

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.

Welcome to Taiwan

I live in Taiwan. I went onto the World Health Organisation website to check on the SARS situation here but couldn't find Taiwan. Then I chanced across some statistics listed under "Province of Taiwan."

Taiwan isn't a Province of anything! For God's sake, I live here. This is an independent country. From where I sit I can see the flag to prove it flying atop the library across the street.

Only last week Beijing would have the world believe: "SARS is not a problem and Taiwan is a Province."

This week the Beijing party-line has shifted to: "SARS is a problem and Taiwan is a Province." Still it's only half-true.

People are dying in Taiwan right now who might have lived but for that insidious half-truth. The World Health Organisation wouldn't step foot in this country until now because of Beijing.

When they come they'll find Taiwan is a wonderful free country and a democracy. It's high time that the W.H.O. and the world community treated it as such. We've all seen the price to be paid for pandering to Beijing's fictional assertions. Enough!

William R. Stimson
Taichung, Taiwan, R.O.C.

ZIA treatment!

I was travelling through Zia International Airport on Friday, May 2, 2003, bound to North America. The confusion, commotion and misbehaviour I witnessed at the immigration counter at the Airport that day was extraordinary.

Apparently the authorities have introduced a new embarkation/disembarkation card to be filled up by the passengers. This was not made available to most passengers till they reached the immigration counter. Most passengers were handed over new embarkation/disembarkation cards at that stage and asked to fill them up and queue up again. Then in all cases the immigration officer claimed that the cards were not properly filled in and misbehaved with the passengers.

I thought that the new embarkation/disembarkation card is superfluous and on top of that the instruction received by the immigration officers about the correct filling procedure was either inappropriate or they understood the

Who is looting whom?

The Western media recently has been full of - often the same - pictures of Iraqis laden with goods, furniture and electrical items from the latest looting spree. The endless pre-occupation with looting is not without reason. Firstly it serves to justify the need for Western presence and intervention to solve issues such as looting, thieving and lawlessness -- even though they clearly are taking no measures to prevent them. Secondly, in the longer term it creates the scenario of people who are unable to look after themselves and thus in severe need of being administered, advised and governed by outside forces.

However, the Western media has failed to mention reports of looters being encouraged in areas where Crusader forces are present, in order to remove the last vestiges of the previous regime. Similarly they haven't mentioned that in some areas local residents have claimed that foreign individuals, unknown to them, are perpetrating much of the looting. Such reports would paint a very different impression on what is actually occurring on the ground.

Yet in all of this pathetic preoccupation with small time thievery, the real crooks are stealing the real wealth of the Iraqi people right before everyone's eyes! The real 'looting' by Western forces and their multinationals, started immediately after the commencement of hostilities, when they secured 1000 oilfields in Southern Iraq. This game plan continued when the Crusaders aimed to quickly secure the oil rich north of Iraq, in particular the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul. Indeed, once the Crusaders have implanted a puppet administration, the looting of Iraq's huge quantities of oil and gas, will be enshrined in the constitution. This surely is a safe conclusion to arrive at, given that the looting of the rest of the Ummah's oil wealth has continued for decades.

Saleh Ahmed
One-mail

comparing Bush to Hitler. A careful analysis will reveal that there are a lot of similarities between Bush's actions to Hitler's and the United States to Nazi Germany during the World War II.

Like Hitler, George W. Bush is looking at the smallest pretext to invade and occupy small defenceless nations. Like Hitler who said the very survival of the German people were at stake, Bush is uttering the mantra that the security and sanctity of the American way of life is at stake. Like Hitler who had Mussolini and Tojo as his toadies, Bush has Blair and Sharon.

Like the Germans before them, the Americans are ready to accept all these lies in order to feel justified in sending their troops on rampage throughout the Arab world. Like the German storm-troopers, the American soldiers are looting Iraqi national treasures, oil and gold. The American troops have indeed been caught red-handed stealing US Dollars, Iraqi artefacts and valuable paintings, just like Nazi officers in Eastern Europe.

After all these similarities, it will be hard for Bush apologists to dismiss claims that Bush is the reincarnation of Hitler.

about Palestinian suffering, one should remind that person that Arabs themselves are to blame for denying the Palestinians their state. David Ben-Gurion agreed to the right of Palestinians to their own statehood. The Arab statesmen did not allow the formation of that state.

