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Fair trial for Saddam is impossible

A fair trial of Saddam is impossible because one of the closest collaborators (the US administration) of the genocide committed by Saddam has practically taken the responsibility for his trial. One of the main allegations against him is that he used chemical weapons against Iranian and developed biological weapons. So he was very dangerous for the world and specially the US.

Now look at how the US helped Saddam to test its (US) biological weapons. The US administration allowed and encouraged American corporations to do business with Saddam in the 1980s. That's how he got chemical and biological agents so he could use them in chemical and biological weapons. Here's the list of some of the stuff the US sent him (according to a 1994 US Senate report):

- 1) Bacillus Anthracis, cause of anthrax,
- 2) Clostridium Botulinum, a source of botulism toxin,
- 3) Histoplasma Capsulatum, cause of a disease attacking lungs, brain, spinal cord, and heart,
- 4) Brucella Melitensis, a bacteria that can damage major organs,
- 5) Clostridium Perfringens, a highly toxic bacteria causing systemic illness, and
- 6) Clostridium tetani, a highly toxicogenic substance.

Moreover, during the occupation of Iraq, both US and UK used cluster bombs which killed at least 1000 Iraqi civilians. The purpose of using these bombs was to test their efficacy, not to kill Saddam.

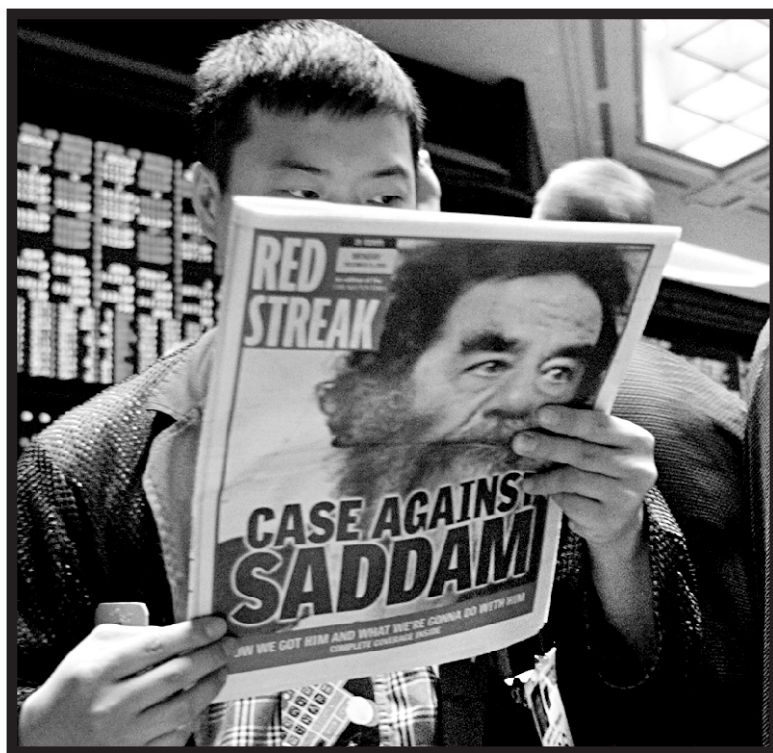
I am sure neither the US nor the UK administration will be blamed for war crimes by the jury who will perform the trial of Saddam. But it is obvious they were collaborators with Saddam while he gassed Iranian. I sincerely want Saddam to be tried, but along with his collaborators, otherwise the judges will make the worst injustice in the history of mankind.

Dr Mahboob Hossain

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Saddam a coward

The capture of Saddam Hussein proves what people who knew him closely knew



all along -- that he is a coward. During the first Gulf War, he capitulated without a serious fight. This time around, he fled again without any resistance. His sons were made of sterner stuff and chose death to disgrace. Saddam, the coward that he is, surrendered meekly, leaving no one in doubt of his cowardice.

