A photo. I say, do you have a photo of him? If you have, go

But I have a picture, framed and hung in here, in my head.

You see, at the time of his birth, we were always on the

move, when it was time for us to return and settle down, we

had to cross a great big river, it was dawn, we were waiting for the boat, the sun was rising, then as its first ray touched

The face of a baby just born. How can I describe it?

his face, it turned into an exquisite bud of red shapla.

This and no further. I'm going, this time, definitely.

But, please before you go, tell me what do we do?

Fish float on the river, dead; and our boats are rotting

The sun passes through an eclipse everyday; and a prickly

Another second, and I go mad myself. Alright, alright, I

Advertise in newspapers. Don't bother about photo-shoto.

The city man goes out jogging. Our man watches him go-

Yes. The newspapers. The missing column, A big ad. Per-

The man steps forward and dreams up the words of the

For many years now seeds could not be collected for sow-

For nineteen years we have not gone to sleep, watching

After your return those who threatened you, abused you.

we the people of this land, we the people and the rivers,

we all shall be united and take revenge on your behalf.

your return. You once came back, then left us again.

And now we have fully realized why you left us.

cut the tendons of your feet, we promise you.

haps a full page. I will pay with everything I still have. An ap-

Words, just words will do You will have to pay for the ad; of

course. Sort of an appeal to the missing. My sugar! My pres-

to a newspaper put an ad in the missing column along with

CITY MAN:

OITY MAN:

CITY MAN:

understand.

sure! Goodbye.

advertisement.

the hours, for

waylaid you and

MAN:

I don t have a photo of him.

Home has become haunted.

bush is marching on our rice-fields.

We must get him back.

ing. Slowly his face brightens up.

peal to the missing. Yes, an appeal.

Your mother is in her death-bed.

In short, we all are living corpses.

Shaplas are not blooming.

Wherever you may be, please, come back.

Your doves are not returning to their nests.

Houses crumbling down, could not be mended.

Day sends out the smell of corpses.

Children suckle, the milk doesn't flow.

Night brings no dreams.

the photo.

MAN

A park. Late afternoon. All manner of people can be seen ; elerks, beggars, prostitutes, joggers, street urchins, lovers Some are seated on benches, while some are walking by, vendors hawking their fares, prostitutes freezing momentarily in their seductive best pose.

A middle-aged man enters. His dress and manners show that he is from the countryside. Furrows of deep frustration are etched on his face. He speaks to himself.

MAN:

No. He is not here either. I thought, may be I would find him here at last. Oh, I was so certain.

In these trees, in that blue of the sky kissing the lake, in the school of fish under the water, in the wings of birds returning to their nests, in the voices of people. Trees, fish, birds and voices.

A city man enters jogging in. He is in his late sixties. He stops to do some knee-bending and arm-stretching. Our man moves nearer to address him.

Did you know, he was so fond of trees and birds and rivers and fish in the river. He would follow them fish down the stream, thinking he was a fish. Then he would spread his arm like a bird with wings and run on to take off in the air.

He would have a bad fall. He would try again. To fly. Again he would spread his arm as though those were his

Again the fall

The city man is amazed. Slowly he turns to him. The man continues now with more urgency and emotion.

MAN:

Here is everything in this park he loved. Trees, people,

birds, water. Even the shapla-red of a setting sun. I can see them. Only I don't see him.

Will we ever see him again?

What hope is left? Will there be a day of his return?

CITY MAN:

Do I understand, he ran away from home?

MAN: Oh; no, no. He was not the type, Kidnapped he was.

CITY MAN Kidnapped! These are bad days indeed. Dark days are

these. You should have known. Should have been more careful with him.

MAN: But I was! We all were! Yet, one day, at dawn, he was just

not there. Vanished. Gone. Only three years and a half old he was.

CITY MAN: You don't say! I would go crazy. I would go insane if I were

MAN:

Walls closed in on me. I couldn't pull down the walls. Like a carp caught in a net I struggled and saw my fins and tail tear away from me.

It's midnight, the air feverishly sweet.

Tall and dark trees silhouetted against

the window coalesce sprightly with the green

flourescent lights. On nights like these I'm

intimidated to stand over the balcony all alone

doing nothing. My heart goes in for it but I've

to turn in uncomplainingly. It'd have been an

idyllic windy day to take you on a walk. But if it

never happens I'd be glad to keep my words to

myself because nothing is lost when you

the night aging, couldn't be past one. Nothing

fancies me now and this is what really bugs me.

need someone to yak with undauntingly.

