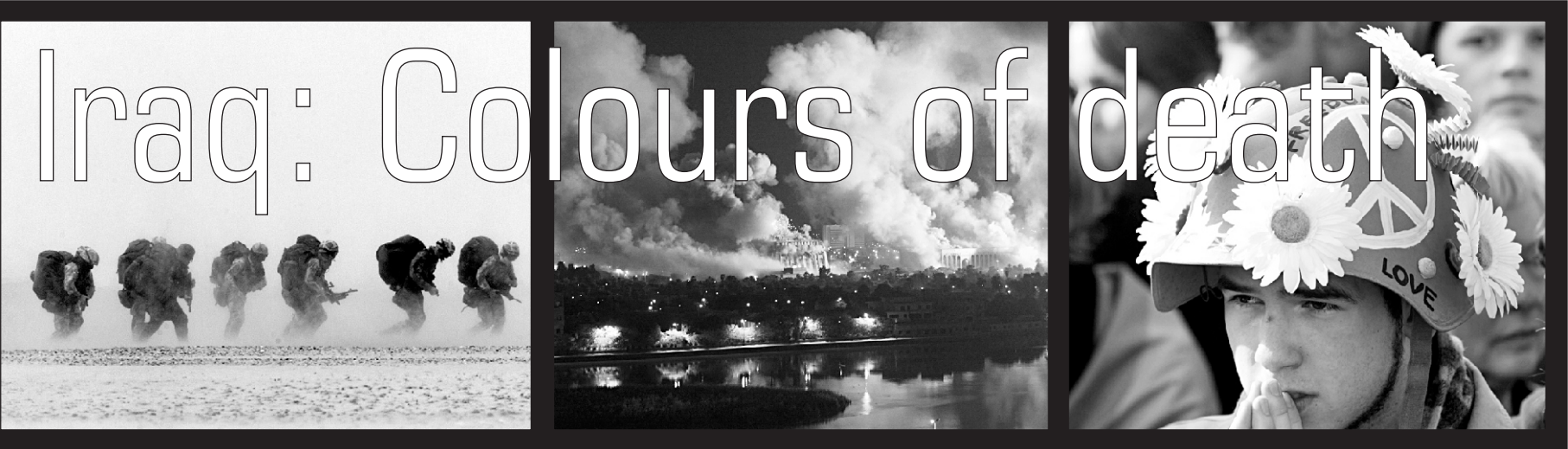
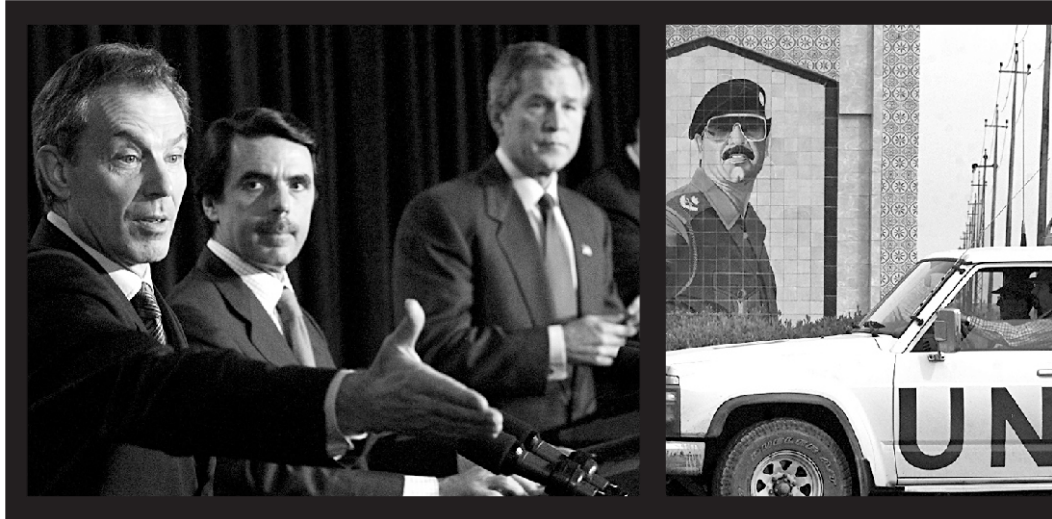


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



"The pre-emptive age"

After entering the 'space age', way back in 1961, the mankind has entered the new age on the 20th March, 2003 called 'the pre-emptive age'. The political trend of this new world may take on a dramatic turn from now onwards as the nations have already got the unofficial license following the path of USA, the unchallenged superpower in history.

