Dhaka, Friday, October 11, 1991

Tribute to Shahabuddin

It was perhaps his finest hour. As Justice Shahabuddin bade farewell to the country's highest office, he had the rare satisfaction of any Chief Executive to be carrying along with him the grateful appreciation of the nation for a job well done. He took charge of the State's affairs when the edifice of power lay in ruins. Today he leaves behind a sovereign parliament, a popularly elected leadership, a unanimously adopted form of government and, most importantly, a Constitution that has been shorn of its undemocractic features. Any one of the above could sufficed to be a life time's achievement for a statesman or a politician.

The 306 days Presidency of Justice Shahabuddin was low on profile and high on performance. Ribbon cutting here and pontificating there were neither his style nor a part of his agenda. His single-minded attention to the task for which he was called upon to assume the office of the President was all that he cared for and all that he did. We must remember that he was not an actor in any of the events that propelled him on to the centre-stage. However, he was a superb manager of the consequences of those events starting from organising and running the interim government, to steering the nation's transition to a democratic system, to the final step of electing his own replacement.

In a remarkable display of courage, leadership, clarity of vision, impartiality, unwavering faith in democratic norms and unfaltering commitment to national interest, the former Acting President gave us, what was till then an impossible dream a free, fair and peaceful election. Through the skilful management of that one single event, he : a) restored our faith in elections, which through repeated riggings and shameless manipulations was reduced to nothing; b) made the parliament what it was meant to be the supreme representative body and the highest legislature, and not a gathering place for goons and lackeys; c) gave dignity and honour to the representatives of the people; d) sent sky high the prestige of our system of government, a prestige which is of immense importance for a country in desperate search for positive image. On a more practical plane Justice Shahabuddin showed us that however archaic and corruption-ridden our administrative system is, it still can be made to deliver if the leadership is honest and determined. It was the same district administration, the same police and the same official bodies that Ershad used to cheat the people of their votes which the venerable Judge used to do the exact opposite.

This journal pays tribute to Justice Shahabuddin - and in so doing echoes the sentiment of the nation — for his contribution in strengthening the foundation of democracy in the country. It was his expert and meticulous handling of volatile political issues, timely initiatives and courageous moves that have helped us in attaining in nine months what we had mostly lost, and in some cases, ourselves destroyed in the last 16 years.

We have had leaders of many kinds; charismatic, visionary, intellectual and, of course, corrupt. But never one as unassuming, low-key, committed and so thoroughly devoid of any inclination to cling to power. Justice Shahabuddin, through his single-minded dedication to serve the nation has given us a new confidence and pride. As he left the office of the President, he stood tall. And for his accomplishments, the nation stood taller.

Israel's High Jinks

Israel's violation of Iraqi airspace on lest Friday, and those of Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia in the process, dramatically highlighted the exis-tence of another belligerent state in the region. While the world's energy, in the form of UN resolutions, investigating and demolitions teams, and US threats of use of force, is directed against Baghdad and its programme to build an atomic bomb, Israel has demonstrated that it has the capability and the willingness to not only threaten Iraq, but also to show the utmost disregard for international law under the noses of the UN.

The Israeli government has not explained why its warplanes spent half an hour flying over northwestern Iraq, and the United States has not explained why it did not detect or intercept the flights, even though it has enough surveillance and monitoring technology deployed in the region to have done so. Perhaps they knew, but did not intervene because they also knew the aircraft involved were Israeli, and not Iraqi. In that case, the subsequent US condemnation would certainly seem like an exercise in window dressing. If not, then it was an embarrassing failure of American intelligence-gathering technique and technology. Either way, the US has as much to answer for as Israel. Washington cannot escape responsibility, as it has assigned to itself a high-profile troubleshooting role in the region.

Even more seriously, Israel's blatantly belligerent action, while moves to put together a Middle East peace conference reaches a critical stage, is a bad omen indeed. The question now naturally arises whether this Israeli action is designed to incense Arab opinion to the point of wrecking the planned conference; or whether the intention is to intimidate Arab states into accepting Israeli conditions for the conference (which would make the meeting quite meaningless anyway). Tel Aviv, by routing its warplanes over the territories of three Arab states on their way to Iraq without being detected, let alone challenged, appears to have driven home a simple message — that mili-

tarily, it can do whatever it wishes in the region. It would be a tragedy if "moderate" Arab states and the US allowed Israel to convert that unquestionable military superiority into political triumph. Nobody really expects the US to launch another Desert Storm to free the West Bank and the Gaza from Israeli occupation, but President George Bush could add substance to his new image as a superpower statesman by compelling Tel Aviv to come to the peace conference without pre-conditions. For their part, Arab states should remain on course for peace, but demand greater US pressure on Israel. If Israeli belligerence and US indifference continue, then the Arab masses on the street may well be driven once again towards leaders who offer confrontation.

