

After invasion, whither Iraq?



PHOTO:AFP

When the United States invaded Iraq, a New York times news survey estimated that 42 per cent of American public believed that Saddam Hussein was directly responsible for 9/11 attacks on the WTC and the Pentagon. And an ABC news poll said that 55 per cent of Americans believed that Saddam Hussein directly supported Al-Qaeda. On the other hand, the neo-conservative American administration propagated that Iraq possessed WMDs which were a threat to American security and the world in general. About Iraq's possession of WMDs War monger George W. Bush said, "It

would be suicidal for the US not to attack Iraq." But none of these is based on evidence. In spite of being opposed by the peace-loving rest of the world, America invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003. War was essential for America because in their opinion they wanted to see a liberated Iraq. The Bush administration wanted to spread a democratic ideology. Apparently, Iraq has been liberated. But nobody is secure there today. What does Mr. Bush have to say about it? **Aynal Hoque**
University of Dhaka

Plant and protect trees

Most of the people of our country cannot manage two square meals a day. To reduce this problem we need to grow more crops. President Ziaur Rahman took steps such as: Plant what you can beside your house. You must use your land properly. It was a great decision. At present, our government does not takes such steps. It is the season to plant trees. The government spends a lot of money for plantation. But they do not take any steps to protect these plants. So the money is wasted. **Kabir Jony**
On e-mail

Gay marriage

I would like to respond to the letter of Mr. Raihan, CUET, on gay marriage. In his letter Raihan said, "If we go back to history of Roman Empire, the epidemic of homosexuality was rampant and they became filled with every kind wickedness, evil, greed, depravity, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice." Mr. Raihan, I must ask you to whom you actually refer when you use the words "they became"? Are you speaking of people with your views? Are you speaking of the world in general as it is now, as indeed it seems to describe it pretty well I would say. Please explain exactly what you mean. **Zabidur Rahman**
Toronto, Canada

Tall talk about Teletalk

I have discovered the following amazing facts about my Teletalk connection, which I obtained from a lottery and after paying Tk.3, 000 at the bank: 1. There was an announcement that on account of the reduction of VAT from Tk.1200 to Tk.900, the Tk.300 overpaid by customers during the interim period before finalisation of VAT would be repaid as talk time credit. No such credit has yet been made and there is no statement as to when it will be done. 2. Though I can make the extremely expensive normal ISD calls based on the old technology from my Teletalk connection, the economy international call based on the more efficient modern VoIP technology that every T&T landphone, including those without ISD facilities, can make (using the prefix 012 in place of 00) is not allowed by Teletalk. This effectively means I actually cannot use Teletalk for my usual international calls. 3. Teletalk is so callous about its customers that they do not bother to advertise where refill cards are available. 4. Worst of all, and the most suspicious part of the Teletalk set-up is that even when I do not use my Teletalk cell phone for days, using my land phone instead, the talk time credit (as heard from 1515) keeps decreasing by itself. Even if it can be established that Teletalk did not issue multiple cards with the same

account, it is up to the authorities to explain how this can happen, since there are no incoming charges, and of course no line rent for prepaid service. 5. Teletalk never advertises any value added service, such as Friday reductions, concession for a set of chosen numbers or GPRS service, as other operators do, and yet the finance minister made many sarcastic remarks about the high call rate and profiteering of the private operators, which are true, but which could be curbed only if Teletalk could set a highly competitive example. I think the BTRC is as useless as the Anti-Corruption Commission and should be abolished. Consumers should get together, and with support from the media, they alone can bring this unsatisfactory state of a promising public enterprise to order. **Sudhir Mitra**
Tipu Sultan Road, Dhaka

Terrorism and London attacks



PHOTO:AFP

sioner to enforce only one rule to ease our sufferings. That is, please ensure plying of rickshaws, vans including all types of non-motorised vehicles on the left side of the road in a queue; bus, truck & heavy vehicles in the middle and light speedy (motor cars) in the right side as per traffic regulations. If you can enforce this rule, I am sure there will be a lot of improvement in the traffic system. **M. A. Bashar**
Dhaka

