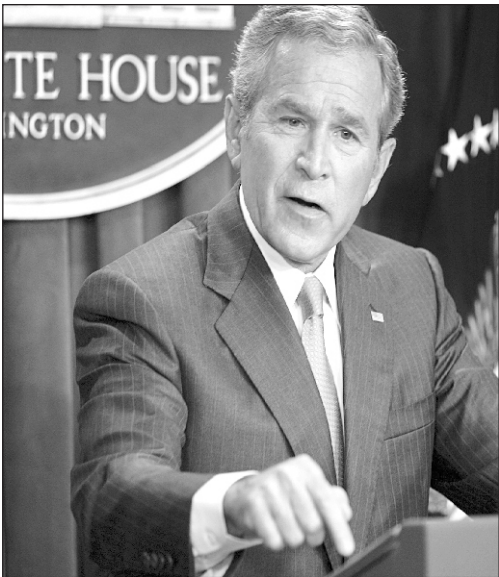


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Bush and Napoleon



Juan Cole (who is a professor of Middle Eastern and South Asian history at University of Michigan) and also the author of the book "Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East", recently, wrote a wonderful article comparing the present US invasion of Iraq to France's conquest of Egypt in 1798. This article was later published in one of our dailies. The author basically points out the striking similarities between the mindsets of President Bush and Napoleon Bonaparte as their speeches conveyed the same message of liberating their conquerors from their tyrant rulers. According to Cole, both these leaders, in the name of establishing ideologies such as democracy, liberty and security, tried to prove that their invasions were justified. But their policy to forcefully impose their own set of rules on another country proved to be futile as their plans backfired (it is apparent that the Iraq plan has backfired). They both targeted Arab-speaking Muslim countries and harbored dreams of a "Greater Middle East." Like Napoleon, Bush also followed the same strategy of ruling by terror and initially undertaking draconian measures to resist any form of threat or counterattack imposed by certain sections of his conquered lands. In other words, Napoleon while facing resistance from the Bedouin of the western Dirr tribe, had ordered his army to burn that village so that it sends a signal of caution to the protestors and make others aware of the consequences of opposing the French Army. Similarly, the devastating US air-raids and artillery attacks damaged two-thirds of Baghdad's buildings and the Americans did so as they initially faced resistance. However, the trick which both Napoleon and Bush missed according to Cole is that both their armies had certain weaknesses which

made them vulnerable to the opposing forces; for instance the high-tech US military is still vulnerable to guerilla tactics as was the case with the French army having to fight against an ally of the Egyptians--the British Navy. Ultimately, the gist of his article is that like Napoleon, Bush is also trying to unleash terror against the Iraqis in the name of liberating their motherland from the clutches of militants to restore peace and calm. But as long as a stubborn Bush continues with his mission (which is basically to have greater control over certain Middle-East countries), the Iraqis will suffer (as there have already been countless civilian casualties) because unless the US troops leave, the violence in Iraq will continue to escalate and the situation will further deteriorate. Napoleon eventually had to surrender and may be Bush might eventually have to withdraw his determined plan to keep on deploying more troops and put an end to this war. Whether President Bush realises his mistake and finally decides to withdraw the troops is something I am eagerly waiting to see.

Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS, Dhaka

Balanced migration



DRISHTIPAT.ORG

The most recent policy announcement of the government is to compel the diversification of labour migration flows. This is to be achieved by requiring that the selection of migrant workers reflect a greater geographical diversity in the sourcing of the workers. Areas that do not have a history of labour export or that are especially disadvantaged by poverty such as the north-west are to be privileged in the selection of workers for export. BMET is to be the lead agency in implementing this policy and the policy has been welcomed by local experts on labour migration. However, this quota system is to be achieved by disrupting the established migration chain and social

networks. Therefore any gains that might be made in achieving greater diversification will be made by weakening the support structures of the existing labour migration flow. The importance of social networks in supporting migration and establishing strong cumulative causation is recognised as one of the principle means by which sustainable migration flows can be ensured. The new policy will therefore work against one of the few support structures that Bangladeshi labour migrants have in the destination countries which is their expanding social network. By compelling diversification at the expense of this support structure the government of

Bangladesh only creates another obstacle to the existing flow of migration. It can then be expected that the existing migration network will resort to irregular channels if necessary to enable their friends and relatives to overcome this new barrier to their migration. In fact, the government of Bangladesh seeks to punish the success of a source community in establishing a migration network by deliberately dismantling what should actually be supported and encouraged.

