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PHOTO: AFP

## Letters from the West: writers' motif questionable

This is in reference to Mr. S. Khan's letter published in the Daily Star on Friday (October 24, 2003). Mr. Khan wrote that he had been observing readers writing on Iraq and came to the conclusion that most of the readers were biased against the United States. Well-said Mr. Khan.

In the letter, Khan has disseminated arrogance and obstinacy without bothering to go through the letters of most of the readers. His version reminds me of a strongman of the village who, after slapping a weaker person, heralds his benevolence for not kicking the weaker.

A thief can be rewarded for having saved his starving child through theft; a rapist can be crowned because he was not violating the virginity of an orphan; and a consistent liar can be applauded just because his skill lies in concealing truth at any cost. The US is culpable of all such crimes in its diplomacy vis a vis the Muslim world.

Most of the Iraqis did not want ex-ruler

Saddam Hussein. But that doesn't mean they welcome the arrogant Americans to rule them. How does it look now that George Bush is the de facto president of Iraq?

"One man's freedom fighter is always a terrorist to another", I am not surprised by Mr. Khan's comment that terrorists were fighting against the US troops in Iraq. But we have a problem here to resolve. Why are the US troops in the firing line of the 'terrorists'? These 'terrorists', except some 'pilots', didn't go to Washington DC, New York, Miami or Los Angeles to fight the Americans.

They are fighting in Baghdad, Mosul, Tikrit, Faluja and Basra. I understand the response of people like Mr. Khan, if our motherland is attacked by another mighty country, would be collaborate with the invader. I swear on God, Allah, Jesus, Buddha and Rama, you too will turn a terrorist willing to die on the pitch of Dhaka or in the topography of Sylhet if you face an occupation.

Khan also suggested about accepting the existence of the Jewish state of Israel. I accept it. What next? Do you really believe that a man like Ariel Sharon, whose hands still soak in blood of unarmed children and women, will ever agree to go back to the 1967 borders unless the Palestinian terrorists compel him to do so? If you do believe that, you have no knowledge about the history of the Arab-Israeli conflicts.

A country that bulldozes the body of a Western peace activist (a lady) to demolish a Palestinian house does not believe in peace making. I feel letters from the West aim at making the Jewish lobby happy. May be the writers seek political office in the West or create opportunity to meet Western high-ups to show us back home how important they are.

**Ahmed Mohiuddin**  
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herself any credit by that speech. Those advising her and those who drafted the speech damaged her standing seriously.

That notwithstanding, there is also a point where she and her advisers have a reason to feel that the press is not friendly with the regime. While the AL was in power, the law and order was no better than what is now. But a murder during BNP rule gets hyped-up in the media and creates panic among ordinary people. The fact that we have been very successful recently in financial management remains obscure to the media, for obscure reasons. I for one have not seen any newspaper, not even this one, writing a commentary on the high recommendations that the IMF has given to Bangladesh on this account.

Finally, I have a different opinion about this paper's Commentary. Somehow I cannot understand whether the Editor's commentary is written out of a genuine feeling for assisting the government see its errors, or is it that this paper has an anti-establishment role to play?

When the AL was in power, The Daily Star earned the AL's wrath and was considered to be pro-BNP. Now it is being perceived by the BNP as pro-AL. May be this is the real role of a media in any democracy; to keep the government in the right track. After all, our opposition law makers are not in the parliament to influence government decisions. Media must come forward to fill the gap.

**Shahjahan Ahmed**  
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## Editor's commentary: Valuable and analytical

I have gone through your editor's valuable and analytical commentary of 25 October, 2003. I do agree with most of the observations, albeit with some exceptions.

I agree that our leaders do need to have a better understanding of how the media operates and its overall scope of operation, objective, obligation and responsibilities. The weaknesses of some in any profession must not be shown as a collective drawback, particularly by the country's highest executive.

Besides, this was hardly a platform for the PM to dwell on the media when the entire country was waiting to hear about the contributions made by the Bangladesh delegation at the OIC Conference. At a time when the entire Muslim Ummah is passing through the most critical crisis with respect to its unity and mission, our PM should have told the nation about our individual and collective roles.

Being a Freelance columnist, and not belonging to the regular cadre of the journalistic community, my experience leads me to believe that our media has contributed greatly toward the development of democracy and democratic traditions.

