

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.

## Needed: urgent DCC action

Right before the eyes of people, a slum has slowly been growing in the very heart of Dhanmondi Residential Area on the divider of main Satmasjid Road (with two Chinese restaurants, Xiamin and Jing Ling on two sides of the divider - if one moves from BDR Gate towards Mohammadpur). Some people have been dwelling, sleeping, cooking and doing all the chores, including answering nature's call, on the divider and on the adjacent footpaths. Curtains have been hung up and clothes are being dried on this busy thoroughfare.

Surprisingly, nobody cares about what is going on. We, therefore, request the Dhaka City Corporation and also other concerned departments for kindly taking instant corrective steps. Otherwise, the situation in the entire area will become even more unhygienic in the days to come.

### Victim

Dhanmondi, Dhaka



## Don't blame the UN

During the demolition of Iraq by the USA-UK combined forces, bypassing the UNSC resolution, the UN, an organisation that had been working for maintaining world peace and security received harsh criticism from every nook and cranny of the world.

The UN failed to play its role at a crucial stage and therefore the world order was at stake. Aside from this criticism, no sympathetic tone for the UN has been registered so far and everybody seems to have reached the conclusion that it is the UN that has to be blamed for what

has been done to Iraq. But, have we given enough contemplation to the Iraq issue and thought how far the UN could be responsible for the aftermath in Iraq? What has really prompted us to come to this state of criticising the UN? Or have we considered the existing tug of war between the UN and the principles of the United States' Republican Party? I think not! If we did, it would not have been possible for us to come down on the UN so harshly-- I believe. Let's throw some light on the matter.

The UN is an international organisation that came into existence

after the end of the Second World War with the commitment of wiping out the shortcomings and weakness of the League of Nations. Though this organisation has expanded its branches in different levels from development of poor countries to providing education to reach out to the underprivileged children world wide, yet maintaining world peace and security has been recognised as its chief motto since the advent of the UN. Till now, the UN has not recoiled from this commitment. History gives us evidence of what the UN has given out and provided to the countries where UN intervention was needed.

When the attack on Iraq had begun, we, all peace-loving people around the world, were shocked and numbed seeing the intensity of cruelty and barbarity of the USA-UK combined forces.

At this stage of civilisation, we are not used to seeing children being killed and injured, women screaming around and men being shot mercilessly. This shock has cast a deep sympathetic impression in our minds for Iraq, but we failed to express our anger as we have nothing with us to prevent the US and the UK from executing this brutality. We felt downcast which has propelled us to throw invectives against the UN. We raised questions as to why the UN secretary general had failed to express his reaction at a crucial moment, why the UNSC could not take a strong initiative to prevent the coalition from attacking Iraq, why the UN could not be a stumbling-block in their way to demolition of Iraq, and so on.

But one thing that we have never considered is that the US, especially after the downfall of the Soviet Russia, ignores the UN and this trend is still very much on. Even when the Democrats were in power in the US, they toned down, but did not abandon the policy of ignoring the UN. They have always tried to show off how important they are in world politics and as a lone superpower, they have the authority, as they think, to dominate world politics.

The Republican Party has been critical of the UN for long. Ever since Ronald Reagan became President, their step-motherly attitude towards the UN has increased and it has never changed. Even after Reagan left, the high-ups of the party formulated a scheme to minimise the power of the UN, though due to the Democrats' surprise win in the election, their plan could not see light. But the arrogance of the party to look down upon the UN has not disappeared.

So, the party ideologies might have made some impact on the Bush-led war on Iraq. Here Bush administration's megalomaniac philosophy is more responsible for the demolition of Iraq rather than

the ineffectiveness of the UN. Moreover, The UN is limited in power in certain areas. It cannot take control of any situation as long as an agreement among the member countries is not reached. Unfortunately, many countries in the world do not want to earn the wrath of the US and they pour down their pent-up anger on the UN instead. So, it is very much injudicious for us to castigate the UN on such a scale without having given much attention to the global geo-politics and political economy.

Now, many people, including some scholars, have gone so far as to demand a ban on the UN. I find this suggestion patently ludicrous. They have forgotten the glorious history of the UN. You cannot count the score on one failure. Imagine a situation without the UN. What would have happened then? Would the USA or the UK bother about the hue and cry of the developing countries? Could any country give guarantee of world peace and security? Don't you think the moral question of whether a war is justified or not wouldn't have been raised at all?

The UN must stay intact and continue playing its role to keep the world safe and secure.

**Sulav Barua**  
Middlesex University,  
UK

## Positive remarks

For their positive remarks (Nov. 16 and 22) about Bangladeshi people, I thank both Dr. Richard Benkin and Mrs. Roxane Rosemarie respectively. Dr. Benkin especially deserves our deep appreciation, as in his pragmatic, rational, and provocative yet humane article, he contends that despite its low profile in international politics, because of her inherent dynamics, by assuming to become an interlocutor, to solve the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, Bangladesh can contribute positively. This gesture towards Bangladesh, for an American, is a rarity as much as Mrs. Rosemarie's comments about Israeli responsibility to consolidate the peace process evince her recognition of political reality.

