

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.

Our troops in Iraq

I am very sad and insulted even by the thought of sending our troops in Iraq. I don't know how our government can even consider the idea! The Iraqis will never treat our troops as peacekeepers; rather they will be treated as a part of the occupation force because they will be under the US army command.

We, as a nation fought our Liberation War against an occupation army and earned our independence only 32 years ago. Have we forgotten this already? If not, then how can we think of sending our troops to suppress a nation who are fighting for their independence against an occupation force? How can we be a part of this unjust, immoral war of plunder?

On the other hand, Iraq was one of the first countries to recognise the newly born Bangladesh. It will be an insult to our martyrs who sacrificed their life for our independence. I don't know how the ruling party, the opposition or any fair-minded person can compromise on this.

Why do our soldiers have to die for America? Is it because our life is not worthy enough compared to that of the Americans? For some economic gain, we don't have to send our troops to Iraq. If we do this it will be like taking bribe and the blood of freedom loving Iraqis will be on our hand. We will be accountable to our future generation. So let's unite, speak up and let the world know that we don't want to be any part of this unjust war. We are a peace-loving nation.

Syeda Murshida Mahmood
Banani, Dhaka

Tiger cub's death

Yet another incident of non-professionalism by the zoo staff (June 26, 2003). The tiger cub was reported sick. I do not know if the veterinary doctor took any precautionary measure or any attempts to diagnose the sick cub. If any measures were taken the public should be informed of that. The zoo staffs are responsible for the welfare of the captive animals under their care and are accountable to the public. The authorities should investigate the case seriously and if any instance of negligence is found the concerned staffs should be punished. The tiger is an endangered animal in the wild and is a flagship species. Because of this royal status, the zoo tigers also enjoy the 'same status' and are loved by people of all ages, especially children.

This raises the concern that the zoo staffs are not adequately trained to manage and treat wild animals. As has been rightly pointed out by Dr. Reza Khan (DS, June 11), my letter (DS, June 13) in the recent debate over the controversial statement of the curator. The concerned authorities should seriously think of transferring the zoo either under the Ministry of Environment & Forest or to give authority to some private enterprise to run the business and appoint relevant trained personnel for the maintenance and welfare of the zoo and captive animals respectively.

Deny everything!

Blame and lie; these two words fit more accurately with politics than any other profession. Politicians around the globe have made it their habit to use spin and lies, even with the most obvious matters. A few imaginary scenarios:

China: In an outbreak of virus in China, the first thing the Chinese government orders for is "isolate the area and contain the cameras!"

India: When a monkey in

downtown Bombay gets electrocuted by accidentally touching a live cable, L. K. Advani comes out and say "we have intelligence that Pakistan is behind all this."

Pakistan: Some Pakistani politicians are asked for their opinion after a man in India gets bitten by some mosquitoes. They reply "well, we totally condemn it and we will do everything we can to catch these mosquitoes. We have told India many times before, let's sit

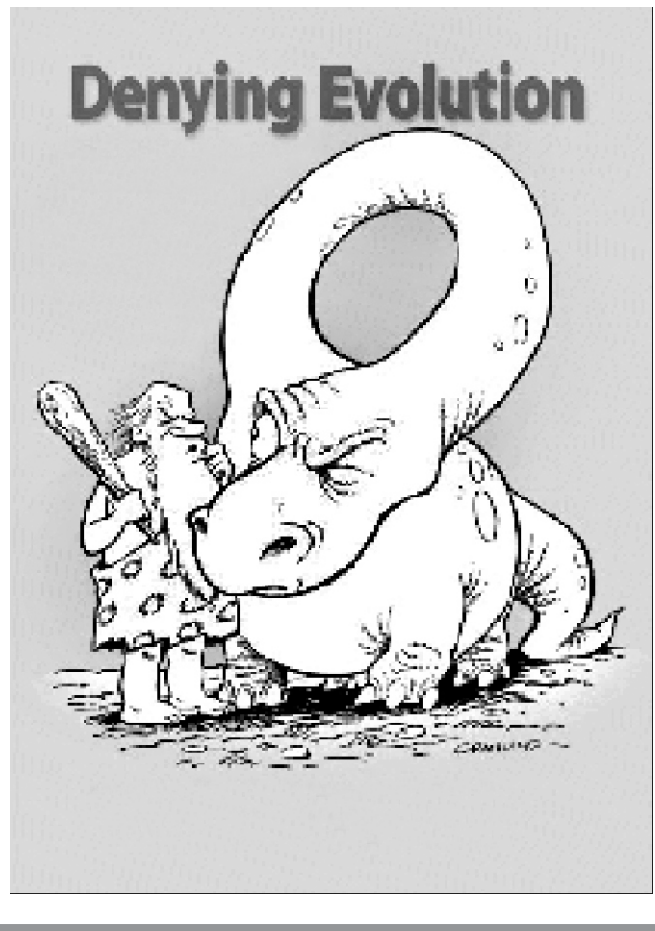
down and talk."