Expect free papers and ink who has got an ear

to lend. I've never put my pen down in such a

pitiful way. I'm writing under cover of the

night that's why I'm doing it well. To tell you

the truth. I've innumerable, faceless and very

minute sighs. Would you've them confided into

every Johnny you met in the street, if you were

me? Maybe there is a shoulder to lean on, your

own. If only I'd a touchstone I'd have it rubbed

to allow myself a free boost if not a fee booze. I

think I know what's wrong with me. I don't

like songs tracked in trackless cassettes, po-

rems speaking nothing but of agriculture, being

in love with mortals, cadence making the

composer ever more snobbish, rhymsters with

a purpose, works that grade you as a result.

houses with an attitude, people without ceil-

ings and the idea of parks. I want somebody to

THE EID

FESTIVAL.

for anyone else, do not or can-

not celebrate the Eid equally

some laugh and merry-make,

while others literally cry and

Indeed, the need for a festival in a nation's life cannot be

undermined, for a festival can

have potentials for becoming

an organising principle, for

bringing together people, for

fostering a sense of solidarity

and unity which, today, we

lack so much. But, then, for a

ritual to become a genuinely

péople-centred and mass-orí-

ented one, its enemies need to

be clearly identified, squarely

encountered, and finally elimi-

nated. Let the routine-re-

sponse turn into the festive joy

of building a world where

moods, methods, manners of

celebrations can be truly

equally shared and can act as

potential binding forces be-

tween man and man. Let the

spirit of our Eid festival be di-

rected towards that end.

Nazrul rightly sang : "Of equal-

ity I sing./Man comes first.

/And there is nothing nobler

than him./Differences of easte

or creed./Of ages or coun-

tries/Matter little./ Wherever

men are, far or near./ They are

comrades and friends."

I'm feeling awful and I hate to discuss it. Is

Years came and went. I was like a man - bitten by a deadly snake - stretched out on the ground - ashen, motionless.

CITY MAN: Didn't you put out a search?

IRABELLA.

haven't lost your heart.

TAMANAC THE REPORT OF THE PARTY OF THE

A One Act Play by Syed Shamsul Haq

MAN: But I was threatened

CITY MAN By whom?

MAN

By those who kidnapped him. They made our nights darker. They painted our days black. Mirrors became wavy and weird. No more could we recog-

CITY MAN:

nise our own face reflected on them.

This man is mad.

MAN:

And so you would be, if your very own were kidnapped.

CITY MAN:

I am an old man. I was witness to many griefs and loss. Dying rivers. Mountains with no pass. Birds shot. People rallying on the streets.

Yes, the rallies, demoes, protests and marches. Yes, there were marches on the streets.

And I thought they were out on a search for him.

I too have raised my arm to the heaven where a deaf God presides. I too have shouted slogans till my throat was hoarse and

spat blood. I too was shot at.

But I was alive again. And was shot again. Again on the streets, looking for him. For fifteen long years. Then a strange thing happened.

CITY MAN:

What strange thing? Even if you are mad, I am interested to hear the rest. Go on.

MAN: He returned.

CITY MAN:

He returned!

MAN:

Yes. A young lad of nineteen. When all hope had left us he returned.

CITY MAN:

Now, wait a minute. Didn't you say he was only three and a half when he was kidnapped? Then how could he find his way back? How did he remember his home?

You must be very confused, to say the least. It's just not possible for anyone like him to find his way back home.

But he fancied himself to be a bird when he was a baby. Maybe like birds he carried the instinct of a return in him, a map of his home.

CITY MAN: You really are confused, my man. The lost one has returned

and yet you are again on the road to look for him! I have no time for you. Must complete my jogging. Fifteen more minutes. Oh. God. my cholesterol. I must go.

MAN:

Fire-works!!

Please. No one has any time for me it seems. Let me explain. Yes, he returned. It's true. After fifteen years, he came back. He did! He did! Oh, what a celebration we had, Illuminations, songs, dance.

And what a beauty he was to look at. Skin smooth as apple. Eyes bright like stars. A flower in his hand. Blue of the sky on his shirt.

CITY MAN

I can see where he is heading. To further and greater madness. Now my pressure would go up. I must jog. Hop. one. two, three.

MAN

Let me set you right. He came back alright, but disappeared agam.

Within a couple of months at the most. CITY MAN

So it was not a case of kidnapping this time. He ran away. then?

MAN:

Yes, he ran away.

Please, tell me, what do we do now? You have seen so much in your life. Plagues, deserts, celebrations and extinguished lanterns.

Can you suggest, please, how do we find him again? I have been to every village, town, bazar, river, big and small, small and big, in darkness and in light. I knocked from door to door, asked from people to people, in each full moon and each new moon I stopped each and every traveller and looked hard into their face. No, none was him.

Then I came here. Came to the capital of our country. Isn't it the centre of the wheel? Please, tell me, how do I start looking for him here?

CITY MAN:

Do you have a photo, my man?

MAN When was it?

