Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Monday, October 23, 1995

Long Live UN

The United Nations is fifty now. By the standards of individual nations this may not be much of a life's time. But for nations of the world joining in an entity and continuing as such is a success of unprecedented proportions and significance. How many years did Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations tick?

The thousand failures of the first true world body of the peoples add up to an impressive pile and then pale before any of UN's true achievements. For one, there is this world without a third world war taking over. Two, the UN's extension beyond its first role - political and as such the most visible of its many aspects - into human and material development of all mankind is something that has very effectively and, pregnantly as well, changed the human context and is shaping changes in the outlook for humanity - doing something meaningfully affecting the human condition. The invisible UN is a marvel and it far outweighs the visible in true significance.

The best tribute to UN on its completing a half-century is: a world on the threshold of the third millennium and without UN anywhere around is improbable, impossible, inconceivable. Let us begin to appreciate that in its weaknesses lie the strength of UN and that its best achievements came by ways other than policing around.

Long live United Nations.

Near, Yet So Far

The threat of the coming week-long hartal is most disappointing. Though it is from dawn to dusk, the programme will effectively shut down the economy for one-fourth of a month. No offices, organisations and factories will be able to operate during the day-time. Obviously most commercial houses will resort to nighttime operation and try to recover some of their enormous losses. However hard they try to recoup, it will not be the same again. As far as the economy is concerned — in terms of import, export, banking function, link with the outside world — we will be effectively cutoff from the rest of the world for good 7 days. Can Rangladesh, or for that matter, any economy take such a beating? We would like to say it with all the strength at our command, NO. We cannot, and must not, go into that week-long tunnel of darkness and self-destruction.

Except for a blockade of roods, railways and water ways on the 6th of November, the real stoppage of work starts from the 11th. All programmes prior to that are confined to mass demonstration. This gives us till the 10th of next month — good 20 days — to resolve the political crisis. Given the critical juncture at which we are, and given the fact that time to make use of some important electoral options like using the bye-election option to bring in some neutral persons inside the parliament will be running out, we feel optimistic that a solution maybe worked out before the 11th. Our optimism is also based on the fact that the Prime Minister herself stated that she will make her position clear immediately after her return from the UN tour. The initiative of the G-5 (group of five eminent citizens) has also helped to narrow down the gap, and clarify the areas where negotiation is needed.

We feel that significant progress has been made in the talks between the two sides. There has been sufficient clearing of issues and removal of misunderstanding for a substantial

agreement to take place.

However, what worries us is the possibility of any vested group throwing a spanner in the wheels at the last moment. We also express our serious apprehension about leaders making personal attacks which create bitterness and animosity, pushing back the possibility of any immediate understanding. Let not secondary issues, and secondary figures, spoil what the two leaders are near to achieving.

DU's Bad Stomach

About 26.8 per cent of the resident students of the Dhaka University suffer from gastro-intestinal diseases or various complaints of the stomach. The figure comes from a survey made by the food and nutrition department of the university. But the national daily that on Saturday reported on this old DU phenomenon did not clearly say if the figure was based on students reporting their illnesses to the DU Medical Centre. If it were so, the conservative estimate is understandable. For, most of the sufferers prefer not to go to the Medical Centre. They combine self-medication and plain bearing it out.

It is common knowledge that of these students whoever keeps in health does so by not eating at the hall canteen. That explains the low figure for women student sufferers, put at 9.7 per cent. Almost all of them do their own cooking out of their own shopping.

The food in every residential hall is bad and poor. It consists mostly of ingredients strictly tabooed by diet experts. It is understandable that the caterers supply only what a students food charge would allow them to. But that should not mean putting all the world's masalla into the curry and the missing waters of the Ganges into the daal. Appropriate supervision by authorities could somewhat improve the situation. But the true answer lies in increasing the per capita spending on the food — without

much hurting the student. Subsidies per year per student vary from university to university by even thousands of taka. Will it hurt DU to add a thousand taka to its usual dole and see that its students eat better — and healthfully good stuff.