LPG issue

I think we need to clearly know the following: 1. Is the LPG being proposed by our policymakers derived from local gas or imported fuel? If it is based on imported oil, why should we go for it at all when we have our own gas at home? 2. Does the policy prescribe 'replacing existing pipelines' or supplying LPG to newer establishments only? Why should we destroy the expensive infrastructure that exists already? 3. Do we have any idea how will the cost of LPG increase because of unofficial 'toll takers' on the streets when the whole nation becomes dependent on this commodity? Piped gas can at least flow without being charged by such elements. 4. In quantitative terms can we have an estimate what percentage of the total national gas output is wasted by housewives, and what percentage in the form of tampered meters or unpaid bills? Is the LPG option for households cost effective? (As I believe piped gas will still flow to the establishments consuming the bulk of it). 5. Can we not spend some money into media campaigning for not wasting gas? This may be a better investment than replacing the existing infrastructure. 6. Can we not have a pre-paid gas meter if the wastage is beyond acceptable limits? Every house can have one at their own costs. To make it affordable give a project with reasonable money and time to local technologists. BUET has already developed a prepaid meter for electricity, similar meter for gas should also be possible locally. I am ready to take up this technology challenge if required funds are given, but there should be assurance that the product would be ordered for local use if tested satisfactory, and that similar finished item would not be imported at low tax while imposing high taxes on the raw materials for its local fabrication.

Sadly enough, I mention this last clause out of real life experience over many years. (A recent report says that prepaid electricity meters would be imported for distribution in certain areas in Chittagong. Why take up this import based project when BUET people have developed products successfully?) **Professor Siddique-e-Rabbani**
Department of Physics Dhaka University

Mr. NewYork's stand

Dear Mr. NewYork, thank you for the abridged finance review on the yield curve, however your response is at best dull and inaccurate in the Bangladesh financial market context, or in fact in any financial market context. Firstly, it is absolutely inaccurate to mention that the yield curve is purely based on investor expectation and not on government action. Even finance folks in the States, in financial city centres in New York would move out of the "financial theory" mind box and acknowledge that the Fed policy & treasury actions very much affect the yield curve, especially the spot rate curve. Fed directly affects the Fed rate and then it has some ripple effect on the rest of the yield curve. So similarly in Bangladesh, the treasury action greatly affects the yield curve. Probably where Mr. Byron's article was lacking was that it did not specify what type of yield curve it was. Given that a secondary bond market is non-existent, it is safe to assume he was talking about some treasury spot rate curve. Mr. New York, if you might also not be aware that in the Bangladesh

Bond market most commercial banks base their rate sheet off the Bangladesh Bank rate lists. Given that there is no secondary market, these institutional investors are not really forming forward looking "expectations about the economy" but rather acting as agents of the central bank, in adopting the rate sheet. Therefore, Mr. Byron is absolutely right in assuming that rates of all maturities, depicted in the yield curve, are influenced by the central bank's actions. **Naureen Khan**
Banani, Dhaka

PRSP and budget

A lot of thanks to Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar for his column "PRSP and the proposed budget". If the government could make such an environment where everybody is able to be the writer of his future then poverty will go off automatically. Bangladesh is a country where there are a lot of natural resources and manpower. We, the citizens of Bangladesh, need the right kind of political commitment and a corruption free environment. **Abu Raihan**
On e-mail

Water scarcity

Through your esteemed daily I want to draw the attention of the relevant authorities about the acute water scarcity in Blocks N, O, P, Q, R and S of Noorjahan Road of Mohammadpur since the middle of May. There is hardly any water supply since the last 45 days, which has affected more than 150 holdings, mostly multi-storied buildings. It is unbelievable that we are not getting any water supply for more than six weeks. Local authorities do not bother or care about it. Time and again we complained in person to the executive engineer at the WASA office in Lalmatia. He didn't even bother to find out the reason and on top of that his rough behaviour shocked us all.

