

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.



Eid for all

Eid-ul-Fitr and H.S.C

It is in response to the letter of Sabrina Khan, Christina, Sajid and Hadi. And I'm totally against their opinion. Is it really a problem for a HSC level student to write about Eid-ul-Fitr? I don't think that it is a problem for any student no matter which religion he/she comes from. Though 90% of our people are Muslim, the rest are familiar with the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr (The biggest religious festival in Bangladesh) as well. And as Bangladesh is a land of communal harmony, people of all faiths celebrates Eid-ul-Fitr, in somehow or other. In our colony, I have always seen-- Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians celebrating Eid, buying new dress for the occasion, visiting friends and relatives' places etc. And I think that it is more or less a common scenario all over the country. So how come all of a sudden they are not familiar with the occasion? All TV channels show their Eid programs at least three or four days, newspapers bring out special supplement. Don't people of other religion enjoy these TV programs or read the supplement? From these haven't they been able to learn anything about the occasion? Another question of the five clues provided for the concerned question was "What do you do in Eid ghah?" Is it so difficult to answer by a female student? Although they (woman) don't go to the Eid ghah but don't they know what happens there? Don't they have father, brother, husband, cousins who go to Eid ghah? So why can't our HSC level female students write some sentences about that? Since I have never been to USA, Russia, Canada or Japan should I then say that I don't know anything about those countries?

Omar
Motijheel, Dhaka

In defence of Israel

We have seen many letters from the UK denouncing the state of Israel. There are many reasons to oppose the Israeli government and its actions in the Occupied Territories. However, the arguments in this Letters Page against Israel are mostly from the perspective of anti-Semitism.

Israel has been there for fifty-five years. It will not go away. The Israelis have fought three wars in self-defence ('48, '67, and '73). Granted, it sided with imperialist forces in '56 and involved itself in the Lebanese civil war. Israel continues to occupy lands belonging to the Palestinians. The settler movement continues to flourish. The plight of the Palestinians increases by the day.

Let us look at how the other countries treat the Palestinians. Those living in Jordan have not been granted citizenship even though most of them were born there. Ditto Syria and Lebanon. What happened to the Palestinian State which was being talked about in 1948? It was carved out between Syria and Jordan. Only when those lands changed hands in 1967 did they become "Occupied Territories".

Are we not going to hold the Arab states responsible for their part in denying the Palestinians their state? Why should we make Israel a scapegoat and let others go scot free? We talk about Sharon in relation to Sabra and Shatila; how about King Hussein and September 1970?

It is time to end the hypocrisy. Israelis will vote the Likud out of power one day and make peace with the Palestinians. Will Jordan/Syria/Lebanon accept those born in the refugee camps as their own? Fat chance. **Yahya USA**

Man of one-eyed vision

This is in response to Mr. Mahmood Elahi's letter "President Bush - a man with vision". Of course Mr. Bush is a man with vision, but this vision is one-eyed. Humans can see through their pair of eyes and is known as binocular view as opposed to monocular view (snakes, for example). The interesting difference is that we can have a vision of a single object via both the eyes but in monocular vision, though using two eyes (for example, Bush!) objects on the right side cannot be seen by the left eye. Analogy of one-eyed vision is also found in the monster of Arabian nights. **M. U. Chowdhury Dhaka**

Political commentators

Since 9/11 we see a mushroom growth of "fertile brain" email composers, incessantly pouring wanton letters for free market consumption. They have been hired by American media groups from around the globe (I can vouch for my own personal experience with them). Their job is to manufacture lie, masquerade lies as truth, distort facts as fictions and present fictions as facts.

