

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.

# Iraq bleeds...

Has this invasion brought any change in Iraq? Have Iraqi people been benefited by the elected government by any means? Has the government taken any action to ensure better prospects for its citizens? Not at all, rather Iraq has turned into another Vietnam where US forces are going through another chapter of "Dead body syndrome". Till now, more than 1,800 hundred soldiers have sacrificed their lives for the wrong policy picked up by Washington. Instead of building a new and peaceful country, civilians are dying every second, passing days in anxiety and most importantly getting outrageous day by day. As the day progresses it is getting impossible for US and Iraqi forces to stop the irresistible power of insurgency because they have suffered psychological setback for losing too many men in front of rock-solid resistance of Iraqi guerrillas. It has already been proved that the Bush adminis-

tration is paying a heavy price for picking up the wrong policy. The whole world is turning into a living hell for the cruel Bush-Blair game. Recent suicide attacks in London, Madrid, and Bali and in many other places



PHOTO: AFP

are the aftershocks that innocent people have suffered. They had no connection with this ongoing bloody battle to curb terrorism. Rather, the Bush-Blair policy spreads the venom of terrorism all over the world.

Suicide bomb attacks on US convoys are taking place regularly. Heavy exchange of gunfire is leading to countless deaths on both sides. Main roads are littered with dead bodies, smashed vehicles,

demoralised day by day and taking no chances, considering they might be the next victims of such attacks. In reality, phobia of suicide attack has put them on dire straits.

Isn't it fair to say that the pre-invasion period was far better than now where people had at least passed peaceful days without the fear of being shot any time? It is evident that each and every individual has turned into a human bomb and that has made Iraq a death zone for the coalition forces.

Who would come forward and rescue Iraq from this tragic quagmire? The American occupation has led to an explosive situation in Iraq and the country is inevitably heading towards another dark chapter of bloodshed and atrocities where innocent Iraqi people might have to walk a long way to search for the ultimate freedom and durable peace.

burnt-out military tanks, trucks and so on. They have even shot school children claiming to defend themselves from suicide attack whereas the boys had nothing except school bags on their shoulders. What does it show? Soldiers are getting

Shafiq Rana Sayed  
Brac University, Dhaka

# Bush-Blair duet

The Bush-Blair global strategy on containing the deep motivation leading to the 9/11 WTC NY and 7/7 London tragedies has failed dismally; creating more problems than solving any. The blitz on Afghanistan has blown away billions of dollars; and the subjugation of Pakistan is not yielding dividend. The bigger failure is the Iraq invasion by Uncle Sam—it is like landing on a marshy land and unable to get out. The latter is out of question, as loss of face is involved. Perpetual strikes in perpetual time? We need a new Einstein!

The Bangladeshi restaurant business in Britain would take a dip; and it remains to be seen how Blair tackles the millions of Muslims who have settled in UK (the control of immigration and entry are subsequent issues). The careers of both these leaders are at stake, not to speak of political contingencies and emergencies. How to develop a friendly interfacing of post colonial thorns, and display roses?

Economically, the industrial North is facing sunset years, and the Western strategy on the current terrorist movement cannot reverse the situation. This is double dilemma. The standard of living would certainly go down, and more so with restrictions on the entry of foreign

workers. The economic equations are changing, and the books have no theory or solution to the new emerging situations. Basically the problem is economic parity, not religious difference. All religions have the same Creator at the very top. No litmus paper is required for testing universal brotherhood.

The panic buttons have been half-pressed (it is not possible prosaically); and half-cooked solutions are going to make the situation worse. Meet, or face?

The right way is to seek human solutions. But the cult of individualism in the developed countries is too strong to create openings. The colour and religious bars are very much there.

First priority: the Palestine issue has to be approached and treated neutrally, without being partial to Israel. It is possible, but it is being avoided. Why the ministers from Iraq and Iran are meeting after decades? Watch the fall-outs.

Divide-and rule foreign policies have weakened the Muslim unity.

Once this is achieved, then operation clean up [in the respective camps] is not insurmountable. Like Harry Potter books, the plots are hotting up.

A Mahasen, Dhaka



PHOTO: SHARHUL ALAM

If ever I'd wanted to savour the decadence of flying in a private jet, this was it. The F28 seats 78, less one for the flight engineer. I had the choice seat, 1F, right hand window seat, perfect for viewing the Everest. As it turned out, it didn't matter too much. There were only four other passengers, and we could have taken any seat we chose, left, right, window, and aisle. Had it been a long flight, I would have sprawled across three seats and snored away.