That said, there also seems to be a growing tendency on the part of some in the profession to indulge in "yellow" journalism. Of much greater concern is the fact that there are some newspapers that appear to be clearly advancing the cause of one particular political party while actively engaging in degrading the "image" of the other. I guess this has now become a global phenomenon in the media world, or is it?

**Shamsher Chowdhury**  
Dhaka

## When teachers go wrong

Rev. Mrs. Angela Robinson found something good about the rogue state of Israel ('rogue' in the sense that it has continued to blatantly flout the laws and norms of international relations with its air strikes on the Syrian capital as being its latest mischief). She claims that, after the holocaust in the second world war, "Within a generation, they (the Israelis) were among the finest soldiers in the world. They began sending agricultural advisers all over the world to poorer countries..."

Rev Robinson, for whatever reason, does not tell the whole story how Israel reached such a level of prosperity within such an astonishingly short period of time.

The Zionist state has not excelled in military and agriculture without direct assistance of the US. A superpower, whose interest it has always served as an agent in the Middle East (such as, millions of dollars are still coming in to Israel from the US annually in the form of 'aids'), has constantly helped Israel in all respects.

The prosperous Israel as we see it today owes a lot to the US which in fact owes a lot more to its agent state, Israel. The US with its 30th or so (please correct me if I'm wrong) veto in the UN Security Council against decisions censoring Israel had demonstrated its ugly biases once again. Not censoring the outrageous Israel attack against Syria was the latest US blunder in

the Mid East. The US is paying the price in Iraq for committing such blunders for over half a century. Rev. Robinson does not make any reference to the US-Israel relationship for the benefit of her students as she sings Israel's praises. Or, does she think that Bangladesh should also serve the interest of the US in this region of the world?

**Diruba Zaman**  
Ministry of Education

## Professing morality to nation's professors

My sincere thanks to and gratitude for the letter of Md. Anwarul Kabir, Assistant Professor of the AIUB's Department of Computer Science, published in your esteemed daily on October 23, 2003. I fully agree with all contents in that letter and ask our teachers (from primary to university level) to act upon Mr. Kabir's observations. In addition to Mr. Kabir's appeal to teachers teaching at different levels, I have some ideas of my own to improve our teachers' morality.

Universities have not been ivory towers; they have been remarkably attentive to the needs of the society that supported them. They evolved and took on new tasks as society required; particularly in the last 20 years when they expanded to accommodate mass university education by creating professional schools and research institutions devoted to the services of the nation.

Nevertheless, universities have always had core tasks and core ideals that enriched students and concerned quarters. Their central task is to teach moral education. Professors have responsibilities to teach, research and serve the society with new-found knowledge. The universities and the civil society are parties to a social contract. In each era, this social contract must be adapted and renegotiated to suit the timely needs. Critics claim that professors neglect teaching in favour of their own interests to gain more money through private research assignments (with the government/donor agencies/private companies/NGO). These researchers are overspecialised and unconnected to the needs of students and the society. While in the business of teaching, all teachers must stick to what they are paid for.

**Gopal Sengupta and Shyamali Sengupta**

Barclay Avenue, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

**ICT can perform as good as apparel**  
While in Dhaka, I have tried unsuccessfully to publish my viewpoints through your letter page. I'm a professional and my viewpoints have some implications in creating awareness and provoking thoughts.

I would like to draw upon the paradox of the ICT business growth in Bangladesh. The GoB has been optimistic about the ICT export market, which I also feel as having some prospects.

Here in the UK, at one month's hosting cost, I can get 12 months hosting service from Bangladesh. There is no need of submarine cable or whatsoever to spur sluggish growth in our ICT Business. The 11 months' cost saving will lead every individual in the UK to go for the BD hosting service. I have a website which promotes 'Made in Bangladesh' products. I'm now planning to forego the BD ISP and go for an expensive one.

However, cutting cost is not all that businessmen or individuals want the most. They want services against their money. I can say that I am receiving nothing. ISP promises that the subscribers will receive their own administration service i.e., editing and upgrading of their own website.

Practically though, I am not receiving the facility even after repeated cry. Unlike the textile and clothing industries, the importance of customer service in other industries, especially in the ICT, has not acquired urgency as yet.

I strongly believe what the textile and apparel industries have shown or proven to BD and the world can be replicated to many other sectors in Bangladesh. Clothing industry is not the only sector that can import raw materials from overseas and add value to it by exporting finished products.

