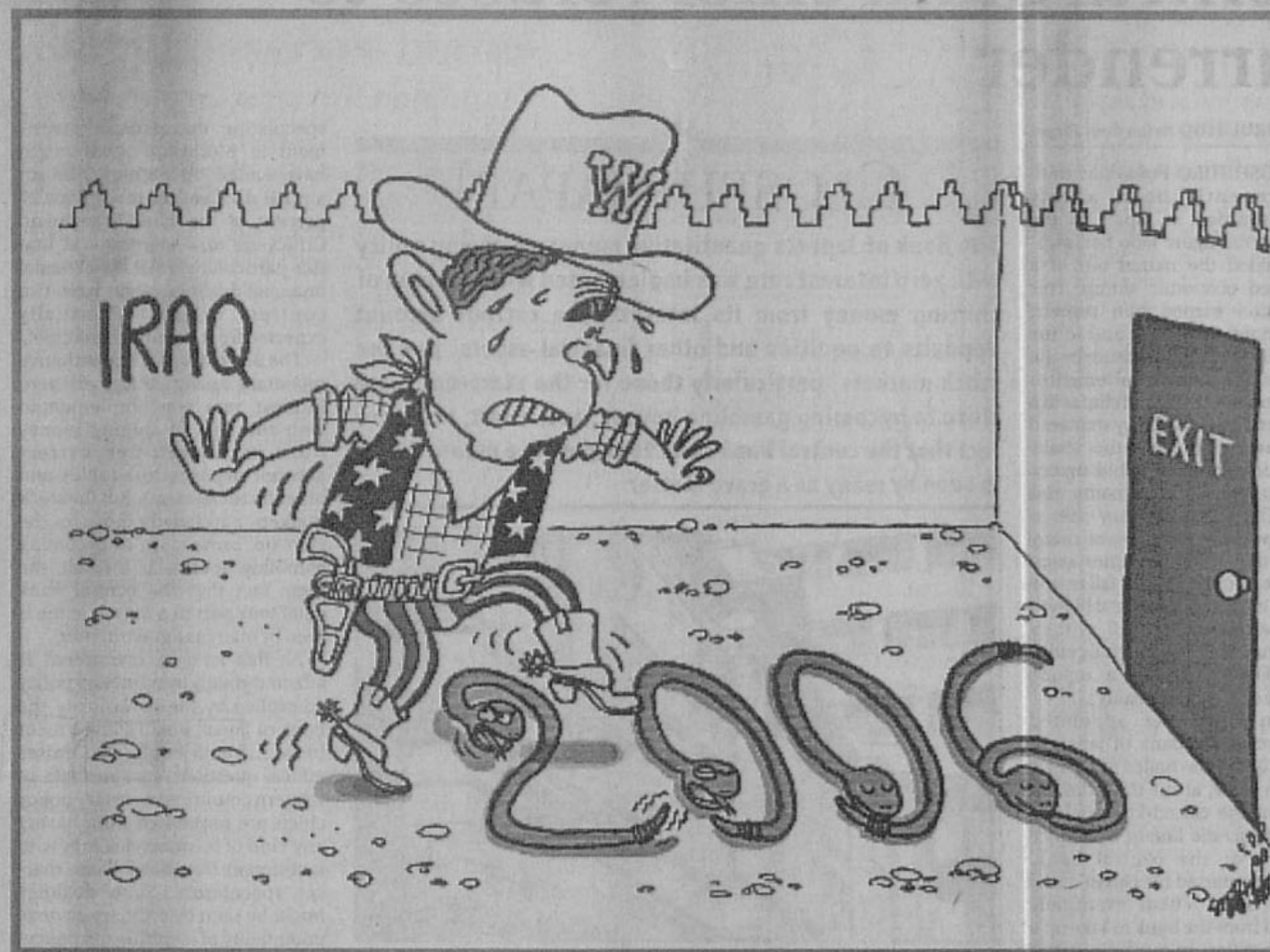


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



## Bush visits Iraq

George W Bush recently visited the worn-torn Iraq. He might have wanted to see the bleeding condition of the land and its suffering people firsthand. Or that he was there to instill some faith in the fading morale of the US soldiers in occupied Iraq.

Mr. Bush what good have you brought to the people of Iraq and what will follow next?

Rafiqul Islam Rime  
Agrabad, Chittagong

## Challenge for RMG sector

The recent unrest and disorderly conduct of the labour force of the garment industries must be a worrying factor for Bangladesh. The outburst is attributed to various factors identified by many well-known people of wisdom. These areas follows:

- Outside conspiracy to destroy Bangladesh export market.
- Opposition political parties trying to destabilise the government.
- Fundamentalist parties might be involved since a large number of workers are females, something the parties do not approve of.
- The ruling party wants to divert public attention.
- An outburst of the labour unrest due to their unattended grievances over the last two decades.

