

THE JUDGEMENT

It was on predictable lines –the Saddam verdict and its fallout in Iraq and elsewhere in the Ara world. One reason they took so much time—39 sessions stretched over 9 months—to pronounce death penalty to Saddam Hussein and his co-accused in the farcical trial as it was, is American hypocrisy to project Iraq as a showcase of democracy which it is not. Much to the dismay of Bush and Blair, the road to peace and democracy in the Middle East does not really run through Baghdad. Amnesty International, not a Saddam supporter by any stretch of imagination, has already questioned the fairness of the trial. How Amnesty manufactured fabricated stories of human rights violations including medieval barbarity by Saddam's troops in Kuwait is now history. Nobody thinks Saddam will be given a chance to have a fair trial at the appeal stage. Even the top UN human rights official, immediately after the passing of death sentence, urged Iraq to ensure Saddam Hussein a fair appeal process and not to execute him. But all this international outcry may not influence the existing dispensation that takes order from Washington and London.

Saddam's hanging "was a sovereign decision by a sovereign nation". That was John Reid, the British Home Secretary. And the White House was prompt enough to highlight the independence of Iraqi judicial system and deny the allegation that the Bush administration in reality arranged the 'scheming' and timing of the verdict before crucial US elections. For one thing judgement in Iraq is seen by many as revenge for the years of Sunni rule—or misrule.

The Saddam show trial has been intriguing ever since it officialy began more than a year ago. Ironically, Saddam has been sentenced to death on a localised massacre of Shias rather than wholesale gassing of Kurds over which the Bushes were so exercised when they decided to destroy Iraq and Saddam as well. On May 25 1994, the US Senate's Committee on Bank-ing, Housing, and Urban Affairs produced a report entitled "United States Chemical and Biological warfare-related Dual-use exports to Iraq and their possible impact on the Health Consequences of Persion Gulf War". The report was candid enough to inform Congress about the US administration approved shipments of biological agents by American companies to Iraq from 1985 or earlier. America knew all about ethnic cleansing and even supplied the gas—along with Britain—because Saddam was an American ally in those days. But Saddam was not allowed to depose before the trial court about American and British involvement in the Iraqi gas tradey, for obvious reasons. Washington disowned its past connections with Saddam's government to hide its own crimes against humanity. So the trial mainly focused on the massacre of Shias to bury a larger Bush administration package. At that time the CIA even went to the extent of blaming it on Iran for dropping the gas on the Kurds. All this happened because Saddam was still at the time America's favourite friend rather than its favourite war criminal and, what is more Saddam was still dealing with dollar, not euro in oil business.

The Bush invaded Iraq illegally and that unjust war cost Iraq a mere 600,000 lives, mostly civilians—women and children. And yet Bush is not on trial for his heinous crimes against humanity. Britain exported £200,000 worth of thiodiglycon, one of two components of mustard gas in 1988. And eight years later the British apologists of American world order had no problem to prohibit the sale of diphtheria vaccine to Iraqi children under the specious plea that it could be used for “weapons of mass dustruction”. Iraqi children died in thousands like flies because of sanctions and non-availability of essential life saving drugs. And yet Blair is not on trial.

A dead Saddam may be more problematic than a living one for America. But one thing is almost certain: Iraq is heading towards a grave emergency paving the way for partition on ethnic identity basis—Shia Iraq, Sunni Iraq and finally Kurd Iraq. And this ethnic war is likely to escalate beyond Iraq’s borders to aggravate the Middle East crisis upsetting all equations of Uncle Sam.

Even if Saddam goes to gallows which is likely unless something radical happens, peace will remain elusive for the Iraqis for years to come. Iraq is now swamped with mass murderers having religious and non-religious affiliations, guilty of mass killings, rape, arson, loot and all the dastardly crimss under the sun. And they are the foot-soldiers of America-backed Iraqi government.

Saddam brilliantly utilised the trial show to expose America’s evil designs in the Middle East while urging his people not to indulge in sectarian violence and unite against the occupation forces. Gorbachev was still in the Kremlin at the beginning of Iraq crisis but he did nothing to stop America’s aggression, diplomatically or otherwise. Nor did the progressives across the world seize the opportunity to develop anti-imperialist struggle. Nearer home communists and liberal democrats working under different signboards of caste groupings did precious little to oppose America’s Iraq war and later, the so-called trial imposed on Saddam Hussein. Now they are planning to mobilise masses against Saddam’s death sentence, possibly with an eye to the next general election. But the most crucial issues related to American strategy to rephape the world in horrific ways are not discussed seriously—either in the public arena or in election campaings. This is a major reason why popular resistance to American hegemonism and bellicosity is nowhere near what is desperately needed. This time too things won’t be otherwise. ~~████~~