

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.

Iraq crisis: Seek peaceful solution



The readers of The Daily Star had the opportunity to read two Iraq related letters on December 14. The first one by Mr. Mahmood Elahi mentions Saddam Hussein as the only tyrant in the world and that Saddam's compliance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1441 will ensure his survival.

We have observed in the past week that complying with the UN Security Council Resolution 1441, Iraq handed over its arms documents to the UN on 7 December. The very tough UNSC Resolution requiring the declaration be filed by 8 December also called on Iraq to declare any stocks or programmes in chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

But US President Bush always rejects such Iraqi denials. On 10 December, his Defence Secretary Rumsfeld said the US knows Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction.

The world welcomed Iraq's release of its arms declaration in time. Iraq accepted the UN weapons inspectors and has been fully cooperating with them since three weeks after they started swooping on Iraqi sites from 27 November under UNSC Resolution 1441. The inspection teams have not reported anything untoward from their site checks.

Saidur Rahman, Dhanmandi, Dhaka

This is in reference to the letter "Who will save the Iraqi people?" Having read the letters by Mr. Elahi and the subsequent replies from the readers regarding the Iraqi crisis, it seems that Mr. Elahi is so typical of brainwashed Americans who only believe their values/views/actions are correct.

If we look at the reasons why the US along with other nations are giving for attacking Iraq, I could use the very same reasons to justify an attack on US by Bangladesh. The actions of Iraq is threatening the future security of US and its interests.

As a Muslim I am not permitted to use reason to justify my actions. I have to use Sharia. But the likes of Mr. Elahi will not defend himself using Sharia because he will say he has a different system of rules. I am still allowing Mr. Elahi to defend himself on his own terms - ration.

I await a rational reply from Mr. Elahi, not just his usual regurgitation. Abu Nasher, UK

Database of Liberation War martyrs

It is very unfortunate that we have passed more than thirty years in independent Bangladesh, but have taken no initiative to collect the names and details of our great martyrs of the Liberation War.

I request the Minister of Liberation War Affairs to start a project to collect the detail of our Liberation War martyrs and publish it in media including the Internet.

Dalia Satter Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Censored

The other day my hawk delivered my weekly 'The Economist' for the week November 30th - December 6th 2002. On opening I found one page (pages 42/43) cleanly torn off.

I was surprised. I know that the Saudi Govt. does this type of impromptu censorship at airports and other parts of entry.

AZM Abdul Ali Uttara, Dhaka

Save Dhanmondi

I have read with interest the news that appeared in your daily on December 20, about violation of Rajuk rules in Dhanmandi Residential Area regarding height limit in construction of building there.

only gone beyond the six-storey limit; it has virtually turned the lives of people living there like me into hell. In addition, the Medical College, in total disregard to the health of the people living on Road No 14 "A", has been disposing hospital wastes in the open garbage on the road with total impunity.

I am writing this letter with the hope that the Chairman of Rajuk who said that the alleged violation of building rules by the Adel Family will be looked into and if there has been such a violation, it would be corrected, would also look into the antecedents of the Bangladesh Medical College that stands 8 storey high already.

In Bangladesh, we blame the poor people for not being law abiding. Unfortunately, when massive violations are done by those who are supposed to implement the laws and the rules, nothing is ever done.

Shahjahan Ahmed Dhanmandi, Dhaka

River linking!

India is contemplating to link the rivers of the north with those of south at a cost of Rs. 5,60,000 crore. The report appeared in the Times of India of Sunday, 22nd December.

To say the least it is ominous for Bangladesh. Both Jamuna/Ganges and the Brahmaputra will have to contribute huge amount of water to keep the rivers of southern India wet. In the process Bangladesh will become totally dry.

Plight of Biman passengers

A news item published in a local daily on 10.12.2002 came to my notice. It was reported that the Biman authorities took exception to a delayed flight and took action

against the officials responsible for the delay. It prompted me to write this letter.

On 2nd December, 2002, I along with the members of my family were going to Bangkok by Biman flight No.BG-084. The flight was scheduled to leave Dhaka at 12:45 p.m.

