

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.

"Mockery of a law brings shame on the nation"

"The passage of the indemnity bill is the one of the greatest insult that one could bring on a democratic society. By this single action we have eroded our credibility as a democratic nation, called into question our respect for law and made a mockery of our justice system. Seldom in the history of modern-day parliament has such a shameful, outrageous, disreputable and unethical law been passed in peacetime and non-emergency situation." ("Mockery of a law brings shame on the nation", February 27).

Mr. Editor, you have lived long enough in this country to understand how the business is taken care here. The army personnel didn't kill these individuals to settle their personal scores. We needed them desperately to help us get rid of the evils that basically brought the country to its knees. We have full sympathy for the victims. Yet, we still feel that the nation should be ready to absorb the

sacrifices.

You want the army to clean your dirty linen, yet you will not spare them. How hypocritical can it get? Mr. Anam, we did have our share of the "intellectuals" like Kabir Chaudhury and Muntasir Mamun. Please spare us. We don't want any more political "intellectuals" in this country. Please try to understand that editorship of a popular daily like *The Daily Star* News does not qualify to abuse your authority and mislead the nation.

Mahub
One-mail

Someone once said, "Politicians think about the next election; Leaders think about the next generation." We have a lot of politicians but none of them seems to be a leader. Wait a minute. Do we really have a lot of politicians? Are BNP lawmakers thinking about the next election at all?

PirSaheb
USA

I must say I agree with everything Mahfuz Anam has written in his commentary about the Indemnity Law. If anything, I found his commentary guarded.

He seems to hang on to some sort of belief that the parliament and our politicians can possibly offer some sort of moral leadership in this country. That is an impossibility, even civilised democracies have a tough time getting moral and ethical direction from our politicians, at best we can hope for a civil society to restrain their worst excesses.

Mahfuz Anam also seems to be trying to elevate our present President to some sort of apolitical authority figure, like Shahabuddin was. Unfortunately that is not the case. BNP is proving itself to be



the problem rather than the solution. The other day, Shomit

Chowdhury in a letter regarding the war in Iraq asked rhetorically if we deserved colonial subjugation by the British.

From the look of things we might as well invite them back. **Azad Dhaka**

Independence Award

It is indeed ironic to see so much ado about the Independence Award given to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ziaur Rahman. Both of them had positive and negative contribution to our nation. Each of them had the opportunity to lead our nation and they did so with their best efforts.

Now, they are dead and buried. It is a nice thing that present government acknowledged their contributions. Please let us move on. Poverty, illiteracy, hunger and diseases are still part of our national life. We have corruption in every vein of our society, our economy is nowhere near progress, we lack basic human rights and we are yet to achieve a minimum standard in any sports or athletics in the international arena.

Our Independence came with a heavy price. Most likely, three to ten lakh people

thrown to the dust by you. Even all these if you still point your fingers at the young innocent and experienced boys of the Bangladesh team to avoid your responsibility then the millions of cricket loving people of the country will never ever forgive you.

Wahid Shahi, Dhaka

Any comment?

On your February 27 issue you have misprinted the caption of one of the pictures in the front page as *Sammilito Sanskritik Jote*. But in fact it would have been 'The Left parties' Anti-War Procession'. Is it just overlooking or it has a biased treatment towards Left-leaning parties?

Such errors are not usually found in the case of Awami League's news items. My comment, sir?

J'accuse!

The Daily Star's lopsided reporting on the Iraq crisis is beginning to get on my nerves. It would appear that the Editors of our favourite paper have picked their camps and refuse to budge even the least.

Contrary to what may appear to frequent readers of *The Daily Star*, the whole world is not united in opposition to the US and British plans on Iraq. As a matter of fact, even if America did decide to go on without another UN resolution, it would hardly be alone. In addition to Britain and Australia, the two countries which would join it in fighting, America has the support of half the current members of the European Union, all the countries applying to join and most of NATO.

