

## Air quality management

### Dhaka's poor rating is cause for concern

DHAKA has been given the lowest rating in air quality management at a workshop held in Manila. The finding followed a survey carried out on seven major Asian cities.

It has also been reported that the average 'particulate matter' level came down to 150 in 2002 from 300 in the city, after two-stroke auto-rickshaws were banned. But it is still higher than what is considered permissible by the United Standard Environmental agency. So things have improved, but we are still lagging far behind other Asian cities in air quality management.

The decision to phase out two-stroke auto-rickshaws was taken in view of the alarming air pollution in the city. It was indeed a hazardous situation that the city air had the highest level of lead concentration, which posed a direct threat to public health. Against this backdrop, the banning of two-stroke engines was welcomed by all and sundry, though it created a temporary dislocation in the city's transport system. The government pursued the plan of putting the worst pollutants off the road with determination and vigour.

However, a lot needs to be done to set things right. Poor enforcement of traffic rules still allows the vehicles spewing black smoke to go unpunished. The tightening of the noose only on auto-rickshaws cannot produce the desired results when glaring flaws remain unattended in other areas.

Air pollution is a major problem that most of the big cities in the world have been facing. But in our case the situation has deteriorated quickly in the absence of any air quality management worth the name. The government must be able to identify the problem in its entirety and adopt a holistic approach. Coordination among the agencies concerned must improve and strict enforcement of traffic rules must be ensured. For example, to begin with, emission of black smoke can be stopped by preventing violation of the rules in this respect. If we cannot achieve such a modest goal, the task of combating air pollution cannot be accomplished as a whole.

## Security of life hits a new low

### Another murder in broad daylight

THIS time it has happened in an unlikely of places. A couple of gangsters masquerading as visitors enter the office room of a security service agency and feigning to whisper something into his ears pump bullets into his head. As he lay dead, one of his security guards also sustained bullet injuries.

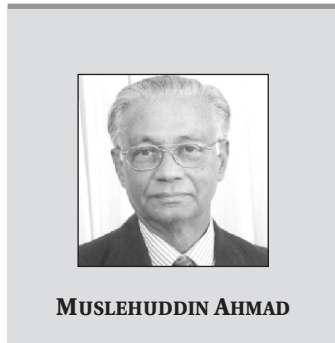
The dastardly murder of Khandakar Masudur Rahman, 34, an owner of Splinter Security Service goes to prove that no business place is immune to the murderous assault of hired killers. Imagine the ironic signal being put across to people by this murder at a supposedly self-protected security agency office, and that too, in broad daylight!

This is basically a tragic indictment on the law and order situation encouraging criminals to finish off the targeted person at the time and place of their own choosing.

A needle of suspicion is pointed to one of the deceased service provider's partners. It is also reported that the case is allegedly being sought to be deflected off-course by vested quarters. That is part of the case handling reality in the post-murder situation often rendered murky by different imputations of motives and the like. Only a scooping police investigation, forensic for the most part, can reveal the truth.

It should not be difficult for the police to track down the 'hired killers' so as to find out who masterminded the murder. Yes, it may not be physically possible for the police to eave-drop on business houses or residences of the partners in trade to follow the brewing of any untoward plotting etc. But two things can help matters immensely: first, finding out the culprit and prosecuting him in a legalistically fool-proof manner; and second, handing out a conviction to the guilty. Law and order is strengthened every time appropriate punishment to the culprit.

## 'We got him'



MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

"We got him" -- declared Paul Bremer, the US Civil Administrator in Iraq after American occupation. One who is conscious of the application of the international law and also of the rights of states under the UN would immediately question -- who gave you the right to 'get him'? The words used were not befitting the person who said it and on whom said. Indeed, the American army man who first met Saddam Hussein in the cellar performed well. It seems that he had the right training. On the first question from him Saddam Hussein reportedly said, "I am Saddam Hussein. I am the president of Iraq and I am willing to negotiate." The army man reportedly responded, "President Bush sends his regards."

President Saddam Hussein deposed by the US was captured on December 13 at 8-30 PM -- Baghdad time -- at a 6-foot deep, dirty and rat infested cellar in the outskirts of Tikrit, his home town. It was obvious that some Iraqis informed the US forces about the hide out, which led to the arrest of Saddam Hussein. He had pistol and other arms by his side, but did not use them nor did he offer any resistance. He also did not commit suicide. It was undoubtedly strange, but one could see the following reasons: He was too tired and committing suicide would have added to his basket of sins. May be he wanted to take an opportunity to expose many things that the world did not know. One has to wait and see.