So who truly is to blame? And before you excoriate anyone, try to walk a mile in their shoes. If the British Nationalist Party adopts suicide bombing technique on the immigrant populace of UK and if the UK government cracks down on them heavily handedly, would it be prudent to imagine Mr Azad crying foul in similar manner?

Yahya USA

Liberators and the liberated

Where are the jubilant liberated people of Iraq? Should they not be showering Donald Rumsfeld with flowers as an expression of their gratitude? More to the point why Donald Rumsfeld chose only to address his own troops in their barracks rather than the Iraqi masses openly. As the Baptist

and the forceful "liberation" by the guns and bombs of the US military. Out of desperation even the powerful mass media (CNN, Zionist-Fox, Zionist-Sky etc) tried to manipulate the gathering at Karbala to vindicate the invaders as liberators of the Shia's. Yet during the era of Khomeni, the media portrayal of the Shias were along the lines of a fanatical sect of Islam, deviated from the mainstream moderate Sunnis. How the presentation of facts can be altered for the manipulation of the masses! Isn't it time that we eliminated the "commentaries" of these "Journalists" from our minds?

Yamin Zakaria
UK, London

"Arabic and ZIA"

According to Mr. Shibly Azad (April 25), I, in my letter dated April 23, "exposed a gross lack taste and fickle-mindedness. For, Urdu even for an instance, had no reference in the ongoing debate." According to Ms. Sabreena Chowdhury of North-South University, Dhaka my letter is deceptive and that she is confused as to whether did I "really mean that ZIA should have a fourth neon sign in Urdu" or I "was trying to make a mockery of Urdu as a language?" According to Mr. Khan Imtiaz Ahmad, the new generation kid from Dhanmondi, Dhaka, I "sarcastically argued to hang an Urdu sign beside the other three."

I respect all the languages on earth and I have not made any sarcastic remark against Urdu. I attend 'Milaad' and listen to 'Khutbas' in mosques where, to my absolute humiliation and disgrace, I hear the 'Maulana' often use Urdu language as much as possible. Unfortunately, in our country, we still have many people who still treasure and cherish "those old good days in Pakistan" and yes I reaffirm that they are the same people who believe that Urdu is much more affiliated to our religion than Bangla.

For theology or metaphysics and religious doctrine being the ultimate wisdom, one must study and be compelled to have a very clear knowledge on philosophy, science and history to conceive the absolute significance of verses of The Holy Koran. It is not enough to know to read or even to understand only the language, in which the holy book is written, be it Arabic, English or Bangla.

We claim us to be a secular state but we are a member of O.I.C. We claim that our State has nothing to do religion but our hypocrite politicians, since last 32 years, have established, from government exchequer, more madrassahs than schools to justify to their voters that they are 'Pakka Musliman'. Again we claim us to be an Islamic country but our judicial system, as prescribed by our parliament, do not ensure the inheritance law of The Holy Koran.

Though we are an independent country, I condemn our politicians who have had been using Islam is a saleable commodity to deceive people.

Nazmul Karim
Dhaka

So Mr. Mokaddes Hossain Khan asked us to learn Arabic, Greek, French to taste the actual essence of Quran or Arabic, Greek, French literature. And should the Arabs, Greeks and French learn Bangla to understand Tagore? Do you think it is possible for common people to learn any of those languages? For us, the common people we have no other option but to depend on translation to understand Quran or any other foreign literature.

Mr Khan also gave an example that in English "ALLAH" is represented by "HE" which is a masculine gender. But he forgot that in Bangla "ALLAH" is represented by "TINI" which is a neutral gender. By the way the Arabic of "Zia International Airport" is "Zia International Airport". And we don't have to learn Arabic for that.

Enayetullah Forhad
Sukrabad, Dhaka

Well, as for the current debate in The Daily Star, Arabic signage has bought up some issues which I would like to share with readers.



Liberated looter?

I, personally think that there should be signs in Arabic. This obviously does not indicate that we are becoming biased towards religion. I reckon that many expatriates, who treat Arabic as their second language and cannot read Bengali, may find it helpful. People/foreigners from the Middle East would also find it helpful.