From now on, any country can strike any other nation if it would even simply feel threatened, by bypassing the UN and taking permission of the US. As the world body could not able to stop one of its member from practising such a dangerous thing then it won't be surprising if the same thing would happen to Chechnya (by Russia), Kashmir (by India) and Taiwan (by China). All these places are so volatile that any misunderstanding or misadventure could eventually lead to World War III.

In the case of Iraq, I think, very

them very effectively in a non-violent way, simply by boycotting the British and American goods and services all over the world. This will convey the right message to the right places. I would therefore urge all the peace loving people of the world, irrespective of national boundaries, religions, races etc, to come forward and reject everything that is American or British.

Hafeejul Alam, Dhaka

I would like to comment on Masood Rahman's letter (March 21).

Mr. Masood implied that we should send students to Europe, Canada, Australia for higher studies instead of US to retaliate against Bush's attack on Iraq. But Australia and Great Britain - a European country, are allies of US. So shouldn't we quarantine them as well? Perhaps Mr. Masood meant that we should shun US only, because it was US and not Australia or UK that initiated this unjust war. Please clarify yourself Mr. Masood.

Muslim charities.

Lest your good readers think that this is a fanciful idea, I would like to tell them about exactly such a product that is available here in the UK. The Derby-based Qibla Cola Company produces regular and diet versions under the catch line "Liberate your taste".

In case any budding Bangla entrepreneur still harbours doubts about the viability of such a product, I take pleasure in pointing out the similarly successful examples of France's Mecca Cola and Iran's Zamzam Cola.

So go on! Make a million, make a cola and make a stand.

Joseph Jabbar

Birmingham, UK

I agree with Mr. Arilds suggestion of boycotting american products, particularly those that are imported from USA.

But here's another thing that can be done: we should begin using the Weapon of Mass Protestation (WMP). As a first step I urge all of us to "boycott CNN" completely and ask your cable operator to remove CNN from the program list. Their coverage is so biased and all of their reporters seems so gleeful when they are portraying the mass bombing of a nation to submission. I sincerely hope Al Jazeera starts their English News channel soon. And we should specially show our back to CNN.

MIK, Ramna, Dhaka

If people wish to protest the United States war with Iraq by boycotting American goods and services, it is their right to do so. But in this era of increasing globalisation, boycotts, as a tool of protest, is increasingly becoming nothing more than a fool's errand. It will end up hurting innocent people than punishing a supposedly arrogant superpower.

Most American products, for the most part, are either completely or partially made overseas. Brand-name clothes, shoes, and other textile products are made in Asia. A Ford automobile is more likely to be made in Canada, Mexico, or Europe; and whose components come from a half-dozen other countries. The same goes for airplanes, computers, and other manufactured goods.

Boycotting U.S. products is like throwing a rock into the ocean, the ripples will affect everybody.

Niraj Agarwalla

Boston, USA

"Why this hartal?"

I have just read the letter "Why this hartal" that has been written by an unidentified DU teacher where the author claimed that the Left party's attitude seemed to be "suspicious" in her/his point of view which was actually a protest against the suspicious strategy of government towards the newly begun bloodshed.

While going through the letter I was getting a bit confused whether the whole speech was based upon a wrong understanding of the term 'pro mehonoti manush'. Though I was never been a follower of any of the Left parties ever, and I was not sure about the rationality of that hartal, particularly in Bangladesh. I didn't see any contradiction between supporting labours and then calling strikes for the sake of labours at all. In my view, the right to call a hartal/strike is only preserved for the workers. As though they are keeping the machine and production running on whereas the management is only making profit out of their effort. The workers won the right to stop the machine as soon as they find themselves to be subjected to any form of repression and oppression by the management and stop the beneficiaries to make anymore profit.