Basically, it is an issue of long deprivation of the poor work force. The salary and benefits are so low that these workers are finding life very miserable, particularly in the context of unusual inflation and unaffordable prices of essentials. They survive on the strength of having several people from the same family employed in one garment factory. They share one dingy room and foods cooked for all at a time. They barely have access to medical facilities and their children are deprived of going to school, while the owners can send their children to American schools/universities and have medical treatment for their family members in Western Europe or America. Going to Bangkok or Singapore for minor treatment is like a factory worker trying to reach a village doctor in Ashulia. In less than 20 years, some of the industrialists graduated

from public transport to Mercedes Benz, jumped residence from extreme south of Dhaka city to the north, and built posh luxury houses in Gulshan worth crores.

Where did the money come from? Bank loans need not be repaid, then why one should hesitate to use his connection and borrow money from Uncle Sam's bank, enjoy life, and take a vacation with his family or friends in French Riviera. One of the worst deprived work forces in the poorest and most corrupt country in the world can perhaps express their frustration and anger through violence.

It was amusing to see how proudly the TV channels telecast the disorderly conduct and screaming of a foreign investor. It is a disgrace to the nation. The country is sitting on a volcano; it will erupt and create more serious social disorder unless we do something, which will seem to be just and reasonably fair. The government should look into the matter a little more carefully to avoid a catastrophe. It is no one's benefit to blame adversaries. Find out the real causes of this unrest and discontent and address it professionally. Do not expect the owners to come up with a just and fair solution to this issue. Their incompetent relatives engaged in poor management mostly surround them.

Timely action will save the industry and the country's growing potential markets. Address the salary and benefits issue a little more humanely. Amend the ancient and obsolete "The Factories Act of 1965". Make the Inspector of Factories implement the act.

M. Chowdhury  
New York, USA

### For a better life...

From the very beginning, I have been watching the pathetic condition of our compatriots and our country, my dearest Bangladesh. Now, it is more than 35 years old. It is not a short time to make progress. We are a laborious and hard working nation. The men who are working abroad are proving this through their hard work.

However, the people of Bangladesh are living from hand to mouth. Some people have money but they are very few in number. They are not the main feature of the country. We are eager to change this situation by any means. However, we failed due to lack of good policies and lack of an honest leadership. In our country, most of the people use politics as a means for earning money, not to serve the nation. They make money by adopting any kind of unfair means. So, we see very few honest union council chairmen, members, or MPs or ministers. In a developed country, people as well as their leaders are honest and they are

always ready to die for the country. This is why they are developed.

In 1971, we achieved freedom from the cruel Pakistani rule. After that war, we had to work for the progress of the country. However, due to lack of proper planning we failed to make the expected progress.

So, the war for freedom has ended but the war for the economic progress of the country is on.

Mohammad Sazzad Hossain  
Dohar, Dhaka

### Gone are the values

Three seventh graders robbed and tried to kill three of their long time buddies. Sharp knife was used to cut throats, their hands were swift and thinking clear. What is unclear to me is where did they learn the craft that induced them into this kind of cruelty at this age.

Is it because how they are educated in the school, is it how they are raised by their parents, is it because the society where they live - I can't figure out. But it appears to me that it did not alarm the bell,

except the mothers of the victims.

Raising children is a very difficult job, especially when the human value and integrity matters. Society is not always on your side.

Inducing polity into the society is a big job and can be done only when everyone has basic awareness. And that should come from education. Governance can impose the norms; society should also eagerly exercise the fundamentals of the expectations.

I guess, we are failing at every step.

Our teenagers finding no exemplary guidance, no leading character to emulate, are rather twisted within a culture of despair only. Blaming others is a fashion but not the remedy.

M.M Haque  
Jeddah, K.S.A

### Democracy in Bangladesh

Perhaps President Abraham Lincoln gave the most lucid definition of democracy-- 'Government of the people, by the people and for the people'. But this seems to be totally out of tune in the context of Bangladesh. Democracy, as it is functioning in Bangladesh, may aptly be described as 'Government of the corrupt, by the corrupt and for the corrupt'. Election victory here literally means an unfettered right to plunder public wealth. Irrespective of party affiliation, politicians in Bangladesh are shameless characters who do not have the slightest hesitation to cause incalculable damage to the country and the people to advance their own cause.

People can't also count on the third force for bailing them out, for very obvious reasons. So only God can save us from the clutches of these self-seekers.