Two names that come out winners during the last two years are Mahmood Elahi and Esam Sohail. **Ferdous Islam Ontario, Canada**

Amnesty International Report

Over the last few years, it has been noticed that The Amnesty International report on Bangladesh has been characteristically similar, at least in some areas. Lack of administrative knack, bureaucratic com-

plexity, abuse on journalists, death in custody are some of the common features that are being reiterated. If we consider the professional integrity of the Amnesty International, we have got to put our faith in its annual declaration and that gives us an impression that we have not been able to improve the situation on the aforementioned fields that are being discussed as our fundamental weakness in all workshop based on third world countries across the world.

As usual, our foreign secretary denied all charges brought on against Bangladesh and evaluated the report as one-sided and replete with erroneous information. So, we could catch the government stand on the report. In similar traditional pattern, the opposition party has castigated the government over this report coding the government have washed away all the democratic norms. But, both the parties have failed to look into the dormant

danger of the report, which eventually could be of great harm to us.

The Amnesty International has had a worldwide reputation, mainly the developed countries rate it very high. The donor countries consider these reports to decide which country could be ideal for extending aid. It is about time we became pragmatic. An effort to establish what others say is wrong and what we say is right would be deadly harmful to our country in the long run. Let's build up our country and lead it up to a thriving democratic nation.

Sulav Barua
Criminal Justice & Criminology
Middlesex university, London, UK.

Traffic laws and fines

The other day, my driver parked my car in front of the Dominous Pizza and went inside to buy a pizza. It hardly took five minutes. But by that time the sergeant booked the car for

illegal parking (although there was no "No Parking" sign). I am not trying to defend his action. I was fined TK 40- which was payable on the 5th June.

We went to the traffic section to pay the fine and to our horror, we were told that the fine has to be paid at the Court! We had to spend more than TK 100/- to go to the Court to pay a fine of TK 40/-.

This is pure harassment. Previously, whatever fines we had to pay, it was always at the Traffic office near the Viqarunnissa School.

In order to stop this harassment, I propose that, the traffic sergeants be empowered to collect the fine for minor offences and the sergeant may receive the fines through revenue stamps, or whatever means. After all, once the sergeant fines someone, we hardly can do anything about it and have to pay. This will certainly pave the way to speedier payment, less harassment and save us the trouble of going to

the courts.

One other thing I would like to point out regarding our traffic system. We keep on hearing that there are far less number of traffic police/sergeants for Bangladesh to cope up with the volume of traffic here. But my question is, can you name a single city in the world that has four traffic police at the major junctions and one or more sergeants like we have here? At least in those places, the traffic should be not as chaotic as it is here now. **MJH Dhaka**

WMD: Head we win, tail we win!

Mr. Blair agreed the other day to set up an inquiry on the intelligence reports on WMD in Iraq. The inquiry committee will report their findings only to Mr. Blair himself. So, the committee will look at Blair-WMD project and then ask for opinion from the very person who is supposed to be under scrutiny! Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives asked for independent judicial inquiry but Mr. Blair brushed them aside saying that he was only doing the 'proper thing'.

Anyway, I think it will be good for Mr. Blair and Mr. Bush if they can find those WMD in Iraq. If they don't, it will be even better. In that case Saddam's WMD must have been smuggled to Syria and Iran just (forty-five minutes?) before the war started. I have no doubt, intelligence reports saying so will be revealed in due time. We all know what to follow after that. **S.H. Naqib Cambridge, UK**

S. Q. Chowdhury and some queries

Awami League is opposing S.Q. Chowdhury's nomination for the Secretary General of O.I.C. on the ground that "he opposed our liberation war and he has many allegations of misdeeds during the war against him". Now we want to know what those specific charges are against him and why he was not tried by Awami League Government while they were in power from 1972 to August 1975 and then again from 1996 to 2001.

And then again, because Awami League did not bring any charges against Mr. Chowdhury does not mean that Mr. Chowdhury is not a war criminal. The present government has committed another crime by nominating him for the post of Secretary General of O.I.C.

