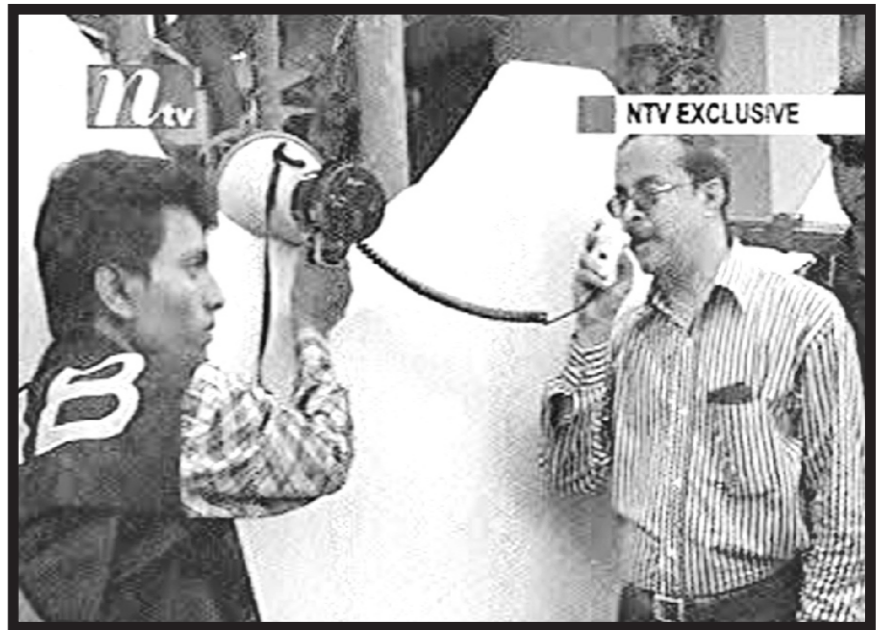


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Capture of JMB supremo

The capture of Shaikh Abdur Rahman, the supreme leader of JMB, the banned militant group, have made us elated—very good news indeed. We congratulate Rab, police and BDR who took part in the operation. Our special thanks to Rab, who have done a wonderful job. We expect that they will always make us happy with their performance.

We urge the government to keep it up; the relentless effort must go on so that Bangla Bhai and other terrorists will not be

able to evade arrest. Abdur Rahman and his accomplices must be guarded in utmost security so that they won't be able to escape or be able to establish connection with members of their group. We hope that within a short time every member of the militant group will be arrested and people will live in peace.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong ***

Militant kingpin Abdur Rahman surrendered to Rab when they

cordoned his den in Sylhet. He talked with the Rab officials from a window and wanted to talk to journalists before going for surrender. He has been captured but confusion arises whether it is a staged drama or not. This suspicion has enough justification.

The country is facing a serious fertiliser crisis, electricity shortage, people are perplexed due to scarcity of water; even people came out with broom and pitcher to demonstrate. People in northern districts are

paying more money for purchasing diesel and are waiting in long queues for getting a limited quantity of fuel, and now comes the arrest of a religious extremist. When the whole nation is annoyed with price spiral of essentials, this drama has been staged.

At the same time the media is highlighting the news paying no heed to the national crisis. On the other hand, the government is propagating its success story without giving solution to all major problems. If the media

and the govt. concentrate on this success, who will address our major problems?

So this could be a planned thing aimed at diverting the attention of the people from the burning issues.

Well, Abdur Rahman is captured and now we, the people of Bangladesh, want to know what this man has got to say about the crimes committed in the name of religion.

Abdur Rahman accused Rab of violating human rights. We will also support this if he is

not allowed to face the media.

Taslim Hasan Sabu
University of Dhaka ***

Better late than never! On that very day all the Bangladeshis living at home and abroad were in front of their TV sets, watching exclusives on the capture of JMB leader.

No foreign channels were being watched, Rtv, ntv, channel-one reporters and crew did a good job in covering the whole episode. And special thanks go to Rab and last but not the least

the Sylheti people. The JMB leader might not have been arrested without the help of Rab. Rab members took a great risk as they tried to enter the house where the JMB leader was hiding.

Rab has done so many good things, yet some people do not want Rab to exist. Why?

Another point is that just after Abdur Rahman had been captured, AL leaders started saying it was a drama made by the government to get vote in the coming election. While

everyone is looking forward to an end of religious extremism, and the government is also addressing the issue, I think this kind of statement is uncalled for. The enthusiasm of the security forces will be greatly dampened.