Global Nuclear Weather Improves

OME say years ago Radio Moscow happily announced - warmer wea ther tomorrow from today's minus 45 C to minus 40 C. Last week President Bush announced cuts in the US nuclear arsenals, which was more than matched by President Gorbachev anno-uncing cuts in Soviet Union's nuclear arsenals. These sound something like Radio Moscow's weather announce-ment as the present cuts in nuclear arsenals of both superpowers would mean the world could now be destroyed say eight times over times over instead of ten times.

It appears that the cuts include most of the obsolete nuclear warheads and shells for tactical missiles and tactical nuclear weapons at sea. The action also includes taking a good number of strategic misstles off combat alert. Both superpowers had their own reasons for elimination of the above types of nuclear weapons. But still it was, undoubtedly, a big step forward and President Bush's initiative and follow up actions by President Gorbachev deserve world wide appreciation. The idea itself is praiseworthy as the reductions would be achieved without any bilateral negotiations which are generally very protracted and irritating - START and INF negotiations are the examples. In such sensitive matters the need for initiatives and correct political decisions like the one taken by President Bush is overwhelming. One can also detect fine

diplomacy in President Bush's action that helped him to test, something very necessary at this stage, whether control of Soviet nuclear arsenals is still with the Kremlin. Gorbachev's announcement amply proves Kremlin's control over them. So far nobody has said anything against Gorbachev's decisions. Some of the Western experts, however, expressed doubts on whether nuclear arsenals, located in some Republics could ultimately be destroyed by Kremlin's order. Under the present situation their doubts seem misplaced as there is general understanding among the Republics' leaders for central control of the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenals. The reason is most of the nuclear weapons are now located in the Russian territory and the smaller Republics can not take the risk of Russian control. This also confirms that despite what happened in the Soviet Union it still is a superpower.

Noteworthy Initiative

The initiative of President Bush for unflateral cuts in the nuclear arsenal is noteworthy and indeed there is a need for making this type of unilateral gestures at least a yearly event if not more frequent - this time initiative was taken by Bush and next time by Gorbachev and so on. Though Britain and France have virtually expressed their unwillingness to cut their own stocks of nuclear weapons, one hopes that they would ultimately join

by Muslehuddin Ahmad

the process and also take the initiative for unilateral cuts. As they are still outside the superpowers nuclear cuts negotiations, their willingness to go for unilateral cuts appears to be the only way for reductions of their nuclear weapons. The USS has asked for reductions of tactical nuclear bombs based in Europe. The NATO is apparently moving ahead with the same objectives. If this process continues, the world can largely get rid of this evil - the weapons of mass destruction in the near future. This would be the deterrence in reverse order on the basis of mutual confidence and respect for human lives - something created by Almighty God and nobody has the right to destroy them except through process of internationally accepted law. The process will also give real boost to the economies of the nuclear powers and also strengthen world economy in general through productive use of the resources released therefrom.

One may suggest overall supervision by the UN inspection team of the nuclear cuts in the respective countries on the basis of their own declarations to avoid any cvasive moves at lower levels. The UN inspection team may periodically report to the UN on the

The above should not only apply but be mandatory on South Africa and Israel as both

possess nuclear weapons. Their nuclear weapons should also be destroyed.

Opportunity for Saddam

This could also be a good opportunity for President Saddam to go for a self declaration and consequent action to destroy all of his own rubbish on nuclear programme and other weapons of mass destruction in the presence of the UN inspection team. This would save his country and his people from utter humiliation and economic disaster. He might also serve his country and the people well if, along with the above, he could take the courage to announce his retirement — a suggestion only as no outsider could demand ouster of another country's president and certainly not for the satisfaction of President Bush, but with a view to finding enough time to write a book on his dangerous adventure, a true account of what led him to commit this aggression, which should be lesson for all dictators around the world. This would also fetch him enough money for his retired life that will surely be more peaceful and rewarding than the present sleepless manoeuvres to confront and embarrass Bush and his alliance colleagues. Whatever contributions he has made to destroy Arab nationalism (some are of the opinion that he aroused Arab nationalism) through

madness in a brotherly country Kuwait would remain with the Arabs for sometimes. He can however, have some satisfaction that his wild actions in Kuwait have prompted Bush to take a plunge into Middle Eastern desert for peace which might, this time with the support of the Congress, lead to Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land - something he asked for against his withdrawal from Kuwait a good demand but against his evil acts - and indeed in the process had his country destroyed.