Palestine: Chairman Arafat goes to a car showroom to buy a new bullet-proof Mercedes. The dealer tells him the price of the car would be \$65,000. Mr Arafat says "no sir, my country is very poor and I can only offer you \$64,995." The dealer goes "hmmmm okay, but now you will only get 5% of the 22% of the original full-tank petrol that was on offer." Mr Arafat happily agrees and a few minutes later he comes out of the store with a V sign!

Bangladesh: 500 people are killed by heavy rain/flooding and the government of Khaleda Zia responds by "how can we develop this country when the opposition is playing this sort of tactics with us?" In response to that, the leader of the opposition party Sheikh Hasina "the government must resign, they can't even stop the rain. And on that note, we call for a full day hartal tomorrow!"

Israel: Ariel Sharon goes fishing but he can't catch any fish. He packs up, goes to his office and orders for few more settlements to be built. He then calls White House and says "Mr President, see everything is against us, those Arabs even get the fishes with them. We can't survive, you must help us."

Finally, I, Azad Miah categorically deny writing any of the above!
Azad Miah
Oldham, UK



S.M.A. Rashid, PhD
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

DUTP, DTCB traffic nightmare for Dhaka

This has reference to the write-up 'Business of buses' published in The Daily Star's Star City supplement on 11 June. In the era of open economy here emphasis has been given on a controlled economy in the name of 'bus route franchising' under "The Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB)".

Over the last few years any conscious citizen must have noticed that, lots of mass transport, specially four wheel vehicles of different sizes and shapes have appeared on the roads of Dhaka City under Public Transport suggestions of Dhaka Urban Transport Plan (DUTP), most of which are low quality Indian vehicles.

If we go back to the root of our transport problem in Dhaka City, we will find absence of standard criterion of routes, vehicles, fare,

and service and about environment. We must understand that, our objective is to have congestion free transport facility and to achieve that we need to ensure the following:

Standard criterion of routes (this is also linked to overall zoning plan of the city, which is non-existent in Dhaka city).

Followed by standard criterion for vehicles, fare, service and about environment.

To maintain the set standard. To bring about continuous improvement in the standards for public transport and overall system under open and fair competition.

We have to realise that, who are getting benefited out of the proposals under DUTP & DTCB at the expense of general public. Decision is ours whether we, the general public will live with donor/foreign agency proposal guided by interested lobby group. Or influence our planners and make them accountable for basic services that they are responsible

to provide as per our requirement.
Misbah
Dhaka

Shopping plus fine

These days, there seems to be a mushroom growth of shopping malls in our city but with not enough parking facilities. Due to this the car owners suffer a lot. Most of the shopping malls and markets are beside the busy roads and because of no parking facilities the customers have no choice but to park their cars on the road. And very often they are harassed and fined by the sergeant for parking on the road. But is it the customers' fault that the markets don't have sufficient parking facilities?

The other day I had a similar experience on Panthapath Road. There are many markets and hospitals on the road and if someone with a car visits these places he/she doesn't have any choice but park the car on the road. Although this road has four lanes and the last lane should be used

for parking as it is done in foreign countries, it is not the case in Panthapath. Therefore, every time we go out for shopping or some other places, the car owners have to take extra 500 taka for giving fine for parking on the road! How many days and years we have to suffer this way?
Mahbub
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

My view on Magnetic Train in Bangladesh

It is indeed a great effort from our Communication Minister to introduce the fastest magnetic line between Dhaka and Chittagong. This will definitely play a vital role for the business community as well as to the ordinary passengers. I was delighted to read about such a nice project in the daily newspapers. I therefore thought to share a few ideas regarding this.