People of Bangladesh are now happy, but we want another culprit, Bangla Bhai, to be brought to justice as soon as possible.

Cantara Wali Ruhi
DU



Iraq's unity

Three years, two thousand US and countless (because America don't count them) Iraqi lives, and a change in reason from WMD to founding democracy later, the prospect Iraqis get is that of a civil war. The bombing of Imam Ali al-Hadi shrine in Samarra has set up Iraqis against Iraqis along sectarian line. More than 130 people have died in the ensuing revenge attacks. Questions of whether America can establish democracy or even restore electricity supply to pre-war level are eclipsed to a bigger question of Iraq's integrity.

The bombing was not an all-in-a-day's-work even by occupied Iraq's standard. It destroyed a thousand-year-old shrine much revered by Shiites and cracked the relative restraint Shiites were practising to the provocation from a handful of Sunni zealots. Even the paramount Shiite leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who had urged for patience and calm after every bombing, said if the government cannot protect them they will do it themselves. Some Shiites apparently thought rioting against Sunnis is the way of doing that.

It is not. The shrine can be rebuilt, but the wounds that sectarian violence inflicts are much more difficult to mend. They remain for generations. And sectarian disunity is exactly what the bombers had in mind when they walked into the mosque. It is now up to Shiites as well as Sunni community whether they will hand over the terrorists such an easy success. History has yoked them with a daunting task of ending something they didn't start. America is looking for an exit from the adventure that has become too real, but no such exit for Iraqis. And killing fellow Iraqis is not the way to live.

We can only hope that Iraqis will refrain from fratricide and show that their spirit of Islam, Shiite or Sunni, is stronger than any shrine, made of gold or else.

Ashish Ahsan
Uttara, Dhaka ***

I've been really depressed by the sectarian violence in Iraq. Shia and Sunnis have turned against each other after a Shia shrine was partially destroyed by a powerful explosive. Divide and Conquer policy at its best.

So, do I oppose the occupation of Iraq? Yes, absolutely. Were I not to oppose it I would be condoning an illegal act of aggression. To condone it would be to forgive the crime of it and to weaken the focus on the

falsehoods used to justify it. To do so would only help strengthen the position of those that support the occupation of Iraq and the democratic pacifism being used to co-opt it.

With Iraq perched at the very precipice of an ethnic and sectarian holocaust, the utter failure of the Bush administration's policy is revealed with starkest clarity. Iraq may or may not fall into the abyss in the next few days and weeks, but what is no longer in doubt is who is to blame: If Iraq is engulfed in civil war then Americans, Iraqis and the international community must hold President Bush and Vice President Cheney responsible for the destruction of Iraq.

This isn't about George Bush, it's about the ability of the powerful to rewrite the rules as they see fit while public blindly support, and often defend, the practice.

Nations like the US help set a global human rights standard. How are those who would abuse the rights of people to view what the United States has done over the last four years? Will they find it easier to commit human rights abuses using the US as an example of what is and isn't acceptable? And what of those governments that routinely engage in abuses? Have the actions of the US and the UK made it easier for those governments to get away with greater levels of abuse? Without question.

The Bush administration, Saddam Hussein, Halliburton, Zarqawi—they're all detractors from what should be the main focus. Yet again, innocent people have paid the price for the arrogance of a few. Those who deserve justice are those that now lay dead in the tens of thousands and those that must live the rest of their lives traumatized by this war, the loss of loved ones, and the destitution of their country. I comment on the actions of the American and British governments because they must shoulder the responsibility for the murder of innocent people. The invasion and occupation of Iraq can be sold as liberation, as the defeat of tyranny, but those are merely buzzwords and not at all realistic. The truth of the matter is that Iraq is not liberated, nor is it free from tyranny. It is in the throes of chaos, severe economic depression, repression, and fear. After two years of supposed liberation, how can one even evoke that word in the same sentence as Iraq?

Ahmed F Salim, On e-mail

Muslims Vs Muslims

The article by Shamsher Chowdhury has correctly pointed out what I have long believed strongly.

Its really time we looked at ourselves instead of this tendency to blame the west for all our problems. I think we the Muslim world suffer from this complexity that anything that is wrong is because of a conspiracy of the west or they are hell bent on 'destroying' us. Of course, there is some truth in that, but WHAT ARE WE, that we cannot stand for ourselves, be honest, practise social justice and not be 'manipulated' by the west.

Aren't we supposed to be the 'best' of people? Unfortunately, looking around, I strongly doubt it.