I have few more queries. I fail to understand what is this O.I.C. for? Did we get any benefit from this membership since last 30 years? Did any member of O.I.C. support us during our War of Independence? Didn't this O.I.C. act jointly with the Pakistanis during our Liberation War? **Rubaya Naheed New Jersey, U.S.A.**

Bank robbery

A number of bank robberies have occurred in recent times, which is a matter of great concern. This obviously calls for the need of improving general law and order but the real bank robbers have remained untouched so far.

Bank officials in connivance with big borrowers are simply plundering bank money which has resulted in classified loan of over Tk. twenty five thousand crores. These people are the real bank robbers. No serious effort has so far been made to realise these classified loans. The Finance Minister has correctly said in a recent meeting that bank officials are the real culprits for huge amount of classified loans. The example of Pakistan shows that it is not very difficult to realise classified loans if the government is serious. The punishment for non-payment of loans should be sufficient to act as a deterrent. Why should honest borrowers pay for the misdeeds of these robbers in terms of high interest rate? And high interest rate is discouraging production, employment and income growth. Will the government give a serious thought to it? **Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury Mohakhali, Dhaka**

Gorai Bridge at Kushtia

Our Communication Minister Mr Nazmul Huda has done quite a commendable job in the communication sector. May I, on behalf of the people of Kushtia urge upon him to kindly look into the construction and completion of the Gorai Bridge at Kushtia, which would facilitate trade and commerce of South West Bangladesh to the capital and other districts of Bangladesh/ **Tayabul Huq Uttara, Dhaka**

Arundhati Roy

I can recall that your esteemed daily reproduced Arundhati Roy's "War is Peace" in October 2001. She wrote the piece immediately after the US attack on Afghanistan. I request you to please consider reproducing her recent piece "Buy One, Get One Free", if you have not already done. Her recent write-up is about the US attack on Iraq.



Flag of freedom

"Anti-Americanism"

I thought I was responding to a reasonable person when I was expressing my views on Mr. S. Khan's letter. I now see I wasted my time. Thus it may be futile to refer this article to Mr. Khan but for others who may have followed Mr. Khan's remarks, I would suggest they read an article by Paul Krugman captioned "Bush should be called for his deceptions" which appeared in IHT in its issue of June 4.

Mr. Krugman is a very well respected columnist and he is neither anti-American nor does he suffer from any inferiority complex. He suggests that the Bush administration duped the Americans not only on Iraq; it has done the same over recent tax cuts. Mr. Krugman goes on to conclude that for Americans like Mr. Khan, the issue here is not Saddam for the neo-conservatives who now rule USA and who fomented this war are the same people who "were nonchalant, or worse, about Central American death squads in the 1980s." The important point to Mr. Krugman is that the neo-conservatives told the US public that Saddam was an imminent threat and goes on to say that if that threat was fraudulent, the "selling of the war is arguably the worst scandal in American political history - worse than Watergate, worse than the Iran-contra affair".

A last word for Mr. Khan. A crow is a crow and no matter how much he/she tries to imitate, will remain one till he/she learns to respect his/her roots. **Shahjahan Ahmed Dhanmandi, Dhaka**

This is in reference to S. Khan's letter published under the heading "Anti-Americanism" (June 4).

Perhaps S. Khan could explain why celebrities like Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins, Sean Penn and the Dixie Chicks came under fire for apparently exercising their right to free speech? Is it because of the right to free speech "US Secretary of State Colin Powell was under persistent pressure from the Pentagon and White House to include questionable intelligence in his report on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction he delivered at the UN last February (as per US News and World Report)? What about those journalists who got fired by their respective employers for reporting their version of the war on Iraq? What about all the citizens from the black-listed countries who are currently in the US and whose movements have been restricted (e.g., restricted access to certain airports in the US) just because they are from potential terrorist countries? What about the US internal Justice Department report released yesterday that found serious abuses in dealing with hundreds of Muslim immigrants who were detained and deported after 9/11? US Attorney General John Ashcroft has drafted a new legislation (Domestic Security Enhancement Act) which, if adopted, "would diminish personal privacy by removing important checks on government surveillance authority, reduce the accountability of government to the public by increasing official secrecy and expand on the definition of terrorism in a manner that threatens the constitutionally protected rights of Americans" (as per the American Civil Liberties Union).