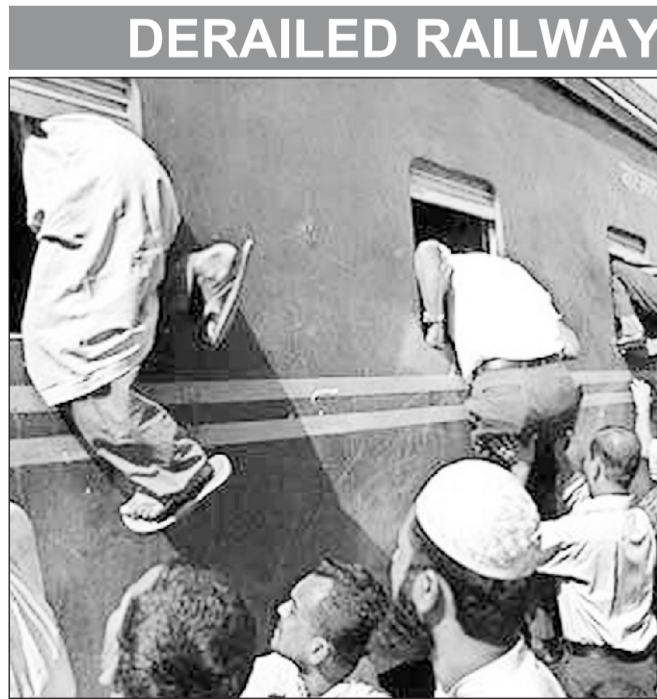
Service was excellent. Captain Enam was a photographer and we had fun talking pictures. Never before have I known each passenger in my flight. No queues on arrival, baggage on the belt, even before we'd arrived. Wonderful. Except of course for Biman or the environment. A conservative estimate of a flight to Kathmandu costs Taka 2 lakh. That's Taka 40,000 per passenger on flight 703. The enormous environmental damage for ferrying five people to a neighbouring country was staggering.

The F28 we were flying was old, water dripped onto the seats, the shuddering panels had withstood daily wear and tear for some 35 years. Still, Bangladesh had paid some nine crore (ninety million) taka for this craft.

I could hear the mumbling in the ground. Cautious comments about how top management never consulted the rest of the staff, how decisions were made on political rather than technical or economic grounds. Rama, a Nepali passenger whose father worked in Cosmic Air commented on how they had expected the flight to be packed because the afternoon flight of Cosmic Air had been cancelled. She was surprised that despite such numbers there were two flights to Kathmandu on the day.

The comments then veered to Biman as a whole. "Amra Borishale batash ani nei" (We only transport air to Barisal and back, there are no passengers), said a Biman official. "Chowdhury shahab er bari Borishale, oi flight ki ar thaman jaibo (Mr Chowdhury the minister- is from Barisal, fat chance you have of stopping those flights).

I enjoyed my flight. I bet the two cockroaches who kept me company did too.  
Shahidul Alam, Drik, Dhaka



Bangladesh railway has no caretaker. In a recent meeting of the Communications Minister and the Finance Minister with the ADB and the WB regarding improvement of our railways, our Finance Minister admitted that the railway was running without any effective supervision.

The government should address the issue in right earnest.  
Peerzada Syed Rofiqul Hussain  
Hiala Shaheb Bari, Habigonj

## No spicy development!

Our politics is jhaal-morich (spicy), but we are very short on adequate local production of spices and edible oil, as revealed in the DS report (July 17).

The ministries concerned do not talk about it. The media is flooded with stories of "roads, bridges and culverts" (we play hockey and cricket during the monsoon). The price of the dollar has gone up, and the imported edibles are more costly. Niramish (light vegetarian) dishes also need spices, as the Bengalees are not accustomed to boiled or steamed dishes.

The side effects are adulteration and black marketing in the kitchen bazaar. This base also contaminates politics at the higher levels. Some vested groups and syndicates encourage this cycle. The authorities can take corrective action, if not self-contaminated.

The philosophy of insularism works both ways, depending on the road map.

Seeking foreign financial aid and siphoning most of it into private pockets is the lifestyle of corrupt governance. Chase the opposition or correct the society? Our social structures are too lax to retain the shape or contour of the boundary conditions of acceptable social behaviour.

Take less jhaal-moori (spicy puffed rice), for diverting more oil and spices to the kitchen.

Abu Abd, Dhaka

## Shocking news

I'm extremely shocked to read the news that 131 hapless women of Ansar-VDP will be sent to Saudi Arabia as maids!

What a heartless decision! We usually know that the Saudi Sheikhs treat women like products or prostitutes! They are Muslims with no Islamic values. Everybody knows that Saudi Arabia is an insecure place for maids in the age group 25-35.