The current European Union members who support the Americans are Britain, Spain, Italy,

the War of Independence. Let us not forget that many of the intellectuals killed in the genocide of 1971 were also journalists.

To those unaccustomed to such free and lively debate, our press freedom is distasteful. To them, it is heretical that *The Daily Star* should be voicing people's opinions and "falling over backwards" to print post-editorials by every Tom, Dick and Harry it can wheel out" (MA, February 26) and excluding the more "level-headed" opinions of the Economist and Salman Rushdie (!).

The hypocrisy in their rancour is clear. While using the platform of free speech to demand that *The Daily Star* print articles of their choice, they are expressing their disdain of others to express themselves via *The Daily Star*. Their myopic vision overlooks the fact that it is the very belief in the free-

dom of speech being an inalienable right of each individual, is what permits the Economist to do its business and further, permitted Salman Rushdie to write his book "The Satanic Verses", however much insulting it was to many Muslims worldwide.

It is therefore not surprising that, to them, those who espouse a dissenting view of the argument behind the impending war on Iraq, are to be brushed aside as "knee jerk peaceniks" (MA, February 26).

I wish *The Daily Star* continued success in its role as a conscientious newspaper worthy of its name. Every day, the "Letters Page" permits us to come together as a nation, and rejoice in our right to free speech. The path of press freedom is not for one to define nor dictate. Insults levelled at *The Daily Star* for not printing articles espoused by a particular reader illustrates the inability of the reader to grasp the essence of this freedom, and certainly not the failure of the newspaper.

Shomit Chowdhury
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

I agree with Mr. Jamil Ahmed (March 2). Indeed Mr. MA has missed the point as he often does. MA is just short of suggesting that the Americans are going to war in Iraq to help the Muslims. This war

has nothing to do with democracy or Muslims and everything to do with US self-interest and to suggest otherwise is a travesty and a farce! No one denies that Saddam Hussein is a ruthless dictator, and that Iraq will be better off without him. But that does not mean that the Iraqis want a war for that to happen.

The US administration claims that there is support in Iraq and the Arab world for this war. Fortunately, only a handful of people such as MA are buying such rubbish. There is no support for this war in the Arab world, least of all in the Iraqis want to get rid of Saddam, but not at the expense of war. Tell me Mr. MA, if you were an Iraqi and wished to get rid of Saddam, would you accept the risk of a bomb dropping on your house and killing your family for that to happen? I think Bishop Tutu said it best when he said, 'We in South Africa wanted an end to Apartheid and to dictatorship for many years, but at no point did we ask the west to come and bomb us into a democracy!' I believe most Iraqis would reflect similar sentiments if you bothered to ask them.

Don't retaliate by calling me a peacenik Mr. MA. I am not one. But there is a moral and ethical argument here that warmongers such as yourself prefer to overlook. Fortunately enough, your numbers are small and dwindling all the time. You say that we should stand by our friends, the Americans. Care to remind us Mr. MA what our "friends" the Americans were up to when Bengalis were getting killed by the Pakistanis in '71?

Shamir Abed
New York, USA

corruption there. Look towards the Law Enforcement Department--they are in competition with the Judiciary. Look at any government department from the very top to the peons, they are all collecting toll money. No file has ever moved in any government department as far as I can remember without tolls being paid at every desk with the full knowledge of everyone. Have you considered imposing capital punishment on corrupt government servants? Do you have the courage to do that? Probably not.

Syed Imran Hussain
Uttara, Dhaka

European delegation in Bangladesh

The comments made by the visiting delegation from the European Commission will be very heart warming for a section of our society especially as we have come to know how much our freedom and civil liberties mean to others. This is certainly very assuring to know that we are not a forgotten country but there are people who actually care for our liberties. So why me, a lowly citizen of a poor country put the motives of our friends in Europe in question?