Therefore, I found there was nothing suspicious in the attitude of the Left parties through calling strike against an imperialist government and their regretful strategy towards the new dictatorship and the attack on Iraq. The reason that I didn't support the strike in Bangladesh was a completely different one. I found it uselessness for Bangladesh society, where strike is an everyday event and more likely to a fashion than a strong protest. Since I have been observing protests against war in Europe, among all of them the student strike on the first day of war (yesterday) in Madrid was the most successful one where the students have stopped classed in all the universities, schools and also stopped the traffic and trains with the help of the ordinary people protesting the war. Similar programs were followed in Barcelona, Valencia, Seville and some other

cities around Europe.

Rumana Hashem

Munich, Germany

I am amazed by the silly hartal called by the 11-party alliance. They must have been emboldened by their last successful hartal and thought they might as well call another one.

It is even sillier to call a hartal protesting the US actions in Iraq. I personally think this is a splendid war but my government doesn't. It's not as if we have our soldiers next to the allies although that would have done wonders for our standing with the Americans.

Shonku, Dhaka

It is very amusing to read that the left leaning 11-Party alliance called a half-day countrywide hartal in protest against the US invasion of Iraq. Can someone explain how ruining the already poor economy of Bangladesh, by calling hartals, will help protest the war in Iraq? What are these "party leaders" thinking of? What purpose are they going to serve?

Waseem Khan

Los Angeles, California, USA

It's our political parties' old habit, if anything you disagree express it by calling hartal. Those who called hartal in protest of the US-led attack on the innocent people of Iraq, forgot that Bangladesh is trying hard to overcome the recent economical recession. Everyone knows what impact a hartal can make on our economy.

I am not supporting Bush, but if you honestly want to stay beside the innocent people of Iraq, raise fund for the refugee who will be the victim of war, give it to the Red Crescent or the organisations who are helping those people. We can be positive, can save also the innocents, but please don't call hartal, don't destroy our economy further.

Tanvir, Benazir

Dhaka

"America vs Iraq"

This is in reply to the "proud American" ("America vs Iraq", March 23).

There is no doubt that Iraq had WMD in the early '90s, as there are a lot of supporting documents for it. But whether Saddam Hussein still have them is yet to be verified. UN inspection team led by Hans Blix, up till 7 March 2003, has not found any indication that Iraq currently possesses any WMD. I would like to refer to his progress report to the UN Security Council on disarmament Iraq (refer to http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2830505.stm, and http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2867913.stm).

However Bush certainly has contrary beliefs. Being a non-American I am more inclined to believe Blix's account. Additionally, if America has undisputed evidence, why doesn't the US government show it to the world?

Lastly, America had shook hands with oppressive regimes many times in the last 50 years. The innocent people of East Timor, El Salvador, Vietnam paid the price. Most importantly, as a Bangladeshi, the role of America during our Liberation War was not that of a nation that fights for justice. I seriously doubt whether the average American knows these facts. Either way it is not surprising that when US wages war in the name of the freedom of Iraqi people

our minds are filled with scepticism and fear.

Sami Afzal, USA

I read the letter from "A Proud American Citizen (March 23) with amazement. After reading that letter I asked myself, "is he or her for real?"

Jamil Ahmed

Houston, Texas

Has Bush gone insane?

The ongoing war in Iraq that we are watching on TV is no doubt barbaric, uncivilised and ruthless. Panic has pervaded every door to door in Baghdad and people are panic-stricken. While living in a civilised era and watching this type of barbarism is an insult to humanity. The rain of missile in the sky of Baghdad waves the tremor in our hearts, but we can, in no way, guess what mental tribulation the Iraqi people are going through.

Whenever Bush appeared on TV screen, he boasted of being an American and threatened to ignore the UN and at the end, he did. A sane person can never stand by this

cruelty and deny the world opinion. Bush has proved himself to be a man devoid of any common sense and as a warmonger.

