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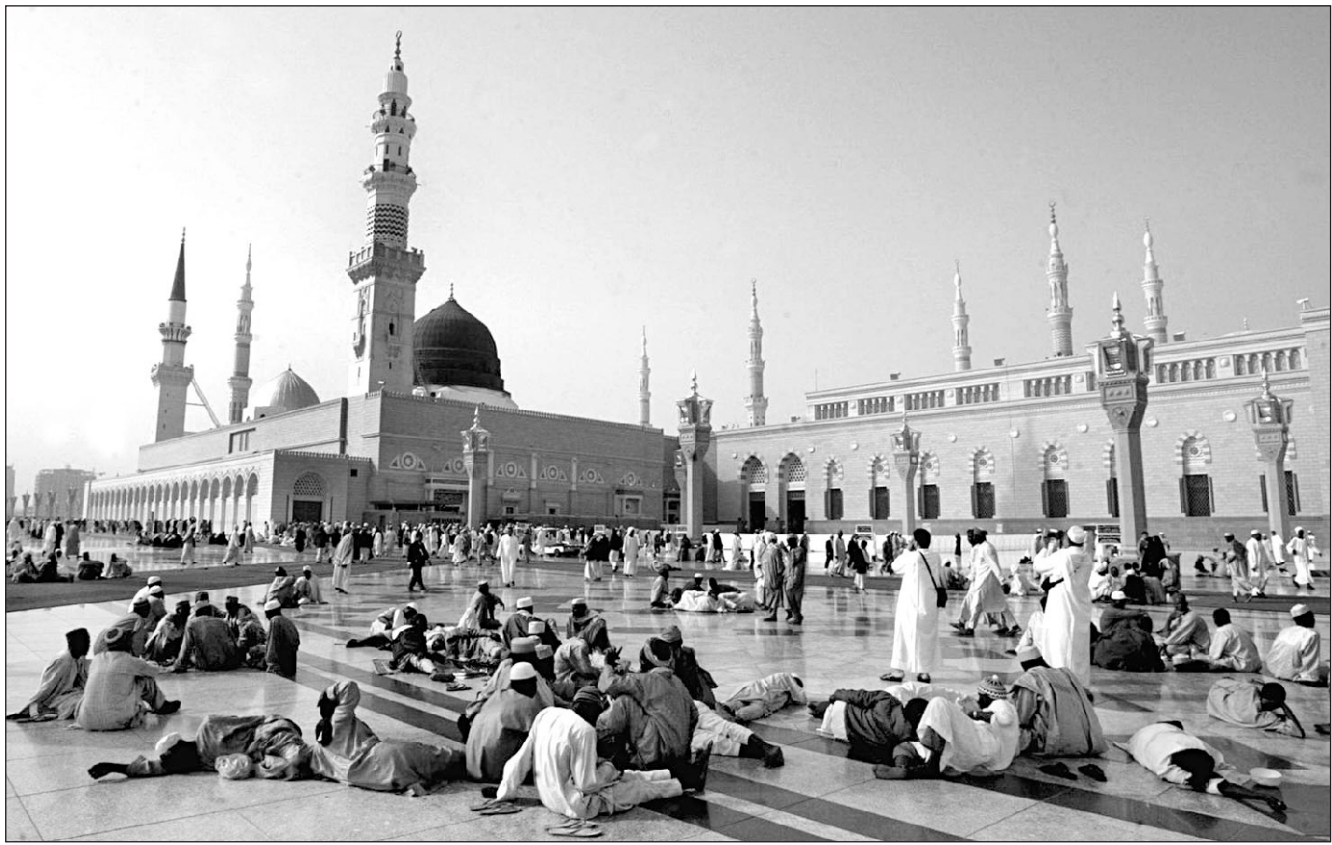


PHOTO: AFP

## Death of Hajis at Mina

It was a pleasant Eid, interspersed with extreme bouts of stress and tension because of the deaths of Hajis at Mina. I have a few relevant questions and observations about the seemingly routine, apparently varying only in degree and magnitude, deaths.

The Saudi government, caretaker and custodian of the holy sites, has, in

my opinion, failed to handle the situation with care and attention. Why is there not a system which would enable the Hajis to enter and exit the venue in an orderly fashion? There is a similar crowd gathering at the Vatican every Christmas and Easter but nobody ever dies from stampede. Isn't it a combination of intense religious fervour, frenzy

and zeal on the part of Hajis and lack of efficient management on the part of the Saudi government?

All the countries sending Hajis, especially those with casualties in the latest mishap, have a right to demand an explanation from the Saudi authorities.

**Omar Khasru**  
On e-mail

ary 5 to explain that status of "discovery" of WMDs in Iraq. After the speech, four panellists on CNN tore Mr. Tenet's points apart. It looked to us as if Mr. Tenet would have done better if he had kept his trap shut.