Dr. John Davies
SMNP Team Leader
Netherlands Recreation Centre, Dhaka

Russian nuclear reactor
Construction of the Chernobyl power station began in the 1970s. The first of the four reactors was commissioned in 1977. Reactor No. 4 began producing power in 1983 and it exploded on Saturday, April 26, 1986, at 1:23:58am local time. This plant was built by Russia. The Chernobyl accident cost the former Soviet Union billions of dollars, and some observers believe it may have hastened the collapse of the Soviet government. Massive amounts of radioactive materials were released into the environment, resulting in a radioactive cloud that spread over much of Europe. The greatest contamination occurred around the reactor in areas that are now part of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. After the accident, the Soviet authorities resettled more than 350,000 people outside the worst affected areas, including all 50,000 people from nearby Pripyat, but millions of people continue to live in contaminated areas.

I would request our CTG to consider all these facts and safety measures before they consider buying a nuclear reactor from Russia. To solve the electricity problem in Bangladesh, building a nuclear reactor is the only answer. For the development of Bangladesh we have to have it and there is no other way. But for the safety first it is better and wise to spend more money to buy the latest and safest plant. Technologically Russia is not in a position to supply that. It would be appreciated if our govt. could consider Japan, Germany, Sweden, and Finland who have the latest technology regarding reactor safety. It would also help to get more cooperation and investment from western countries in Bangladesh. Our govt. should include the clause that the builder must take all responsibilities and bear all the costs in case of an accident. When Sheikh Hasina was the prime minister of Bangladesh, I requested her to build a nuclear reactor to produce electricity, instead of buying MiG -29 fighters (a letter in this respect was published in The Daily Star).

Dr. Majumder
Germany

Abortion policy
I wish to commend the Vatican, and more recently Catholic Bishop Michael Evans of East Anglia for condemning Amnesty International's new pro-abortion policy. Amnesty has fallen victim to a distorted rationale that tends to place a higher priority on human suffering than on life itself. Contrary to Amnesty's new position, human welfare depends upon a shared responsibility that involves moral limits. There are no "small" murders. The respect for every human life is an essential condition if a societal life worthy of the name is to be possible. When man's conscience loses respect for life as something sacred, he inevitably ends by losing his own identity.

While the term "choice" may sound democratic the person who opts for abortion is neglecting to consider the fundamental right to life of the mother's unborn fetus. We must help those who are suffering, but we may not use a good end to justify an evil means. Human beings are not raw materials to be exploited or commodities that can be bought and sold. To suggest otherwise is to endorse a macabre interpretation of progress. To claim the right to abortion and to recognize that right in law, means to attribute to human freedom a perverse and evil significance: that of an absolute power over others and against others.

This is the death of true freedom.

Paul Kokoski
Columbia Drive
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Muslims in West Bengal
A recent study by BBC Bengali Service revealed the sorry state of affairs of Muslims in the left -uled West Bengal. With 26% population, Muslims are employed in 2.1% government services and 1.98% private services. Their representation in business and other gainful employment is even more negligible. Interesting to note that these ratios were slightly better during the Congress rule. Their fate took a continuous downward trend during the so called progressive rule of the CPM-led left coalition for whom Muslims voted en masse.

We the people of East Bengal (then East Pakistan) felt neglected as our share in jobs and businesses were disproportionate to our percentage of population in Pakistan.

Now we find that the Muslims in India are in an even worse situation. Political thinkers, sociologists and demographers may enlighten us in these matters.

M. Sanaul Huq
Uttara, Dhaka

Father of the Nation
Ask any Indian, who is your Father of the Nation? They will say Mahatma Gandhi. Ask any Pakistani the same question and the answer will be Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Ask Bangladeshis about their Father of the Nation, the answer to the question will be not that clear. Many of us will hesitate to answer, some are confused, some

will say Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and so on. It is tragic and unfortunate that we educated Bangladeshis are confused and misguided.