Sulav Chowdhury, London

Who'll pay for rebuilding Iraq?

Those who on their calculated mischief of self-interest arbitrarily have waged war resulting in misery and physical destruction of Iraq have banked on the premise that the neighbouring countries will be involuntarily bound to accept thousands of refugees at the cost of political, social and financial sufferings to themselves.

The invaders have already started talking at the EU of billions of dollars required for the reconstruction of Iraq for whose destruction only they are responsible. Contractors in the so-called 45 coalition countries are eagerly watching like hawks for the green signal in order to move in.

It is time the world told these violators of international democratic norm: a) to take all the refugees to their 45 countries, b) to provide all the funds to reconstruct Iraq under UN umbrella and c) to disallow contractors of the coalition countries to start rebuilding Iraq.

And they should vacate Iraq immediately.

Atiq Rafzal

Motijheel, Dhaka

Security

There are barbed wire barricades on the road in front of the US embassy. Perfectly understandable give the opposition to the war in Bangladesh. I did notice a curious thing though. While going towards the US embassy from Progoti Sharni, the police stop and check the boots of taxis and the cheaper model cars i.e. my jeep is never stopped. But that's not the funny part.

The joke is that the cars are stopped and searched just in front of the car bomb barriers in front of the embassy itself. Now if you are going to check for bombs etc wouldn't it make more sense to do it a bit further away from the gate? Point to ponder.

Sabyasachi, Dhaka

Ousting a dictator

There is a curious aspect to the war in Iraq that seems to be escaping much of our country. As Fareed Zakaria of Newsweek puts it, "For more than 25 years, he (Saddam) has sought to acquire chemical and nuclear weapons, and has in several documented cases, succeeded. He gassed 60,000 of his own people in Hulabja. He has launched two catastrophic wars, sacrificing nearly a million

Iraqis and killing or wounding more than a million Iraqis. He has flouted 16 UN resolutions over 12 years that have warned him to disarm or else, including one four months ago, giving him a final opportunity to do so 'fully and immediately' or face 'serious consequences'."

Yet amazingly enough the Americans and British are alone in this gallant endeavour. I honestly can't fathom this opposition. Of course there will be civilian casualties but it'll be better than Saddam continuing his depredations. So far from what we have seen on the TV, ordinary Iraqis are welcoming the Allies with open arms. It will be quite interesting to see how *The Daily Star*, for instance, explains away the joyous celebrations of ordinary Iraqis.

Satyajit

Dhaka

The suffering civilians

Finally, the war on Iraq has started and it is only a matter of time, the US and the British soldiers take control of Baghdad. As far as I am concerned, this war could have easily been avoided. But the UN failed miserably in this task. What is the need of this organisation then?

In the war of ousting a dictator, it is the innocent civilians who will have to face the misery and destruction.

Minhaj Ahmed

Uttara, Dhaka

Undiplomatic overture!

I have observed with anger as well as dismay that another stance of arrogance in US diplomacy has surfaced with the impertinent request of the State Department reportedly been circulated among the 62 host governments where Iraqi embassies are in operation.

How dare the US try to intimidate and dictate the whole world -- the independent, sovereign states, even when the UN have not fallen prey fully to their dictations! However, I do pity Kofi Annan who failed miserably in his job and at the same time pity the disgraceful indifference of the Muslim world who could not unite to give a befitting reply to this unprecedented attack on Iraq. They even failed to take any stance similar to that of Russia, China, France and Germany!

AF Rahman, Dhaka

War on Iraq

Now that the USA has waged a war on Iraq, would America be successful in achieving all goals as narrated by their government? Would America be able to convert Iraq into a modern democratic state? Is it possible or have they got the patience to build up a Muslim country? If they fail, in that case, its chain reaction would undoubtedly generate ample heat in favour of the 'The Clash of Civilisation' theory as told by Prof Huntington.