The truth is me, myself would not have put their motives in question but that is before I saw this certain news item in BBC where they had obtained leaked papers from the European Union Trade commission which outlines and stresses the need to open up the public utilities sector of the developing countries to create markets for the European companies. Now you may ask is that a very bad idea, are we not all witnesses to the corruption and inefficiencies of the public sector? The problem is though this privatisation and handing over public utilities have not worked and is not working in other countries, where prices for basic service for water has gone up several times after being handed over to the European companies.

So I pose this question to you if the European Union do not have much concern to one of the basic survival needs of the people in the developing countries in this case namely water how much are they genuinely concerned about civil liberties?

Then again I guess caring for our civil liberties make very good sound bite in the media and caring about their companies make it

easier to perpetuate their wealth. I guess then our friends do get it both ways but to me it seems a very unequal friendship, but then again maybe it's just me whose concerned about it.

Rezaul Hauque
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Who cares?

Would the authorities concerned please give us an approximate date when our transport problem would be solved? For how long do we have to stand on the road hour after hour to avail of a CNG-scooter or other mode of transportation?

From the lack of letters on this issue, it seems that most of the readers of this Page have car and don't bother about petty problems like this. They are more worried about Iraq crisis and world peace. Why bother about those middle-class people raising hue and cry over transport problem? People can breathe fresh air and there are less traffic, what else are needed? Let others walk for hours, if needed; soak in rain if deemed necessary; if they can't pay for taxicab that's their problem!

Touhid Khan
Purana Paltan, Dhaka

made the ultimate sacrifice, and many are still surviving with physical or mental handicap. No single person is above such sacrifice, no single person is above the misery and hardship, this nation had to endure during those nine months. We owe our Independence to those martyrs, freedom fighters and many other unknown people who directly or indirectly contributed in liberating our country. So, these awards are just a token. In reality, it is the noble nation who sacrificed.

M.Hassan
USA

BCS question leaks out!

I am horrified to hear that the questions of the recently held BCS examination have been leaked out. The genuine examinees have studied hard to get selected in these exams-- memorising questions from the very primary level of school education to the latest world news.

I've seen my colleagues

whose only hope is to qualify in this exam. Imagine due to this leak out how many unworthy examinees would be qualified and how many genuine students would be left out! The authorities concerned should cancel this exam and investigate this matter so as to prevent further mishaps.

Munnies, Dhaka

It was known from the national dailies that the question paper of 24th BCS Preliminary Test held on February 28 was leaked out! It was alleged that some members of a Students Organisation were supplied with the questions!

If the news is true it is simply a deathblow to the prestige and sanctity of the BPCS. However, the Chairman of the BPCS has denied the allegation leakage of question paper. She argued that the question papers were kept in sealed containers and containers were not opened before they reached the examination halls and not before the examination time.

This is indeed a serious allegation and needs to be investigated thoroughly. The reputation of the country depends on it.

MAS Molla, Dhaka

Alas! Fumbling Jack

Jack (Jack of the last straw) was fumbling for cogent words in the British parliament. But why? For Jack was attempting to "jack" up his sagging Prime Minister. Tony Blair has been full time Foreign Minister of USA for some time; he is currently running the errands for George Bush. How busy he has been to divide Europe, succeeding though only partially. Tony Blair of late wears the mantle if not the armour of a 21st century Knight waging what is now his moral compulsion, alone in Europe if necessary; seems he is suffering from paranoia; he has to carry the cross alone if need be crusading against evil demons.

Tony Blair is a man possessed, a man of deep conviction who cannot help go against the "ill informed" British public. Jack was seen fumbling, pathetically lost for words, lacking coherence, and turning even comical and utterly pedestrian. A pity to observe such men of the state who are anything but statesmen. Worse, some like the British Foreign Secretary are doing a disgrace to their office by looking and acting more like paid agents fabricating untruths they know to be false. Alas, the public know better and British public must be credited with more sense (common sense) than their own statesmen like to credit them for.

