

May It Please Your Exaltedness

MEGASTHENES ponders the innate nature of flattery

THE late Shahidul Haque excelled in his profession, journalism. His friends, who are legion, will for long remember his warm, generous and affable nature. He had the true journalist's questioning mind, and a hint of the irreverent in his make-up. In the early part of the 1980s he took a break from journalism when he accepted the assignment of press minister in the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi.

In his office in New Delhi one day, an Indian friend of his wondered, apropos of something or other, how even perfectly sensible people could so often be susceptible to flattery. He also lamented that anyone should engage, and sometimes very openly too, in anything as undignified and insincere as flattery.

Shahidul Haque was more tolerant in his response. The Almighty Himself, he said, desired to be praised and worshipped five times a day. It was thus surely understandable that mere mortals should welcome and relish praise.

Raja Birbal was among the group of very gifted and capable persons who adorned the