However, after much exchange of heated words, passengers were asked to go to Balaka Restaurant at the Airport and were served lunch over there. Finally at about 4:00 p.m., we were informed that the pilots are on a wildcat strike - they have placed a charter of demands and were negotiating with the Biman authorities at the Airport.

My question to the Biman authorities is: can't the passengers expect the minimum courtesy of being explained the reasons for the delay and the minimum apology for this? What did the members of the crew achieve by keeping the innocent passengers hostage so long?

No wonder people prefer to travel by Thai or Singapore Airlines. Hasani Iqbal Dhaka

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Wherever civil society faces the danger of being imperilled, it is everybody's concern whether it is Dhaka, Ahmedabad or Jerusalem. It is our duty as human beings to protest injustice in every society, regardless of who and where we are.

I had merely pointed out that detaining the alleged "criminals" by Operation Clean Heart and the resultant 'death in custody' will not solve the problem. You can detain a gangster. Someone else will fill his shoes if you do not resolve the socio-economic problems that gave rise to the gangster.

These are issues far removed from our society. If what is happening in my country is none of my business then obviously ethnic cleansing in India should not concern anyone in Dhaka. Or is it?

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In the meantime, innocent people might die in custody. My question to you gentlemen: my geographical remoteness notwithstanding, do the words "rule of law" and "presumption of innocence till proven guilty in a court of law" mean nothing to you? Have you forgotten Rubel?

Why is it politically incorrect to talk about human rights and civil rights? Can we not envision our society where everyone would be free? Yes I mentioned the US Constitution but that was to point out the shortcomings of ours. We can adopt the Bill of Rights in our Constitution. Will it be wrong to expect fair treatment and accountability for all?

Yahya USA

"We should face the reality"

This letter is in response to Angela MV Robinson's "We should face the reality" (December 20).

Your exhortation to admit that there is a presence of international terrorists in Bangladesh by our Government to its powerful friends is truly an insult to the intellects of Bangladeshi people. Obviously, "There is a sickness in the heart

of the High Court premises in connection with expediting the judgement (demanding execution of the accused) on the Bangabandhu murder trial I had this premonition that we have indeed set a dangerous precedence, one that no government, democratic or dictatorial, can afford. The same could be said about the Muslim League's storming of the Supreme Court premises during Nawaz Sharif's rule in Pakistan.

Shamsher Chowdhury Dhaka

Good work

Our politicians need to understand that they can get a lot more respect and praise if only they bothered to do what they were voted for. They can benefit a lot by keeping people happy rather than lying, harassing and taking people's rights. Public are not afraid to praise leaders if and when they deserve it.

We would eagerly await to see similar progress with India. India is big and powerful country and the recent accusation of Advani linking Al-Qaeda presence in Bangladesh has surely strained the relationship between the two country. That is why our PM needs to play her cards with India very carefully.

Azad Miah Olaham, UK

Civil rights

Mr Shaad M. Ahmad and Mr A.K.M. Fakhrul Alam (December 13) has accused me of being a busybody, butting my nose into what is none of my business, being as I am "comfortably ensconced" far away. I also hear a lot of people decrying the Gujarat riots. Israel is a perpetual scapegoat for all the ills of the Muslim world. Our compatriots shed crocodile tears for Palestinians every day.

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Blasts in Bangladesh

I am certainly confused with the current situation created with the recent bomb blast in Mymensingh. The way the Government has been harassing a number of prominent citizens of Bangladesh with charges such as "anti-state" makes me really frustrated.

There is a big difference between anti-state and anti-government. Being anti-government is not illegal, everybody has the right to raise their voice against oppression. The way the bomb blast situation is being handled by the Government, the only anti-state element I can find is the BNP-Jaamat coalition.

Both the BJP controlled govt. in India and the so-called secularist elements in Bangladesh are claiming that the Muslim fundamentalists backed by Al-Qaeda was responsible for the recent bomb blast in Mymensingh.

HM, Dhaka

Interestingly both the secularists and their Indian backer are claiming that the present Govt. of Bangladesh has the influence of the so-called fundamentalist Islamists within the Govt. If it is so then why would they jeopardise the position of the Govt. at home and abroad by destabilising the very Government they represent?