Moreover, the Saudi government never allows any woman to work as maid under the age of 40. So, why are we pushing those young women towards an uncertain future and ignominy?

Fuad Hussein Fida  
Dhaka

## Fatal diseases

HIV/AIDS is a fatal disease that may spread all over the world within the next few years. Medical science has not yet found any preventive or curative medicine, there are some drugs only that could delay the process of diminishing immunity system of a human body that carries the deadly Human Immuno Virus (HIV).

It has been observed that the awareness programmes and advertisements related to HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are not very effective, considering the level of education of the general public. We need to clearly tell all what makes sense like use of condoms can protect transmissions of HIV virus to a great extent. So, sexual intercourse that has risk of HIV/STD transmission should be protected by use of condoms, not ordinary ones but Latex condoms. The best option is to avoid sex with any person whose sexual behaviour is unknown.

The HIV virus, though one of the deadliest among all known viruses that survive in human body, fortunately is a very slow progressing virus and cannot survive in ambient temperature for long, unlike some other viruses like Hepatitis-B (HIV). One single HIV virus can cause hepatitis. Fortunately, HIV virus was not detected in sweats and other saliva like eye fluids in such potency that can definitely transmit the virus. But think of other viruses like HIV that are equally lethal and can make one's life miserable. All sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) can increase the chance of HIV transmission as they

make the immune system susceptible for transmission of HIV.

So the clear message is - avoid unsafe sex. Do not allow use of the same shaving instruments in the barbershop, better shave at home with personal shaving kit. All these are not big deals to keep you safe from STDs and more specifically HIV.

Shakil Monzur  
Halishahar, Chittagong

## Fast growing metropolis

It is indeed heartening that Dhaka is one of the fastest growing cities of the world. It is amazing that Dhaka would soon be a megacity, much bigger in size and population. But the necessary infrastructure, facilities and amenities are absent here and there is no integrated and coordinated move to make this city a nice place to live in. Anyone stepping into Dhaka from other cities of

against the country's culture. That is unacceptable.

Culture is something that you cannot disown without losing your identity.

Mohammad Ariful Islam  
Baghili, Tangail

## Cheating on medical reports

As indicated in the DS report of July 11, cheating and swindling in medical diagnostic tests and issuance of medical reports have become big business, in a sustained environment of corrupt practices, not only in Bangladesh, but in many countries, developed and developing.

I am myself a victim of it in Dhaka (and my family members), having had to spend around Tk 10,000 for seemingly unnecessary medical tests (nothing negative found, before a cataract operation, and during a sickness). Later, for the

A Mawaz, Dhaka

## Laws and our text books

To keep the law and order situation under control is one of the prime responsibilities of the government. So, the law and order situation always gets a high priority in any administration.

How can we be a law abiding nation? The answer to the question is not easy. At first a citizen has to be taught about law. And then we can expect about his or her going by it.

A number of students are studying at the high school level. A huge number of students are passing the SSC exams every year. At the same time, nearly 50 per cent of the students are failing or dropping out. The unsuccessful students have to try again. However, this is a common phenomenon both at SSC and HSC levels. These students are the future citizens of Bangladesh. They

leave the USA and other western countries, leave India on various excuses, then how can we remain aloof? We've to handle the bilateral issues cleverly and sustain good relations with other countries. People should be active also.

We've to find ways and means to strengthen Saarc in the present situation. The principle of living alone has no value in our times.

We have problems with our friends every day. But we usually quickly resolve those problems in the interest of friendship. At present, we've to think of strengthening the relations among Saarc countries. We must also build institutional capacity.

To my mind, the following steps may be taken:

Empower the Saarc Secretariat for smooth and efficient functioning by the Secretary General. Create certain new posts: Director of SGO, Internal Auditor, Protocol Assistant etc.

Tangail

## All pervasive corruption

We are poor but as a nation we have a glorious history. We agitated for our language and freedom and were crowned with great success. We are proud of Bangladesh. But nowadays, corruption has engulfed the whole country. We are world champions in corruption. It's very disappointing and disgusting for Bangladesh people.

The government has taken a few steps against corruption but those are confined to only a few areas. We need more enlightened people and transparent governance to deal with corruption. Above all, we have to be honest ourselves.

Arendu Chakma  
Rajshahi University

## Adulteration

Your reports on adulteration have

# Unethical politics

Our political leaders (not the followers) never talk about the weaknesses in our deteriorating political culture, while the print media is full of feedback of the citizens. How the politicians read the newspapers? This lack of sensitivity will rebound one day, and it would be too late to make amends. That is real purpose of elections freedom of choice (in other words, democracy).

How the political pundits monitor the feedback, and why they do not respond publicly to the same? All criticisms are not from the opposition, and most represent the millions of voters and honest citizens.

