

Teachers Indeed!

The reported assault on a principal of a prestigious educational institution of the city by some of his colleagues shames us all. This attack on a highly successful and respected teacher points to the precipice our education system has reached. Why did the principal of Motijheel Ideal School and College become a target of his colleagues' attack? Because the principal asked them to confine their private tuition within the school, not to go for coaching on a commercial basis. What was uppermost in his mind — as head of the institution — is the improvement of teaching in classes. When the principal gave written instructions to the teachers to discontinue their outside coaching engagements from next January, the already disgruntled teachers could take it no more, they pounced on their superior.

By committing this dreadful and deplorable offence, those few teachers have virtually put their entire community to shame. We understand the teachers' financial concern, but that was no provocation for manhandling the institution's head who must strive to raise the quality of education and thereby help the students to achieve unrivalled academic successes. The school has to its credit remarkable results over the past few years. The principal did what was most natural for him. He just wanted to curb the trend of excessive commercialisation of education. This is no crime. But the aggressive teachers felt threatened and what they did is a crime indeed.

Most teachers in the city have forgotten where the line between their private tuition and teaching in schools has to be drawn. The whole approach to teaching has changed with an undesirable emphasis on private tuition. Teaching in classes has been perfunctory and the dishonesty is hardly taken into cognisance. The principal of Ideal High School is fighting a lone battle against the current and no wonder his colleagues thought him to be a villain. The important point is to reverse this awful trend of private tuition-based education. Without changing the system it will be hard to keep one or two educational institutions free of this bane.

Khulna — at Long Last

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has pledged to build Khulna into the second commercial city of the nation. Her commitment made to the Khulna City Corporation Mayor and his commissioners who called on her on Tuesday, was, for a change, full of specifics. And these specifics, when realised, would add up to much more than making Khulna only a second commercial city which it already is although trailing far behind the first — Chittagong.

The items of the commitment are linking Khulna with a bridge thrown over the Rupsa and connecting Mongla seaport with railway, making potable water available for the city instead of the present highly saline piped water, construction of an airport, setting up a new 250-mw power plant and an export processing zone. It is clear these would constitute only the first phase of a grand deal for Khulna as other big things should issue from these developments provided the Khulna leaderships have a right vision and a will to get Dhaka help realise that.

Khulna is the lone entrepot to the whole of what has technically been called the western zone — the poorer half of the nation having neither power nor industry and losing the traditional market for its produce as a consequence of partition of India. Mongla, Khulna's seaport, perhaps with more natural plus points than Chittagong, has from the very beginning been a dud for want of a rail connection with the rest of the country. Now that Mongla will be rail-linked, it will only need to expand and modernise the port before the whole western zone is opened up to the world. To keep up with this catalytic event of immense potential, Khulna will need to become a great city in all the connotations of that epithet.

Sheikh Hasina has seemingly accepted a demand for developing botanical and zoological gardens for the city. This and many more of such things will be coming Khulna's way and the Khulna leaderships must be very wary of falling into Dhaka or Chittagong's mistakes of a total lack of imagination and control. They must go soon for an integrated urban development of the stretch up to Daulatpur and further up.

Charming Interlude

No, it is not yet winter here. But we are already in that threshold season of Hemanta — with unmistakable intimations of the much-awaited soft caressing winter that we have here. In fact, yesterday was Pabela Kartik, the official opening day of Hemanta which has been ineptly translated into English as late autumn. Countries of the temperate north — there is no land in the temperate south zone, only the seas there — are poorer than us by two seasons, Hemanta and Borsha, the Rains.

One may feel that Hemanta is too flitting to be called a season. Yet for the generations of Bengalees coming after Jibananda Das, it is simply inconceivable that there be no Hemanta. Tagore had in him a particle-wave kind of duality in relation to the seasons. He went deep down his self with the onset of the rains — a dark earth beneath and an overcast sky above. And he blossomed as the world's prettiest bloom in Spring, beside himself with the heady intoxication of the season of colour and fragrance.