Undoubtedly, Saddam was a tyrant but there are other tyrants

## SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

Saddam's capture may be something important for Bush in his election campaign. But the American people and the lawmakers as well as the British people would undoubtedly look for an answer to WMD as they still see that they were misled by Bush-Blair on WMD. So far as the American election is concerned it would also depend on how best Democrats use this in their election campaign.

around the world who pose themselves as civilized people. In any case, he was a tyrant in his own country and to his own people and not to the American people. He killed many people, but who killed thousands of people in the unjust war against Iraq by using world's most powerful war machines including the cluster bombs? Who killed hundreds of children in Afghanistan and Iraq and later said, sorry, these were mistakes? Who were responsible for the deaths of about a million Iraqi men, women and particularly children due to unjust UN sanctions? Later the same members of the UN said the sanctions did not work, so the country must be invaded and the dictator be brought to justice. Then why did you leave him in place after he was defeated in the Gulf war which was fought apparently for a valid cause (Iraqi claim was different)? His removal at that time could have avoided the present disaster. Who should be responsible for all these "mistakes" that led to innumerable casualties and untold sufferings of the Iraqi people?

If Saddam is to be tried which now seems to be a reality, the first question must be answered first -- who authorized America to invade Iraq, a sovereign UN recognised state in the name of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) which were yet not found there, in the name of fighting terrorism resulting in 9/11 with which Saddam had no connection, and destroy a sovereign country, kill innocent people and rob their sovereignty? Were not all these against international law and justice and against the expressed will of the members of the UN thus amounting to total defiance of the UN? If all these

questions are effectively dealt with, only then the trial of Saddam would be proper. But can any one expect justice in this unjust world? Probably not. Age old system still prevails. However, President Bush appeared fair when he talked about the open trial that should withstand international scrutiny. But the idea of having justice done in Iraq by the Iraqis appear to be dangerous as now the atmosphere there is extremely charged. The comment by President Bush about "ultimate penalty" or "ultimate justice" was also not proper as this prejudged the case. However, his unwarranted comment received flak from the EU and the UN.

France and Germany, among many others, received world-wide acclamation for their stand against American unilateral military invasion defying the UN. But one gets baffled to see that both these countries have expressed satisfaction over the capture of Saddam and German Chancellor Schroeder reportedly sent a telegram to President Bush congratulating him on this. This seriously clouded their rightful stand in the UN on Iraq invasion. One doubts whether these two countries and similar others would ever get a chunk of the lucrative contracts of billions of dollars in Iraq.

For Iraqis, however, reactions were mixed on Saddam's capture. There were some rejoicings, but there were demonstrations too supporting Saddam that led to scores of deaths. Though it's a fact that Saddam is physically gone forever from Iraqi political scene, his shadow will continue to influence politics of not only of Iraq but also of entire Mid-East. For America, this is only the beginning. It

seems that guerrilla fight would continue against American occupation. The Arab rulers would have to judge the situation and adjust their roles appropriately, otherwise, things may go against them as well.

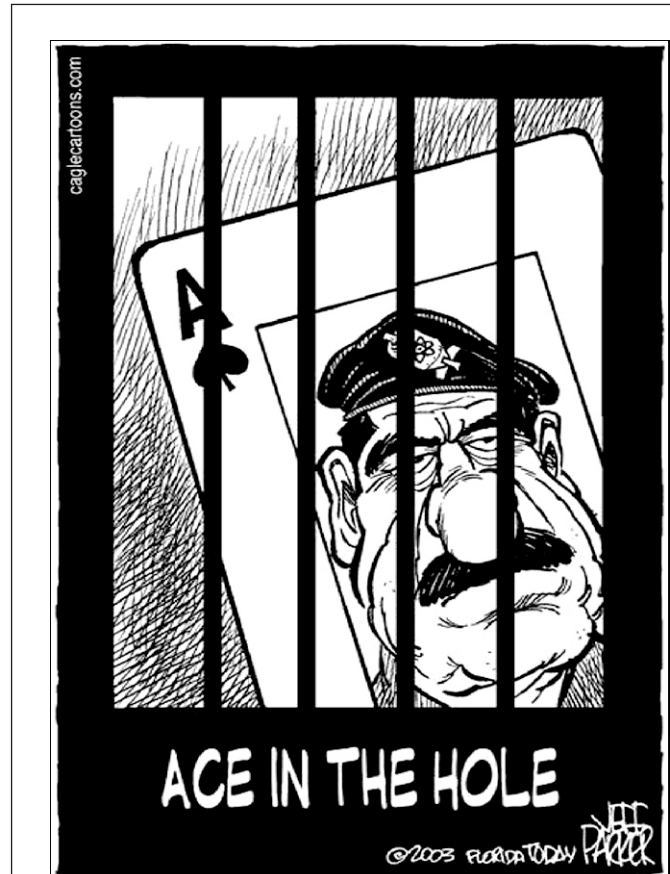
Saddam must face trial and that should be in the internally recognised court or a Tribunal set up by the UN. Special Tribunal formed by the US cannot deliver justice as the