Lack of vision or selfish interest? Where are the findings or reports of internal check-ups? Our leadership is tainted and contaminated with tinges of autocracy and dictatorship.

Oratory is no substitute. What has happened to plain living and high thinking? Wealth has become the ultimate arbitrator. What comes before or after naturalism? The current leadership is encouraging a philosophy of life, which is warped (and un-Islamic).

If the approach were correct, the details would take care of itself (through negative feedback). What about internal weaknesses within the political parties in power? Humans are not faristas

(angels), hence to err is human (not a debatable issue). But the so-called netas shirk their responsibility, and avoid unpleasant topics. The local political moralising is silent.

Only the good party points or performances are publicised. This is one way communication fatal for any brand of leadership. The selected chiefs have to respond to complaints and criticisms, especially when the parliament has been manned by non-dedicated MPs, who seek publicity through cheap local stunts.

The standard is judged by the company one keeps.

It needs moral courage to be self-critical. Money and wealth cannot protect, or for long. Position, power and influence are being misused to an unimaginable extent. There is complete absence of self-regulation. The critics are being nabbed, cornered, and maltreated.

What is the role of honest citizens, when they are politically marginalised, as violence and corruption rule political culture today? The top leadership is not touching upon these basic issues. Criticism is easy, but analysis

and remedy need knowledge, experience and dedication.

We have some able MPs, but their proper role is not reflected in the media. Our leaders have small footprints, and cannot contain large inputs. The filtration process is missing in public life. The small minds are not responsive in the right way. Philosophy comes in, as we get the basics wrong.

The corrective mechanisms in the society have been strangled. The dubious goal is to remain in power, or regain it, by any means. There are monitoring and

regulatory laws in existence, but successive governments have failed to pass the tests. Now Ombudsmen are being appointed, in a situation where the weather or environment has gone out of hand. It is like putting the cart before the horse.

There is no entrepreneurship in our stale and corrupt politics. No politician is seeking a new road. It is safety-first, for self-existence.

Our distorted politics is the root of all evils. What is the use of lengthening this commentary?  
AZ, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

the world or even our neighbouring country would feel that Dhaka is a chaotic and most undisciplined city lacking the minimum facilities of modern life. Nowhere in the modern world railway tracks run through the city, interrupting the movement of the vehicles and creating severe traffic problem.

So, concerted and integrated planning and action are urgently needed to solve the problems of Dhaka city.  
Khijir Ahmed  
Segun Bagicha, Dhaka

## Save our culture

I was astonished at the letter by Zeenat Z. Syed, (DS 13/7/05) titled "Save our culture-Why?" She is living in Bangladesh and writing

sickness I was prescribed a tablet costing only Tk 10.

It is suspected that the doctors get a commission on prescribing extra tests. There is no government or independent body for monitoring and regulation (not publicised, BNA to note), where aggrieved patients could seek investigation and redress. The specialists are doing roaring business, waiting for the next patient in the waiting room.

The PR policy of the GoB is amateurish. It leaves out the grey areas of non-development (especially in the services sector). The PID has to prod the ministries on the basis of daily feedback on the mass media. Simply sending clips to the ministries is not enough. Perhaps we need PR Ombudsmen!

will be a part and parcel of society. But are they well acquainted with the basics of law? Those who frame the curriculum should think about the issue. We should not forget that citizens have to be familiar with different aspects of law and its application.  
Md Rustom Ali  
Phulbari, Dinajpur

## Strengthening Saarc

This is in reference to Mr. Zia Uddin's letter on 13 July. For the sake of debate, his observations may be true, but I must admit that Saarc has no other alternative, and it's not possible to go on alone in the modern world. If we leave Saarc,

The Secretariat may also be better off with a Public Relations officer (PRO) to project the achievements of Saarc in the region and outside world. The Secretariat should aim at speedy and effective implementation of the decisions and plans.

Increase people-to-people contacts: Introduce a visa-free regime; facilitate intra-regional tourism, improve the communication infrastructure and transport; develop telecom network; cooperate in the education sector and ensure exchanges in the fields of sports and culture. These would contribute significantly to promoting people to people contacts in the Saarc region.  
Engr. Mohammad Ariful Islam

been quite revealing. It is now clear that even the best restaurants in the city are not safe, nor are the well known food producers. We are virtually eating poison!

Now the citizens would like to know what the government is going to do about this potent threat to public health. Some of the culprits have been fined. But that is not enough punishment since they are actually committing murder.

The government should seriously think about enacting harsher laws to punish the elements causing so much damage to public health.  
Mansoor Raja  
Dhaka