

Global Nuclear Weather Improves

by Muslehuddin Ahmad

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Israel's High Jinks

Israel's violation of Iraqi airspace on last Friday, and those of Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia in the process, dramatically highlighted the existence of another belligerent state in the region.

The Israeli government has not explained why its warplanes spent half an hour flying over north-western 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.

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.

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.

SOME say years ago Radio Moscow happily announced — warmer weather 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's announcement.

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 missiles off combat alert.

The initiative of President Bush for unilateral 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.

Drug Smugglers Leave a Trail of Destruction

Catherine Sampson writes from Beijing

IN 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 hand 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

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.

Noteworthy Initiative

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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.

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 evasive moves at lower levels.

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

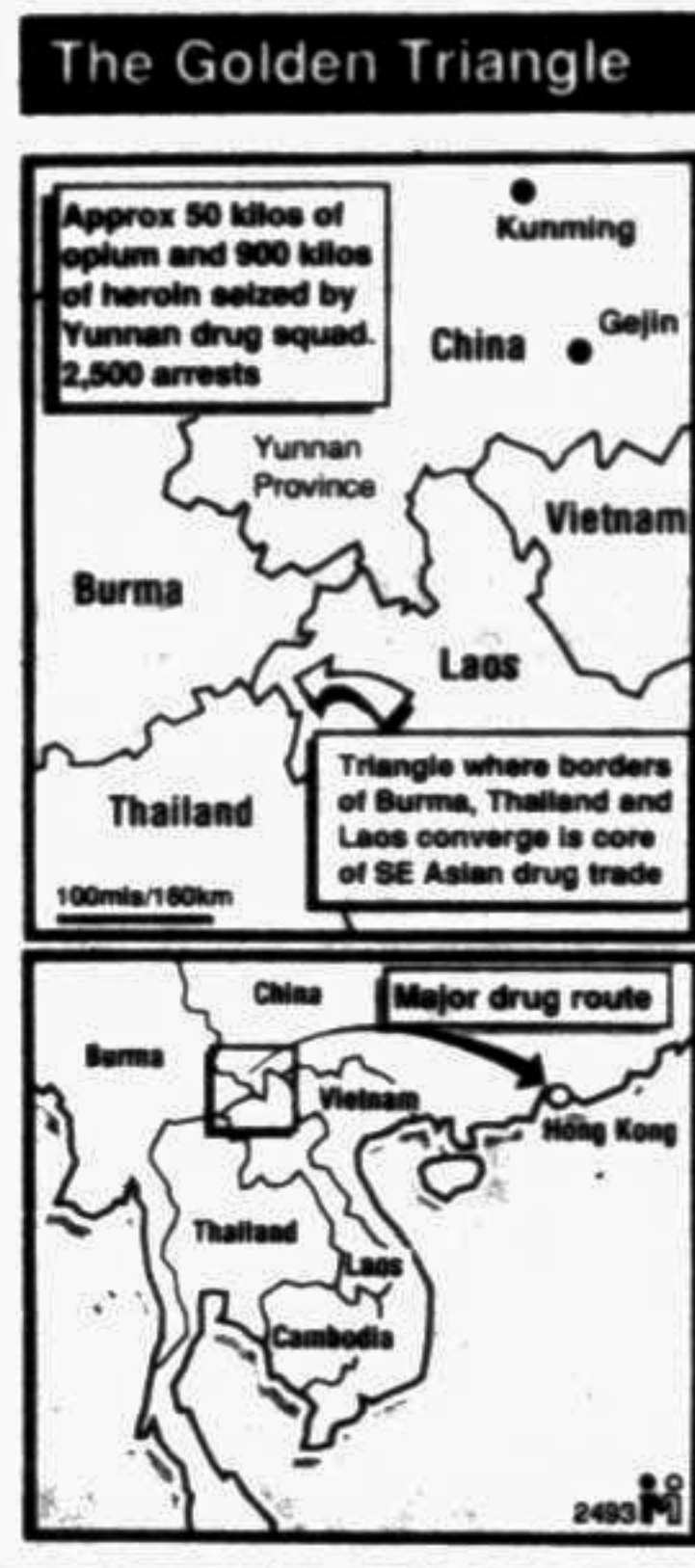
This could also be a good opportunity for President Saddam to go for a self declaration and consequent action to destroy all of his own rubbish on nuclear programme and other weapons of mass destruction in the presence of the UN inspection team.

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 democratic movements.

Drug Smugglers Leave a Trail of Destruction

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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 south-west China as the route from the opium growing Golden Triangle to the lucrative Hong Kong market.



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.

Shabby as her dormitory is, the young woman adduct, 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 opium has been punishable by death, as a warning to others.

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.

"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.

Latin America: Unhealthy Prescriptions

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.

importance 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.

Public spending, which in the past was a means of social compensation, has been cut as a result of the structural ad-

justments thus sacrificing many health, education and public safety programmes, the study points out. 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.

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, especially 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.

To the Editor...

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.

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.

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.

Colleagues are taught by best teachers and that the students are very well taken care of, or is not explaining why the mark sheets 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.

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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 paper-setters 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!

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

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.

Adapted 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.