The ammunition that Mr. Tenet gave was of various kinds. First, he admitted that intelligence is never absolutely right or absolutely wrong which suggested that the US President was advised tentatively on the case against Saddam Hussein. Second, he admitted that WMDs have not been found and only the "intent" was revealed. Finally, and this is dangerous to the UK, he admitted that Saddam's regime never posed any immediate threat at the time of the invasion which was the main argument for Mr. Blair to take his country to war. The panellists revealed a number of interesting points. First, that containment was working in Iraq. The former chief weapon's inspector Mr. Kay's revelations before resigning that Iraq had no stockpiles of WMDs at the point of invasion strengthens this argument. Second, Saddam Hussein was not that uncooperative as the US stated and one panellist who was a UN weapons inspector said that Iraq did not allow inspection of the sites such as Presidential Palaces because among the inspectors were CIA agents who were known to be plotting to assassinate Saddam. By hindsight now, the places that Iraq did not allow inspectors to enter were places that were not even remotely related to any WMD programme and Saddam Hussein was right not to let the CIA agents in to his security areas on grounds of national and his own security. Finally, the claim by Mr. Tenet that action in Iraq encouraged Libya and Iran to cooperate with IAEA on the nuclear programme is misplaced and wrong. One panellist said that Libya was trying for the last 10 years or so to talk to the Americans to come back to the fold but without success. He just cleverly used the Iraq issue to draw the attention of the USA, which he received. Of Iran, the panellists said that Iran's decision to open its facilities was taken when the US got bogged down in Iraq and was in no position to mount an additional assault and that too only after the EU foreign ministers who had been working with Iran for a long time made a visit to Tehran.

A year ago, Mr. Tenet was leaving no one in doubt that Iraq had WMDs. In his speech, all he could say was that intelligence now available proved only Iraq's intent to possess WMDs which not only weakens the

## War and propaganda

Latest exposures indicate that the USUK led aggression against Iraq fits into a propaganda paradigm. The exposures reveal the true extent of a deep-rooted scheme to invade Iraq fabricating intelligence information used to justify the war, thanks to the piercing boldness of David Kay and 'Powell's doubt' and the roles played by the western media and the vibrancy of their democracies. The exposures should prompt the world to ask the governments of the United States and United Kingdom as to why they invaded Iraq. It is an international responsibility. Whatever Mr. Bush and Mr. Blair are telling the world publicly have been proved to be lies; and the international community should act immediately so that they cannot change the voices.

The Iraqi threat bogey rationalised Washington's acting in self-defence, pursuant to Article 51 of the UN Charter, although there was no evidence to prove that Iraq constituted a threat to the US in specific terms. Bypassing the charter, the US UK coalition resorted to using the doctrine of pre-emption as well as prevention to destroy Iraq as a countervailing power to

Israel in the Middle East. Saddam's patronisation of the Palestinian upsurge so flabbergasted Washington's Jewish lobby that the war became unavoidable. In an emotional rush towards the war, the US did not bother to show an iota of respect to Article 33 of the Charter that necessitates the obtaining of facts in any disputed situation where the claims of self-defence are made on one side and rebutted by the other. The USUK coalition also violated Article 37(1) of the Charter that requires of disputing parties to refer the matter to the UNSC upon exhaustion of other means stipulated in Article 33 such as negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitra-

tion, etc.

Bush insisted on no talks with Saddam. As well, the US and the UK invoked the cease-fire resolution of April 1991 ((Resolution 687), in which the UNSC linked the easing or lifting of sanctions to the disarmament of Iraq. As it is evident now, Iraq did not possess any WMD to pose a threat to the US. The warmongers -- Bush and Blair -- find themselves nakedly exposed before the world.

**Sirajul Islam**  
Social sciences researcher and consultant  
Pisciculture Housing Society, Shyamoli, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

## Woman leadership

The leaders and the activists of our Islamic parties time and again say that according to Islamic Shariah woman leadership in a Muslim country is not permitted (*najaez*). But at the same time two MPs of the Jamaat-e-Islami have become ministers of the government which is headed by a woman prime minister. Another MP of the Islami Oikya Jote is saying that he will resign from the JS if he is not made a minister.

Now the question is, if woman leadership is not permitted, then is it lawful to become a minister under a woman prime minister?  
**Iqbal Ahmed**  
New Eskaton, Dhaka

## RAJUK plots

Thanks are due to the RAJUK authorities for extending the date of submitting application for allotment of plots at Gulshan, Banani and Uttara (3rd phase). As per the notice of RAJUK, persons having land, flat, residence within 590 sq. miles either in one's name or in the name of spouse, children or dependants, have been barred from applying for plot. Apparently it sounds justified, but should it be applicable for the residents of old Dhaka? Is there any cogent reason to debar the people of old Dhaka from applying for the government plots?