Through this column of yours I appeal to the minister in charge, the managing director, and chief engineer of WASA to look into the matter. **An affected dweller**
On e-mail

High Court directives

Thanks to Mr M Abdul Latif Mondal for offering a good analysis on the above issue in DS on 26 June. I had already raised a question whether there would be any need for enactment of a new law to enforce the HC directives to the EC. Although M. Mondal's analysis does not have a clear answer to my question, yet it appears that the existing laws are enough to enforce the directives of the HC. However, one should keep in mind the reference of Indian Supreme Court rulings on a similar issue in India and the legal battle it had to endure to get a Supreme Court ruling as mentioned in his analysis. I am a bit surprised that there is very little reaction on the issue from the politicians so far. To clarify my stand on the issue, I very much welcome the HC rulings. **ABangladeshi**
On e-mail

Appalling scene

I was not only perplexed but also shocked at the picture of our Honourable Prime Minister beside the cadaver of Juba Dal leader Sagir Ahmed in a news report published in The Daily Star on June 26. Sagir was assassinated by hoodlums. He might have been a petty party activist but certainly he was a notorious terrorist who patronised hoodlism and terrorism in his locality. And his homicide is the consequence of intra-party conflicts. We came to know that most of the BNP stalwarts assembled at their party head office to mourn the death of Sagir. But the visit of the PM surprised all of us. It was noting but recognition of notoriety. Sagir was a murderous criminal and he was accused in many criminal cases. Such things discourage the young generation to think about national politics. **Molla Mohammad Shaheen**
Dept of English, DU

Malaysian investment on highway

We applaud the Malaysian firm for their keen interest to invest on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway. There is no doubt that this kind of investment will boost our communications sector. **Syed Benojir Ahmed**
Atlanta, US

Why this wastage of natural resources?

It's a matter of great concern as well as shame for the whole nation that we are losing our valuable natural gas due to carelessness of an unskilled foreign company. Shouldn't we use our own experts? What do our engineers do? If they need advanced training and technological support, why

doesn't the government provide them with the same? When we have been endowed with such a huge quantity of natural gas, which is worth billions of dollars, expending thousands of dollars to train our own professionals will be no wastage of money. Rather, it will increase our confidence to explore and utilise our potential resources with the least possibility of great loss out of mishandling. We may in no time become one of the richest countries in this region like the oil-rich Arab countries. So what are we waiting for? **Md. Arif Sadeq**
University of Dhaka

A great day

July 9 was a memorable day for me as well as for all successful S.S.C. examinees. On that day at 3:00p.m. I was in a cyber cafe to get the results through internet. It was an exciting moment for me. At just 4, the results appeared in the monitor and without making any delay I rushed through the web search and got the result. It showed me GPA-5. But unfortunately the other computers of that cafe could not search for the results as the web site had overload. There were so many people in that place waiting for results. And luckily only I got the results before all. They congratulated me. It was a great moment. **Joyonto Roy**
Rangpur Cadet College

Unsmart BTv

There is no end to complaints against BTv. Sometimes BTv gets my blood boiling. I don't think anyone ever watches "bosta pocha" drama programmes of BTv after the entrance of satellite channels, you better not. Luckily (?) sometimes I get the opportunity of watching BTv when we are disconnected from

Drive against adulteration

Thanks to DS for the in-depth stories based on facts and photographs, which prompted the government to initiate drastic action against the people engaged in adulteration and all sorts of unhygienic practices. The home ministry constituted two mobile courts, each headed by a first class magistrate who are conducting raids on different food processing units, shopping malls, kitchen markets, restaurants and are slapping fines on the violators of codes set by the BSTI. It is also surprising to know that many renowned establishments of the country have been found guilty. **Humayun Hyder, Zigatola, Dhaka**



PHOTO: STAR

Sylhet International University

Crossfire deaths

In recent times law and order in the country has improved a lot due to Rab actions, although we are still to go a long way. However, there have been three or four deaths of innocent people in 'crossfire' which is very unfortunate. Hence Rab should be extremely cautious and careful so that no innocent people are victimised. The families of these

facilitate their easy movement.