Third World

As it seems, President Bush's initiative has vastly improved global nuclear weather. One may hope that the reductions in nuclear arsenals would lead to reductions in conventional arms and also in armed forces around the world and particularly in the Third World countries where, many a time, arms are used against their own people - against demo-

cratic movements. The reductions in the armed forces in the Third Would countries on the basis of mutual understanding among and between the regional groupings could be best step for them to move out of their present abysmal economic situation. A recent UN report shows that by mere freezing the military expenditure at the present level the Asian countries could generate as much as \$150 billion savings in the

next decade, which could be used for their economic developnient. Substantial reductions which appear within reach would release vast amount of resources that could indeed change the economic destiny of these poor countries.

Britain's move sometime ago in favour of having all arms registered with the UN deserves appreciation. One may even suggest a step further. Indeed, if the UN is to be made an effective organisation all weapons, including nuclear weapons, purchases and sales should be examined by the UN for which a special Weapons Committee with all 15 UN Security Council members may be established where there will be no veto. Approval should be given considering only the defense needs of a country. The Committee should also have the power to check new additions in the weapons producing countries' existing stocks. There will be no infringement on any country's sovereignty as no country should be allowed to go for unrestricted and unlimited production of arms and other weapons of mass destruction. When the UN has applied the standard on Iraq, it should have similar authority on other countries also. The justification of the UN action is that Iraq committed aggression. Yes, it did and did it recently but some other did the same before and in some cases in far brutal manner. The UN must avoid double standard.

Drug Smugglers Leave a Trail of Destruction

Catherine Sampson writes from Beijing

N the Yunnan Province of south-west China, old men sit on street corners happily puffing away on hookah pipes, conjuring an image evocative of 19th Century opium dens.

But while the old men are getting their buzz from nothing more evil than tobacco, a much more threatening subculture is growing among the young of the province.

A painfully thin young woman, dressed in regulation pink and white striped pyjamas, sits on the edge of her bed in a Spartan dormitory of the drug abuse clinic.

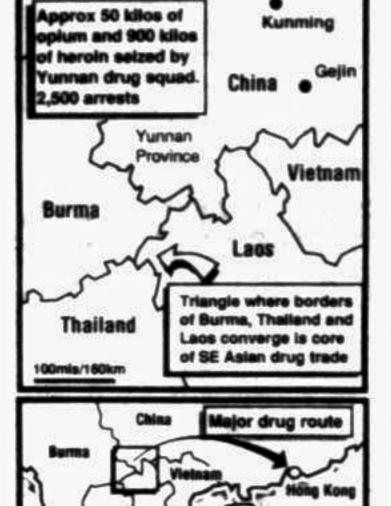
"I know I am not strong enough to resist heroin when I get out of here," she says, passing her band shakily across her forehead. "So if anyone comes near me with it, I am just going to run away."

Barbed wire surrounds the clinic. There are bars at the dormitory windows overlooking the Yunnan Province's lush hills, which stretch to the border with Myanmar (formerly Burma), from where the drugs come.

After 1949, the communist regime created an almost drug-free China, which lasted for 30 years. Now the authorities say drugs are back, AIDS has arrived, and the strong arm of the law must be brought to bear.

International drug smuggling gangs are increasingly For about 30 years, the communists created an almost drug-free society in China. Now international drug smuggling gangs are increasingly using Yunnan Province in southwest China as the route from the opium growing Golden Triangle to the lucrative Hong Kong market. They are leaving in their wake a trail of desperate drug addicts prepared to risk death by execution to get their heroin.

The Golden Triangle



using Yunnan Province as the route from the opium-growing Golden Triangle to Hong Kong, leaving a trail of addicts and several hundred AIDS victims

in their wake. The street value of heroin increases tenfold between the Myanmar border and Kunming, the provincial capital, where shady deals are done in the hundreds of little hairdressing salons, dance halls and video game halls which line the busy streets.

Unlicensed clinics have sprung up in the city, offering quick, easy - and expensive -

cures for drug addiction. Shabby as her dormitory is, the young woman addict, too embarrassed by her situation to disclose her name, is one of the lucky ones. She checked herself in to Kunming's one voluntary drying-out clinic before the police got to her.