It does not matter to Bangabandhu whether he is recognised as the Father of the Nation or not. But why is this meanness of not accepting him as the Father of Bangladesh?

Our forefathers fought under his leadership and Bangabandhu will remain alive as long as Bangladesh exists.

Mamun Ahmed
Las Vegas, NV, USA

Neglected Niketon
The housing area called Niketon has developed fast with high-rise buildings and a habitation of more than a 100,000 citizens. There are decent houses with most inhabitants being service holders having their offices in the vicinity.

Most of the inhabitants have cars. But the roads of Niketon are absolutely unworthy of driving with ditches filled with thick slimy mud that can ruin the cars. Alternately, if you prefer to take a rickshaw ride, to save your transport than you are bound to damage your spinal cord or hip-joint by jerks. Ironically, this happens to be Gulshan!

Navera Sayeed
Niketon, Dhaka

Repair the road
It's quiz time--which important road of Dhaka city has no footpath & road divider? The answer is Jatrabari-Jurain road. It's the entry point to

Dhaka from the south & south-east region of the country.

The department concerned doesn't look after the road properly. We need an immediate response from the department & urge the City Corporation to look into the matter.

Solaiman Palas
East Jurain, Dhaka

Diplomats and people
I am at a loss to understand if the foreign diplomats are here to represent their respective countries or just to issue certificate as to which action(s) taken by our government is right and which is not. The other day The British High Commissioner even went deep into the recent DU crisis and opined that "money was involved in all those incidents". It may be recalled that the entire matter is already under judicial probe.

What is more surprising is that our Foreign Affairs Adviser , after a recent meeting with foreign diplomats, very confidently said, "The government received full support of the envoys, at least no one disagreed."

One may now very reasonably ask as to which is more important -- the support of the foreign envoys or that of our own people? Would the foreign office please clarify?

Hafejul Alam
A former civil servant

Arrested teachers
The other day I was watching a documentary on the role of US media leading up to the invasion of Iraq by the US. The documentary, Buying the War, was a brainchild of Mr. Bill Moyer, a famous US journalist. The main thrust of it was how the media moguls and individual journalists who are known in the US for their professional integrity failed to stand against the wind of emotive national sentiment to avenge on anyone perceived to be related with the 9/11 attack.

The Bush administration's spin doctors silenced a few dissenting opinions and newspapers and electronic media managers even did not give enough space for readers to see those dissents by journalists who believed the evidence against Iraq was insufficient. Some top journalists now regret in this documentary that they had let them to be blown away by the wind of "national sentiment for invasion" and poorly served their readers by not standing against the wind. One journalist comments in that documentary that such moments are testing moments for professional journalists to tell the truth without fear and unfortunately many journalists failed. Newspapers like New York Times and Washington Post also failed to live up to their reputations. Many now believe the US is in a quagmire in Iraq.

It is heartbreaking to see five university teachers being remanded here in Bangladesh. Most newspapers failed to press for more information as to the whereabouts of these distinguished men up until they were taken to the court.

Very poor performance!

Saumen Rhudra
Dhaka

English: official or foreign language?
We are extremely proud of our rich Bengali heritage and literature and the Language Movement of 1952 which gave us a unique global platform as a nation. In 1913, Tagore became the first Asian Nobel laureate for 'Gitanjali'. He is the only author to compose 2 national anthems-- of India and B'desh. He was fluent in Hindi and English also.

To compete globally, we need to have a much greater use of English

WETLANDS



It is good news for our country and an achievement! Ramsar Convention on wetlands published our organisation's World Wetlands Day Celebration photo as the theme photo of

World Wetlands Day 2008. The theme of World Wetlands Day 2008 is "Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People". This theme is important and relevant for our flood-prone and riverine

country.

Muhammad Shariful Islam
President
Nature & Biodiversity Conservation Society (NBCS)
East Jurain
Dhaka

in our education system. I feel we are lagging far behind as a nation and need to address this urgently. It is not uncommon to see a graduate from B'desh not being able to speak a few words of English in the UK. Is this person illiterate? Definitely not. I feel he is being let down by the education system very badly. Our 'leaders' would send their offspring to the UK or USA 'to study' while preaching about Bengali language and culture to rest of the 'unfortunate population'. I feel it is about time this ancient system is completely transformed.