judges selected may not be the neutral ones. Of course, the best course would have been to try him in Iraq before Iraqi people in the open court, but under the situation it would not be appropriate as everything is highly charged politically and emotionally and the system is under direct American control. The people working with the Americans are all anti-Saddam and heavily biased. In the first day's

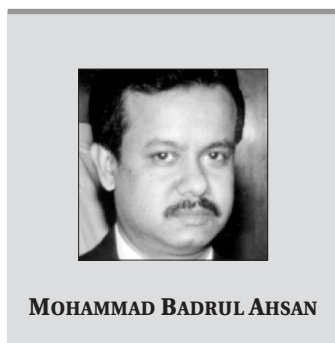
interrogation of Saddam some of the Council members like Chalabi, Pachachi were present. Pachachi was the Foreign Minister of Iraq before Saddam came to power. Saddam reportedly told him that 'you were the Foreign Minister of Iraq, what are you doing with these people (meaning Americans)? This shows what Saddam is. On the issue of whether he had any WMD, his reply was 'No, Not at all.' On Kuwait invasion he said 'Kuwait was rightfully a part of Iraq'. On the victims of mass grave he said '...they were thieves, they ran away from the battlefields with Iran and from the battlefields of Kuwait'. On the use of chemical weapons on Kurds, he said 'this was the work of Iran during Iran-Iraq war'. He seems to be a hard nut to crack and had all the answers with him. Whether the court would accept them is a different matter. This is why an internationally recognised and neutral court is a must.

Saddam's capture may be something important for Bush in his election campaign. But the American people and the lawmakers as well as the British people would undoubtedly look for an answer to WMD as they still see that they were misled by Bush-Blair on WMD. So far as the American election is concerned it would also depend on how best Democrats use this in their election campaign. If the non-existence of WMD is finally proven, this would certainly be used by the Democrats to get an advantage over Republicans in the ensuing election. Only if a Democrat wins, there could be a possibility of some favourable change in the situation in the M-E, again subject to their appropriate handling of the situation there. Otherwise, the present problem which many seem as clash of civilizations and religions would compound and take a turn towards the point of no-return. This would be bad for all who love to live together in peace and harmony regardless of faith, culture, creed, colour etc.

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## The prisoner of Tikrit



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

SADDAM Hussein has been captured at last. He was found hiding in the cellar of a farmhouse near Tikrit, thus bringing destiny full circle for a man whose glory started from the same hometown near which it also came to an end. He is still alive, and might go on living for many more days. But he will not be the same man again, the confident, overbearing strongman, who ruled Iraq for more than two decades. Perhaps that is why many Iraqis were disappointed to see him taken alive. If his enemies defeated him before, Saddam has now defeated himself.

Finally, the man has erased his own myth. He has lost his life although it hasn't been yet taken from him. He is dead alive, the ghost of his own undoing, reduced from sublime to ridicule by popping out of a spider hole like a gopher. He looked disoriented after the arrest, moving his head from side to side to cooperate with the US Army medic who examined him. His mouth glowed in the light of the torch, looking like a lit-up pumpkin on the Halloween night.

There was something eerie about the whole thing. It marked the horror of a concealed life.

What do we make of Saddam Hussein now? He will be dragged from trial to trial, and might get death sentence by hanging or firing squad. His captors have given him a haircut and shaved his beard to showcase the man in his utmost likeness. He once bragged that he was never going to be caught alive. But seldom did he know that fate was going to be more ruthless than a dictator, that he was going to be captured without even firing a

dismantling of a dictator, his pride swallowed every time he opened his mouth or moved his head at the disposal of his captors.