Re-inventing the United Nations at 50: Mark II

At 50 the UN would do well to ask how effective its programmes have been in member-

countries. Over 20 years ago UNDP Administrator Bradford Morse and later trouble-

shooter Victor Urmbricht told me in extreme reaction that 10 years of extensive

programme in Bangladesh would help us reach the take-off stage.

PANISH exile and Ox ford professor Salva-Odore de Madariaga wrote in 1960 how a Venetian bomb, on September 26, 1687, falling on a Turkish powder magazine blew the Parthenon to pieces. He reacted, "men had risen to that I newly-emergent nations height where such beauty is conceived ... men had fallen to that depth where such beauty is destroyed. Madariaga rightly thought that our civilisation was to a great extent, a willed and thought-out creation of man. including the beautiful Parthenon. Like the accidental Turkish powder magazine. the powder magazine of Atomic and Hydrogen bombs could create an accidental global catastrophe, and markind would be waking up too late and quoting Shakespeare say. Oh lago, the pity

From 1960 till October 24, 1995 when the international community is pre-occupied with the razzamatazz of the celebration of Golden Jubilee of the UN, the world has come a long way in striving to ensure that the accidental magazine explosion will not take place.

of it!

A strong supporter of the United Nations, Madariaga was deeply aware of the failure of the League of Nations to avert the World War II. By 1943, the Moscow Declaration had recognised the necessity of establishing at the earliest practical date, a general international organisation based upon the principal of sovereign equality of all peace-loving states, large and small, for the maintenance of international peace and security. The formation of definite plans for such an organisation took shape in stages: through Dumbarton Oaks, Yalta, and finally, at the San Fransisco Conference in 1945. The founding fathers of the United Nations took pains to avoid the faults of the League of Nations. Majority voting, and not unanimity, is the talisman of the General Assembly. And most important, the charter made sure that the 5 permanent members of the Security Council have veto powers - a recognition of the fact that all member-states are not equal.

With decolonisation and the consequent emergence of new nation-states, the membership of the world body has today jumped to 188 from the original 51 that signed the Charter in San Francisco. The on set of the cold war predictably created a divide in the UN. The

What has gone wrong, if any? more often than not took an anti-West posture as if to ask them to expiate the sins of colonialism and demanded social and economic justice 3379 in 1975! the result was the shibboleth

of new international economic order (NIEO). New International Information Order, the formation of the G-77 and the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement. The American government, which until 1964, provided nearly 40 per cent of the UNassessed budget started looking upon the UN organisation on the Turtle Bay together with other Western countries, as hostile and unfriendly. They were justified to a point. This is not the world body they had envis

Countries such as Bangladesh, with its admission to the UN agencies in Geneva. Vienna and Rome. between '72 to '74 and with the admission to the UN proper in September 17, 1974, had always been exerting a moderating influence on the world body so that the differences between the developed and the developing countries could be narrowed down. From the Non-Aligned Summit at Algiers in 1973 attended by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the Havana Summit in 1979 led by president Ziaur Rahman Bangladesh continued to exert a healthy moderating influence to narrow the chasm between the North and the South - with considerable success.

But the disenchantment of the Western democracies who were also the major contributors to the UN budget continued to escalate. US ambassador Charles Lichenstein perhaps encapsulated most articulately the Western position when he said in September 1983, if the UN members did not appreciate the US position, then they should, "Seriously consider removing themselves and this organisation from the soil of the United States. We will put no impediment in your way and we will be at the dockside bidding you a fond farewell as you set off into the sunset!" With this statement the US underlined its view that the United Naingly anti US, anti-West and anti-free enterprise. Verily has it been said that the world body reached its nadir when it equated Zionism with racism by resolution

When the United Nations meets on the East River on October 24 to celebrate its 50 years or coming of age. many of the world leaders in cluding most of the Western heads of state will perhaps take a second look. The collapse of the Berlin Wall has dramatically changed the configuration of world powers. By inviting the assembled leaders, over 150 heads of states and government to a reception at the New York Public Library Hall on October 22. President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary Clinton