You shall no more be threatened by anyone, we give you the word. Liberty, please, come back. Translated from the original Bengali by the author.

rivers and fish, fish and birds.

The Words by Abu Taher Mojumder

The words I longed to utter Years ago with passion and hope Remain untold.

The path we were to tread together Remain untrodden. Our wrinkled faces are aglow

With the dying rays of the sun What's the use of unfolding the hearts now -Lost hours are unrecoverable Unredeemable is the warmth

Of the moon and the stars. Let the untold words nestle in the mind ; Only think

We had many feelings to exchange Heart's desires dreams Flush of flowers permeating The soul. I thought I would ask a thing-

The glory of a word And give you what nightingales Die for on the thorn. Perhaps, you too had such words-Your heart longed but tongue withheld.

The hours fled before you could resolve The crises of tearing emotions-No art can turn the wheel of time back. Our game will be over-

The words remaining untold, There's no time to turn back To resolve and be bold.

A 20th Century Thought

by Shams Monower

Their feelings grew calm, numb by worldly affairs - guns, dollars. Cable TV brought the news of another brother dead In a world of religion and faith, Aeroplanes dropped bombs on ancient mosques Churches turned into brothels - by the brute Witness my brother's war crimes In silence.

They never tried to sing our song on a big green field. Make friends to unite Throw their guns into the sea, Try to free the pains of power Reach the everlasting horizon where true glory lies. Let the words speak -

Freedom, Equality.

Was it meant to be a big joke? Live one life and suffer In the hands of one another ... When would the moments of redemption come? Gunshots rock our campus Make us scared of books, classrooms.

The colour of our souls is turned dark by jets, frigates.

They too are a part of mankind -Tributes to a path of destruction Amidst the debris of anguish, pain Found under the skies of the 20th century fire -It boasted of bombs that destroyed the garden of our worlds.

And the minds of the chosen leaders -They wanted us to survive their worlds. Wake up at night to hear the wails Of a hungry child, a desperate mother Waiting to take orders from one another

Addresses Unknown A Short Story by Shakib Ahsan

hear me out, nobody is ready to: I want to fall in love but women have too short a memory; maybe I want something badly for me but who has ever got one all to himself. Are you still

there? Won't you've anything to say?

Why're you so angry with me? Your ruthless eyes pin me down as if to see me pulverised would pease them most. I hear you've got phonographic voice, why don't you use that often. No moon would shine for a thousand and one nights in a run and my guess is we might not have to spend our after lives together. So could I be so uncivil enough to be seen around? What's talking with you at the moment, in your solitary trance? I could tell without opening my eyes, you're looking for your knight in shining armour when everybody is out to the woods. Please I beg of you, don't pull over until you've run it through. I truly live up to each letter I write to you. I've gone to great lengths to learn your optic language. You're so far and tranquil a world away from that of mine that sadly enough time would write me off before

you really have heard me.

My trips to the airport coincides either with your flying in or flying out. I've been there in the July sun or the December chill drunken in mirth and seen you transformed into a nymph from a tadpole but never coy in place of capricious. We were great pals throughout the infrequent visits we had just because you were a mover and a shaker. I still have those scintillas of moments, timeless faces from my 'ugly duckling periods yellowed in my albums. There is one in which you're standing infront of me among sari-clad girls pretending to be adults. We both are fighting shy only your's is not as naive as mine. I remember the only journey I had with you, the guys sang without pause, crammed inside the pick-up rattling at wind-speed. You were the jewel in the crown, nobody's gal. I used to keep silent even in throngs had you not thrown a banter at me. specially made, "Why don't you speak up, you cold turkey." I hoped that you'd see beyond. realize what really kept me from opening up.

wanted to know about the world I was in. Does anybody ever keep anything out from a fervid listener as you are. You ended up believing that I've an unsung wound that needs to be dressed. The truth is, I'd become a fastidious schmaltz by then. You turned my babbles into sages, had

me rediscovered. I got you all to myself, what you never knew was whether you've won me. Myriads of times you inquired about my feelings towards you but never once did I speak my mind. I feared of shocking you exorbitantly, shaking your unmistaken faith in me - this alone held me back. The day I saw dismay in your eyes, it was too late, nothing was there to say. You took leave. You came in like a stranger at a time when I knew life to be unforgiving.

Ironically, you were still in your piggy-wiggy

teens. The year you sat in for your "Big E", you

were big enough to chill out but you never

stopped to surprise me. You laughed impishly

looking straight in my eyes on the top of a mil-

lion-dollar smile and then it had to be me who

was in guard instead. it was then when you

Your absence had been such a limbo from which one has to pay his way out, in my case it had to be you. Your memory has outlived all my imaginations but I no longer believe anybody can have someone in this world simply by lighting a fire in his heart. You'd never write me back, this much I know, maybe because it would bleed you the same way. Luckily you'd forgive me someday, nobody keeps thinking about anybody more than is needed.