I have been working at the Division of Railway Technology in Royal Institute of Technology (Sweden) since 1998. In my view it could be lucrative to establish broad-gauge line instead of magnetic line between the two cities and thus run high speed trains. In Sweden, newly built interregional train (non-tilted) run about 200km/h. there are few advantages to use such type of tracks. First, the travel time for the trains could be kept the same compared to the Magnetic Trains. Secondly, the goods train could hardly take two hours thirty minutes to cover the distances between the cities. This means both passenger trains and goods trains could be used on the same tracks and thus could bring enormous income to the railway sector. Finally, non-tilted trains could easily be run on such tracks.

It is necessary to inform that about 20% passengers suffer from motion sickness due to tilted trains. Once I travelled by a tilted train and vomited up to six times. I asked a few Bangladeshis if they have similar experiences and most of them do. Therefore, the concerned ministry should avoid introducing tilted-trains. According to my research, 30% passengers are likely to be affected by motion sickness in Bangladesh if tilted-trains are introduced.
Drshafiquzzaman Khan
Sweden

Commercially Important Person

Many business personalities are enjoying the status of "Commercially Important Person" (CIP) granted by the Government of Bangladesh. But there are many businessmen who are not suitable for enjoying these facilities. The government should give proper attention to the matter and should declare the status of CIP to a businessman considering the following issues:

- a) How much income tax he/she has paid to the government.
- b) How many employees are working in his/her office.
- c) How much tax/vat are paid by his/her office.
- d) How much foreign currency his/her company has earned?
- e) Whether labour law, employment law etc. are properly maintained in his/her company.
- f) Special steps taken by him/her for the welfare of the staffs.

M. Kibria
Nayapaltan, Dhaka

WMD cannot be found for the same reason Saddam cannot be found

After the US-led ouster of the Iraqi dictator, many critics have been blaming the US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair for exaggerating the threats posed by Saddam's weapons of mass destruction (WMD). This allegation is mainly based on the fact that the coalition forces have not uncovered such weapons after two months since the fall of Baghdad. These critics must ask themselves another question: Why after two months since the ouster of the Iraqi regime, have not the allies found Saddam and his two sons?

Saddam and his two sons are much reviled and they have made many enemies because of their wanton brutality toward the Iraqi people in general and their political opponents in particular. It should have been extremely easy to find them once their hold on power is gone. Yet, the Americans are nowhere near to finding Saddam. This explains that Saddam must have planned his escape knowing full well that the Americans would invade his country sooner or later. He must be hiding right inside Baghdad, a huge city of five million, where many houses can be used as hide-outs. Saddam must also have planned his armed resistance to the Americans after the fall of Baghdad. The widespread looting may be a part of the plan. If the

Americans can be kept busy fighting the looters and for their own security, they can hardly operate freely.

Similarly, Saddam might have taken elaborate steps to hide his weapons of mass destruction. Most experts think that it takes a small amount of laboratory space to develop and store these biochemical weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The only way to find them will be to search as many Iraqi houses as possible. This will take years, if not decades. In fact, the greatest danger may be that faced with growing combat casualties, the Americans will cut short their military presence and let some kind of weak Iraqi government to take over as they have done in Afghanistan where warlords now rule most of the country.

Until the Americans have captured Saddam and his sons, they may not be able to find the WMD.
Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Bush: The new Jack Ryan or Daffy Duck?

Anyone who has read Tom Clancy's books will be familiar with the character of 'Jack Ryan' -- the ordinary historian who is fated by great events to become the leader of the most powerful nation of the world. The character was honest, patriotic and plain. He shot from the hip in defence of his country and its allies. I strongly suspect that our friend Dubya has read those books and is modelling himself as a president after this character. What he forgets is that Jack Ryan may shoot from the hip at America's enemies, but he is a man wise enough to hit straight at the heart of those enemies.

What our great leader George W. Bush appears to be good at is shooting America on the foot. He may have started out well by promising to tackle the serious problem of terrorism and its root causes, but his promises have remained just that -- promises. When the US and British forces liberated Iraq, they forgot one very important thing: how to win the victory and not just the war. Unfortunately political guidance from Washington and London, as well as an obtuse attitude taken by many European and Arab capitals, has not helped. The coalition troops in Iraq have been tripping over their own plans when trying to pacify the ill feelings of Iraqis and also trying to satisfy their political masters.