Boutros-Ghali has stated very succinctly in a number of documents, particularly in the agenda for peace - 92 and 95 - agenda for development 94 and on United Nations and nuclear non-proliferation. Through these handy monographs the Egyptian-born UN Secretary-General has drawn the attention of the world to the United Nations. He has said, and rightly so. 'Development has to be oriented towards each person beyond that must

generations vet to come!" While sceptics may refer to many failures, the cognoscenti will also list a myriad success stories. Apart from population, environ

ment and women, the most

rise a recognition that this

human community includes

Waliur Rahman

will let the attending leaders know that America is the only superpower, with Russian Federation an important partner, still in possession of the second largest arsenal of nuclear warheads. Many of them would, I dare say, recall what Winston Churchill said in Washington DC on June, 26. 1954. "Better jaw-jaw

than war-war". While taking stock of the past 50 years, the major actors, headed by the United States will, I believe, take a more mature and under standing look at the achievement of the United Nations. Would the world be a better place without the United Nations? The answer would, perhaps, be an assertive 'no'. The faults and foibles of the UN are no greater or lesser than those of the member-countries composing the United Nations. US Ambassador to the UN. Jeane Kirkpatrick, per haps said it right - in January 26, 1982 - "There is a mysterious dialectic through which greater realism can lead us closer to the ideals that inspired this very human institution". A critic as she was, of the UN, I never doubted her conviction ex pressed in these words. UN

important contribution of the UN till now has been in the area of nuclear non-proliferation. As a member of the Expert Group, set up by the UN Secretary-General, on the economic and social consequences on arms race and military expenditures I can vouchsafe that without the UN framework the agreements on the nuclear weapon-free zones, treaty of Tlatelolco inspired by Ambassador Garcia Robles of Mexico, treaty of Rarotonga, African nuclear weapon-free zone, the Anterctic Treaty. the Threshold Test Ban Treaty, the PTBT wouldn't have been possible with the signing of the CTBT in Geneva in 1996, the UN will add another chapter to its accomplishment in this area. And last but not the least, the resolution No. 3379 of 1975 equating Zionism with racism has now been repealed by another resolution No A/46/L. 47 by UN GA on Monday 16 December, 1991, with 111 votes in favour 25 against and 13 also tensions. Bangladesh voted for repealing the infamous resolution of 1975.

For Bangladesh, the 50th anniversary in New York will have a particular significance.

Secretary-General Boutros If there is one nation-state born on the umbilicus of the United Nations, it is Bangladesh. The relationship between the UN and Bangladeshi is therefore very close. Its sanguinary birth presaged it and the War of Liberation consolidated it. As Thomas Oliver wrote in his book. United Nations in Bangladesh, "The ten million refugees and the millions of displaced Bengalees were reabsorbed quickly and quietly. Law and Order was by and large preserved. The threat ened mass slaughter of minorities did not take place. Most important of all, the people were fed. The credit for this achievement," as he said "goes in the first place to the people and the government of Bangladesh". As the author, recalling the meeting between the then Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad and UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim in Dhaka in February 73 said. UN operation in

Bangladesh was, a rare example" of international cooperation that has enlarged the scope of constructive United Nations Action. Today Bangladesh is striving hard to make its nascent democratic process a success. Our constructive engagement with the international community is achieving greater dimension. The first

JCGP mini-summit in Dhaka from February 6-8, 1994, set the agenda not only for Bangladesh but the whole world — an agenda for peace and development. The UNDP summer session of June 1972 in Geneva allocated the IPE of \$18.5 million in favour of Bangladesh. From this modest beginning UNDP today account for one of the largest programmes in the world. The Joint Consultative Group on Policy meeting in Dhaka, first-ever held outside New York and Rome, was thus a natural outcome of the close relationship between the UN and Bangladesh. Five men and women of goodwill met in Dhaka to work for peace -Pax hominibus bonae voluntaties. On top of that Bangladesh today is in the forefront of providing troops

to various for peacekeeping

operations worldwide. At any

given moment we have about

actly what their national

leader would be doing after

arrival and when and where

greeted at the airport by

Muzi-Falconi or senior offi-

cial. Muzi-Falconi and

Novichenko will make dozens

of trips to meet the aircraft

arriving at all hours from all

coni smiles and says simply:

Undersecretary-General

Joseph Verner Reed com-

ments: "The only thing we

can't control is the weather.'