An individual of simple intelligence would agree that it would be equal to suicide if the fundamentalists would plot such a heinous act to destabilise their own coalition government.



An age of anxiety

here..." who always tend to run with the Bare and hunt with the Hounds.

We, like the other developing nations have a reality problem with the fact that, we, Bengalis did not colonize Indian sub-continent for two hundred years, it was not Chechens who invaded and conquered Russia, nor did the Afghans, the Egyptians or the Pakistanis ever invade Britain, no Palestinians ever took over any Jewish villages in Germany, the Iranian secret police backed no military coups against Dwight D. Eisenhower, and the Egyptians did not conspire with the Colombians to reconquer the Panama Canal, no Arab corporations covet oil in Texas or Alaska; Arab forces do not maintain bases in Europe or North America; Philippines don't have a base in California; Arab aid has never supported military dictators in Chile, Peru, Zimbabwe, or Cuba.

Singapore's IT Masterplan and our opportunities Today we all are aware of Singapore's success. If we look back in 1970s, Singapore was not as prosperous as they are today.

With the growth of every other sector, Singapore govt. decided to improve its educational sector in early '90s and allocated a huge budget for this purpose under the project entitled 'IT in Education: Masterplan'. The first master plan which was spanned from 1997 to 2002 has successfully been completed and recently MOE (Ministry of Education, Singapore) has announced the second five-year IT Masterplan. One may learn more about this in the following website:

http://www.moe.gov.sg/edumall/mp2/mp2_overview.htm. One of the major goals of this IT Masterplan is to develop e-learning environment and content for all the schools, colleges and universities in Singapore.

Respective departments of every schools, colleges and universities are taking initiatives to accomplish the task by proving training to teachers and others to convert a huge volume of classroom materials to an e-learning form and publish it through the e-learning platform. Local and foreign (mostly Indian) IT firms are also participat-

ing in this huge work-festival. There is a very good opportunity for our IT firms who have technical know-how of e-learning to grab a handsome share of this big cake. Most of our IT firms may not be aware of this opportunity. Our foreign mission in Singapore may play an important role by analysing the current events and providing necessary info to the relevant parties in Bangladesh.

Besides this IT Masterplan, I believe there are other good opportunities in other sectors, for example, education, shipyard, construction industry for our govt. to establish gainful relationship with Singapore with our skilled professionals. Kazi Sabbir Ahmed Singapore

Army drive and human rights violation

While we applaud our Govt's initiative to curb crime and domestic terrorism, we are seriously concerned about the increasing deaths in army custody. Almost everyday, there are news of more deaths in custody.

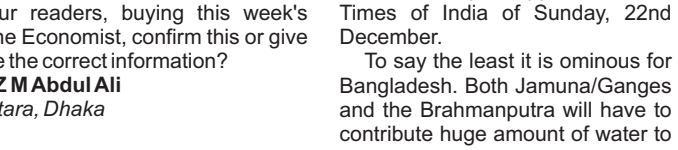
How is it possible that the army picks up a healthy person and returns him dead? How can one believe the doctors' reports of "died of sickness," and similar hogwash, when the reports talk about "serious injuries on the ankles and joints"?

Yes, we like to thank our honest, dedicated men in uniforms, who mean well and do their job. Yet, we cannot but protest these deaths in custody.

Tirtho Mahmud Dhaka

Before Operation Clean Heart began, like everybody in the country, I used to open the newspaper with a fear of seeing more death news and other bad news. Opening the newspaper did make the whole day bitter for me. Still the situation is prevailing, but in another way. Now my whole day is spoiled when I see the news of deaths in army custody.

Many people say that it is better to see one death news a day than seeing many. I completely disagree with them. Because these deaths are different. These people died while they were in custody! What is most dangerous is the near and dear ones of the



The fear factor

Obviously some factions who wants to see this Government become unpopular at home and branded as extremist abroad has clear hand behind this despicable crime.

The recent statements by the Indian Govt. about the sheltering of Al-Qaeda terrorists in Bangladesh sound very objectionable and suspicious as well. People of Bangladesh respect India as a great neighbour, but India should know that the Bangladeshis would defend their sovereignty at all costs.