I believe that should Bangladeshi foreign policy makers heed to the weight of Dr. Benkin's logic and with serious intent, contemplate as to how Dhaka can play its role in solving the crisis by initiating say, an informal dialogue among OIC member countries, for the benefit of the innocent people of Palestine and Israel in particular, and humanity in general, it would be a great service. And this tradition of preference for mediation, as Dr. Benkin points out, is the core value of Bangladeshi foreign policy, as evident in Dhaka's meditative roles in resolving Iran-Iraq War and to defuse regional tension, in proposing the formation of SAARC.

In this respect, as a first step, to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict, to form a consultative forum within the OIC framework, Bangladesh can initiate a dialogue with OIC member nations such as Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, who already maintain diplomatic relation with Israel, and to make the forum effective, eventually, can bring in other member countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, and others, as directly they are not part of the conflict; therefore, would not mind in getting involved in the process.

In this process, to maintain communication with Tel Aviv, OIC member countries that already maintain diplomatic relations with Israel, can work as a feedback channel; on the other, rest of the forum members can serve as envoy to the Middle Eastern nations in



## Dr. Benkin's appeal

Dr. Richard Benkin's November 16 piece in the DS asking Bangladesh to recognise Israel reminded me of the so-called 1993 Oslo Peace Accord between Israel and the Palestinians. With peace taking place between the blacks and whites in South Africa in the early 1990s, people assumed that the peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians was irreversible. What they ignored was that only Israel's Labour Party signed the Oslo Accord. The Likud Party was dead opposed to it. After a Jewish extremist assassinated the architect of Oslo, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in November 1995, and the Israeli voters elected Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu as the prime minister a few months later, Netanyahu went about dismantling Oslo. It may be recalled that in destroying the Oslo Accord, Netanyahu was acting in concert with Richard Perle and other American Jewish neo-conservatives, now

holding top positions in the Bush administration. Destruction of Oslo by the Netanyahu-Perle cabal, however, did not cost Israel anything. Israel had received the benefits of Oslo up front through universal diplomatic recognition, including from such great powers as India, China and Russia. Palestinians, on the other hand, received only more oppression from the Israelis!

By asking Bangladesh to recognise Israel without any Israeli concession towards the Palestinians, Dr. Benkin is replaying the Oslo theft process again to help Israel. He is demanding conjugal rights before marriage! I have a deal for Dr. Benkin: Persuade Ariel Sharon and Israel to withdraw to the pre-1967 borders between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza, let the Palestinians that Israel drove out of their homes from 1948 to return to their homes, and Bangladesh will be happy to recognise Israel!

**Akhtar Zaman**  
New York, USA

## Allah Hafez vs Khoda Hafez

Both Allah and Hafez are Arabic words and belong to Asma-ul-Hosna. The word Allah cannot be translated and it has no gender. Hence, Allah Hafez is absolutely correct and universally accepted. On the other hand, Khoda is a Persian word which is not universally accepted instead of Allah, not for the reason that it is a Persian word, because it has a feminine gender.

For that very reason, many

## Dr. B's analysis

I wonder why Dr. Badruddoza Chowdhury -- "the physician-turned-politician-turned 'civil society member' decided to address the audience in English? For whom his message was? Or is it that he wanted to show that, unlike other 'illiterate' politicians, he is an 'educated' man.

DR. B analysed that 'we need a large number of educated, honest, sincere, broadminded and efficient people to take up the leadership in politics and society'. But what he forgot to mention is that we also need a man with guts and courage and not a timid personality like him who vacated his post of the presidency at the behest of the BNP parliamentary party. Didn't the ex-president, whose obligation was to uphold the constitution, know that the decree of the BNP parliamentary party had no constitutional basis?

Islamic scholars including Maulana Mohiuddin Khan, the translator of Tah- fi-mul Koran, does not like to say Khoda Hafez and feel guilty. But no one dislikes Allah Hafez and feels guilty saying so. Some may be habituated to say Khoda Hafez, but no one says they are non-Muslims.

So if the government decides that either of the two should be said in the government media and functions and order for saying the absolutely correct and universally accepted one, then should we smell arat?

If the former UN official shares his shocking and cheering experience in the UN and suggests ways for the reform of the UN which is required for its existence, it would be a better contribution for us from his side than creating confusion.

**Monir Uddin Ahmed**  
Scientific Officer  
Bangladesh Atomic Energy  
Commission,  
Savar, Dhaka

## Bush and Iraq war

No matter where he goes and how many conferences he attends, Mr. Bush will remain the most unpopular president in the world. His onslaught on Iraq not only cost many Iraqi lives but also many US soldiers'. Aren't these lives enough? Aren't they priceless?