M.A. Obaydullah Melbourne, Australia

"South Asian alliance"

Considering the current situation in the world, where unilateralism by an arrogant super power has become the norm of the day, where only one nation dictates the affair of the whole mankind, it is high time that smaller and weaker nations tried to unite to ensure they don't become a victim of the rising neo-imperialism. Nations in South Asia should take step following the footsteps of EU. Bangladesh could take a bold step in forming a South Asian alliance. We must not forget that SAARC was the brainchild of President Ziaur Rahman.

Bangladesh should propose for a common currency in south Asia similar to Euro. This would allow this entire region to emerge as a powerful trading block similar to ASEAN and will boost trade and commerce. A South Asian defence pact could be signed to ensure sovereignty of

all South Asian nations in the region. If there is need for peace keeping in the region due to any crisis in any SAARC country then this South Asian defence force should do it not NATO or anybody else. This defence force will ensure, the drama that took place on the banks of Bhagirothi at 1757 is not repeated. The battle of Plassy was lost not because the invaders had more troops but because in 18th century the concept of nationhood was totally absent. The more than 500 so-called "princely states" that emerged after the collapse of the central authority of the Mogul Empire chose to fight among themselves rather than collectively opposing a foreign enemy. Individualism was the slogan of the day and the notion of "nation" was totally absent. The result was more than hundred and fifty years of foreign rule. This South Asian defence force will ensure, from the treacherous Khyber Pass to the serene hills of Chittagong, from the icy peaks of Himalayas to the sun baked shores of Maldives, entire region remains

independent. If any nation disagrees with this idea they are free to leave. Afghanistan should be immediately accepted as full member of SAARC and Bangladesh should take the first step in forming such a military alliance with Pakistan, Maldives and Afghanistan. I am sure other nations will join soon. Let us all learn from history and make sure it is not repeated again. **K.Wasimuddin Chicago, USA**

Expiry date on medicine strips

It has been noticed that some medicine strips do not have expiry dates clearly embossed and it creates a lot of confusion. Some salesmen at the drugstores themselves cannot properly explain what is the date of manufacture, particularly, the expiry date. **SMS Zaman Dhaka**

"A maximum security prison in the Bay of Bengal"

I am writing this in response to Mr. Hasanat Alamgir's letter "A maximum security prison in the Bay of Bengal" (June 4). Mr. Alamgir has rightly pointed out the need for a secluded prison for the criminals, as they often maintain contacts with their accomplices outside to continue their criminal activities while they serve their terms in the prison by dint of their unholy relationship with the wardens. I fully agree with him and so urge the authorities concerned to explore the possibility whether a prison could be established in any of the islands in the Bay of Bengal under the central control.

The prison in a remote island, should be located outside the mobile telephone zone, these days mobile telephones has become important means for communicating with the outside world. Criminals in the jail, use mobiles telephone facilities to contact outside, these we have learned from various newspaper reports.

The majority of the criminals stay on trial for prolonged period, where they have to appear in the court frequently during that period. Keeping them in a remote prison would create inconvenience for their travelling to the courts from the prison. Though Mr. Alamgir has specifically pointed out that the remote prison for the



criminals who have been sentenced already, still the on-trial criminals should also be considered for this remote prison, in spite of these difficulties, because they are the types create much problem to the public security, staying inside and outside does not make a difference and which has become a regular feature of their life pattern.

The irony is that most of these criminals manage to get bail or released within the trail period, through the loopholes of the law, then they continue their criminal activities in full swing, only a few are sentenced to jail for different periods. **Duncan Chowdhury Tejgoan, Dhaka**

CRIMINAL ISN'T IT?