It was Jibananda who as if discovered Hemanta for us all. He is full of it and the magic spell of Hemanta is over us all. How can we now live without envisioning the harvested fields of Kartik with mice lacing through the vista and a surrealist moon hanging over the dream landscape!

ADIOS BISWAS, WELCOME SHAHABUDDIN

Transition at the Highest State Level Augurs Well

Everyone welcomes and welcomes warmly the successor President, Justice Shahabuddin. A second time in the highest state office, he has to his credit, inter alia, the unique achievement of holding the best and undisputed parliamentary election the nation ever had. On his assumption of office, the new President pledged to endeavour for all political parties to work together for the common good of the people.

THE King is dead, long live the King. The age-old proverb drew its origin in Britain and is designed to highlight monarchy as the permanent hereditary institution of statecraft in Britain. In Bangladesh also, the highest state office never remains vacant but is filled up variously by appointment, election, revolution or de facto coup. This is for the first time in the history of our nation that a transition at this level took place on completion of the full tenure of five years of a head of state. This is an achievement for all concerned and signifies a welcome degree of maturity for our politicians.

President Biswas took office on the 8th October, 1992, on this election from the previous post of Speakership of the new democratically elected Parliament. He has no doubt been a controversial figure during his tenure of office. The opposition boycotted functions at Bangabandhu and had little to do with the highest state office. The ostensible reason was that the President had been involved in

tion of the immediate past President related to the events leading to the dismissal of the former Chief of Army Staff, General Nasim. The objection was basically procedural. The president was criticised for taking action without recommendations of the Chief of Army Staff and of the Caretaker Government.

It may be well argued that the logical procedure of consulting the Army Chief was not followed. It is unfortunate but true that from the very beginning, our heads of government have taken many similar actions on their own and informed the Army Chief or obtained his signature later. Even on the basis of advice of General Nasim, while he was DGFI, a number of senior army officers had to go without even the knowledge of the then Army Chief. It was indeed a bad precedent but precedent was what the President followed. Secondly, it appeared that the Chief of Staff himself was somewhat implicated with the two dismissed officers, thereby giving rise to Presidential doubts against compliance

addresses to the nation, it may be logically surmised, by their action and acquiescence, made positive contributions to the nation.

President Biswas, unfortunately, got much less courtesy and dealings than what was due to a head of state even from his former fellow party people. The last Prime Minister also did not meet him as often as it was due, to apprise him of current situation from time to time.

Many thought that a relatively weak incumbent would never bear to take any untoward action. Yet, to them, the mouse that roared and acted like a lion took everyone by surprise.

President Biswas delivered address to the inaugural session of the present Parliament after it was understood, making some alterations to the text. In retaliation, the government refrained from moving the customary discussion proposal and from thanking him. Both sides are to blame. A titular head at state cannot make substantive alteration to such text, if it was so done. The head of the



Currents and Crosscurrents

by M M Rezaul Karim

a 'peace committee' in his native town during the War of Liberation in 1971 and therefore, became a 'collaborator' or Razakar.

It raises three questions in one's mind. Firstly, if Razakars were untouchables, then how could the Awami League act as close collaborators to the anti-Liberation collaborators Jamaat during these past years of opposition movement? Secondly, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman granted amnesty to all collaborators. Was it not for allowing all Bangladeshis, forgiving past misdeeds of many, to work together towards building a new 'Shonar Bangla'? Then why should President Biswas have been singled out as an exception and not forgiven? Finally, it is well known that some of many Awami League leaders, who made no attempt to oppose or redress the tragic events of the 15th August 1975, acquiesced or collaborated with the following regime and even joined the government of Khandaker Mushtaque, are found still to be prominent leaders of the present day Awami League. It is true that some of them were obliged to act or not to act for being under duress, but some others must have acted out of conviction and the rest must have decided upon sitting on the fence to avail of any opportunity that came on the way. All these substantiate the stark incongruity between principles and actions, and manifest the unfortunate proclivity of some of our political leaders to act on impulse and expediency.