Shun your war-like attitude towards all Islamic countries. The inevitable is

going to come very soon. Every day you open the newspaper and see the news of deaths of both Iraqi and US soldiers and they are not only soldiers but also a father, a brother or a husband or a son for whom the family is waiting. For this warmonger we are losing lives of so many people.

Who is he to decide Iraq's fate? The forthcoming presidential election will judge all his deeds and will either eject him or re-elect him. His destiny is transparent. This is the man who changed the whole world map into a war map.

I believe the world is waiting for the presidential election of the US. Mr. Blair will also face the music no matter what he does or says now.

To them I would like to say, "You haven't seen anything yet." But you can still make amends. Stop roaming on Iraqi soil and spare the lives of US soldiers and Iraqi people.

**Badal Hasib**  
Asad Avenue,  
Mohammadpur,  
Dhaka

## Iraq and other issues

As Gilgamesh (wise king of Uruk) ventured in the forest with his good friend Enkidu, thrice he dreamt. The first and the second, although terrifying to begin with, ended in comfort. But the third was altogether frightening:

"My friend, I saw a third dream and this was altogether frightful. The heavens roared and the earth roared again, daylight failed and darkness fell, lightnings flashed, fires blazed out, the clouds lowered, they rained down death. Then brightness departed, the fire went out, and all was turned to ashes fallen about us." (Gilgamesh to Enkidu)

What a fateful dream! A dream, millenniums later, is to befall on his sullen descendants!!

Saddam Hussein of Iraq is not an unknown man. A misanthrope as he is, he has maimed and killed and gassed Iraq's innocent. Abetted by none other than his today's nemesis, he waged a regional war, later only to be rebuffed as he stepped on the sore toes of his benefactor. This is a slithering story of slippery oil, and oil only. Neither Mr. Hussein nor his enemies harbour any compunction for the people, or for the matter of fact, for "peace". Snooty warmongers, with a rather haughty mood for the nonce, can never care less for Arabs (precisely from the ancient land of Mesopotamia).

With the absence of WMD-in-sight, they are crying, with certain justification, for a new justification in unearthing of the mass graves! I view the whole thing as an "exercise-in-futility": -- a not so futile exercise for humanity after all. Iraq, in fact, is liberated from the heavy yoke of a totalitarian regime. Liberated, yet occupied! From a cosy couch in my family room, the amazing flurry of dancing JDAMs was entertaining. But my heart was with the fallen hearts at the receiving end. Aerial softening of the enemy line, to my heart was nothing but a firing line to kill those frightened "toys" of Saddam. I was sad. Like a pelted windshield of a speeding vehicle, my heart was broken into myriad smithereens. But at the same instance I was hopeful to the brim that at the end some sort of democratic phoenix shall rise from the ashes, that the ruins shall morph into a reign of the wise: - may be another modern day Gilgamesh!

Now that the war is over, that the kibosh-laden theories of WMD are coming home to roost, and that the newfound voice of the millions of Iraqis are in yodel; - it is not the time to ponder over the bygone. Let the sloganeering and/or electioneering politicians do their petty fight. "Wide is the range of words on one side or the other (Homer)". For the thoughtful, it is time to look beyond and to make a little sense of what lurks in yonder!

Being confronted with an overwhelming western superiority, both technological and intellectual, the Arabs have the dreamy luxury of falling back to a comfortable cocoon of "Historical Grandiosity". They also dream of a world wide web of "Umma Solidarity" shattered repeatedly by wars and conflicts. Not only Iraq but also the entire Arab world is stranded precariously on the steepest of the precipices. Autocracy in some cases runs amok. Minus democracy (and even the semblance of benevolent autocracy), the whole World-of-the-Arabs is immersed in a terrible morass. Things are in the bottom and can go no further down. To be precise, not only the Arab World, but also the Whole Muslim World is in the same predicament. A rapid melt down of Saddam Hussein's mighty (?) regime came as another rude awakening for the dreamy!

I have an enormous faith in the ability of any people, especially those who once achieved a dizzying height of success, to shape their own destiny. If they keep on wearing the uneasy stiletto heels, they will lag behind. Eventually, however, they surely shall shed their lagging attributes if the desire to climb up is strong enough. A smidgen of benevolent external hand may smoothen the rock, although at the end; it is the particular people who have to do the climbing.

Legitimate misgivings are there as to the intentions of the only superpower. Unlike the Britons, the Spaniards and the French of imperial yesteryears, America, hegemonic though, is not a declared imperial power.

History is not there to domicile in. History is more like a lighthouse to warn a weary mariner of the dangers that litters the water. Only an astute Odysseus shall reach his cherished Ithaca.

**Mohammad Zaman**  
USA