The man most responsible, according to major American news publications, for the fiasco in post-Saddam Iraq is Donald Rumsfeld. He advocated a policy of doing more with less in military operations. However he has very little idea of how to conduct peacekeeping and policing operations in conflict areas. Instead of cajoling and sweet-talking Muslim countries into providing peacekeepers, Dubya is presenting terrorists with big fat American targets. What seriously bothers me is why aren't there entire divisions of troops from all over the world conducting humanitarian operations in Iraq as well as helping in the search for weapons of mass destruction. What 911 has shown us is that terrorists will stop at nothing to push their agendas. Muslim troops under US leadership would dramatically reduce the tensions now simmering in Iraq which threaten to breed more terrorists out of desperate men and women. Then there is the sudden sale of oil without even any semblance of an Iraqi government in place. It may be a straightforward transaction, but the suddenness and the lack of clarity about who receives the money are bothering a lot of people.

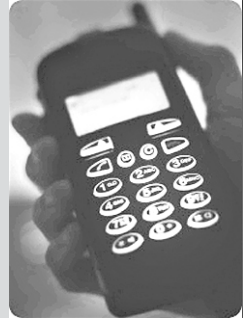
Mr. Bush, please raise your gun and shoot at America's enemies and not at your country's foot.
Ahsan
Dhaka

Bangla band songs

I haven't watched BTV for years and seldom turned the Radio Bangladesh on. And had stopped myself from listening to the cut-copy songs of Bengali Bands. But I can recall the time when some bands in our country attempted to sing the old songs with modern approach. It became a trend after Maksud (Feedback) was scolded and reproached by the intellectuals for his attempt to sing a song of Tagore with modern approach. One must admit that his composition of the song had degraded the previous (original) version. He couldn't re-compose the song maintaining the harmony with the lyrics, inner sense of the lyrics and all other parameters, which make a song worth listening. But one must also admit that he took a very good attempt. And that's what we see today, bands like Bangla and Dew Drops are making sensation.

However I've listened the songs of Lalou sung by Farida Parvin. And listened some of Bangla's re-

What about prepaid GP mobile?



Grameen Phone - a leading cellular phone company in Bangladesh has declared a slash in the call rate which is a welcome move by the company and by doing so it has fulfilled a long cherished desire of the cellular phone users in the country at large. But intriguingly, the prepaid cell users have been left out of this benefit package.

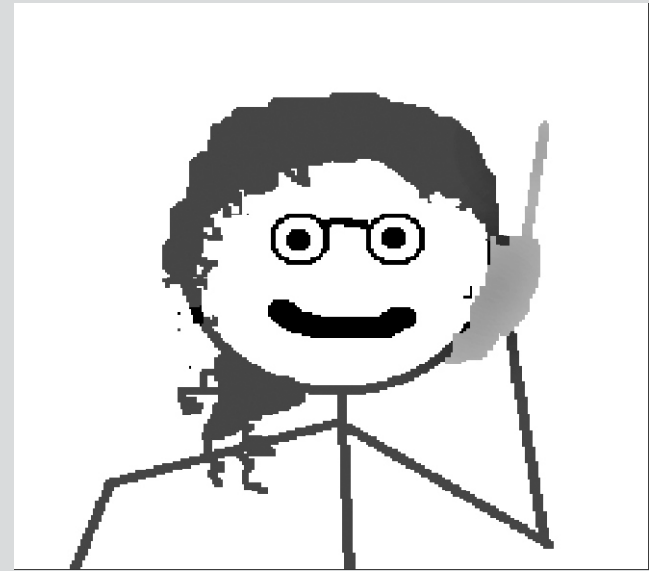
It may not be out of place to point out that the Grameen Phone Company launched the prepaid facility to woo a good number of people who belonged to the fixed income group and who also prefer to avoid hassles of paying bills through booths or designated bank counters. Prepaid facility was an excellent system indeed. But the recent declaration of slashing call rate in other packages alone may discourage the prepaid users.