Yunnan's drug squad has arrested almost 2,500 people so far this year for drug-related offences, and has seized about 50 kilos of opium and 900 kilos of heroin.

From the beginning of this year, possession of 50 grams of heroin or 1,000 grams of optum has been punishable by death, as a warning to others. The Yunnan police boast that they executed 66 people on one day alone in June.

Most addicts the police discover do not have large quantities of drugs.

First, the police give them a deadline by which they must stop using drugs. If they fail to stop, they can be placed in one of Yunnan's 50 or so compulsory drying-out centres for several months. After that, if they have still failed to reform, they will be sent by police to a labour camp for up to three

"We are planning to open special labour camps just for stubborn drug addicts," says Chen Cunyi, head of Yunnan's drug squad. "Labour camps are a special feature of China."

Chen says that even in the labour camps addicts are taken off drugs gently, with the use of drug substitutes and psychological counselling.

One former addict in Kunming said her friends had found otherwise. There was no medicine, no counselling, and of course it did not work. How can you expect people to give up drugs if they are forced

· The one voluntary drug abuse clinic, based in the former mental hospital 20km from Kunming, has only 22 beds, but has treated 365 people since it opened in late 1989. Many patients bear scars on their arms from injecting

For the equivalent of about \$75, patients are kept in a locked compound for up to 45 days, with no visitors. During this period they are put on decreasing doses of methadone and are finally brought off the drug completely. After that, the patients are given the option of a further six months of rehabilitation.

There is no communist

propaganda on the walls. As one doctor comments "Addicts do not believe in anything." Instead, and most unusually for China, a large painting of the character for love is tacked to the wall. Doctors laugh and joke with patients, forgetting to treat them as criminals.

Dr Zhang Ruimin, who works at the clinic, stops at another poster and proudly reads the clinic's creed: "I am a free man ... I can made up my own mind to stop using drugs

... I can choose my own fate." Although spur-of-themoment escape attempts are thwarted, patients who insist that they want to leave are allowed to do so.

"About 50 per cent of patients leave before the end of their treatment," says Dr Zhang. "Of those who stay the course, about 90 per cent go

back on to drugs again." One young woman, on the last day of her methadone treatment, said: "My husband

is checking into the clinic when I check out. "He looked like he was having such a good time on drugs that I joined in. We opened a private restaurant to make some money because we

were spending so much (about \$25 a day) on drugs. Now we have had to sell everything we own. We are penniless."

- GEMINI NEWS

CONOMIC adjustment programmes in Latin America, ostensibly put into effect to re-solve economic imbalances and generate cash flow, have in fact worsened economic inequality and poverty in the region, ac-

cording to a recent report. The report, released by the Latin American Economic System (SELA), said imbalances resulting from the adjustments are evident not only internally in the region's countries, but in their relations with the industrialised coun-

tries as well. While measures promoted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in developed countries give priority to increasing production, SELA said, in Latin America they are oriented toward commercial and public financial adjustments. Less im-

Latin America: Unhealthy Prescriptions portance is placed on the modernisation of the productive apparatus, the report said.

The structural adjustments have accentuated social contradictions, caused a decrease in salaries and an increase in poverty, according to the SELA reports, presented at the organisation's 17th ministerial council meeting which met in Venezuela in early September.

In underdeveloped countries, a desired goal of the adjustments has been to promote foreign commerce in order for these countries to earn enough money to pay back their enormous debts.

In the medium term, the goal is to consolidate a neo-liberal model in which tariff barriers are reduced and the state Structural adjustment programmes promoted by the International Monetary Fund to correct economic imbalances have only resulted in more poverty and sharpened social contradictions. Marco Antonio Sibaja of IPS reports from Caracas.

apparatus is diminished. In fiscal policy, public income through indirect taxation continues to rise with the burden of the payments falling onto the shoulders of the gencral population.

Public spending, which in the past was a means of social compensation, has been cut as a result of the structural adjustments thus sacrificing many health, education and public safety programmes, the

Along with the deterioration in key areas of social development, there has been a sharp increase in poverty affecting over half of the region's population.

study points out.

Reports done by the Economic Commission of Latin

America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) show that in 1989, 41 percent of Latin America's population was living in poverty and that there were 200 million people whose income was insufficient to meet their basic needs.

Of this total, 21 percent live in a state of deprivation, espe[‡] cially in rural areas.