So how much Iraqi and collateral blood must be spilt to defend the falsehood of the statesmen who is willing to follow the agenda of world domination even if that, as in the case in point, is by proxy? How long will majority voice of the world, NAM included, be at best ignored or at worst be dismissed with contempt? Who is making the United Nations irrelevant- the majority who are weak or the minority who are powerful and are absorbed with ambition to control the world though pretending to preserve democracy and freedom? These are questions that must be asked, must be voiced stridently, must be backed by willingness to make sacrifices, sometimes heavy, by the marginalised majority.

Hussain
Dhaka

An Open Letter to the Finance Minister

Your recent observation that corruption and inefficiency is rife in government banks while there is no bribe culture in private banks is much appreciated. The immediate conclusion one comes to is that you should privatise the state-run banks to stop public money being wasted through corruption. If the unions are stopping you from doing so, the government should initiate an "Operation Clean Heart" style crackdown as soon as possible. Believe me, you will get a lot of public support.

Will you also kindly give some attention to the National Board of Revenue and the Customs Department? I do not know of anybody in these places who is honest. Very recently, when I arrived at Zia International Airport, a group of Customs Officers were openly negotiating with fellow passengers. One even approached me and asked whether I would like to cut a private deal, all under the watchful eyes of the senior officers there. Fortunately, I did not have anything to declare.

So how can you pragmatically address corruption in these areas? I suggest that you take some bold steps and privatise Revenue and Customs. Give realistic targets to private companies who will collect on behalf of the government. Let there be competition between them. People will have the choice of submitting their returns to any of the licensed companies. Involve experts from Singapore or Britain in the inspection of these private companies and have heavy penalties and excruciating punishments imposed on those who involve themselves in corrupt practices.

The root of corruption in Bangladesh is the Government itself. Look at the Judiciary, the vilest of them all. You will find unbelievable inefficiency and

Bangladesh vs Kenya

Bangladesh's performance against Kenya in the World Cup leaves me pondering with one thought: how much lower the standard will slump to?

Our bowling was completely let down by some poor (that's an understatement!) fielding and there isn't much to talk about their lacklustre batting as usual. The number of dropped chances leaves me wondering whether these players will be able to catch a cold in North Pole! A total of 58 runs were scored from these drops and I am certain that if Bangladesh held on to those, they had the match in the bag.

When will this nightmare be over I wonder!

Fuad Bin Rahman
Dhaka

main bowlers. Instead of bowling to their opponents they tried to keep the runs under check and that's when they lost the game. As Ian Smith said, they should have kept Kenya under 180. And as always the fielding was not up to the mark.

Bangladesh's Test status seems to be skating on thin ice. If it is taken away not only will it be embarrassing for the cricket crazy nation, it will also be extremely difficult to get it back. The governing body should make good use of this dreadful experience. It has to be said that they have changed too many things. The selection has been poor. So it's not right to blame the players only. We should get a good coach someone in the ranks of a Bob Woolmer or a John Wright or a Geoff Marsh. The captain and the coach should have more say in the selection. The good thing or the positive sign is that most of our players are young and blooming stars. With the right guidance (which I don't think they have been receiving) the standard will improve, and redeem ourselves from all the shame and disgrace!

Jeeshan Mirza
Mastermind School, Dhaka

This is my response to the letter of Mr. Raihan Rahman (February 27). Sir I sincerely agree with you when you say that Bangabandhu and Ziaur Rahman were both heads of the state. Sir I do not think that has anything to do with our independence.

In anyway to remind you that Ziaur Rahman had become the head of the state through martial law while Bangabandhu won a democratic election. I also agree when you say that they are both founders of two of the most important political parties but sir the parties were formed after the country was liberated so once again I do not find anything relevant in this statement which supports our independence.

Anyone who finds a political party cannot be a contender for the Independence Award. But I certainly disagree when you say there is no problem awarding Bangabandhu and Ziaur Rahman together.