Momtaz Jahan  
Fulbari, Sylhet

### Heritage Park

Heritage Park at Ashulia enchants me highly. I am a person not very familiar with our past. In fact, I have very little knowledge of our heritage.

The Heritage Park has a lot many things worth mentioning. I was astonished that they could build exact replicas of all these places. I have seen some places for the first time and their look made me curious to know about our history and historical places.

The authorities have done an outstanding job. However, the government should have some policy like this to express our glorious past in brief. As a private organisation established such a wonderful park, they deserve great appreciation.

The place named "Chironton

Bangla" really charmed me.

Md. Mahubur Rahman Khan  
BUET, Dhaka

### Recruitment of nurses

I am highly pleased to notice the recruitment procedure of nurses as reported in your June 18 issue. Though very much delayed, it is an essential measure to increase the number of nurses in our health sector. From my long bitter experience, I would like to pursue the responsible authority or authorities to provide them better nursing education. They should be turned into a highly humane, responsible, knowledgeable Human Resource.

And if the budget can afford, they should visit neighbouring countries to learn more about nursing. I would recommend the Christian Medical College Hospital, a non-profit globally recognised Hospital in Tamil Nadu, Vellore, India!

Dr. Lailun Nahar  
Dhaka

### Combating corruption and terror

Bangladesh has made noticeable progress in its economy in recent years, with an average six percent growth of GDP per year. However, by many estimates, the annual growth of GDP could have been nine percent or more, had there been no loss of resources due to bribery, corruption and misuse of funds. This enormous waste of three percent of GDP annually is a great tragedy for a nation that is dependent on foreign aid and loan for its survival, and therefore unacceptable by any standards. Even more alarming is the fact that people of Bangladesh nowadays view corruption and bribe as a norm rather than an exception, and accept it as an inevitable part of life without any resistance. What a plight!

Concerned citizens continue to urge the government and politicians to rein in terror and corruption, but all in vain. Before elections, political parties make empty promises to eliminate corruption and terror if they are voted to office, but ironically both major parties of Bangladesh have risen to power several times already, and they doubled these problems each time under their rule. Each party just blames the other party for the situation, but both sides are obviously engrossed in the game of power grab, while the innocent people are caught in the middle, without any recourse. It now appears that our intelligentsia has also surrendered to the evils of corruption that is eating into the vitals of our society and destroying the demo-

cratic ideals. So, is there a solution to this problem?

When corruption permeates through every level of society through its officials and politicians, the task of confronting it is undoubtedly very, very daunting, especially when the rich and the powerful are at the helms of corruption and evils. However, when lawlessness reigns, and vices in a society become so rampant that people are forced to accept the wrong, then it becomes absolutely necessary for the suffering masses to take definitive action to establish justice. But who is to bell the cat?

It takes a few good men and women to start a mass movement to bring about changes and reforms. Our very able intellectuals and conscious citizens can act as catalysts to form an organisation of volunteers in Dhaka as a first step to initiate the process and wake up the silent majority who are victims of corruption, bribery and terror. This organisation can then expand its activity to the whole country by forming branch organisations at district and union levels with honest and determined workers. With help from all quarters, the movement will gradually gain popularity and steam, and eventually achieve success, if planned and manned properly. A journey, no matter how great, begins with a single step, and it is important to take that step.

People from all walks of life - intelligentsia, journalists, lawyers, educators, students, NGOs, diplomats in Dhaka, and Bangladeshis living abroad - all have a solemn responsibility in combating corruption, just like the international efforts to tame terrorism. Many have spoken and written a lot about the ever-engulfing corruption and lawlessness in our society, but that is not enough. NOW is the time for action. Words unmatched by actions are fruitless. All honest and patriotic citizens of Bangladesh have to ask themselves, "If not us, then who, and if not now, then when?"

Dr. Matiur Rahman  
Austin, Texas, USA

### Opposition options

Although I am not a supporter of the indiscriminate hartal culture, I believe it is the only political option that the opposition can resort to when all other means of discussion with the government are shut down.

If the government had taken the necessary steps to start the dialogue with the opposition on the electoral reform, there would have been no logic behind hartals. However, this is not the case, as the government is adamant to keep Jamaat members in its dialogue delegation.

Faiyaz Al Zamal  
One-e-mail

### State of the parliament

What is going on in the parliament? Our MPs are using indecent language; nobody has any respect for other's views and nobody even listen to the speaker. I don't think anybody wants this kind of a parliament. On the contrary, we want a parliament where everybody speaks sensibly and politely. We want the govt. to take opposition's views into consideration. We want the opposition to form a shadow ministry and make their points logically. Also, we want everybody to follow the regulations and listen to the speaker.