Against this backdrop, I would like to draw the attention of the Grameen Phone company as well as the authorities concerned to investigate into the matter and do the needful for the greater interest of the common public using prepaid cell phones
Binyamin, Dhaka

Sufferings of the cellphone users

Four cellular telephone operators came into operation over the last one decade. Their overnight popularity amongst the subscriber is not due to their services or call rate charges, rather they got a "fertile" number of prospective users who does not have a chance in their lifetime to get a BTB "land-line" connection in a legal way.

Earlier, I had a 'pre-paid' mobile connection with the biggest GSM cellular telephone operator in the country. Since I required a BTB in-coming and out-going facilities, I opted for a CDMA connection in the last October, 2002. At that



There's something about cellphone

time, the operator CityCell Digital announced that they would provide voice telephony, BTB in-coming and out-going facilities and SMS service a service that is very attractive to the subscribers of all age.

After I bought the connection, I was upset with their service while making calls either from the proper zone or while on roaming. I learnt that this situation arose because of their indiscriminate increase of connections regardless of the capacity of their switches that sometimes bounds their switches to shut down for a long time!

More importantly, it is going to be eight months since I had bought the connection, and still I cannot send SMS to my friends or relatives under their networks, nor I can receive SMS from them! If one service provider cannot provide a service which they had committed and advertised before launching their service, then the subscribers can consider the service provider's commitment and advertisement as a total lie.

I had communicated with their office, written them several letters, and found that still my messages do not reach my desired numbers. In addition, the locality I am staying lacks proper signal strength for making a call. All the calls are usually "lost" within a minute of call establishment! And due to their very bad network facility, I lost a lot of money over last eight months, and all the callers to my phone did lose money as well. In cases of emergency, I had experiences that I cannot get a connection even if I have tried for an hour or more.

Besides, any one must say that the call charge in the cellular telephones is the highest in the South Asian countries. In no way, a call should be more than 1.00 taka (one taka only), including their operational expenses, whereas the SMS should be free of cost, for a 'pre-paid' user. In reality, the operators are charging 6.00 taka for a pre-paid call. Can some one imagine the huge income of the operators! And the time limit for the pre-paid cards should be related to the balance amount in the account it can be one year, or in some cases only a few days depending on the time the user exhausts the balance.

Sajjad Waheed
Senior Lecturer
School of Communication, IUB

I refer to the comments made by Mr. Fredrick T. Temple, the outgoing country director of World Bank in Dhaka on Bangladesh political system (June 27).

Mr. Temple has justly said "the political system in Bangladesh is being increasingly commercialised by the way election system works and that generates the demands for bribes". He further said that the "candidates spend huge amounts of money to get elected" and that "if they win, many use their offices to recoup their investments with profit". Will our *Netas* and *Nettes* (leaders) counter his remarks? No! They cannot because they know what Mr. Temple has said is true.

Unfortunately, throughout the world the democratic political system has had been the luxury of the affluent classes and nowhere in the world the "democratic" elections are ordinary man's game.
Nazmul Karim
Dhaka