In fact the auto mobile, retail (food, stationary and so on) and many other industries run on the same principle. For example, we do not have to make the whole automobile in the country. We simply can go for some part of it and then export for final assembly in developed countries.

The ICT market needs to be studied further. There are many things that Bangladesh can do to create more wealth. ICT is just one of the many.

**Abdullah Al Mahmud**  
Luton, UK



PHOTO: AFP

## Jews, Mahathir and the US

Dr. Mahathir's assertion that the "Jews rule the world by proxy" has annoyed and angered western leaders, particularly the US. His statement was blunt and it pointed out the truth. It is only natural for the Americans to protest and try to belittle Mahathir. However, if we look at the actions of the US government during the last few years in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we would see the rationale behind his comments.

No US government has so far asked the Israeli government openly to vacate the occupied Palestinian territories as was demanded by the UNSC Resolution # 242. But they wasted no time to invade Iraq, purportedly to destroy the elusive WMD which even UN inspectors could not find during their prolonged search. Nor the CIA could establish any link between Iraq and the Al-Qaeda, the latter being accused of the Sept. 11 attack on the WTC and the Pentagon in New York and Washington.

Even the UN fact-finding mission on Jenin massacre in 2002 was abandoned in the face of Israeli opposition, despite UNSC consent to conduct the investigation. The concrete boundary wall with electronic surveillance system that Israel is now erecting in the West Bank sits on Palestinian land. Israeli negotia to dismantle the fence provides another proof that the US cannot do anything to stop Israel's illegal activities. Ariel Sharon has openly said that he would go ahead with the wall even if the US opposes it!

Why should America accept Israeli contention that there should be complete cessation of violence in Palestine before any negotiation can start between the warring parties? Common sense dictates that the aggressor must vacate occupied territories unconditionally. Only then it should demand cessation of all hostile activities by the Palestinians.

In case of Iraq we see a totally different American stance. The economic sanctions imposed on Iraq immediately after the occupation of Kuwait continued for 12 years. Then came the invasion in April this year. Nobody asked Kuwait to negotiate with Iraq about its withdrawal. Incidentally, Kuwait was carved out of former Iraq after the fall of the Ottoman empire. Therefore, it was natural that Iraq would have some genuine grievances against the creation of Kuwait by former colonial powers.

Initially, the US road-map for ME peace envisaged a Palestinian state by 2005. Why such a long gestation? Bush would have none of it if he gets re-elected in 2004. If he fails, another US president will make more new promises. The US applied its veto in the UNSC to favour Israel on countless occasions. The US gets all its oil, which is vital for its economy, from ME Countries. Yet it calls Israel its best friend in the area.

US' blind support for Israel made many enemies for the world's only super power. Given that policy making in Washington depends on Jewish input and opinion, is it wrong to say the Jews rule the world by proxy?

The Jews indeed rule the world by manipulating US and other Western governments. Their domination of the world stock markets and the media is too well-known. The US pressurises other countries to float their currencies, which eventually help Jewish financiers by strengthening the Jewish controlled NY stock exchange.

All these instances show that the US is quite helpless when it comes to making Israel accountable to international law.

**Abul Mohsin**  
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## Tele-terror: Please do something about it

I believe that there are only a few people who have not been baffled by the telephone department of our country. And, while one deals with the T&T, one knows what's what. If you lodge a complaint to repair an out-of-order line, you will hear various confusing reasons from the staffs of the department; such as water in the cable, excavation of roads, etc. creating problems in lines.

Days go on but no action taken to rectify the defects. If you seek shelter of an influential person, or if you are an influential person yourself, you can get your phone okayed so quickly that you would certainly be deceived to believe that everything is just in order with the T&T. If you are not, only God knows how long it might take to get the line fixed.

In order to detect a minor problem in the line, one has to give several reminders to a line-man. These line-men come to fix the line according to their own whim. And the dial-tone will vanish again if they are not given their desired

amount of *Bakshish*.

Besides, general people are facing many other different kinds of problems. Despite having paid the fees, many people do not get their land phone connections for years. In many cases, it is seen that people are bound to pay bribe in expediting the set-up of a phone.

It has become usual for some subscribers to receive huge bill without using the phone to justify that amount. Cases of illegal connections are also a commonplace. Moreover, another big problem is cross-connection. Whenever you pick up the handset, you will hear many unknown people talking.

Sometimes they talk about something very private that you have no desire to listen to because you want to make a call or receive one. Sometimes they force you to hang the phone up by using dirty, humiliating languages.

