

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.

Middle East situation



When 50 Palestinian Muslims were slaughtered by Israel, the world leaders treated it as an act in self-defence and accordingly very few protest placards and banners were displayed. And when an Israeli soldier is kidnapped, the whole of Israel starts maiming and slaughtering Muslims of Palestine and Lebanon with no remorse and shame. This is the state of the Muslims today--- a great concern and food for deep contemplation.
Abu Kashem Ehsan
On e-mail

A letter from a concerned Muslim (19 July) on this topic is indeed sad reading. Such rights of Palestinians as are fitting to a citizen of an independent state and nation could have been achieved long ago provided Palestine and Israel were

left alone to negotiate on the matter. It is impossible to achieve anything because of outside interference and involvement of neighbouring Muslim countries like Syria and Iran who are supporting various fighting groups within Palestine. Such groups freshly started the recent disturbances in the area and a peaceful settlement is certainly something, which they don't want, never mind what the Palestinians want. And the bulk of the collateral damage created by such conflict falls on the Palestinian (or Lebanese) civilians. So for the greater good of the Palestinians the concerned Muslim neighbours must allow them the luxury and maturity of independence first before Israel, USA, EU or anyone else recognise this independence.
Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Muslims killing Muslims



PHOTO: AFP

Machine-readable passport and ID card

I just wonder how much it is justifiable and feasible to implement a project for machine-readable passports, visa and identity card in the country. Which would cost Tk. 1,561 crore and even the money is not allocated in the current budget! Is it really necessary to have machine-readable passports for a developing country like Bangladesh where poverty vastly dominates people's lives? How many countries in the world have such facilities? Such a project is really unjustified and unnecessary when we urgently need to modernise our police department to ensure public security and I can bet there are many other projects that need to be initiated for the benefit of citizens in the country. Wouldn't it be more useful if we use the money to modernise our public security department? For example, connect the whole country's security under computer network. This would be helpful to combat crimes. Modernised equipment, vehicles and communication facilities could be provided to the police department.

On the other hand, my other thought is about the demand of the primary school teachers. They are constantly demanding higher salary but still our government is not committed to their demands. Wouldn't it be more justified to distribute Tk. 1,561 crore to these teachers who are the backbone of our education? We can also consider the demands of the garment workers. The incremental price of daily necessities is also posing a threat to our survival. So far I can observe, not a single citizen starved or participated in a procession demanding machine-readable passports or for identity cards, nor was there any public survey to justify the feasibility of the project.

I don't know where our obstacles lie on the way of development; I can only hear the public outcry.
Md. Habibur Rahman, *On e-mail*

I am writing with reference to the letter: "Islamic fundamentalism, extremism and the sharia," by Mahfuzur Rahman (July 20).

While referring to the war against non-believers, Mahfuzur Rahman tends to forget that despite 9/11, London and Madrid bombings, the greatest victims of the Muslim extremists are fellow Muslims, especially in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. In fact, there is a bigger war going on between the Sunnis and the Shiites.

Sunni extremists in Iraq are systematically slaughtering fellow Shia Muslims. They have bombed Shiite mosques filled with worshippers during Friday prayers. They have attacked schools, hospitals and markets, killing mostly Shiite Muslims. Recently, the Sunni extremists destroyed the Golden Mosque at Samarra, one the holiest Shiite shrines. Only yesterday (July 19), they bombed the Shia suburb of Mahmoudia, killing 60 and injuring more than 100. And the

slaughter of the Shiite majority by the Sunni minority in Iraq had been going on long before the US-led military invasion. It may be recalled that when after the First Gulf War in 1991, the Shiite majority rose against Saddam's minority Sunni rule, his largely Sunni Republican Guards massacred thousands of Shiite rebels. Although the Sunni minority lost their grip on power after the American invasion of 2003, the Sunni insurgents are systematically killing the Shiites in the name of fighting the coalition forces.