If we look into the old part of Dhaka, we see that each residence is owned by a group of people who have inherited the property. Barring a few exceptions, in most cases the individual share of land is less than 2 katha. With the increase of population, the land has been divided into a number of pieces according to the number of co-sharers.

So, anyone visiting the old part of Dhaka will have a glimpse of innumerable buildings vertically extended in a small piece of land. It's really hard for anyone to distinguish the buildings from one another. Since the buildings are constructed

on small pieces of land, proper attention could not be given to sanitation, light, air etc. To tell the truth, no building is hygienic enough to live in. The overall sanitation, drinking water, electricity and other civic amenities are in bad shape.

So, naturally, besieged with a number of problems, many residents of old Dhaka look for better accommodation in the new parts of Dhaka. They become interested to try their luck when the government organisations like RAJUK invite applications for allotment of plots. But, unfortunately, that path has been made inaccessible to them due to the policy pursued by RAJUK. Simply for being a co-sharer along with five/six persons (in some cases even more than that) in a small land measuring mostly from .5 to 2 katha, they are debarred from applying for a plot. It's unfortunate and uncalled for. The bar in question should be withdrawn in the greater interest of equity and justice.

It would be appreciated if the proposed amendment is made immediately, so that the people of old Dhaka can apply for the plots in Uttara, Gulshan and Banani, the last date of which has already been extended to 15th instant. We are expecting a corrigendum of the notice in this regard before the deadline.

**Engr. Md. Shafique Uddin**  
Bagdasha Lane, Dhaka

## "Shopping centres of Dhaka"

This is in response to Mr. SU Ahmed's letter in the DS on February 6, 2004.

My observations on 'Shopping centres of Dhaka' were aimed at not on scrutinising the article, but at pointing out a few of several factual errors for the benefit of the readers. I enjoy a good professional and social rapport with the authors that spans more than two decades. Please be informed that I have

reviewed international journal articles on Dholai Khal, and the DS published several articles by me on urban issues in the early 1990s.

Perhaps I should start writing again, as Mr. Ahmed suggested, starting with 'Dhaka's antiquity' which certainly goes several centuries.

**Mahbub Rahman**  
Architect-Urban Designer  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## "Why?"

This letter is in response to Prasenjit

have national holidays for Durga Puja, for Christmas and for Budhha Purnima proves the point. Look at the United States. It has people with different ethnic backgrounds and religions. Yet, Christianity is the only religion that is celebrated. There are no holidays for Eid or Puja. Why, don't the American Muslims or Hindus belong to that country? At least, in Bangladesh the minorities get holidays to spend that special day in whatever fashion they like, which is a lot more than what other countries do for their minorities.



PHOTO: AFP

## AQ Khan controversy

Now that Dr A.Q. Khan has been pardoned by President Musharraf, let's put an end to this sorry saga. It would have been easier for President Musharraf to carry out his investigation if it was any other scientist. But Mr. Khan being a national hero in his country and a man who has unquestionable respect of every Pakistani, has made President Musharraf's job a lot harder. Nevertheless, I believe President Musharraf has handled this very volatile and explosive issue in a discreet manner.

However, we know some countries will try to use this issue to blackmail Pakistan into allowing 'spying' under the name of 'UN inspection'. Or perhaps even push for Pakistan to give up its nukes. Under no circumstances Pakistan should let those IAEA comedians anywhere near its facilities and there is absolutely no need for any external nose-poking! What happens with Pakistan's nukes is its internal matter and no one has any right to interfere. President Musharraf has said it spot on: "This is a sovereign country. No document will be given. No independent investigation will take place here." Indeed, we can no longer allow any double-standard application of UN. But I don't think Pakistan's trouble is over.  
**Azad Miah, Oldham, UK**

Sarker's letter entitled, "Why?", February 6.

He questions why we don't pay as much attention to festivities of other religions. I think the answer is quite simple: we live in a country which has a Muslim-majority, and so Eid celebrations are a lot more extravagant than Durga Puja, for example.

However, that does not mean that we don't respect other religions and their festivals. The very fact that we

**NM**  
WI, USA

## CIA director speaks

These columns have carried many letters expressing divergent views on US/UK invasion of Iraq, mostly against. Those who opposed were given the best ammunition to argue against the war from none other than the CIA Director George Tenet when he came live on TV on Febru-

case for invasion; it destroys it. It would now be interesting to see how the US administration handles the fallout and whether Mr. Tenet becomes the fall guy. Also, we would wait to see how Mr. Blair handles Mr. Tenet's categorical assertion that Iraq was not an imminent threat when he allied with the US to invade Iraq.