To the Editor...

'Stalemate at BUET'

Sir, A rejoinder has been printed in your esteemed daily on Sunday Oct. 13 in response to the news item 'Stalemate prevails at BUET' published on Saturday Oct. 12. This is to reconfirm to the readers that the news published regarding the stalemate at BUET is correct. Teachers' Association had already taken a resolution in a meeting that the members would not co-operate with the VC and they wanted him to quit. The resolution was published in most of the newspapers of the country. They also decided that they would not attend any meeting notified by the VC. As a result no scheduled meetings were held and had to be cancelled.

The meeting mentioned in the rejoinder proves the fact that a stalemate situation is existing in the University. Five teachers going abroad on scholarship had their flights on 14th Oct. '96. But letters granting their leaves were not issued till 11th Oct. To sort the matter out representatives of the Teachers' Association went to the VC. This was not a scheduled meeting. The VC has used this as a pretext to issue the rejoinder and confuse the readers. How unbecoming of the head of a reputed institution.

The teachers of the BUET are a conscientious lot. They have chosen the time for non-cooperation to be a time when the term final examinations are over and there are no term classes. They want the VC to quit causing as less disturbance to academic programme as possible. But it seems the VC would not let that happen. He should realise that there is always time for a graceful exit.

M Ali
BUET, Dhaka.

Muggers at Narayanganj

Sir, I have been following with some interest the various news items published in your

by the Chief of Staff.

As for the caretaker government, the Chief Adviser in his television speech made it clear that the Presidential actions were lawful, implying authority drawn from the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. Under this amendment, the President was vested with executive authority in respect of the Ministry of Defence and his actions were granted legal coverage by its provision. This amendment was accepted without reservations by all political parties without which no election could have been held under a caretaker government nor formation of the present government possible.

It is strange and unfair that very few quarters dwell about the substantive nature of the offender. Two senior officers of the Armed Services who were found fraternising and implicated with a political party about which the President had conclusive evidence, violated the well guarded principle of depoliticisation of the Armed Forces which every patriotic citizen desires. The President had to act, and he did so in his newly vested executive capacity.

Secondly, if the dismissal of the Chief of Staff by the President was considered unlawful even for the sake of argument, how could the blatant disregard of direct orders by the superior and fomenting rebellion by ordering loyal troops from some outlying garrisons to march on Dhaka be expected to go unpunished? The alternative could have been a fratricidal blood-bath and a possible civil war. The President, and the Chief Adviser, through their prompt

government also should have gone to him as a matter of courtesy and if necessary, to iron out any reasonable differences, as per practice followed in the UK and some other democratic countries.

Everyone wishes the incumbent President well and all success. And for this excellent choice, the Prime Minister deserves due credit from all and also some is shared by our able journalists for their commendable efforts for creating motivation towards this end.

Receiving such a large number of birds at a time the zoo authorities faced problem to accommodate sufficient space for the five thousand 'Munias' and ten 'Mynas'. For the time being they kept the Munias in a special cage measuring 10 feet by 6 feet and the Mynas in another cage. But due to severe congestion and insufficient flying area the small Munias started dying and perishing in huge numbers each day. A few Mynas also died. According to latest reports published in various dailies and from other sources it is learnt till 5 October '96 that at least half of the five thousand Munias have already died and the rest are counting their final days.

Renowned ornithologists of our country and the bird lovers are constantly requesting the authorities concerned to immediately release the Munias and the Mynas in the open sky, which are still alive — in various spots of the country in number of two to three hundred at a time. But according to some sources before releasing the birds certain permission documents are necessary from the Ministry concerned as these birds had been seized as 'smuggled goods'.