Chief of protocol for former

United States President Ge-

orge Bush, Reed is lending a

hand with the arrangements

for high-level visitors, many

known to him personally

from his years at the White

the New York traffic, notori-

ous for its gridlocks. Each

leader's motorcade is limited

lance, with a New York police

escort to clear the way. Nev-

ertheless, it will take a near

miracle for everybody to ar-

rive on time for the six

planned commemorative

Assembly sessions and other

Hall, another miracle is

In the General Assembly

to four cars and an ambu-

Less easy to control will be

Ever discreet, Muzi-Fal-

Each leader will be

it would happen.

over the world.

House.

"An interesting job!"

2,000 of our valiant and patriotic soldiers engage in peacekeeping in blue helmets around the world.

At 50 the UN would do well to ask how effective its programmes have been in member-countries. Over 20 years ago UNDP Administrator Bradford Morse and later trouble-shooter Victor Urmbricht told me in extreme reaction that 10 years of extensive programme in Bangladesh would help us reach the take-off stage. What has gone wrong, if any? The programmes should not become a vicious circle of selffulfilling prophecies! "UN's costly secretariat, its cronyism legions of bureaucrats its high salaries and lavish perquisites" - as in the words of Heritap Foundation Vice President cannot be dismissed out of hand.

While UN member-states

should allow themselves turn for soul-searching, one would dare say that US Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick perhaps struck the correct note in her remark, both about the UN and also as a response to her sometime colleague Ambassador Charles Lickenstein. Yesterday's Terrorists are today's 'peace-makers'! Peter Mashihenge and Nelson Mandela of ANC. South Africa. SWAPO leaders the President and Foreign Minister Ben Guirirob in Namibia, Chairman Yasser Arafat and Zehdi Labib Terizi of PLO. Izhak Shamir and Shimon Peres of Israel have all become votaries of constructive engagement in keeping peace. Andrew Young must be looking back with bemused feeling: he lost his job as US Ambassador to the UN for his informal meetings with the PLO representative in New

Times have changed. So have national priorities. Member-states want investment and capital. Export-led economic growth is the new buzzword. Even bleedingheart liberals now take comfort from Joan Robinson "There is only one thing worse than being exploited by a capitalist and that is not to be exploited at all...!"

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's participation at the solemn UN anniversary at 50 would assume special meaning only in the light of the above: if we succeed in adding yet another bulwark to the dream of the Founding-Fathers of the UN and save this fragile Parthenon of peace, shall we become worthy member-states of this very human institution.

Leaders Line up for the 50-Year Photo Opportunity

Gemini News Service looks at the plans for the organisation's 50th anniversary (24

Elvi Routtinen writes from New York T is just like a school photo. The world's leaders Despite the world body's deepening financial crisis - only about 70 of the 185 member states are up-to-date with their contributions — the UN is preparing for a big party.

Trygve Lie

Norwegian

Perez de Cuellar

Peruvian

1982-91

1946-53

October) celebrations

tions had become exceed-

have been asked to writer down their height so United Nations officials can organise where they should stand for the 50th anniversary group shot tallest at the back, shortest at the front.

They will be grouped around UN Secretary-General Boutors Boutros-Ghali and General Assembly president Diogo Freitas de Amaral of Portugal.

About 160 presidents, prime ministers and crowned heads have said they will be present for the elaborately choreographed programme of speeches and events that will mark the anniversary commemorations at the organisation's headquarters in New York on 22-24 October.

They will all arrive at around the same time and all will have to be escorted, fed, cared for an protected from their enemies for three full

And if there are to be no incidents, their spouses will have to be kept happy, too, while the leaders get on with the ceremonies.

Amazingly, the UN's new chief of protocol, Italy's Olivio Muzi-Falconi, is tackling his monumental task with good

cheer and confidence. Muzi-Falconi stepped into his post in July and his first duty was to meet Mother Teresa — the Catholic nun who has achieved international stature for her work among the poor of Calcutta on her arrival at the UN. He considers this a good omen.

Another recent guest

 Secretary-Generals 6 Dag Hammarskjold

The UN's half-century





Member

countries.