But personally, I am content that this time at least the tyrant and dictator Saddam will be ousted, who fought three unjust wars -- one against Iran, one against Kuwait and another against the Kurds. But personal content and satisfaction should not over-ride the historical eventualities that I foresee in case of bad management on the part of the US in Iraq, which would just strengthen the hands of Taliban marked dark politics in the Muslim world, thus bringing more tyrant and dictatorial rule.

Sahanbir, Dhaka

"War in Iraq"

Mr. Azad accused *The Daily Star* of showing tilt towards anti-war sentiments by publishing letters mostly opposing war on Iraq (March 22). In support of his argument he has given example of Britain, Australia, Spain, Italy, and Denmark giving active support to war on Iraq.

In reality, with the exception of Britain and Australia, all other three countries have only verbally supported the war. In all these five countries polls have showed majority of people have opposed war on Iraq. Even in the Security Council USA and Britain weren't able to get more than four votes in favour.

As a matter of fact in memorable history of mankind no war has been condemned and opposed by a vast majority of humanity as this war has been.

Jamil Ahmed, Houston, Texas



The insecure innocent

Prayer for the Iraqi children

I was watching BBC news and I was shocked greatly by watching a wounded Iraqi girl in hospital after heavy bombing in Baghdad by the US lead forces. Her little legs were badly injured and her helplessness was evident.

Even though the Iraqi children have been suffering miserably due to sanction, their plight increases manifold as the war intensifies. Let alone their government, but the international community has done very little to change their fortune. According to the State of the World Children 2003, the condition of the Iraqi children is worst in the Middle East. What would happen after the Iraq war is over?

Nonetheless donor agencies have failed to fulfil their promises in Afghanistan despite making many promises. If they repeat it in Iraq, it will certainly destroy their credibility. During the wartime, we can only pray for the safety of Iraqi children who are the worst sufferers of wars.

Oli Md. Abdullah Chowdhury

Mirarmaidan, Sylhet

"How I will fight Bush"

Thanks to Mr. Arild Klokherhaug for suggesting a very cogent way of fighting Bush (March 19). It seems that with the massive military force in his possession, Mr. Bush need not care any one in this world. He could conveniently ignore his own people, the people around the world, the most venerable John Pope Paul, let alone the Security Council of the United Nations. The publicity stunt of Goebbels during the World War II appears rather insipid before his deceptive media hype and conspiracy against Iraq and its people led by Saddam. His brazen attack on the innocent civilians of Iraq has been condemned by the sane people all over the world. By his selfish attitude towards the United Nations and the international community, Bush undoubtedly proved himself as a second Hitler.

However, we the civilised people of the world can't behave like Mr. Bush or Mr. Blair. Still we can fight

The physician advised my grandmother to take some pain-relieving tablets that are made in US. Perhaps very essential things like education, medication should be kept above this boycott.

Mr. Masood also mentioned that we should not buy CDs of American singers. But American group Dixie Chick released a song condemning the war. So would it still be wrong to spend money on a Dixie Chick CD?

American commodities have effectively gained a permanent place in our lives. I am sending this letter to *The Daily Star* through my yahoo email account. Yahoo is an American company. Granted there are non-American email service providers. But where can we find a non-American substitute to Microsoft? Unfortunately we cannot ban all things that are American.

I wholeheartedly support this boycott. For me, the biggest personal challenge is giving up Heinz Tomato Ketchup, which I take with all sorts of food. Here I have a suggestion. Instead of rushing to French, German, Russian, Chinese brands after ostracising the American ones, let's see if we can find an indigenous alternative. Instead of Heinz, I will now try out PRAN, a product of Bangladesh. Consuming locally produced items will help our economy to develop.

Munaser Kamal

Dhanmondi, Dhaka

I would like to add my voice to all those who support Arild Klokherhaug and his letter "How I will fight Bush", (March 19). Furthermore, I wish to make a free donation of a winning business idea that will allow some enterprising Bangladeshi to become a multi-millionaire. At the same time, this guaranteed business idea could deal a 'shock and awe' blow to Coca Cola!

The idea - an Islamic alternative to the US drink that also donates to