A Ullah, USA

Thank you for inviting the readers' opinion on the recent spate of bomb blasts in Bangladesh. In the last two weeks the police investigation on this premeditated and carefully planned gruesome killing has failed to find even one culprit. The actual investigation came to a blank end.

However the Government has made 'progress' in arresting and detaining some prominent newspaper columnists, historians and political leaders. An investigation committee has been formed headed by a Supreme Court judge. He even went to Mymensingh, met people from all walks of life and made extensive enquiries. The Prime Minister in a speech in Mymensingh accused the main opposition Awami League of involvement in the killings. In her turn, the Leader of the Opposition accused the Government of putting the blame on them to save their skin and that of their coalition partners who have actually committed the crime.

The recommendations of two previous investigations carried out by two different Supreme Court judges, one concerning a police raid late at night in Shamsunnahar hall and the other about the Shatkira bombing were never acted upon. The first one blamed the BNP students wing and the police for the shameful acts, the second one was so much out of track and lunatic that it disgraced the BNP government and there was nothing to act upon. In both cases the actual criminals went scot-free.

Sultan Mahmud Shariff, London, UK

The last time I visited Mymensingh, It was sometime of May 1990 to submit my resignation to the Vice Chancellor before I left the country for the USA. I had been in Mymensingh for eight years and I loved its natural beauty. I felt empty-hearted to leave Mymensingh.

I went to have a gentle walk through the university botanical garden and the bank of Old Brommaputra, overhead; the stars were out in full, twinkling in the darkened sky. Distant clouds rode the horizon, reflecting the light of a crescent moon. I walked a little way down the beach, simply stood in the water and let it wash over my legs. I closed my eyes and tried to enjoy the beauty of the Mymensingh without having to watch it. The only sounds came from the sail of a boat as the wind rippled through it and the water as the boat cut its way through the waves. Voices sounded different almost free, as if the open air would carry them forever.

I bet, any one would love to go to a quite spot of the bank of the river away from the hustle and bustle of the City, just to appreciate what natural beauty of Mymensingh had to offer. I wonder, why terrorists chose Mymensingh as their target. Mazibur R Khan, Tualatin, OR 97062, USA

Let's act like responsible citizens Building a better Bangladesh has been our wish and dream for a long time. To materialize this dream we have to find the correct answer to the following questions first:

1. Whose responsibility is it to build a better Bangladesh? 2. Who should be blamed for having failed to achieve it? Many people say many things, but it seems there is a sizable number who believe that it is the responsibility of the politicians alone and they are the one who should be blamed for our failure to achieve it. We face and live with numerous difficulties and pains both at home and abroad as a third world citizen.

If we want a quick relief from all these problems the easiest way would be to continue blaming our politicians, western world and its media. But what can we achieve by blaming others other than creating bad blood both at national as well as at international level? Moreover, who are these politicians? They are our people. Who elect them to power? The people elect them. Yes, I know some of us

will say no we do not elect them rather they manage to grab power with the help of their illegally earned wealth. If this claim is true, why then we support them, defend them and that too very often and very vigorously.

Not only that, we do not hesitate to make unfounded allegation about opponents. If we believe that the politicians are corrupt and they do not have morale, why on earth do we feel so boastfully talk about their election victory and popularity?

Double standard is the other pathetic part of our behavior. When the American Ambassador in Dhaka says that Bangladesh is a liberal Muslim country, we very happily quote it in all of our statements and discussions as if she is authorized to issue such certificate. But, when she says that the government is not allowing the parliament or the judiciary to perform independently, many of us say that we do not need foreign prescription to run our country. Isn't it double standard?

What have we seen during the last 12 years? Whoever is in opposition will run to the foreign missions in Dhaka to complain about the government. When it is done by party X it is bad, but if party Y does it is good. This is call double standard. We should stay away from such behaviour if we feel responsible for our beloved country. Shafigur Rahman Khan Vienna, Austria

Reuters reporting

We are stunned and confused by Reuters reporting on the recent bomb blast incident and subsequent findings. What on earth is going on? Where is the professionalism, ethic and binding rules which had taken Reuters News Agency to the highest level? Or, are they also serving someone else's interest?

Tanzia Choudhury Dhaka