51 in 1945)

Annual

peace-keeping \$4.1bn

Main contributions: US 25%

185 (up from

• Staff: 52,000

expenditure:

\$11bn, of which







Boutros Boutros-Ghal Egyptian

of total budget, Japan 12.45%, Germany 8.93%, Russia 6.71%, France 6% Arrears in contributions: \$3.7bn (of 1992which US owes \$1.3bn) complexities to come. Muzi-Falconi, his equally

permanent mission to the UN. Many capitals have also sent advance teams to be taken around and shown ex-

meetings with each country's

called for. All speakers - regardless of importance in the international pecking order - have been asked to limit their oration and eloquence to five minutes. Leaders known for their loquacity. such as US President Bill Clinton and Cuban President Fidel Castro, will find the time-limit a hardship -- as no doubt will most others, unaccustomed to being told to

curb their tongues. The time-limit is necessary to ensure that events do not stretch and interfere with the evening concerts and dinners, like the Clintons' Sunday night dinner for all the leaders at the nearby

New York Public Library In work day hours, the

UN's catering operations manager, Michel Boyer, expects to prepare and serve some 7,000 meals a day for the heads of state and government, the foreign ministers, ambassadors and other delegation members, their retinues of personal aides, an army of American Secret Service personnel and 4,000-5,000 journalists.

"No problem", says Boyer, "We'll serve simple, easy but good food. Nothing elaborate."

Whether "simple and easy" will suffice for the presidents and kings is yet to be tested but an elaborate menu for the three luncheons hosted by the Secretary-General and Mrs Leia Boutros-Ghali would be inappropriate given that the world body is facing its biggest-ever cash crisis (with \$3.7 billion of unpaid dues), cutbacks in contributions threatened by the US Congress, and allegations of waste and inefficiency. Security is a key issue, and the UN Security and safety service has its hands full. Security chief Michael McCann, his deputy Michael Hall and assistant chief Joseph Martella say they are ready

for all eventualities. Hall, a cheerful Australian with a can-do spirit, was tested at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September. His UN security unit of 50 men and five women were a calming presence in the middle of much turmoil, when the 5.000-strong Chinese security forces harassed participants of the non-governmental organisations' forum that ran alongside the main con-

All his tact and diplomacy will be needed to smooth the ruffled feathers of diplomats and bureaucrats when they are steered away from restricted areas by UN security officials.

As usual during the Boutros-Ghali years, however, the toughest restrictions will fall on the media. Reporters will have to submit to so many X-ray machines that many expect to glow in the

dark ELVI ROUTTINEN is Gemini New Service correspondent at the United Na tions in New York.

Lo the Editor...

Aricha-Nagarbari Ghats

Sir, Aricha and Nagarbari ghats are the main links between the eastern and western parts of Bangladesh. Problems of the ghats are as

old as ghats when constructed. Recently government has decided to shift the ghats (Aricha to Baruria and Nagarbari to Notakhola) at a cost of Tk 20 crore. Local people is opposing the move. Shifting of the ghats will not

have lasting solution without river training works. It may be mentioned here

bringing blessings was the

head of the Catholic Church,

Pope John Paul II, whose Oc-

tober visit provided a small-

scale dress rehearsal for the

that in March, 1991 China-Bangladesh Joint Expert Team submitted a report on flood control and river training of the Brahmaputra river. Based on their recommendations, river training works (revetment works) between Nagarbari and Aricha be taken up first for overcoming the problem of the ghat shifting. Serajul Islam

Nobel peace prize and Nuclear test

hard-working deputy, Rus-

sia's Igor Novichenko, and

his staff have had/many

Sir. The peace-loving and environment-conscious citizens all over the world are perhaps greatly encouraged and inspired to find the Nobel Committee has awarded this year's Nobel Peace Prize to veteran anti-nuclear cam paigner Joseph Rotblat of the United Kingdom. This prize was stated to have been awarded to Joseph Rotblat and Pugwash organi-

sation founded by Rotblat specifically for their protest against French nuclear tests.

We sincerely hope that France will stop their nuclear tests for the sake of protecting the earth from environmental hazard and to halt arms race among the super powers for promoting world peace and friendship.

M Zahidul Haque Assistant Professor BAI Dhaka