I therefore appeal to the authorities concerned to ban rickshaws in Motijheel and Gulistan areas. **Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury**
DOHS, Dhaka

Air pollution

As residents of Dhaka city, we all probably have been introduced to the miasma of the dustbins lying hopelessly in the main roads.

Slum children and HIV/AIDS



PHOTO:AFP

According to UNICEF, there are 4.9 million Bangladeshi working children aged between 5 to 15. They perform in many different capacities - as domestic workers, garage helpers, factory workers, porters in railway stations and markets, workers in small foundries -- many for little or no pay, and some of them in hazardous conditions. Many boys and girls who work do not have access to education and become trapped in low-skilled, low-pay work that further binds

them into the cycle of poverty. The picture is especially bleak for children living in urban slums. Sometimes due to poverty child girls are sold to brothels and they become sex workers. In the early stage they have no knowledge about HIV/AIDS, and they don't know about any kind of sexual diseases. So they are badly exposed to HIV/AIDS infection. The issue deserves immediate attention. **Md Sakibur Rahman Khan**
Shamsur Rahman Road, Khulna

dish network. Don't ask! Most of the actors and actresses are awful and unknown faces. They can't even talk properly, it's a wonder to me how they come to act! You will hear them saying kota (kotha), kase(kachhe), sata(chhata). Okay, if you can't pronounce correctly, at least improve your body language, gait, look etc, and then come to act! If only a sun glass and a colourful shirt could make one a good performer, then everybody would have become a Julia Roberts.

We really don't expect it from BTv! **Cantara Wali Ruhi**
BBA, Dhaka University

Private university and subject choice

Nowadays in almost all private universities a limited number of subjects have been chosen for graduation. But we should not consider only Computer Science and Business Administration as these are not enough for any society. We should consider subjects like Genetic Engineering, Agriculture, Linguistics etc. Though so many private universities are doing better, a great number of people of our country take it as the means of studying by money, but I am not sure why they do not think of the positive sides of the private universities. **Abu Taher Md Tarek**

innocent people should be adequately compensated by the government, although money is no compensation for human life. In general Rab is doing a good job, but one thing is very disturbing to the public mind which is discrimination among criminals by Rab. Notorious criminals like Arman and Liaquat have been caught by Rab and they are enjoying warm hospitality in jail. This shows that if a notorious criminal has strings to pull he can easily get away. This is not only going to tarnish the image of the government but also giving some encouragement to notorious and powerful criminals. Will the Hon'ble Prime Minister look into it?

Tariq Ali
Mirpur, Dhaka

Ban rickshaws in busy commercial areas

In recent years a number of important roads of the city have been made rickshaw free to the relief of the city dwellers. Motijheel and Gulistan are two very busy and important commercial areas where presence of rickshaws are causing serious traffic hazards and inconvenience to the general public. There is sufficient number of buses plying in these areas and banning of rickshaws will not cause any suffering to the public, rather it will

Always, the dustbins are seen to be filled and some rubbish scattered in the streets - causing sight as well as air pollution. Now, if that is not alarming and disturbing enough, I have seen city corporation workers cleaning the dustbins with their bare hands, without gloves. Whether they really are city corporation workers or not, the fact is that the garbage disposal system of Dhaka is bad. If we want to improve the image of Bangladesh and prove that we are humans, we need to change our perceptions about many things and the government needs to make a slight increase in the expenditure budget. The city fathers may consider my suggestions (1) Check the dustbins every two weeks (2) Promptly clear the filled dustbins (3) Clean the bins once in a month (4) Create awareness among the people that garbage is supposed to be thrown inside the bin. My solution might be laughed at. However, we should take the system of a First World country as the benchmark and think if ours is up to that standard or not. **Nayeem**
On e-mail