitution does, and any law that contradicts its will be void and, b) all other religions may be practised in peace and harmony. Thus, neither does Islamic law take precedence over man-made constitutional law (the supreme law), nor does the constitu-

Why Iraq?



- It is now evident that the America's war on Iraq was not for WMD. The question is, then why this war? Well, there are a few theories running high. Among them NO. 1, is the follow-up action of Sept.11/2001. The American public were deeply shocked, hurt and traumatised by this act of terror. They wanted some actions relating to revenge. Many democrats believe that war on Iraq was unjust- yet they did not dare to speak it out loud for fear of public rejection. Only a very small number of peace-workers and human-rights activists in the USA, showed some emotions and was against war kept their conscience visible! Second question, why Iraq? Well, if you consider following factors, you will find answer. 1. Saddam's notoriety as a brutal

- dictator. 2. World's largest oil reserves. 3. Presence of deep divisions in Iraqi population. 4. Presence of renegades at arms (like northern alliance in Afghanistan). 5. A Muslim country with no visible/ meaningful support from any fellow Muslim countries. 6. Oil resource of Iraq may make good the loss of Anglo-American-Australian war efforts. 7. Minimum or no protest from the ever-divided Muslim communities of the world. 8. All other world communities are non-committal because every body has some accounts to settle with the Muslims which includes, India, Russia and China. 9. World propaganda machines

were trying to portray the Muslim as terrorist and some Muslims played as ploy in their hands. 10. American intelligence about non-existence of WMD in Iraq. Now you know the facts and your position in the war-game. Please do not burn-down American/ British flags or businesses. These are useless emotions. Give the positive picture of a true Muslim. The Muslims do not hate Jews, Christians, Hindus or Buddhist or any body for their religious beliefs. In our country democracy is working - let's grow a bit wiser along with our democratic principles. Please do not picture an image which is actually not yours. M. Ayub Khan Ottawa, Canada

Feelings right now

Right now I wish I had the best of communication skill to express my feelings on war in Iraq, on human suffering, on naked aggression by Bush and Blair to fulfil their long designed political and economic gains, on media show biz, on duel standard of justice, on opportunists trying to benefit from the situation, on divided Muslim opinion specially those onlookers who are riding on two boats, on countries and leaders who provided bases for launching the attack, on personalities who sold their souls to please the masters and gain temporary favours, on those who forget that history shall repeat, on one sided military might, on attempts to win over hearts and mind with carrot and stick approach, on people who sincerely voiced their genuine anguish and frustrations over this issue. I know, I am not a loner in



Humanity held-up?

this regard. There are many like me awaiting to vent their feelings. I also wish such situation do not befall on us-but-if and if it happens it will be a

perpetual war. Because I have the conviction "man can be destroyed but not defeated." Tanzania Chowdhury Dhaka

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recognise and respect world opinion and not feel threatened just because they are different. Shaheen Mahmood, Gazipur

It's all about security

This is in response to Mr. Jamil's letter on April 17 -- "Cantonment restriction". Cantonment should be secured, no doubt about it but at the same time it should not be in the middle of a city. And if "it's all about security" then for the security of democracy the Cantonment needs to be moved out of the metropolitan area. Moving the cantonment will surely help solve the problem of a crowded Dhaka. Pir Saheb, Glencove, NY, USA

New World order, indeed!

So many wicked things are now happening around the globe, thanks to the New World order, bombed on all of us! According to this New World order, you can be bombed if you "do" cooperate with UN inspectors. What's more, it is becoming increasingly difficult to see who is the leader of which country. Blair became the Foreign Secretary of America, President Chirac became the PM of Britain (by speaking out for thousands of British people). A certain Jay Garner has now become the new dictator of Iraq and you may well get Ariel Sharon on the other side of the door if you decide to pay a visit to our beloved Uncle Sam in the White House! In fact, I think we need a completely new type of political structure for our planet. How about if we have all those politicians to present their CV to us and highlight their specialities. Then different countries can choose which

tion suggest that its citizens must unconditionally believe in the Almighty. The constitution of the Republic, while it does not spell the word 'secular' is indeed secular. Secularism is a term that refers to the separation of religion and the state in matters of law and state policy. Law and policy makers must conform to the constitution, which is the supreme law. In contrast, the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran states that all civil, penal financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political, and other laws and regulations must be based on Islamic criteria. The ideal of secularism is not a reflection of belief or disbelief in religious doctrine. It is a reflection of enlightened reason, and of a vision that men and women can take fair decisions, and do justice by one another based on rational principles. It is an ideal, because it empowers individuals to use their God-given ability to reason, and to assume responsibility for their actions. It is also an ideal because it forces policy makers to consult one another, as well as the Constitution of the Republic, before taking decision that affect us all. In doing so, it strengthens the democratic process! Jens, Dhaka

BNP's law and order

After 'Operation Clean Heart' BNP and its allies claim that country's over all law and order situation has improved. They even say that the country is passing one of the peaceful times in the history of Bangladesh. The following is an example about how much improvement they have made in this regard. Nowadays socialisation has become a threat to one's life. The other day I happened to visit my sick brother-in-law at the Holy Family Hospital and I had a mind to visit my sisters' houses with sweetmeats for my recent promotion. While travelling by a CNG, I was suddenly attacked by a group of muggers in front of the Karwanbazar crossing. They took away my money meant for buying sweets and other belongings. People around me were simply onlookers. Nobody came forward. At gunpoint, I was forced to keep silence. I used to hear about such incidents from others. But that day I was a victim. I've never experienced this before. It was humiliating and insulting for me. Such incidents on the so-called VIP road would never convince the sufferers and their relatives and friends that the present government has ensured terrorism free society as it committed before coming to power. Kamaluddin Ahmed Shamoly, Dhaka

Oppressors will never get-away

The so-called war in Iraq is over and but we still cannot forget the carnage carried out by the invaders. They didn't even hesitate to kill reporters! Three journalists from Al-Jazeera, Reuters and Spanish network Telcenco were killed by tank shells. This was an unjust war which was waged on behalf of Israel and to grab the oil reserve of Iraq. The US, Britain, Australia and other countries which formed a coalition force will one day have to pay dearly. People will never forgive them for the atrocities and will not forget this heinous event ever. The world has changed suddenly, we do not know if it will ever be the same again. The Super Power how has become the Super Terrorist, who could defy it, but we have trust in the Almighty Allah, he will do what is necessary in His own time. Nur Jahan Chittagong