So the disheveled, dusty Saddam who came out of his hide-out isn't the same Saddam who went into hiding after the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Many of his supporters wished he hadn't showed up like that, that he should have taken his own life instead. The members of the Iraqi Governing Council, who went to see him after the arrest, said that Saddam wanted to take his own life when

behaviour with the United States. He could still live in his palaces, his sons still alive, his wives, daughters and grandchildren still living together with him. Why did he risk everything? What was on his mind?

It doesn't make sense at all. May be he had a grand plan, which he failed to execute because his comrades betrayed him. It's so terrible to think that a formidable despot couldn't assess his situation, that he couldn't make sure people around him were on board before he took a momentous risk.

friends vanished. How does he feel about the whole thing, weaned from power, honour and everything? He must be feeling awfully lonely, the dreary void of despair, which he absorbed in the amniotic depth of his mother's womb. His mother tried to commit suicide while she was pregnant with him. There are two accounts of this story. Saddam's father Hussein Al-Majeed divorced his wife before his birth, according to one account. But Saddam always maintained that his father had died before he was born. He seldom talked about

blown to national proportions. An Australian civil servant named Alois Schicklgruber was born illegitimate and refused to acknowledge his origin before he was 39. In the complex psychosis of his anguish, he placed his faith in the whip to discipline the sixth of his eight children. The child under lashes, lashed out when he grew up. In his turn, Adolf Hitler took his grievances to rest of the world.

Saddam Hussein would grow up, racked by his need for recognition and the appetite for vengeance. According to Iraqi political sources, he forged his birth date to identify it with the birth date of Prophet Mohammad. A late-starter who finished high school at the age of 20, Saddam would be attracted to the name Baath, which meant 'the new life after death' and joined the party.

That new life ended last week, when a bearded Saddam, with matted hairs, looked lost and resigned, too tired to die again for a new life. May be that is why he gave himself up instead of fighting back from his hellhole hideout. In his mind, Saddam Hussain may have closed the circle and reconciled with destiny. He may have given up on renewal of life and prepared for final death...

People who believed in Saddam would have liked him to die instead of being taken a prisoner. For years to come, the images of a captured Saddam will flash in their minds and sadden them. There is no sight like the sight of a detained dictator, because the irony of life is so obvious in it!

Mohammad Badrul Ahsan is a banker.

## CROSS TALK

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shot.

There is also a moral lesson to what has happened to Saddam: one must eventually run out of luck. Here is a man who rose through the ranks to become the most powerful man in his country -- an orphan, raised by his uncle, who grew up to lead the nation. It worked for him like magic. People turned to him, obeyed him, and worshipped him, until his ambition turned him into a monster. Then he lost everything, his power, his country, his sons and now his freedom. But worst of all is the loss of dignity. That's the ultimate

the U.S. troops raided on him. What stopped him we don't know. We don't know if the man, who called on others to lay down their lives, lost courage to pull the trigger on himself.

But he lived to remain the wreckage of an enigma. Why did it happen? Why did he become a ruthless ruler, who killed and persecuted his own people and bullied his neighbours? Why did he create the illusion of nuclear and chemical weapons, the WMDs, which he never possessed? He could still remain the ruler of Iraq if he hadn't been so reckless in his

Adolf Hitler had fared far better on this score. He had gathered those like himself, unappreciated outsiders, misfits, and losers. Joseph Goebbels was an unsuccessful novelist and playwright. Julius Streicher was a blackmailer. Ernst Röhm was a sadistic homosexual, who advocated violence and murder. Herman Göring was an air-force veteran without conscience. But all of them stayed with Hitler to the end.

Why didn't people stick to Saddam to the end? His top brass fell in the American hands, one by one, his family scattered and his

his father, and adopted the last name from his mother's side.

By Saddam Hussein's lights, there was much to be gained. His mother got married for three more times and her fourth husband was a farmer, who was brutal to his stepson. He used to send Saddam on assignments to steal chicken and lambs from other farmers, and punished him physically if he failed.