Does the sharia allow killing of the Shiites? Only a few days ago (July 14), a Sunni suicide bomber blew himself up outside the home of a prominent Pakistani Shiite cleric Allama Hassan Turabi, killing the cleric and bodyguard and triggering a riot in the port city of Karachi. After Turabi's killing, hundreds of Shiite youths attacked Sunni shops and a government bank. Pakistan has always been blighted by attacks blamed on extremist elements among the Sunni and

Shia sects of Islam, targeting each other's mosques and religious leaders. In Iraq, the Shiites are now retaliating by bombing Sunni mosques and killing Sunni clerics.

How can the Sunni and Shiite religious fanatics justify killing of fellow Muslims in the name of Islam? Muslims are slaughtering fellow Muslims and then blaming it on America and Israel. It is interesting to note that after the killing of Allama Turabi by a Sunni extremist, hundreds of Shiite youths gathered in front of his house, weeping and chanting slogans against America and Israel, unusual targets of anger in the wake of such acts of violence by Sunni Muslims in Pakistan.

Now the Sunnis and the Shiites in Iraq are killing each other with a viciousness not seen even in the brutal history of Iraq. Can Mahfuzur Rahman explain under what sharia principle Sunnis in Iraq and Pakistan are butchering their fellow Shiite Muslims and vice versa?

Mahmood Elahi, *Ottawa, Canada*

Diplomatic practice?

I am writing this to refer to the recent visits of US Ambassador to the families of Late Ahsanullah Master and SAMS Kibria.

I wonder what these diplomats intend to achieve out of (as reported in the press) such eye-catching movements--visiting homesteads of different politicians? It appears it's becoming (as if) a part of diplomatic norm or duty, to mix up with local political people and get involved in local politics, by visiting homes and families of some slain political leaders!

I don't understand whether this kind of visits and mingling with local people with political background and commenting on our politics can be separated from interference in our internal affairs.

An observer
Dhaka

FIFA World Cup

Zidane was red-carded but Materazzi who provoked head-butting was allowed to go unpunished. Materazzi even drew victim-sympathy profusely from all and sundry when no one really knew what he had done to Zidane, for it was all verbal.

It was a clever trap laid by the Italian team to which the even-tempered football genius had succumbed so easily. Patently, the decision to allow Materazzi to play the match while Zidane was not, was clearly discriminatory as both of them were equally guilty of unsporting behaviour, albeit in two different ways. As is widely perceived, with Zidane playing the match full-time, the result of the match could have been different.

To amend the wrong done to the French team and to restore justice, FIFA may declare both the Italian and French teams joint winners of the World Cup. Negatively, it may lose much of its lustre.

Syed Badrul Haque, *Lalmatia, Dhaka*

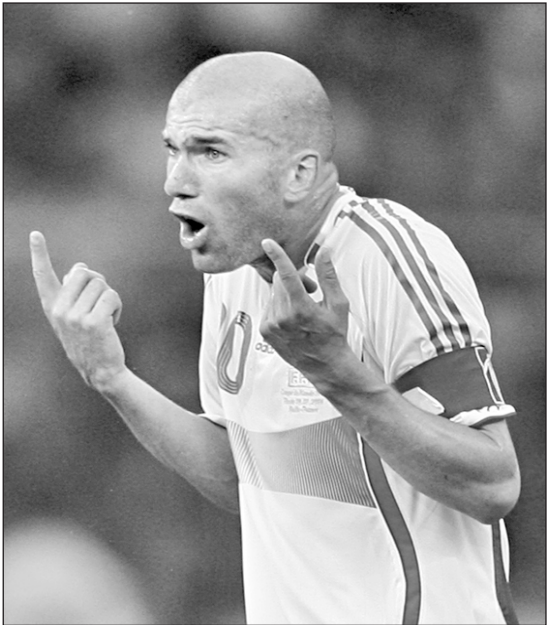


PHOTO: AFP

14X3

6X2

6X3