Gen. Zia was a freedom fighter, a field commander and an army person whereas Bangabandhu was the liberator, the leader, the rebellion and at that point he was our only hope. I do not think Ziaur Rahman had the potential to be compared with Bangabandhu and nor he has any to this day.

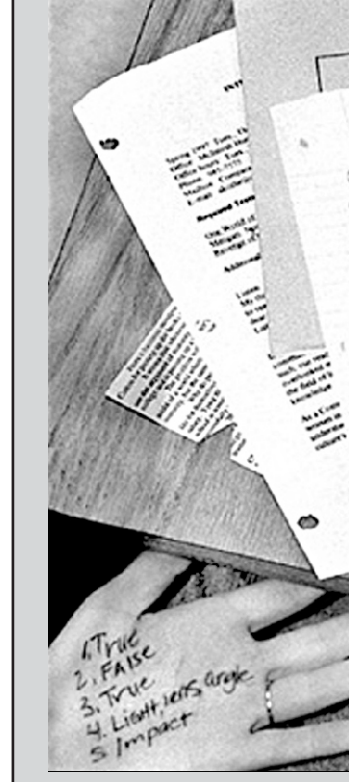
Khalid Rahman
Dhaka

Not cricket

We have turned away from real love of cricket to something commercial. Fairplay and play for the love of the game has gone forever. Australia's do anything for a win and those silly jumps in the air, and embrace all in a display of how good we are! We love ourselves don't we?

I used to watch cricket as a child. Listened all night with the headphones, thrilled to hear Bradman 300 and still going. But not anymore. The old feeling has gone, lost between the next display of useless advertisements between overs. It's all about money these days.

Harry Gordon
Australia



Mahboob NM
One-mail

BUET Logo and Urban Concern Page

A footnote on February 28 by the Consultant to the Editor, *The Daily Star* on Urban Issues has caught my attention. In fact I had similar queries in my mind and so far I remember, an expatriate had raised the issue in the Letters Page regarding the status of the views expressed in the "Agenda for Urban Concern" pages of *The Daily Star*. The query was whether the Pages express the BUET's official views or not?

Using of BUET logo implies an official association of BUET with other parties to present its stand on different urban issues of public concern. The Consultant in his footnote has tried to side-track the main inquiry.

I believe that a journalist has the moral authority to come up with any issue public issue or otherwise with proper investigation, in their own capacity. However, there is nothing wrong in dealing with specialised issues in collaboration with relevant experts/organisations but that should be explicit.

Abir Hossain
Mohammedpur, Dhaka

Denmark, Portugal, the Netherlands and Ireland. Of the members-to-be the three largest Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, all countries that know the bitter taste of tyranny first hand; have come forward in support of their ally through 50 years of communist oppression. Also in support are the "Vilnius ten" a central European and Balkan group which includes five countries due to join the Union next year.

Frankly it is well nigh impossible to get a balanced reporting in *The Daily Star* on the Iraq issue.

It is perfectly reasonable to disagree with the American position on Iraq if one is cognisant with the arguments for and against it. And it is quite another to be unilateralist in our knee jerk anti-Americanism.

Mali
Dhaka

"War on Iraq"

One of the rare privileges that we, the people of Bangladesh enjoy, is the freedom of the press. Engaging in debate and discourse on various issues is a natural exercise of this privilege. This freedom was not given to us by any foreign nation, but earned for our people by the sons of our soil who gave their lives in the Language Movement and in

Chronicles of Iraq

1. World intelligentsia are of the opinion that Saddam Hussein's days are getting numbered every day.

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Bangladesh's performance against Kenya in the World Cup leaves me pondering with one thought: how much lower the standard will slump to?

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The Management Committee of BCB should resign

Shame on you, BCB. It is not the team to be blamed, it is you who should be blamed. Bangladesh team's miserable failure in the Cricket World Cup is only and absolutely because of your incompetence. Our cricket team's image, our country's image has been

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