What makes a lot of us curious is the spin being given by the US Government to this capture as the achievement of a major goal by the US. The goals that the world knows as the only reasons for intervening in Iraq, namely possession of WMDs and Saddam's links with terrorism, are being pushed beneath the carpet by this spin as the spin doctors try to rewrite history. It was never in doubt that Saddam would be found though few expected him to be found the way he was. That it took the allied powers so long does not speak much of their ability. In fact Saddam's capture is a major event for the Iraqis who suffered at his hands and want revenge. No wonder an old lady told CNN that she would like to see Saddam killed and his body thrown in the fire. Saddam has done little at all against US interests for them to hail his capture the way they are doing. Then

why is the US hailing his capture the way it is? Well, a lot of it is politics. The US is using Saddam to lay on his lap the blame for the deaths of US troops after Mr. Bush had proudly but rather hurriedly declared the end of hostilities in early May, after which the allied troops were caught in a hornet's nest of insurgencies that exposed the utter lack of planning on their part. Then, they are using Saddam's capture to deflect attention from the failure thus far to find those illusive WMDs and Saddam's links to international terrorism. Finally, the Bush team is eager to halt the declining fortunes of Mr. Bush as he enters into the election year, and Saddam's capture is being used for that purpose, by projecting it as an event larger than it actually is.

Already analysts are suggesting that the capture would not lessen the insurgency in Iraq because Saddam was hardly leading it. The insurgency is more widespread, and Saddam's capture together with the humiliation he has been subjected to could in fact give the insurgency an impetus rather than ending it. Then there is also the possibility of a civil war in Iraq for people are being polarised. Any wrong handling by the US

(they are quiet adept at this) could make Saddam a rallying point for anti-Shiite forces, not forgetting that the Baath party and its supporters have not been neutralised. However, Saddam, now that he has been caught, should be tried in an open court so the world knows not only of his crimes against his own people (for which he could be given the death penalty) but also the full story of his sordid career; of his friends and his foes, and in particular what type of assistance he was given by the US Government in the 1980s when he was playing their strategic game in trying to bring down Iran.

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmandi RA, Dhaka

Saddam Hussein captured

Saddam Hussein, captured last Saturday after eight months, continues to embarrass the Bush team. The most wanted man in the world in recent times, held by the Americans in a secret place, is for the moment subjected to interrogations. He has, for the moment, denied directing or

organising the attacks in Iraq as well as the existence of weapons of massive destruction. Does he have to be judged in Iraq? In front of a national or international court? Condemned to die or not? "He should not be judged by the council of government which was set up by the occupiers," Saddam's eldest daughter Raghda declared by telephone in Jordan with on al-Arabia that is also telecast by a private TV channel in Bangladesh. "We just want an international trial," she added, specifying that her family was going to hire a lawyer to defend her father. According to Raghda, the images taken of Saddam just after his arrest suggest he was doped by the US Army.

If the whole world claims the right to a trial, the divergences are numerous on the possibility, evoked by the "president" of the Coalition Interim Government of Iraq, Aziz al Hakim, that Saddam will not receive the death penalty. "I have my personal opinions on the way in which it must be treated, but I am not an Iraqi citizen. They are the Iraqis who will have to decide," George Bush was satisfied to say Monday. The execution was also rejected by the allies of Washington, like the UK, and by the UN Secretary-

General. Annan thus specified Monday that the United Nations never had recommended the death penalty in all the existing jurisdictions. It would be normal and natural if the Iraqis had the means of judging Saddam.

Some may leave fear that the logic of revenge takes the step on legal logic. The authorities on the spot do not have the legal means to organise an impartial, neutral and transparent lawsuit.

The statutes of the special courts charged to judge crimes against the humanity do not guarantee an equitable trial. If it is known that this made-up court of Iraqi judges will be able to call upon foreign experts, one can fear that this provision is only cosmetic, i.e. one creates the appearance of international jurisdiction by inviting some American and Anglo-Saxon experts to try to save appearances of a lawsuit stripped of partiality and transparency.

Sirajul Islam

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Help mentally retarded children

From recent observations, we know that the birth rate of mentally retarded and handicapped children has increased in Bangladesh. According to a few specialists, these kinds of babies are born due to some particular reasons, such as early or late marriage, deficiency of nutrition during pregnancy, excessive mental stress during pregnancy, and so on. Whatever the reasons are, these mentally disabled children have longer periods of infancy and dependency on their parents than their contemporaries. It takes them many years to perform even basic skills like walking, talking and eating. Parents always have to take extra care for them for a long period and be anxious about letting them live their own lives as they lag behind and suffer from various shortcomings.

And sadly, these innocent children are often treated cruelly for their shortcomings by their fellow children. Sometimes even their parents start considering such a child a curse for the offensive remarks they have to bear. That is really regrettable. No one should forget that these children are God's creation. If anyone reproaches such a creation, it means he is reproaching the creator himself.

In many surveys, it is seen that if

you put such children in proper schools they can do well eventually. They can provide the service we demand from an individual living in society if they are guided properly.

For example, although they don't always have their own creativity, if you place a portrait to sketch before such a kid, he can conceive it and reproduce it exactly.

In Western countries, retarded children are not regarded as a burden at all, as they have social service organisations and institutions funded by the government and other sources to help and support them to be educated-cum-employed and that aim to bring them to the level of able citizens.

Like the West, our government should take strong, practical initiatives to build up more schools and provide the right kind of methods and skills for educating retarded children. Not only the government but also every conscientious person should come forward and contribute to unburden the poor parents of such children with compassion and financial assistance.

Rubab Abdullah
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

"We got'm!"

Paul Bremer, the leader of the occupation forces in Iraq was

apparently excited and took pride to announce, "We got'm!" Did they really "get" Saddam or had he no alternative but to give in (as reportedly there was no resistance) as some of his own men guided the US forces to his secluded cellar? Whatever, I deplore'm (Mr. Bremer) for it is no achievement for the allied forces who could not trace him with all their might for a long 8 months. In fact, I call it a peaceful surrender. I do not know what was in the mind of the once-mighty man of Iraq. Now we shall have to wait and see how he is treated and see if he will face the same fate as those prisoners in Guantanamo Bay!

We shall have to wait to see what will be the reaction around the world. But I cannot wait to express how disgruntled I was when I heard French President Chirac on TV saying he was "delighted at the arrest" and "his capture will help Iraq be safer" and when German Chancellor Schroeder congratulated Bush by telephone on the arrest of Saddam! Oh Selucus, what a world we live in! Yes, truth really is stranger than fiction! I only muse now while Tony Blair says, "Saddam has gone from power, he won't be coming back" and President Bush says, "You do not have to fear of the rule of Saddam Hossain," but in the same breath said, "The US will not rest till the war is over" and also admitted that

saddam's capture "doesn't mean end of violence."

So should we rejoice in the voice of the Iraqi Foreign Minister who "welcomed the arrest" and called it "great news" or ponder on the TV speech of Mr. Bush? Or perhaps, in all fairness, should wait and see the aftermath.

AF Rahman, Dhaka

Our police needs proper reformation

I read two write-ups sent by Azad Miah and Romeo Ahmed published on December 14 and 15, respectively, on police reform, and most of interest. It is indeed a fact that just changing colour of the uniform will not salvage the shameful image of our police. Azad Miah's humorous suggestion of the police having new clothes without pockets to discourage them from taking bribes was particularly interesting. No one can blame him for such a comment, because he has just voiced his opinion regarding a mostly corrupt and frustrating section of the country that is paid by the people through our taxes. But, as Romeo Ahmed analysed, this serious issue demands due attention not only to deodorise the image of the police but also to pick up the image of the country as a whole from further downturn. This is so simply because the country is suffering acutely due to dete-

riorating law and order scenario in most aspects including upsurge in crime, unsteady commerce and business, poor foreign investment, sorry image of the country to the outside world and what not.

Hence, this pressing issue calls for fitting manoeuvres to reform our police service on an immediate basis, which may include ensuring a transparent and authentic recruitment procedure free from bribery and political influences, securing a respectable salary structure against the existing stingy one, equipping the police with sufficient instruments, and so on. In this regard, readers of The Daily Star may put forward their opinions to the concerned authority through the Letter to the Editor page, as it has already turned out to be a perfect rendezvous of different views from numerous conscientious people of the country.

Takad Ahmed Chowdhury
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Song of Freedom

The documentary film, Muktir Gan (Song of Freedom), made by the Masood duo, is sublime indeed. It gives us many rare facts of the Liberation War of 1971. I watched it in the public library auditorium on Dec 15. I was appalled at macabre scenes of the turbulent days of 1971. The Pakistani Army played a nasty game in our country. We triumphed at the cost of a bloodbath of our innocent people.

I would like to pay my homage to the martyrs on the eve of our Victory Day. Those who hatched such a machination to wreak havoc in Bangladesh should be penalised. The Pakistani government should carry out the recommendations of the Hamudur Rahman Commission. Every person of Bangladesh should uphold the spirit of our freedom struggle. We are independent geographically, but we have to liberate ourselves intellectually as well as ethically.

Molla Mohammad Shaheen
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Human rights and conditions at Guantanamo

According to the news coverage by the press, the US Ambassador Harry K. Thomas Jr., among others, taking part in a discussion meeting on December 10, said, "There is enough to do, such as establishing an independent Human Rights Commission."

But I would like to say humbly that it does not sound very appropriate coming from the representative of the US which has not been able to satisfy public resentment about the condition of the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay nor justify the daily killings of innocent men, women and children in Iraq or

Afghanistan.

The US has also been violating the universal principles and laws of human rights by using the excuse of 9-11 and the war on terror. And principles of human rights are also being violated in other Western democracies, which is no more hidden! The US, so-called bastion of democracy, can not shirk responsibility and liability by merely declaring that Guantanamo, where prisoners are being tortured and kept indefinitely without judgement, is not in the US. --, (held) in different countries, "without the benefit of rights stipulated under the Geneva Conventions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights".

The UN has become obsolete due to the connivance of US and its (limited) allies as UN Security Council resolutions are applied to nations on a selective basis -- some are binding while some have no binding force (according to choice). As we all know dozens of UN resolutions in respect of the occupation of Palestine that have not been implemented only because of partiality and patronage of Israel by the US. Amnesty International also has slammed the terrorism law and said, "The legislation has created a Guantanamo Bay at their own backyard." So I beg to request biggest powers in the world, please do not talk about 'human rights' till you learn to honour human rights, and never grumble or talk aloud about 'terrorism' (national or international) if you cannot stop practising the same yourselves. And my last words are, give human rights to the Palestinians, and you will have peace in the Middle East. If they leave the world's people to sleep in prey, Americans will not see their progeny in body bags.

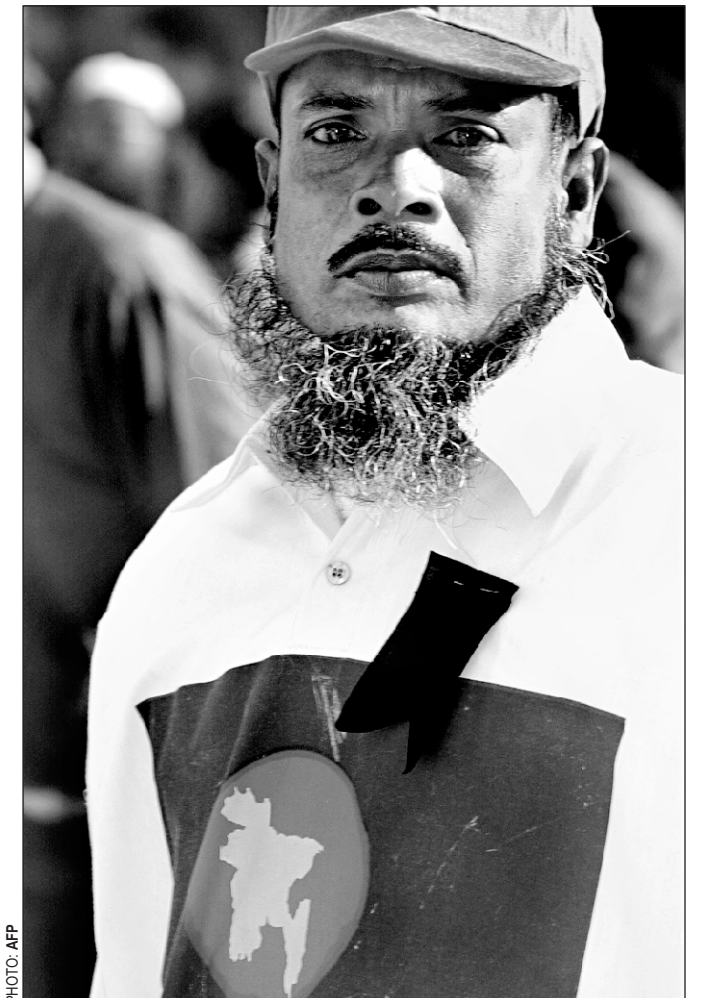
AF Rahman, Dhaka

Save time

The students of our country waste much time in the process of becoming graduates (I am talking about the Bengali medium students). They waste four months after the SSC examination before going for the Higher Secondary level and eight months (approximately) after the HSC before getting admitted to higher education providing institutes. Moreover, four years bachelor's courses have been introduced in all public universities.

My request to the government is to introduce a twelve-year compact high school graduation course instead of SSC and HSC. It will save our student's time and this system is in practice in many modern countries. I would hope that the government would take pragmatic measures in this regard.

Tawhid Shams Chowdhury
English Department, BRAC University



Unite for a smile

The one and only aim of our valiant freedom fighters was to free the country from the Pakistani occupation force as well as to bring smiles to the faces of the Bangladeshi people. "Mora ekti phul ke bachabo bole juddho kori, Mora ekti mukher hasir jono astro dhori." Their sole identity was that they were freedom fighters. But why do they have to be divided into pro-AL, pro-BNP, pro-leftist etc groups? I salute our valiant freedom fighters for liberating Bangladesh from Pakistan, but our other hopes and aspirations are yet to be fulfilled.

I request all our valiant freedom fighters to become united by forgetting all their differences, and also to bring all the political parties and their leaders, including Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina, under one platform to fight against terrorism, corruption, poverty and illiteracy like one nation as we did during the Liberation War.

Iqbal Ahmed, Dhaka

8-year-old maid tortured brutally

On Victory Day, as I was listening to the patriotic songs blaring from loud-speakers and feeling a little nostalgic, I opened the day's newspaper. The eyes of the tortured 8 year old maid was staring at me as if asking me, "Is this freedom, is this what you call Victory? Is this why you are proud to be a freedom fighter?"

I kept staring at the little girl and repeating those questions to myself, trying to find an answer. I have none and no excuse for what this nation has turned out to be, even thirty two years after the brave sons of the soil dared to fight for a country called Bangladesh. Maybe the answer is blowing in the wind, but there is no wind on my back.

Akku Chowdhury, Banani, Dhaka

"Suhrawardy on the US"



I refer to the letter "Suhrawardy on the US" by Esam Sohail (Dec 14). Mr. HS Suhrawardy who could not speak or write Bangla never ever advocated Bangali nationalism. Yes, he wanted that the greater Bengal including Assam should also become another independent country (of course another Muslim country) during the parti-

tion of India in 1947 or that the greater Bengal and Assam should be a part of Pakistan but the intellectual level of this shrewd politician was no where near to the acumen possessed by Mr. MA Jinnah -- the creator of Pakistan. I wonder why the writer referred him as one of the architects of Bangali nationalism.

From day one, Pakistan began her journey with a fragile political base. To justify the creation of Pakistan, Mr. Jinnah's two nation theory, Pakistan's both internal and external policy was and is still based on 'hate Hindu India' theme.

Now if we look at the history, Mr. Suhrawardy made those remarks 46 years back, during the time of the cold war. Pakistan, during that time had no other alternative. That was the time when the mighty Soviet Russia was a very close ally and strategic development partner of

India. India's first premier Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru himself had sound personal attachment and emotional fondness for the economic aspects of socialism. To counter India, Pakistan naturally needed and looked for an ally and this was in the US' interest too. Pakistan was and still is the tool of the US. Who could forecast that there would be an unexpected collapse of the mighty USSR and thus the end to the Cold War era. Who could predict that many people in Bangladesh would now look at India with suspicion, though they were our closest friend and ally during our war of independence. Who could anticipate that the Pakistanis, who were hated by all the Bangalis during our war of liberation, would one day be considered by many of us as a fellow Muslim brother?

With the passage of time, perspective changes, priori-

ties alter, objective reverses, friends become enemies and adversaries become associates. Moreover, with the rotation of the earth on its axis and around the sun, what was wrong yesterday may be correct today and what is true today may be false tomorrow.

Naturally the Americans too have changed their approach and policy to advance their world-wide economic interests. They now do anything to claim their stake everywhere in the world no matter whether it is legal or prohibited and immoral. But Pakistan's approach remains unchanged. Where is the difference between that remark made by Mr. HS Suhrawardy back in 1957 and the living responses of Gen. Parvej Musharraf, the present Pakistani ruler?

Nazmul Karim
Dhaka