This data reflect the exacerbated economic and social situation of Latin America during the 1980's. In 1990, the gross national product per inhabitant was 9.6 percent lower than 10 years ago and the national income fell by 16 percent.

The report went on to show how the economic measures

adopted during this period, in fact, generated a recession, a drop in salaries and a rise in unemployment and under employment.

SELA has proposed a series of measures to be incorporated into the region's development policies.

Part of SELA's suggestions include the application of measures to prevent national resources from leaving the country, robbing the economy of productive benefits.

SELA also proposes that major economic activities be generated to create more employment, and that the process of Latin American integration be strengthened in order to successfully confront the growing international trend towards protectionism and the formation of economic blocs.

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

The SSC results

Sir, The Dhaka Board Chairman/Controller had in one of his appearances on BTV said that the boys and girls of Cadet Colleges were much better students and it did not matter where they sat during the SSC and HSC examinations. But in that very programme it was stated the boys and girls of Cadet Colleges sat at different centres of the country like the students of other schools and colleges. This did not happen. What happened was something arrogant and undemocratic.

It is an open secret that the final tabulation papers of the recently announced Dhaka

Board results were done at the Mirzapur Cadet College for which almost all the boys were seen having the booklet containing the results while some of the major newspapers failed to get any report. Again, the despite serious allegation that some more than ten thousand answer scripts were lost, Dhaka Board has so far remained silent about it. The minister claimed that

'only one or two per cent of the results is usually changed'. Now 25 grace marks were given showing mercy to those who could not have passed otherwise. On the other hand 'grace' also means 'favour' which should have been done in case of those students who

failed to receive 'letter marks' for 4/5 marks only or missed star marks'. Instead many of the boys and girls lost some 10/12 marks in English, which was deduced reportedly to deter them from getting letter marks in that subject. What justice is there when some are shown 'mercy' while others 'unsavourable attitude' in disregard to their 'inherent excellence't

The minister said, 'last year about 150 scripts were challenged but only two or three faults were found in the tabulation sheets'! This appears to be a sweeping remark what he is not supposed to make. However, all the teachers and guardians who do not find the Board's final finding as satisfactory ought to go to a court of law. At least it would be more challenging than just to depend on what one in the authority maintains.

After all he may be blaming the teachers of schools and colleges by claiming that the boys and girls of all the Cadet

Colleges are taught by best teachers and that the students are very well taken care of, or is not explaining why the marksheets or the results were not sent to the newspaper offices in due time, or why 10/12 or more marks were cut from students who possessed inherent excellence! The examiners will speak truthfully if they are asked about these allegations. And, after all, is it a sin to receive 'letter marks' in English or Bangla?

In the recent past we were talking so much about increasing the 'standard' of our countrymen. Now it seems to be a long way! Twenty-five grace marks have allowed many to remain complacent with lesser standard, isn't it! Also, assumably, a good number have been deprived of 'favourable' marks that could help them receive 'letters', and star marks'!

Yet, all cheers to the Mirzapur boys for their excellent results.

Nahtasha Kamal Wari, Dhaka.

To hold examinations in time

Sir, Most of our Degree and Diploma examinations are held much delayed and the results thereof are published further delayed. One of the basic reasons of the delay is said to be the (various) irregularities in the academic process.

A careful investigation would reveal that our papersetters and examiners can really speed up the holding of examinations and the publications of result thereof. But the problem is that the paper-setters and the examiners of our country are the world's least paid. Believe it or not, a degree paper examiner is paid per paper a sum which will not buy even one litre of milk ! If a paper-setter gets at least Taka 1,000.00 and an examiner gets Taka 50.00 per paper, then the delay process in our various examinations will be much minimised. In doing so what we need is a small amount of

save our students' valuable

May we hope that our aca-

demic authorities and the

Ministry of Education would

look into the matter and help

government subsidy.

Bijan Bihari Goswami

Mohakhali C/A, Dhaka.

"Ujjibon"

Sir, I fully agree with Mr Jalalur Rahman when he urges upon the BTV authorities (Star, Oct 3) to use the services of eminent Islamic scholars like Syed Ashraf Ali more frequently.

"Ujjibon" indeed rejuvenates the dormant, distorted, misused and misinterpreted ideology of Islam. But Uffibon's main attraction is Sycd Ashraf Ali's scasational replies. Uffibon will be dull and colourless if this portion is deleted.

Aztzur Rahman Loan Office Para, Jessore.