Also, I'm sure many readers have heard of the saying 'Knowledge is power!' In this context, I'd like to say that learning Arabic isn't such a bad idea - for those who don't understand it!

Finally, some writers (May 1) stated that 'Sanskrit is the sacred language of Hindus, then should the Indians install neon signs in Sanskrit?' Well, I'm a bit puzzled - isn't Sanskrit an outdated language?

Samia Rahman
London, England

Asian University for Women in Bogra

We were indeed very glad to hear that at last some thing was going to be done in Bogra in a big way that Asian University for Women would be established here. But now we hear that the University is going to be shifted to Gazipur.

This is not the first time that this kind of things happened with Bogra. When BARD was established in Comilla, an equivalent institution was supposed to be established in Bogra to cater to the needs of the entire North Bengal, but it did not happen, it ended up with RDA. Many more instances could also be cited.

The reason for shifting the site of the proposed University as published in a local newspaper is, since there is no airport at Bogra, the foreign students will face difficulties in travelling to and from the University campus! As far as, my information goes, the new airport's runway for aircraft landing stands have been completed and some civil aviation staff are also quartered here. Probably a control tower and some other small-related works are needed to be completed, then this airport can be commissioned in to service for regular scheduled flights. If this work is undertaken now, the airport could be ready long before the works of the University campus is completed.

Najmul Haque
Chaklokman, Bogra

Dismal condition of our education system

Quality in education is a precondition for development. But in Bangladesh the situation is pathetic. Although the government is giving highest allocation in this sector, it is not enough to uphold our educational standard. According to a Daily Star report the teachers' salary eats into 94.6% of government school allocation and 87.6% of private school budget.

Our political leaders always say that they are giving highest priority to this sector. In support of their word they show the amount of money that is allocated to this sector. We often watch in BTV news that ministers are inaugurating new school buildings. But they are always hushed about quality. Though infrastructure is very important but new buildings does not ensure quality education. Huge amount of money are being spent on teachers' salary. But the education quality is not at all satisfactory. If a portion of the amount can be spent to improve their efficiency it will be more fruitful.

Only 13% of the total budget of the country's autonomous universities are spent for education and research. But we know that in every discipline there are huge scope of research. For development it will be very helpful.

So the allocation must be increased. If the govt. is unable then the universities should be allowed to do some business, from where they can raise money. Now the universities are fully dependent on govt subsidy. If the NGOs can go commercial in the name of helping the poor, then why can't the universities do that? But in primary education we must increase our budget. Now we are spending only \$15 per student,

which is one of the lowest in the world.
Jabed Sufian
One-mail

Media War

America having its absolute sky controlling power- specially in media- has successfully carried the world to go by with it. When the Twin Tower was hit- Bush's first reaction was to start a Crusade. Later on considering the back and forth math, in a couple of hours, he came on the media with his new version of revenge to smoke out the terror waging war against them which successfully convinced the entire world and got almost the whole world as his ally supporting his stand. He came down deadly on Afghanistan bombing indiscriminately on the entire land to kill Osama-bin-Laden. Media covered him so nicely that the whole world didn't mind the civilian casualties

and destruction of a country in every sense of the term. Truth became the first victim. Their media successfully covered that whoever died there was the terrorist. We couldn't see any picture of Casualties of child, women and old. Also by the blessings of their media we started to believe that after their holy bombing, they will do everything to rebuild Afghanistan and a rosy lavish future was awaiting for the Afghans. Then time started to cool down the attention and emotion of the world. By this time, fixing a Afghan puppet Govt. chosen by them and fixing its military bases they silently left the land leaving their blood stained bootprint and commitments buried under the sand of endless uncertainty.

Now their media has turned on Iraq. Initially the official excuse to attack Iraq was Weapons of Mass destruction and time to time it was

replaced by "Regime Change" as it fitted. So that if weapons of mass destruction is not found the second excuse stands. Media started to cover the war and virtually doing the war with even more intelligently and doing everything to keep the world by their side. They have even set up a new history of embedded journalism. We had seen how Saddam's statue had been shattered down amidst the cheers of Iraqis, how their humanitarian aids are flooding (!) the towns, even how the coalition soldiers are giving medical aids to wounded Iraqis. But we could hardly see any mutilated dead bodies of the civilians under the ruins and other havoc. And again the same music of liberation, rebuilding the country (at whose cost?) and a peaceful future is drumming around the clock in media. And we are again helplessly let to believe it!