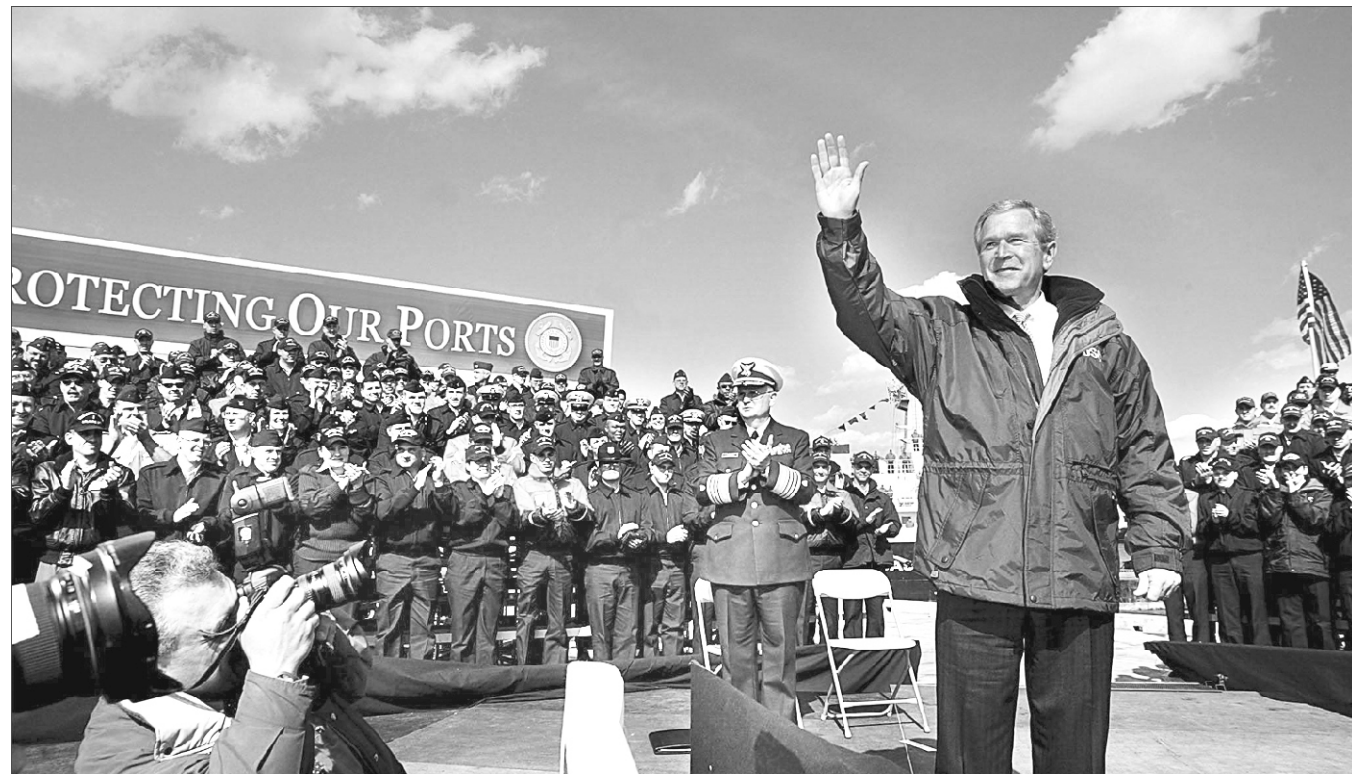
Our politics

composition of those songs. Though their composition aren't bad but they aren't talented enough to the height of the previous one. And in their re-composition the original feelings aren't preserved. We want a better version of old songs if they must be re-composed. But none of the bands have been able to do so.

But recently I turned the radio on and got the chance to hear the song 'chal, chal, chal'. (By Kazi Nazrul Islam) sung by the group 'Dew Drops'. It has the enthusiasm, the music do complement to the inner sense and thus dignify the song.

Though the age of modern Bangla language is not much old but it has got a treasure of valuable poems, lyrics and songs, which our bands can use, they need not copy all those English lyrics and tune. A good example here could be Dew Drops' *chal, chal, chal*.
A Islam Nirvic
One-mail

A peaceful alien



The President assured...

Aung San Suu Kyi has been taken prisoner once more. Regimes such as Mugabe's continues to wreak havoc among their own people. In the past, I would have been duly concerned about the world's unfortunate polities but I do that no more. Why?

Because President Bush has assured us that justice shall be served and that I can go shop at Wal Mart with reckless abandon. No act of terror or policy against peace and democracy will go unpunished. Beware all you bad guys! We are coming

after you!

Of course, for a second there was a little worry about the economy, not having a job and having to move back to a country of "dishonest" people (thank you Mr. S. Khan, I was looking for one word with which to sweepingly and accurately describe 140 million people). However, the President assured me not once but at least four or five times in his speech at a Minnesota speaking engagement the other day that his tax cut would yield jobs. So

no worries there either. What is wrong with all those 11 Nobel laureates criticising the tax cut anyway? Do they not get it? It's so simple. More money for the rich, insignificant tax returns for the middle-income, practically no help for the poor and astronomical deficits in all channels of social spending. See this way, we are eliminating the two things that cause the most unhappiness, the poor and social programs. Once they are out of the way, everyone will be happy again. It's so

simple. Tax cuts = happiness.

As long as those "leftist liberal elite" (thank you Mr Elahi for giving me a term to describe all people not as conservative as John Ashcroft) trouble makers don't disturb my blissful repose with their disgusting "class warfare" and "Saddam loving, freedom hating" protests, I will be a happy alien, maybe even a tickled happy alien.

Iresh Zaker
Philadelphia, USA