Most importantly, we want our MPs to talk about the problems of the general people. I wonder when our MPs will come to their senses.

Sagar Ahmed  
Dhaka University

### Include translation

The Bangladesh government has taken many steps for the development of education. All these are praiseworthy. In order to learn English, the fullest emphasis has

been given on Grammar in English second paper, because our students are weak in English. In the light of many years' experience in teaching, I would like to say that learning translation is the most important factor of gaining knowledge in English which only exists in primary schools. Since there is no question of translation in the English second paper from class VII onward, the students do not learn how to translate.

My earnest request to the education authorities is: please include translation in English second paper from class VI to X.

Nur Nabi Bhuiya  
Headmaster (Retd)  
Ramgonj MU Govt High School,  
Laksmipur

### UN role

I believe the single most important thing the UN Security Council can do right now is to stop Mr. Bush from spreading his version of democracy in the Middle East. The Iraq imbroglio has just started getting knottier and he has another grandiose plan to change the

regime in Iran. The Iranians have never posed any threat to the greater stability and security of the world like the innocent Iraqis, who are decimated only for the utopian recklessness of the neo-conservatives in the American administration.

It is the American hegemony and its vast stock of nuclear arsenals which needs to be addressed vigorously in the Security Council to avert further nuclear escalation as it broke the faith of humanity with the tragic and cowardly bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 60 years ago.

Arifur Rahman  
Banani, Dhaka

### Sheikh Hasina

The Leader of the Opposition should not do what the petty leaders are doing. She should think about the new generation who are being included in the voter list.

We need a fresh beginning as a nation, after all that we have been through in the last three decades.

M.A. Rahim  
Maishamura, Chittagong



### rigged?

A new investigative report "Was the 2004 election stolen?" by Robert F. Kennedy Jr., in the latest issue of Rolling Stone magazine, raises serious questions about the validity of the 2004 U.S. presidential election. Considering what had happened in the earlier 2000 presidential race in Florida, the report deserves to be taken seriously.

In this context, it may be pointed out that Republican Senator Richard G. Lugar, who went to Ukraine as an election observer, found discrepancies between exit polls and final results and called for an investigation. Senator Lugar may be reminded that during the 2004 U.S. presidential election, the same happened in Ohio and Florida.

Why did the exit polls show Kerry winning the election, but the results proclaim that Bush had won? The statement by the New York Times on Nov. 5 that there was no widespread voting fraud was more like an afterthought, which assumed that the election results were correct and therefore, exit polls must be wrong.

But this happened in Florida and Ohio, states that used unverifiable paperless electronic voting machines. Is it a mere coincidence that Walden O'Dell, CEO of Diebold, the maker of these voting machines, is also a prominent Republican fundraiser?

It is very scary to think that George W. Bush & Co created or suppressed millions of American votes. But after what had happened in the 2000 Florida race -- in which thousands of African-American voters were disenfranchised by partisan Republican electoral officials -- vote rigging in 2004 election cannot be ruled out.

Although a Canadian citizen, I supported Mr. Bush for the 2000 race, thinking he would be a change from the scandal-ridden Clinton administration (I have a letter of thanks from presidential candidate Bush to prove it). But after what happened in 2000 and 2004 presidential races, I am deeply disappointed. It is time for a thorough investigation.

Mahmood Elahi  
Iris Street, Ottawa, Canada

This is a response to a letter written by Mr. Oniel Osman on this subject. He said that the Muslim countries do not recognise Israel, since it oppresses the Palestinians, but maintain diplomatic ties with the US. The fact is that the Muslim countries do not recognise Israel since it is an illegal state that was established in the Arab heartland in 1948 by forcibly pushing out 2 million Palestinians from their homeland. The US, on the other hand, is a legal state that gained independence from British rule and the Muslim countries had diplomatic ties with the US long before Israel was created. In 1967, Israel extended its territory by capturing Gaza, West Bank and East Jerusalem and has

## Recognising Israel



since built illegal settlements there. It continues to repress the freedom-loving Palestinians with strong support from the US. I do not know whether the following fact is true or not, but it is believed that it is actually Israel that is persuading America to fight a proxy war on its behalf in order to strengthen its position in the Middle East. And as far as recognising Israel is concerned, isn't it better to stand firm against one oppressor than maintaining diplomatic ties with both oppressors?

Israel is an illegal and terrorist country that doesn't deserve recognition from any sane country, let alone the Muslim countries.

Sameer Ahmad Khan Mojlish  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka