

## Need for sustained counteraction

Food front too murky for comfort

THE mobile courts convened as a result of the recent top-notch in-depth investigative reporting on widespread food adulteration are to be congratulated for their efforts. There have already been a number of quite startling high-profile cases brought and there is no question that the courts are discharging their duties efficiently and effectively, and that for the first time in recent memory the adulterators are running for cover.

However, for a number of reasons, the mobile courts, while praiseworthy, are not sufficient to meet the extent of the problem. The first is that the reports and subsequent official investigations have brought to light the fact that the severe lack of hygienic and sanitation safeguards with respect to the food industry exceeds even our worst apprehensions. There is simply no way that a few mobile courts can be equal to the task of making us all safe.

The second reason is that the existing laws are not stringent enough to work as a serious deterrent to the criminals adulterating food. This is apparently being rectified by the government, which is considering much stricter measures including possible life for those guilty of adulteration.

This is a welcome move. Food adulteration is a serious crime and needs to be prosecuted as such. It is a gross violation of the public trust and the cavalier disregard for the health and well-being of the common people shown by the guilty reveals a truly criminal nature. At its worst, food adulteration can cause severe illness and death. Finally, the profits from the crime are so great that the punishment must be commensurate, otherwise there will be no disincentive.

The government must take this issue up as a priority. We would like to see a high-level taskforce take stock of the whole situation and devise ways to root out the problem. The confusion between various regulatory authorities and laws needs to be eliminated, and responsibilities need to be clearly delineated. Those guilty need swift and severe punishment and those who are operating in an exemplary manner also deserve recognition.

What could be more important than safeguarding the food that the people eat every day?

## Emergency treatment on precarious perch

DMCH's perennial problem needs solving

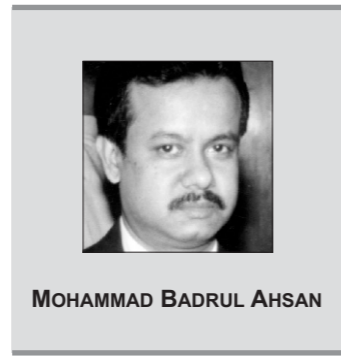
THE neurosurgery ward of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the country's premier public sector healthcare provider, is limping with all sorts of constraints. This important ward has become an overcrowded and extremely unhygienic place, with some of the critically ill being placed, incredible though it may sound, for the type of patients they are, on the corridor between wards.

What is really sad is that even the neurosurgery ward has not been kept free from the noisy visitors and outsiders. The hospital authorities have even failed to prevent cats and skunks from entering the ward. The lapses are not really easy to explain in terms of resource constraints because it smacks of monumental indifference. The patients' cause does not seem to figure in the management of the hospital.

We know that the ward has to admit patients well beyond its capacity. We are also aware of the limitations of the hospital, but nothing can explain why the minimum hygiene standards could not be maintained there. Equally obscure is the reason behind allowing so many people to enter the ward where tranquility should prevail. The health managers have apparently forgotten that patients need the right kind of environment to recover. That is all the more true about patients undergoing neurosurgery. The Ward 30 is only the tip of the iceberg. Patients and their relatives have long been complaining about the mess that they find themselves in at the DMCH.

The government should give serious thought to the imperative necessity for a balanced utilisation of the budgetary allocations to the health sector. Money should go where it is most needed. It is important to ensure that any investment in this sector is based on correct assessment of the prevailing situation and it must not be lopsided or misplaced. The facilities in the hospitals have to be increased considering the sharp rise in the number of patients. The task is long overdue and any more delay will only make matters worse.

## Ideology and innocence



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

EVERYBODY believes in something, but the world is divided into two extremes. There are those who die for belief and others who kill for it. But a vast majority are innocent bystanders, people who believe in varying degrees, but are not ready to kill or die for what they believe. While everybody in the world believes in something, only the ideologue believes with extreme prejudice.

Now an ideologue is someone who adheres to an ideology, which is a collection of ideas that forms the basis of social thinking. Facts are interpreted according to belief, and every society has an ideology that remains invisible to most people but quietly influences their ability to think. This is the dominant ideology, as opposed to all others that differ from the norm, which are known as radical thinking.

Once science was considered radical against religion, and religion itself was considered radical against pagan thinking. Communism was radical against both religion and capitalism. Mathew White, an atrocitologist, wrote in *Historical Atlas of the Twentieth Century* (2001) that in the 20th

century almost 92 million lives perished in the struggle for communism compared to 96 million over other conflicts.

Ideology is the headiest thing in the world, because nothing intoxicates like the mind soaked in the frenzy of strong beliefs. Every time a sword drew blood in the ancient world, and every time a bullet or shrapnel spilled the blood of modern men, there is a trajectory of

captured the essence of truth, he also spoke for himself.

The truth is that whenever the "small men" played big roles, history registered wars, massacres, slaughters, and oppressions. Then comes a time when the hypocrisy is separated from injustice and nations roil in regret and apology. The Americans are preparing to apologise for the mistakes of their ancestors and come

the Irish during the potato famine of the 1840s. Pope John Paul II apologised for the past sins of the Roman Catholic Church against non-Catholics. Australia apologised for its mistreatment of the country's aborigine population.

While all crimes eventually catch up with conscience, the innocent is always the victim of history. Take your pick of a day in Iraq, and it is just a question of how

Hamed al-Ghazali espoused this concept in the 12th century when he introduced the principle of "tattarrus" in his book *Al-Mustafa*. The word "tattarrus" basically meant "dressing up," which referred to the practice of using ordinary Muslims as human shields by Islamic combatants in their fights against infidels. Later, in the 13th century, theologian Ibn Tayimiah further developed a

individuals could be killed: apostates, who have turned their back to Islam, homosexuals, who "dirty" the pure society, and Israelis, including unborn children, who could grow up to join the Jewish army. Now, however, al-Qaradawi has expanded his doctrine to allow for the killing of innocent Muslims in Iraq, because that is necessary for the larger interest of the Muslim Ummah.

This is where you have the catch. All ideological conflicts have claimed innocent lives in the name of larger interests. Mao Zhe Dong is responsible for over 30 million deaths in the name of communism in China. Lenin sent 4 million and Stalin sent 20 million Russians to death over their struggle for communism. Adolph Hitler's Nazi madness cost 35 million lives during the Second World War. Pol Pot killed 2 million Cambodians and Che Guevara ordered hundreds of people to execution under his watch. All the deaths of earlier centuries due to ruthless persecution and carnage were similarly led by ideologies driven to their logical ends.

Between the mortar and the pestle of ideologies, innocence has been crushed like chilies. It has happened in the past and it is happening now, the same old bottle while labels kept changing. Religion, nationalism, patriotism, communism, socialism, democracy and freedom, all have drawn innocent people into the fray to change their lot.

If "to be or not to be" is an ideological question, then the answer is that innocence is guilty. Because an ideology cannot work until the innocent is convinced.

Mohammad Badrul Ahsan is a banker.

CROSS TALK  
Between the mortar and the pestle of ideologies, innocence has been crushed like chilies. It has happened in the past and it is happening now, the same old bottle while labels kept changing. Religion, nationalism, patriotism, communism, socialism, democracy and freedom, all have drawn innocent people into the fray to change their lot.

belief that worked from head to heart to hand of those who vowed to defend the pure and the sacred. But the interpretation of the pure and the sacred varied from person to person, land to land, time to time and ideology to ideology. One of the greatest sources of human conflict is this variance of interpretation, followed by the paradox of understanding.

In 2004, George Bush described this paradox when he visited Goree Island, a holding place for captured slaves in Africa. "Small men," he said, "took on the powers and airs of tyrants and masters. Years of unpunished brutality and bullying and rape produced a dullness and hardness of conscience. Christian men and women became blind to the clearest commands of their faith and added hypocrisy to injustice." In another century, it will show that while George Bush

to terms with the guilt of slavery. The second largest US bank JP Morgan Chase & Co. has publicly disclosed that two of its predecessor banks had received thousands of slaves as collateral prior to the Civil War. It offered a formal letter of apology and said it was creating a 5 million dollar scholarship fund for the African-American students from Louisiana. There is a recent Senate resolution on lynching, while the clamour for a proper national apology is growing across the United States.

History is rife with examples of proper apology for past misdeeds. The Japanese apologised for the cruelty committed by its troops in the Far East during World War II. Germany apologised for the suffering caused by its actions toward Jews and others. More recently Tony Blair apologised on behalf of Britain for its treatment of

many people have got killed. Take London bombing or any other explosion for that matter, and you have innocent people who are getting killed. An average of 4,000-5,000 children died every month in Iraq when the US imposed sanctions on the country to create pressure on Saddam Hussein.

It is one of the starkest mysteries of history that innocent people died in the conflict of ideology. If you think about all the people who went to Nazi gas chambers, died in wars, revolutions, political struggles, and other ideological confrontations, it is always the sparks started by a few men, which set fire to engulf many. Perhaps there is a parallel between crimes of men and natural calamities. The meek and the weak always perish in the wrath of the haughty and the mighty.

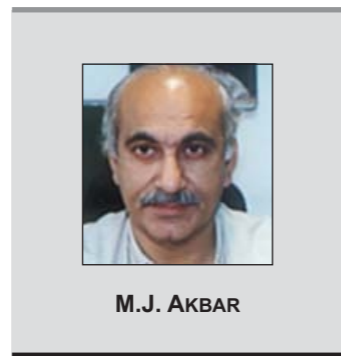
An Islamic scholar named Abu-

"tattarrus" doctrine to justify the killing of non-combatant Muslims during battles with Mongol invaders. The doctrine was subsequently repudiated within Islam.

Until it resurfaced in 1995, when Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Egyptian mentor of Osama bin Laden, argued that killing of Muslims, including women and children, was not a sinful act if required in the fight against the enemies of Islam. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the al Qaeda mastermind in Iraq, claimed that according to the hierarchy of values in Islam, killing of the *mutumarrasoun* i.e. civilian Muslims who live under the control of the infidel, was necessary to prevent the faith of the infidel from striking root in the land of Islam.

Yussuf al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian sheik working in Qatar took a harder line. He initially ruled that only three categories of unarmed

## The Club of 13



M.J. AKBAR

and battled to a draw by Pakistan in 1965. Her trust was on putting new life into the wheat fields, where the Green Revolution was born, and a new heart into the armed forces, which delivered victory on the battlefields of Bangladesh.

The twenty-first century definition of the national interest is economic power and nuclear power, because prosperity is the guarantor of internal stability and nuclear capability the true protection against external

believed that this is the only real deterrence against American aggression. While there were other reasons, a principal reason for Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's victory over the favourite Hashemi Rafsanjani in the recent Iranian presidential election was the suspicion that the latter could have compromised Iran's nuclear power to the United States.

It isn't only fringe nuclear states like North Korea or Israel who treat

India's nuclear capability, built by every Prime Minister since freedom across party lines, created without the permission of the West or the Soviet Union, constructed despite their active hostility by Indian scientists and them alone, is at the heart of India's sense of itself as a power that, after a long while in its turbulent history, will not take dictation from anyone. Any suspicion that a Prime Minister has taken dictation from Washington does not

rather than a fundamental reality. You should also check why no other nuclear nation has accepted such a condition. The short answer is that separation will curtail our flexibility in determining the size of our nuclear capability. I hope Islamabad and Beijing have sent Washington a thank you note. They could do it on a common letterhead.

We have also allowed international inspectors free access to our facilities everywhere and at any

quence, however soapy it might be. The Prime Minister's visit was preceded by an Indo-US defence pact which has raised questions that have not been answered. And Dr Singh ended his visit to Washington with a shocking statement casting doubt on the legitimacy of the Iran pipeline. Dr Manmohan Singh is trying to reverse the declared decision of his own Cabinet (a coalition Cabinet, by the way, not just a Congress one) on dictation from Washington. This is unacceptable. The oil minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar, has made it clear through his ministry officials that the project remains on track. I hope he does not have to pay a price and lose his portfolio for taking a stand.

Dr Manmohan Singh is at a crisis point in his tenure as India's 13th Prime Minister. (There have been 14 prime ministerial terms but 13 Prime Ministers.) His luck is not in the number. It is in his own hands. He is still seen as a decent, honest, good man. But one flaw is beginning to stain his public image. He is beginning to get a reputation for weakness, and of being manipulated, of taking dictation, often against his own instincts and his own will. A vague view can easily consolidate into a conviction, particularly if it is tinged with suspicion that there is a puppeteer in Washington. It will be up to the Prime Minister to use Parliament to eliminate the Indians.

The Indian voter welcomes each new Prime Minister with trust, affection and almost unlimited power. Most of the Club of 13 ended lonely, unloved and without a modicum of influence. It is up to Dr Manmohan Singh to determine how he will be remembered.

MJ Akbar is Chief Editor of the Asian Age.

## BYLINE

Dr Manmohan Singh is at a crisis point in his tenure as India's 13th Prime Minister. His luck is not in the number. It is in his own hands. He is still seen as a decent, honest, good man. But one flaw is beginning to stain his public image. He is beginning to get a reputation for weakness, and of being manipulated, of taking dictation, often against his own instincts and his own will.

aggression. All nations in their senses want the first. For varying reasons a fortunate few nations have both, or can hope for both. America, Britain, and France have both. China, Russia and Israel possess greater military power than economic power, but are catching up. India and Pakistan are nuclear powers without being economic powers, but India's economy is now very significant steps ahead of Pakistan's. North Korea has enough nuclear capability to protect its borders from American troops stationed there.

Iran is the hidden fist. It may not have much of an economy, but it has oil, which enables it to survive a harsh cordon thrown by the United States. And it is widely believed that its unknown nuclear capability has either achieved a clandestine weapons program or is on the verge of one. For Iran the linkage between national interest and nuclear capability is particularly strong. Iranians

nuclear weapons as their defence guarantee. Israel, which has never admitted to possessing nuclear weapons or tested a device, retains the capability as its guarantee against annihilation by potentially hostile neighbours. And just in case anyone missed the point, China's General Zhu Chenghu said, during the last fortnight, while discussing the possibility of American involvement in any conflict with Taiwan, "If the Americans are determined to interfere (then) we will be determined to respond ... with nuclear weapons." What was Washington's response? To grin and bear it. Just as it had done when a little while ago another Chinese general pointed out that China's nuclear missiles could hit California. It wasn't a threat. Just something for the record.

This is why the controversy over the agreement that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has signed with President George Bush is inevita-

travel well with public opinion.

No one expects complete transparency on issues as complex as nuclear weapons. It is possible that gains have been made by Delhi beyond the verbal fluff offered by Bush, as for instance the patronising statement that India is a responsible nuclear power without according it a formal status. Bush pointedly and categorically rejected this option. The rest of what he has offered is subject to Congress. Dr Singh might want to make a phone call to Islamabad to check what Congress did to Pakistan's F-16s. However, while none of the possible gains are immediate, all the concessions made by Dr Manmohan Singh could become operational at once.

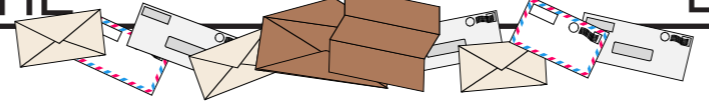
The concessions are major. If you want to know why separating civilian and military nuclear facilities and programs is important, then all you have to do is check out why the United States has been so insistent about what seems an operational

time. The protection that every Prime Minister from Nehru to Vajpayee gave to our nuclear scientists has been removed. Think about it.

One of the key elements of our ongoing research is the thorium program which can make nuclear fuel imports irrelevant. Will inspectors now monitor our scientists there? Public opinion, and even specialist opinion, is also created by the context. Dr Singh has courted his British and American hosts in language that sounds more obsequious than friendly. We heard, from Oxford, about the splendours of the British Raj, which had, among its missions, a responsibility to "civilise" native Indians. Now we hear Dr Singh tell us, from Washington, that anyone who is civilised anywhere in the world cannot but support Bush. Who on earth thinks up such statements for the Prime Minister? Or does he do so himself?

Still, froth is of limited conse-

## TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



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.

### Power shortage in SUST

We are students of SUST. Now we are facing a serious crisis due to load shedding. A university like SUST should be on the top of the priority list for supply of electricity. Because it is not only a seat of learning but also its main and major curriculum is doing research. It is a university of science and technology-- lots of electricity-run machines are working here day and night. Electricity failure may damage those valuable things.

Now the semester final is going on but irregular power supply is causing so much trouble to us. Many lab exams are taking a long extra time to finish.

The relevant authorities should look into the matter.

Zia  
Shahporan Hall, SUST.  
G-8 Summit

The G-8 summit was held in Scotland. This forum is known for its insensitivity to the poor country's interests. They make such economic plans and policies in the name of poor countries' development that cannot be avoided by the poor countries. Consequently, they are forced to take loan with those policies. But the result is unchanged. The poor become poorer.

Anyway, today's issues of this summit are mainly focussed on the prospects of offering more assistance to the poor countries. But Mr. Bush, the US President, had clearly said before going to the summit that he would not sign any treaty which he considers unfriendly to the US economy and domestic development.

So what could we expect from the rich countries?  
M.A.H Nazim  
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Indian psyche

Present day Indians seem to suffer from a pathetic obsession for recognition as a political and military power-- obviously at the cost of its neighbours. But let us just leave that aside for now. They are the only people who talk it, print it, sing it and dance on it rather loudly and with so little to justify it. They have nuclear technology, commendable IT and film industries, and what else! Greatness does not come through bragging or begging, nor at the cost of others. Unfortunately, however, in this obsessive quest they have to continue to employ the most unscrupulous tradecraft in true Kautilian traditions to glorify their nebulous past and build up an image of dubious greatness through deceit and distortions. In applying these Kautilian virtues, the Indian rulers not only misguide and brain-wash the ignorant and simple minded people but also indulge in bluff and intimidation through cheap attacks, propaganda and rumour mongering.

It is a pity that many including quite a few amongst us fall victim to this deception and charade. Our failure to promote education and spread of knowledge, particularly our lack of interest in history has been the main cause of our weak national confidence and that has made us vulnerable to false and distorted propaganda. Though it seems ironical but factually every crisis or problem, however petty, tends to shake our very existence and brings us to the very brink. It is a sad reflection on our national leadership and their inability to discern truth from history whose evaluation and application continue to suffer with dogmatic reservations. It's time that we put our feet on ground.

However, if India looks a little deeper into its history, it will not fail to see that past bitterness and persisting complexes have become an obsessive delusion for recognition and power. Although, it has cleverly managed to create an image of

some importance, it must know that deceit cannot endure.

The greatness that it seeks cannot be bought through bluffs and deceptions, show of force, media propaganda, advertisements or lobbying.

Muraad H Khan  
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### Days of independence and freedom

We would like to present the terms independence and freedom and we want to understand the meanings of independence and freedom. It is fascinating to know that people all over the world migrate and travel like gypsies. In all countries there are different cultures, languages, dialects and people. India has many different languages and people and so does Bangladesh. America also has many different cultures and people. America is a land of immigrants and everyone came from

somewhere else. The most important fact is that the influence of imperialism and empire was spreading around the world by the British Rulers.

On July 4, 1776, America became free from British rule and the Declaration of Independence was written to overcome violation of human rights, oppression of people in America and the oppression of American immigrants. We must mark July 4 as a beginning of days of freedom, independence and peace. From today onwards let us hope and pray for freedom.

On October 11, 1492 Columbus had reached the Caribbean Islands and the West Indies. Revisionist Historians created the interesting documentary film "The Age of Discovery", and explained that Columbus came to the West Indies for trade and enslaved the native American Indians. The Native American Indians were the first inhabitants of the Americas. No one truly has to discover a nation; America, like all

other lands was created by nature and by the power of God. On July 4, we celebrate the struggle, the fight and the victory of human rights and freedom not just for America but for all the people and for all creations and creatures of the earth.

Today, we will sing for freedom with the poetry of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. We will sing the song of Red Thunder and the Native American song, "Oh Great Spirit, set us free." Today, we will present the struggle and victory of freedom throughout the ages and the history of the world. History is in the past and yet history repeats itself or influences the present. If we must repeat history, let us only repeat the chant, the prayer and victory of freedom. Today we will remember Mahatma Gandhi and his faith in freedom and religious pluralism, Mother Theresa and her faith in human dignity, Kazi Nazrul for his fight for freedom in British India, Sheikh Mujib for his faith in the

Bengali language that was a powerful medium of freedom, Wilberforce who believed in the abolition of slavery, Susan B. Anthony who was in jail because she wanted women to vote, Henry David Thoreau for his essay on freedom, King Birendra, the people's King in Nepal, American journalists who believed in the freedom of India, Bangladesh and many other nations; Queen Elizabeth who was in jail and later separated the parliament from religion.

We must overcome war. We must overcome empire and the examples of tyranny set by Hitler and Mussolini. We must continue to construct and deconstruct the concepts of freedom, independence and peace. We must try to understand and educate ourselves about the concepts of freedom, independence and peace.

We must celebrate everything that is good in America and the world.  
Mahnuma Estelle  
on-e-mail