Childhood abuses somehow work into the adult life and create an urge to assail upon the cruel world as personal grievances get

## OPINION

## Life outside the bubble: Question your values

MEHZABIN AHMED  
writes from Easton, PA, USA

FOR the first time in 20 years, I am disturbingly aware of being "brown". I wonder why it has never bothered me before. Is it because I have grown up in a homogeneous society where I was the "majority" -- the majority being "brown and Muslim", or is it because I have grown up as part of this "elite" group in my society called "upper middle class". I ponder as I sit in the restaurant of this white, upper middle class neighbourhood in New Jersey. A group of black people, who look like out of towners walk in, and the owner turns them out saying it's closed. Me and my sister pass each other glances as we honestly wonder if the place is closing two hours early tonight because of the Blackout in the East Coast. Well, you guessed it right, 30 minutes later I stare at the owner as he takes orders from this white family that just walked in. As I sit

there, seeing direct racism for the first time ever in my life, I honestly wonder, how many of us at home would actually want to sit and eat at the same place as our chauffeurs and maids for a change, or would let our nice little environment in a restaurant be interrupted by some lower class labour joining us.

Is it so surprising that the blacks weren't allowed to enter white restaurants during colonial time just like the Indians weren't allowed to ride in first class trains during British imperialism, they were just being classists after all. We do that all the time ourselves, don't we? So what's wrong with others doing the same to us? What sets us apart from them in anyway? No, I suppose maybe I am going a little too extreme here, comparing classism with racism, there is a huge difference between saying "You aren't good enough for me because of your colour or religion" and "because of your class". Or is there? But really, how many of us

When I meet people from different walks of life here, I sometimes criticise them a lot about their government and social policies. They usually get defensive and tell me, "How about what you do. Tell me if the people of your country are any better". I have answered that question in only one way till now, "Yes, we do make a lot of mistakes back home, but unlike you, we are capable of taking criticisms; capable of not just taking them but also changing ourselves". I really hope there is some truth to that statement.

at home actually live in the same neighbourhood as non-Muslims in my own country. Maybe they don't like us that much. I mean the minorities and whites in the USA rarely live together. I don't think it's possible that they prefer living in closed "minority" neighbourhoods in order to eliminate the risks of being discriminated in case the need arises. It's a free country with equal rights and opportunities with the laws there to protect them at all costs after all as one would argue.

Of course, I never bothered thinking twice when we were having Hartals back home, and my High School being a private school decided to make up for one of the lost days in one of the big Hindu festival days. I mean the only two Hindus in the school told the principal they wouldn't mind, why should I care. Really, would I complain if I were one of them? It makes sense now as to why I would probably not complain either if I were a Bangladeshi man instead of a woman, and had to be profiled here. Maybe, I am judging too

many people here by citing very isolated incidents from my personal experiences, doesn't matter that when I read the newspapers from home, all I see is crimes being committed here and there against minority groups all the time. When I look at news on the recent massacre of minorities in Banskhal, I feel a shiver go through my spine as to where we have come to as a nation. I always believed that the fact that we were a nation formed on the basis of standing up against oppression, taught us how to value the freedom we ourselves almost

lost. Me and you sit here complaining about how much we get low paid and about our bad working conditions as immigrants or non-immigrants in the USA. Others who aren't here, complain about how the policies of the "Rich Countries" are screwing our country's economy over, how unfair it is of them to not think of us. We complain about these foreigners thousands of miles away not understanding our needs, and what do we do when it comes to us? We make big factories, pay our workers barely enough so that they

can share a 12 by 12 foot room in a slum with 10 other people, and then we come back home and stare at CNN and complain more about how world politics and foreign policies of these "Rich Countries" are the roots of all evil. I wonder if I have the right to be outraged, or even have the right to even complain about being discriminated here as being a "Muslim" or a "person of colour" or "international". Don't we ourselves brand people because of where they come from in terms of "class", "race" and "religion" all the time as well, so what's wrong with them doing it. I realise many of you would disagree with me after reading this writeup, I would too if I didn't have to go through this drastic transition from being a Majority to a Minority by coming here. But put your hands at your heart and ask yourself once, you will know the answer. This writeup wasn't meant to be patronising or condescending to anyone in any manner. These are qualities in us that I am pointing out to you as I

discovered them as part of my own inner racism as well, but I don't want to be like one of those oppressors, because my time of being oppressed will come one of these days as well.

When I meet people from different walks of life here, I sometimes criticise them a lot about their government and social policies. They usually get defensive and tell me, "How about what you do. Tell me if the people of your country are any better". I have answered that question in only one way till now, "Yes, we do make a lot of mistakes back home, but unlike you, we are capable of taking criticisms; capable of not just taking them but also changing ourselves". I really hope there is some truth to that statement.

As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "We must be the change we wish to see in others". Let's all work together to change ourselves for the better.