Diplomacy in Islam Continued from page 10

disaster was to be feared. Continued from page 9 would be referred to God and to Muhammad (SM). In the bly arrange within their own treaty emphasis was placed on means. And the joy of celebrathe unity of the Ummah in war tion is truly monopolized by and peace. The striking part of the rich already referred to. this treaty is that it is based on The festival, thus, varies in common faith that the Ummah scale and scope from class to thrives on, but not on the basis class. Even children hailing of kinship. The treaty also from all classes, for whom the done away with the local, terri-Eid festival appears to be much torial and tribal alliances. Prophet Muhammad (SM) inmore attractive and muchmore-waited-for than it can be troduced a system of consulta-

> people of Medina. During his life-time Prophet Muhammad (SM) received

tions with leading companions

to take a decision on all major

issues affecting the life of the

many envoys from different heads of states for concluding an agreement of peace with Muslims after the defeat in wars. Generous treatment was accorded to envoys and they enjoyed immunity. An envoy, who was convicted by the State to which he was accredited. was also given due respect which an envoy deserved. Envoys were allowed to perform their own prayer and religious

According to Islamic teaching the head of state does not enjoy immunity which an envoy can. The head of state is subject to trial for flouting the law of the land. Prophet Muhammad (SM) himself is a

glaring example who is on record having heard cases against him. The Prophet had set an example that the ruler is as much subject to law as an ordinary citizen. He is also on record to have allowed the delegation of the Christians of Najran to hold their service in his mosque.

Generally envoys were not arrested or detained. In one of the cases Prophet Muhammad (SM) detained an envoy of Mecca and he was released when the Muslim envoy who was detained by the Quraysh returned safe from Mecca to Hudaybiya.

During the life time of the Prophet (SM) envoys enjoyed diplomatic privilege. He did not insist on agreement or approval as has been the present day practice by Vienna Conven-

tion for receiving any envoy from a tribe or a country. There is another interesting episode which relates to the appointment of Wahshi, the Abyssinian. Wahshi was reluctant to accept ambassadorial appointment because he killed barbarously Humza, uncle of • the Prophet, in the battle of Uhud. When Wahshi presented his credential to the Prophet he was accorded unprecedented treatment which was described by some Islamic pundits as "both unexpected and unparalleled in the annals of Arab history." It had been the practice in those old days that the envoys were received through ceremonial reception and provided with gifts. Similar treatment was accorded to envoy on completion of tour of duty: If a Muslim envoy received gifts from a foreign ruler it would go to the treasury of the state. Similarly Prophet Muhammad (SM) also deposited in the State coffer gifts received from foreign

The Prophet also sent envoys to the Arab and non-Arab rulers. The first mission was sent to Abyssinia during Prophet's early days in Mecca when the Prophet and his for lowers were subjected to harassment by Quraysh. A group of Muslims was despatched to Abyssinia to seek protection of the King Negus. The Quraysh despite providing valuable gifts, could not succeed to persuade Negus to hand over Meccan Muslim refugees to them. Muslims put forward their arguments and convinced Negus for political asylum.

During Prophet's life time envoys were briefed to be tactful, accommodating and sympathetic in the conduct of negotiations before being accredited to different cities. communities and countries to convey the message of Islam.

Envoys were sent to the rulers of Yemen, Bahrain, Oman and the Governors of Damascus and Alexandaria by the Prophet The envoy in Islamic terminology is known as Safir. The

Frequent exchange of envoys took place during the Abbasid period. Peaceful solution of conflicts through negotiation was always preferred. Exchange of prisoners of war by concluding treaties was encouraged. Envoys were given grand ovation during Abbasid period. They were received by the representative of the Caliph or Sultan in the capitals of Baghdad, Cairo, Cordova and were escorted in a procession to the houses earmarked for them. They were also lavishly entertained. Several Byzantine emissaries paid visits to Baghdad during the reign of Al-Muqtadir. There was a tradition that an envoy was not only entertained lavishly but also

country.

word Safir is derived from Safar which means travelling with a special mission. A Safir or envoy is entrusted with full power for negotiation, conciliation or conclusion of a treaty or alliance. The envoy used to carry official letter to hand over to the Head of State of the receiving country. This letter was either in the form of letter of credence empowering the envoy to deliver the message verbally or general statement explaining the purpose of the mission.

During limayyad period diplomatic interaction was confined to Byzantines for the purpose of signing peace treaties. The Umayyad Caliphs negotiated peace treaties and paid annual tribute to the Byzantine emperor to dissuade him from attacking them particularly at a time when they were involved in civil war.

taken round to places of inter-

Continued on page 13

Preparing to look good for the Eld at a local beauty parlour.