On behalf of every citizen of the country, it's my earnest request to the Ministry concerned to take most urgent steps so that these innocent birds could be set free immediately in the wild in a bid to save their precious lives.

Aziz Amirul
Uttara Model Town,
Dhaka-1230

Release the birds

Sir, During the first week of September '96, a large number of birds, which included three

Afghanistan — Free for All

The Taliban have moved into Kabul, without an invitation and apparently without firing a shot. There is a lesson to be learnt here — don't keep your capital unguarded.

The Horizon This Week

Arshad-uz Zaman



THE ultimatum emanating from AlmaAti, capital of the giant Central Asian State of Kazakhstan, adds a new dimension to the Afghanistan crisis. It means that the Taliban adventure will not go unchallenged.

Four Central Asian leaders, Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan, Asker Akayev, President of Kirghistan, Islam Kerimov, President of Uzbekistan and Imajil Rahmanov, President of Tajikistan met to discuss the crisis created by the victorious march of Taliban forces into Kabul, the capital. Present for the meeting was Viktor Chernenomyrdin, the Prime Minister of Russia.

In a toughly worded statement, the Central Asian leaders warned the Taliban that they 'would intervene should the Taliban approach their borders'. The Taliban are reported to be advancing towards the northern high mountains where the forces of Ahmad Shah Masood, Defence Minister in the ousted government of President Rabbani are preparing for battle. Masood and his guerrilla forces had fought the Soviet forces to a standstill during the 10-year war starting in 1979. Indeed the Afghan misadventure accelerated the collapse of the Soviet Union. Facing the Taliban forces is also Gen-

eral Rashid Dostum, who is receiving support from the Uzbek leader, Kerimov. During the meeting in AlmaAti Russia promised support with the most advanced weapons.

The battle lines, therefore, appear to have been drawn. The Taliban operation was masterminded by the Pakistan Military Intelligence (ISI) who recruited, trained and armed the Taliban from Afghan refugees settled in the north-western part of Pakistan. The operation has a striking resemblance with Saddam Hussein's recent operation in northern Iraq, where on the pretext of an invitation from the Kurdish leader Masud Barzani, the capital Erbil fell into the hands of Barzani. The Taliban have moved into Kabul without an invitation and apparently without firing a shot. There is a lesson to be learnt here — don't keep your capital unguarded.

The Taliban has decreed Sharia laws to be applicable throughout Afghanistan, closed down female education institutions, threatened women with flogging should they venture out of their homes and forced people to offer Juma prayers. The Taliban appear as the most extreme fundamentalist forces on the Islamic horizon. Indeed it appears as an infinitely more fundamentalist force than its creator — Pakistan. It can be ar-

gued that this will leave the population cold, since the ousted regime of Burhanuddin Rabbani was no less fundamentalist than the Taliban.

Afghanistan has been the battleground of many countries surrounding it. The Taliban experiment is the latest in the chain. The Soviet troops marched into Afghanistan in 1979. This turned out to be her Vietnam and worse. For it triggered the collapse of the mighty super-power — the Soviet Union. The decision in AlmaAti to resist the Taliban adventure is a clear pointer that Afghans are not to see peace in the near future.

The Taliban occupation of two-thirds of Afghanistan has created anxiety for Pakistan's close friend and ally — Iran. Iran has historic, ethnic and religious ties with Central Asia and Azerbaijan. Iran would view with suspicion Pakistan's foray into Afghanistan, which could become the bridgehead for her entry into Central Asia.

Afghanistan is an ethnic mix. The Pushtoons, who are in the majority, are the dominant factor among the Taliban. But Masood's forces are near their Tajik brethren as the forces of Dostum are near their Uzbek kith and kin. In Afghanistan there are Baluchis who straddle Iran as well.



Taliban take over Kabul: Women put under veil.