The sufferings inflicted by our telephone department are countless. Day by day, it is getting worse.

Though mobile phones are there, everyone can't afford one. In order to save subscribers from the sufferings, the government should take stern action against the irregu-

larities of the telephone department. After the T&T makes lot of money to enforce discipline on its own staff. Fire those who have become accustomed to corrupt practices.

**Rubab Abdullah**  
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## Is Daily Star anti-establishment?

My attention was drawn to the Editor's commentary that appeared in the DS on 25<sup>th</sup> October. While the views expressed in it about the politicians may be true, I could not however help myself in not thinking that a sense of self-aggrandisement pervaded through this well composed commentary.

For instance, Mr. Anam wrote, "We proudly recall the national media's role during the past more than 13 years of democracy. We think media has served the interest of people with patriotism, commitment to democracy, fundamental rights, public interest and fair play. We have spoken out fearlessly against corruption, abuse of power, nepotism, partisanship and power-hungry leadership." Fact is: print

media in Bangladesh is so poor that the highest circulated newspaper reaches only to over 200,000 people in a country of over 130 million.

Newspapers round the world carry editorial and post-editorial to express the opinion of editorial leaders. Outside Bangladesh, few newspapers will allow the liberty to editors to have a separate column, appearing in the front page, where an editor can indulge in the expression of his opinions that are, however well intended, subjective. And, when subjective issues are expressed with selective adjectives, the twist seems obvious and those against whom it is intended are deprived of self-defence. They can not reach the same audience as the editor(s) can.

There are few newspapers in Dhaka which have credibility and acceptability. With respect to dependability, we depend more on the BBC and the VOA for news and views than on the local press, especially during any political upheaval. Let me come to the PM's reference to the press in her address. The Commentary was right in saying that she did not earn

## Confusing vitamin A with polio doses



PHOTO: STAR

If you look back on the last page of your daily dated 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, 2003 you will find a big photograph of a child receiving a capsule. The caption reads that the government launched the second round of a polio vaccine programme.

It is surprising to note that the press remains oblivious to many intricacies and subtleties involved in government actions. In reality, the government launched a new campaign to give vitamin A capsules along with de-worming tablets, thus naming it Vitamin A plus campaign. This has got nothing to do with the polio.

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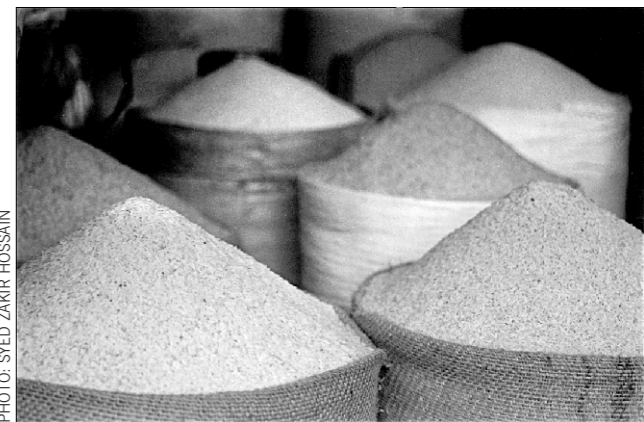


PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

## Inflation might spark upheaval

"Popular opinion has it that inflation makes everyone worse off by reducing the purchasing power of people's incomes. Accordingly, most people perceive inflation as public enemy number one. Inflation erodes our living standards and adds in many ways to life's uncertainties" (R. Lipsey, P. Steiner and D. Purvis, 1982, Economics, 7<sup>th</sup> ed, pp.752).

Inflation does not mean a higher price level; rather it is the continuous or persistent increase in the price level which is regarded as inflationary. Recently, national dailies have begun writing on price hikes of essential goods. In our country, once the price levels increase, they never go down. And now that Bangladesh is an open market economy, price hike might worsen.

The commerce minister pegged Tk. 18 per kg of onion, but failed due to the open market dynamic, as the minister himself confessed. Due to this price hike, inflation creeps in and the purchasing power of the middle, upper middle and lower classes go out of control. Their standard of living thus erodes.

However, when people's purchasing power goes down and inflation hits home, real wage falls and the low-income people are pushed more toward adopting corrupt means to subsist.

The government should adjust the inflation rate with the people's income every year, which is called 'inflation-indexed wagging.' If not, the nation will be in the throes of an upheaval sooner.

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