**Shahjahan Ahmed**  
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

## US Congressmen and minorities

After reading the letter of Mr. Bijan Kumar Nath published in The Daily Star on January 28, the accusation of a black student in a foreign Institute came to my mind. When the inebriated student from an African country was charged by police for making bizarre noise on the corridor of a hotel at night, he accused the police of discriminating a black, an

appeal to anyone when faced with injustice.

Can the examples cited by Mr. Nath be termed as discrimination or are those commonplace injustice? Can Mr. Nath answer to the following questions that are whacking my mind: 1) what is the basis of defining majority and minority? 2) If I as a Muslim and as an ethnic Bengali, is selected for a membership of the majority, can Mr. Nath guarantee an effective safeguard for me against

the examples of discriminations he cited land-grabbing, antagonism by the political opponents when the party I vote for loses the election and so on? If you can, please render me your contacts through The Daily Star so that I can fulfil my dream of getting that guarantee in exchange of a befitting reward for you.

I would ardently request Mr. Nath not to mix up migration or immigration (economic or voluntary) with political asylum. We people have a trend to be the majority that is one of the supreme causes of immigration. Why the Jews around the world tend to come to the state of Israel? Are they being discriminated against in Ethiopia, former Soviet Union or in the United States? Why have my millionaire Bangladeshi Hindu friend living abroad built a luxurious house at Salt Lake, Kolkata? He could have easily lived in an elite locality of Dhaka where religion or ethnicity could have never been a matter of one's query.

The feeling of being a member of the majority is just like the feeling of wearing ornaments by a woman. It strengthens the interior of a person more than it can beatify the exterior. And not only that! Democracy also heralds the infliction of the opinion of the majority on the minority if there is no such complex procedure of elections as for the president of the United States (Mr. Gore got more votes than Mr. Bush in 2000). And even the most powerful and advanced country, from which the Congressmen are, has not been able to prevent the hate-crimes despite sincere efforts.

**Ahmed Mohiuddin**  
Dhaka



## Citizens need help

In Bangladesh, the cell phone companies are doing monopoly business. The service is very poor and the call rates are extremely high. I, as a customer, feel that the government has a big role to play in this regard. The clients are paying monthly service charge and if the companies cannot provide the assured service, then they should refund the money.

I, as a citizen of this country, feel that more companies should be encouraged to do this business.

If we compare our cell phone companies with other countries', the cell charges should not be more than Tk. 1.00 per minute and the monthly rent cannot be more than Tk 200.

**Colonel (Retd.) Towficur Rahman**  
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka

## "Transformation of a glorious city"

Dr. Syed Saad Andalib is to be congratulated for his most comprehensive/thoughtful article under the above heading which appeared in the Point Counterpoint page of The Daily Star on February 5.

The pictures of residential areas in good old Dhaka with its greenery and tree covered roads, clean environment having so many ponds of unpolluted clear water and orchards (Gandaria, Wari, Narinda etc.) are indeed unforgettable. This is just to add to the preamble of the subject article of Dr. Andaleeb already narrating the beautiful lush green Ramna and all other areas beyond the railway track of the past (new Dhaka of that time). Virtually all those, as rightly but regretfully, summed-up now turned from 'grace to ugliness', to say the least, despite great costly developments with so many grand projects particularly after this megacity gained the status of becoming capital of an independent Bangladesh.

It is no use for anyone to come out with any excuse blaming the state of affairs now existing and which may soon transform Dhaka to a place not fit for human habitation, as pre-

dicted by many thinkers/experts by their utterances/write-ups through the media. Perhaps, the writer being a NRB (non resident Bangladeshi) did not experience the unbearable condition of air-pollution before the two stroke engine-vehicles were banned from our city streets, which made the situation much better and so is the effect of action against polythene bags. From all signs, the short-lived good result may not last long. As the situation seems to be again reversing due to lack of enforcement of the law, when, we, the old and children in particular, may once again have to put up with the lack of fresh air (with max tolerable level of pollution) so essential for our survival. Then come the health hazards for everybody originating from lack of basic hygiene/ sanitation for the vast floating population and the slum-dwellers. The terrible mosquito menace is in fact the by-product of the conditions created by the absence of proper drainage/cleanliness. Poverty cannot or should never be the cause for all the ugly scene that we witness all over Dhaka these days.

How can we hold on to the habit of

keeping our eyes shut in these days of great IT revolution enabling people to see, hear and learn as human beings from each other? Or remain ignorant about all the progress in these respects happening to our neighbours/world at large? As a matter of fact, we have more people

with money to day than ever before and the percentage of education is also much higher, then what makes us all sit idle and watch the situation going from bad to worse everyday, as time passes? Each and every recommendation / suggestion contained in the write-up by Dr.

Andaleeb ought to be carefully examined by our city fathers to be followed up for immediate execution jointly by the officials concerned of the conservancy/health departments of the DCC.

**Z Rahman**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