Engr. G. M. Sarker
Lalmatia, Dhaka

"We have many problems to address"

This letter is about Mr. Sajjad Waheed's letter (May 5). I totally agree with him on the issue of lingering debate in Letters Page on trivial matters like Arabic sign at ZIA, some singer's wrong pronunciation of a word in Rabindra Sangeet or how a great leader Kemal Ataturk was.

These topics have nothing of a great deal to contribute for the well being of our socio-economic and cultural scenario. Debate may spring up on issues that are of minor importance otherwise this Page would be overwhelmingly fraught with serious talks and in a way will become boring. However clinging on to a particular topic for a long time especially which doesn't have that profound effect on our society, should be avoided.

Zafar Hadi, California, USA

Flying billboards



Shattered signboards

During the recent storms it has been quite apparent that many of the huge billboards put up all over the city are a hazard to public safety. Billboards have been erected on top of multi-storied buildings, on shaky metal poles and on the walls of many tall buildings. Every time there is a storm less and less of these billboards manage to remain in their intended space and either disintegrate into flying pieces of projectiles or fall to the earth intact, people I know have sustained serious injuries as a result.

The so-called "ad agencies" need to wake up and realise the potential threat

these structures pose to the public. I would urge the ad agencies to seriously consider attending a crash course on public safety. Just after a storm one can see twisted metal frames and debris from poorly constructed and erected billboards scattered all over the road and sidewalk. With our crowded streets, these falling billboards have the potential to kill or injure many innocent city dwellers. It is also outrageous to see many billboards left dangling from tall buildings. The ad agencies are probably waiting for the next storm to bring these billboards down to the earth, rather than safely

removing them from their unsafe state.

Newspapers seem to be keeping silent on this matter and so is the government. Seasonal storms are not a new phenomenon in Bangladesh and any structure erected in the city should be designed and planned accordingly - to withstand such storms. In many countries buildings built in earthquake prone areas are designed to survive a severe earthquake and it's about time our authorities introduced some safety guidelines for the ad agencies and their flying billboards.

Mohammed Mannan
Gulshan, Dhaka

regime collapsed, the support for the "liberators" should have increased. On the contrary the ordinary Iraqis along with the general masses in the Arab/Islamic world continue to view the US forces as oppressors rather than as liberators, with Imperialistic and a pro-Zionist agenda.

Even the British, keeping in line with its long tradition of "divide and rule", tried to incite (Liberate) the Shias to rebel from the very beginning. To the contrary the same "liberated" Shias are demanding the withdrawal of the foreign troops. This facade is very clear now; it was built upon the twin towers of non-existent WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction)

instructions incorrectly. The net result was the usual highhandedness of the immigration officers. Obviously, no Government employee in Bangladesh would ever agree that they are generally incompetent, but they still seem to believe that everybody else are their subjects, a legacy from the British Raj.

We have tarnished our image as a nation the world over already in so many ways. Could we not give everybody a break for a change?

Islam
Ontario, Canada

Bush vs Hitler

There has been a lot of debate

Amatun Noor
Dhaka

"Not insulted enough, we need more"

In response to Mr Azad Miah (April 30) regarding the relationship between the US and the State of Israel.

Israel was formed under the charter of the UN in 1948. Nothing illegal or imperial about that. The UN also mandated another country called Palestine. Mr Azad conveniently forgets that his brotherly Muslim countries Syria, Egypt and last but not the least, Jordan gobbled up and annexed those territories. Every time an Arab cries foul

Advertisement for 'DON'T GIVE UP' by an unknown author. It features a cartoon character of a man with a mustache and a hat, and a list of motivational phrases: 'When things go wrong as they sometimes will, When the road you're trudging seems all uphill, When the funds are low, and the debts are high, And you want to smile, but you have to sigh, When care is pressing you down a bit- Rest if you must, but don't you quit. Success is failure turned inside out. The silver tint of the clouds of doubt, And you never can tell how close you are, It may be near when it seems afar. So stick to the fight with your hardest hit- It's when things go wrong that you mustn't quit.'