We only need to look at our mighty neighbour India for inspiration. There are 8 major religions, 22 official languages and 28 states in India. Hindi is the official language of only 10 states. So it is no wonder English found its way as a national educational medium and is shaping up the country's future at a fast pace. Today India's fierce emergence as an intellectual and economic superpower on global stage has been possible by its diverse and dynamic approach.

M M Rahman
London

Iran
It may be interesting for those who admire Iran for standing up against the West to take a look at a letter to the editor published in Pakistan's The Daily Times on August 25.

In the letter to the editor of The Daily Times, Asfar Bano, of Lahore, writes: "A few days ago, a friend of mine returned from Tehran, having lived there for two months because her father was posted in Iran for a project. Her time in Iran was eventful. The most humiliating experience for her was being beaten up by the police for wearing a kameez, although her head was covered.

This should be an eye-opener for all who admire Iran without ever visiting Iran under the mullahs.

Mahmood Elahi
Iris Street, Ottawa, Canada

BTV and autonomy

The present CTG has initiated a move to make the state-run Bangladesh Television(BTV) an effective autonomous body. Over the past few decades, we have seen government control over BTV in the name of giving autonomy to it. There is no denying that BTV speaks more for the incumbent government than the mass people.

People do not want to hear any more pledge. Now they want to see its materialisation in the true sense.

Shaila Solaiman
Jahangirnagar University Campus
Savar, Dhaka

Discretion and law-enforcement
Mr. Huda's article on the subject (Sept:01) attempts a rational analysis of the policing attitudes in law enforcing activity. However, in my opinion the very terminology "law enforcement" has a connotation of force and violence attached to it. A better term could be law implementation; which is realistic and rational. The subject matter in Mr. Huda's write-up should be applicable to all services concerned with implementing the law.

In Bangladesh, this covers the Ansars, Police, and Rab. I feel BDR and the Armed Forces should not be associated with these activities; as they are border guards and fighting forces respectively; for defence of territorial integrity.

In our country where the "haves" and "have-nots" can be easily identified in their external getup and presentation: the poor and the downtrodden are objects of psychological domination by the law enforcers of all types and shades. Their action and interaction is clearly demonstrated in their attitude, behaviour and approach; easily visible at any check-post that straddle our roads and streets. There were never such set-ups or police confrontation even in the fairly violent days of "Quit India" movement that I remember during the 1944-45 period in Calcutta. The

active war front was hardly more than two hundred miles from Calcutta; as the crow flies! Firing by police invariably called for a judicial inquiry. In contrast, the law "enforcers" of today are "licensed to kill" in James Bond fashion!

What has happened now, where have we gone wrong? We never heard of "state of emergency" even during the political agitation of war years in Calcutta in mid nineteen-forties; despite the presence of the so-called hated colonial British Raj! Then it was the "Raj"; afterwards "Pakistan"; but now who are our so called opponents? It is us and us alone!

A law-abiding citizen
Dhaka

Students overheating
While the mere incident could be handled without any violence, the whole country was strangled for a few days. I was really frustrated to see students taking to the street to protest, vandalising public and private property. There are other forms of protests which could easily avoid these incidents. The army left the campus as the students demanded. Why did the students then go to the streets again? The government is suspecting that some groups influenced the students and took advantage of the situation. All the DU students are adult enough and they are well educated. How could they be so easily influenced?

I always expect a more practical and astute attitude from the DU students as they are the most enlightened people of our country. There was a fight between two persons and it turned upside down the whole country! There were numerous occasions when political activists beat up DU students and we have never seen such reaction from the victims. It tells us that there was something else, something the government should try to figure out and take appropriate action.

Ahmed Islam
Toronto, Canada

Police

I, as a concerned citizen, want to write about an incident that happened on September 03, 2007 at 6.30 pm, while I was passing through Zindabazar (Sylhet) by a CNG vehicle. I

saw a traffic constable insulting a car driver without any logical reason, some other traffic personnel also joined him. I was amazed. I did not find anything wrong with the

car driver. How can we expect good behaviour from such police personnel?

Mashruf Ahmed Chowdhury
Sylhet