Mr. Shamsher Chowdhury also brings up the good point that we are so occupied with our Islamic rituals that we fail to practise the real essence of the religion. I think it's a problem in the way we learn the religion. We recite the Holy Quran and practise salat in Arabic, but how many of us understand it. The holy book is meant to be the guide, unfortunately we stress only on reciting it melodiously rather than really understanding it.

As for the Arab countries, I strongly agree there are more things that are wrong there than right.

It's time, we looked within. Telling the rest of the world that Islam is a religion of peace will not do if we don't practise it. I am a Muslim, I myself don't believe that we are serving the cause of peace - how will the west?

Ehtesham Haque
California, US

ies/towns weekly to support the autistic children and their parents and gradually they can develop a professional team at regional level.

The government and the leading institutes may take the initiative and make plans to develop this kind of support. We think that through this process many autistic children and their families who are living outside Dhaka will be benefited. We trust that our appeal for help will be received with empathy.

Mahmuda Khatoun and S. M. Masudul Islam
Jessore

Asian Highway: no bliss

The government of Bangladesh also must be congratulated for refusing to buckle under the pressure to comply with the interested groups and countries to accept the Asian Highway to enter and exit from India. Any highway that goes only to India will not benefit Bangladesh. In the long run it will create problems which Bangladesh will not be able to handle - pollution, traffic jam, disease, crime, sabotage, and drug, you name it. On the other hand, absence of such highway will fit Bangladesh just fine - probably will be better for Bangladesh, after all, only a small number of our trucks will be using this highway compared to all other countries of the world. Some are complaining that our refusal to accept the highway will make our friends unhappy, I am sorry it breaks my heart, but countries work in their own interest. Of course they will be unhappy. No sovereign country lives to make other countries happy at its own cost. It has to be for mutual benefits. I have absolutely no doubt that no matter how much they grumble, eventually they will have to accept Bangladesh's proposal to route the highway through Myanmar - it may take a decade, but they have no other viable alternative. As for transit for India, I would support rail link from Agartala to Kolkata on commercial basis. That will satisfy India's need for transit and Bangladesh railway can make some money.

I must say the political aspect of it should not be ignored. It is essential that Bangladesh strengthens its relations with its neighbours. We must also express our good will for the people of India at the grassroots level, particularly our neighbours of Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, West Bengal and Assam. We have taken lots of flak for our support for Myanmar government; there must be some way to remind them of it. Our relationship with the people of Myanmar should also improve.

Difficult time is the time when leadership and sagacity is needed. As a free nation, we must think before we take far-reaching decisions, which will affect us for generations.

M. Talukdar
New York, US

How many MORE lives ?

We have seen over the years catastrophe after catastrophe inflicting heavy losses on human lives either due to faulty construction or non-compliance with required building codes. I don't know how many more lives it would take to strike our hearts to bring the culprits to justice? Isn't it already enough? Or is this only because the people, who have died, were mostly poor and were not powerful enough to move and shake the conscience of our corrupt politicians? Or are the culprits responsible for these catastrophes part of our so-called elite class who enjoy a degree of indemnity due to their money and political affiliation? Perhaps all these are true and also true is the fate of justice that has been thrown into gutters every time such an incident happened. But I want to question one thing, is this a

sign of a healthy society? Probably not. Why it is so lopsided and favours the powerful and disregard the powerless so much? The recent incidents of garment factory-fire in Chittagong and collapse of "Phoenix" building in Dhaka are nothing but continuing saga of blood and sweat of our working class. But this is not a saga that we can feel proud of (as a nation), rather we should be ashamed of it.

Rayan Zafar
California, USA ***

I listened to the remarks of the works minister about the bill under consideration to tighten the loopholes to catch the violators. The problem is not with the laws or its tightening to close the loopholes. It is simply the incompetence of the ministry itself.

Why it has to wake up after a disaster?

Rezaul Karim

On e-mail ***

In a tragic fire accident at KTS garments and Textile Mills near Kalurghat over 54 garments labourers (according to official estimate) lost their lives and hundreds sustained serious injuries. Many more are missing. It is reported that the factory has practically no fire protection equipment and other facilities. Of course, in order to keep costs down, there is probably no need for minimum safety arrangements. After all, garment factory owners are creating jobs.

The fact that workers lose their lives owing to factory owners' negligence does not matter. Are these owners brought to justice for negligent homicide? The answer is no.

Michael Smith, US



PHOTO: AFP