Recalling S M Ali—an Exponent of Free Press and Modern Journalism

by Muhammad Quamrul Islam

TODAY, the 17th October, 1996, marks the third death anniversary of S M Ali, Founder-Editor of The Daily Star and a journalist of high repute and reverence. Born in a family of litterateurs in 1928, S M Ali developed his own style of writing, may be different from that of his famous uncle, Syed Mujtaba Ali. At a time when Afghanistan is blazing one feels to re-read the unforgettable writing 'Deshe Bideshe' of Syed Mujtaba Ali who saw the extremists capturing power, dethroning the progressive ruler King Amanullah. It seems that same events are repeating in Afghanistan. Although immense changes have occurred in the world, it seems Afghanistan is still there where it was six decades ago. Undoubtedly Syed Mujtaba Ali remains a giant of Bengali literature. S M Ali, however, was in a different sphere, his own unique sphere.

In a least developed country like Bangladesh, where we have little to be proud of, the man like S M Ali brought glory to us. A few days back, when I was having a conversation with a veteran journalist, once intimately acquainted to S M Ali, he frankly told me that it is difficult now to find a journalist of his stature, who was equally good in words and deeds. He was far from strife in the domain of journalism, on partisan lines, or material gains. He kept the loftiness of journalism up, in spite of the prevailing tendency, by influential quarters, to name a paper either pro or against a party. Although S M Ali spent most of his time abroad, particularly in ASEAN countries, he did not loosen his tie with the land of his birth. Always he felt for Bangladesh.

At home, he started his career in journalism, while a student, at the very inception of the then Pakistan Observer, in 1949. He played a direct role in the late movement from 1949 to 1952. In 1953, he worked as spokesman of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan in London. He again joined the Pakistan Observer in 1956 and involved himself in the activities of journalists' union. He held the post of president of the then journalists' union from 1958-60. At that time he became journalist-member of First Wage Board of the then Pak-

istan. We revert later on, to discuss his resplendent activities, unto death.

During his long stay abroad, he served with 'Asia Magazine', Hong Kong, as an Assistant Editor in 1962. From 1966 to 1970 he was the Managing Editor of the main English 'Daily of Thailand The Bangkok Post'. In 1971 he associated himself with the Singaporean evening daily 'New Nation'. At that time, he extended his unwavering support to the liberation struggle of

A man of chequered career, moving and meeting people from one place to another, S M Ali had a knack for innovation, which impelled him to take the risk of starting a new English daily in Bangladesh — 'The Daily Star'. It first came out in 1991 and at the very appearance caught the attention of connoisseurs — heralding a new phase of journalism in the sphere of English dailies of our country. Quickly it found a place in the mainstream of English readership. The paper was enriched by his varied experience at home and abroad, which he also eloquently passed on his colleagues. Soon he presented a new set of writers, on whom he never imposed any opinion. He allowed everybody to express his/her opinion freely. Over and above, he was always ready to extend helping hand and, found pleasure in the success of others, which is rarely found in our country.

The vivid exposition of his good qualities of heart were seen when he refused to receive 'Ekushey Padak', awarded to him, on the ground that whatever successes he achieved in the field of journalism, was the result of a team-work, not his alone. So, if any award was to be given, it was to go to 'The Daily Star', not him. Our society, which is badly ridden by selfish aggrandizements, 'my' and 'mine' considerations, the above assertions of S M Ali would remain a beacon light, for the present and coming generations' hopefully.

There is no two opinions that S M Ali had successfully established an institution like 'The Daily Star'. And it is encouraging to note that his successors are carrying the torch much ably. The continued success of 'The Daily Star' has been maintained.

We are confident 'The Daily Star' will remain in the fore front: 'First with the News, Best with the Views'. And that's the best way to pay homage to S M Ali. On this occasion while we pray for the eternal peace of his departed soul, we are sure 'The Daily Star' family will also reckon the past, to chart its future, in the true spirit of journalism, expounded by S M Ali.

The writer is an economist and Advocate, Bangladesh Supreme Court.