

Vying for the post of OIC Secretary General



ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

TWENTY-five years ago the Government of Bangladesh started its quest for the post of Secretary General of the OIC. It has been a fruitless effort so far. Once again Bangladesh has nominated a candidate for this prestigious post. Through a series of events this has become a highly controversial event.

In 1979 then President Ziaur Rahman nominated Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury as candidate for the post of Secretary General of the OIC. Justice Chowdhury had a most illustrious career. He had been President of Bangladesh. In 1971 from his base in London he carried on a brilliant campaign in favour of Bangladesh throughout the world. In 1979 he was living virtually the life of an exile in London. Gen. Zia was very keen to get him back in the country.

I had for many years excellent personal relations with Justice Chowdhury, whose affection I enjoyed. In 1979 I was Ambassador of Bangladesh in Cairo and was attending the OIC Foreign Ministers' Conference in Fez in Morocco. Justice Chowdhury telephoned me to ask my views about Gen. Zia's proposal. I told him that in the light of his very high standing within the country and around the world, I could not feel enthusiastic. He agreed but said that since the proposal had come from the President he would have to accept. He said he would not campaign for the post.

Since 1971 Justice Chowdhury had become a thorn on the side of Pakistan. His personal involvement in our War of Liberation added to it prestige and weight. Furthermore since the birth of Bangladesh, Pakistan tried fruit-

lessly to block the entry of Bangladesh in the comity of nations. In Middle East and the Arab world Pakistan carried a lot of weight and she did not want her influence eroded in that region because of rival Bangladesh. Pakistan, therefore presented her candidate Ghulam Ishaq Khan for the post. He was a senior bureaucrat. A stalemate ensued, which is what Pakistan wanted. In OIC, because it is a matter of the Ummah, elections are never held but decisions taken on the basis of consensus. Habib Chatti, a former Foreign Minister of Tunisia was named Secretary General. Bangladesh was given a vague assurance that its candidature would be considered favourably on a future occasion.

In 1980 the OIC Foreign Ministers' Conference was held in Islamabad. The Government of Bangladesh nominated me for the post of Assistant Secretary General. I was to replace Pakistani diplomat Zafur Islam. My credentials were impeccable. I had been Ambassador in several Arab posts including Cairo, Algiers, Tunisia and Morocco. I knew English and French, two official languages used in the OIC. At the last minute Pakistan attempted to float a candidate and proposed his name to Turkey. The Turkish delegation told them that they had promised to support me. I have life long friendship with the Turks at the highest level. The news of the Pakistan candidate was brought to me by Ambassador Faik Melek, who used to be my colleague and friend from Algiers. Secretary General Habib Chatti was my colleague in Algiers before becoming his country's Foreign Minister. He welcomed me with open arms. In September when I called on him in Jeddah, he handed me an office order signed by him in which he stated that I was to hold the portfolios of Political affairs, Jerusalem and Palestine, Informa-

THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

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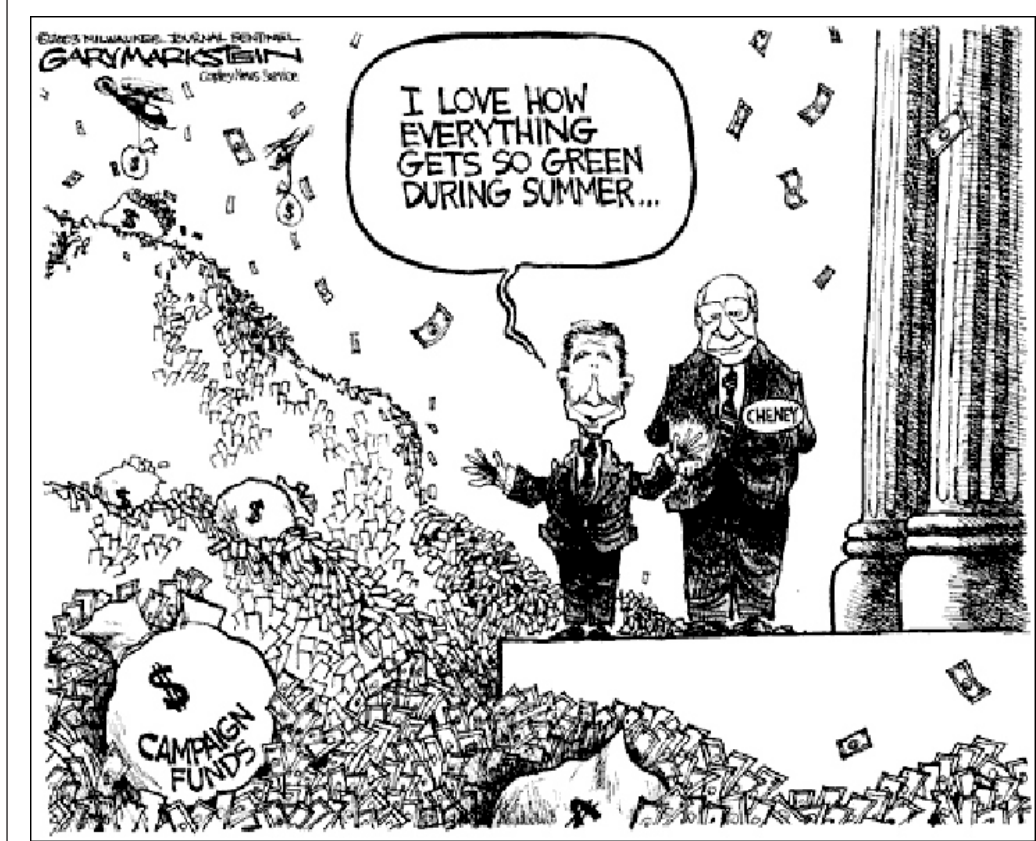
tion and Legal affairs. He further stated in the order that in his absence I was to become Acting Secretary General. I thus became the Second in Command and had often served as Acting Secretary General.

During my tenure of over 4 years I visited Bangladesh frequently. On one such visit I learned that then President H.M.Ershad was contemplating naming his Foreign Minister and friend A R S Doha for the post of Secretary General of the OIC. Doha had solid credentials. He had served as Bangladesh Ambassador in posts including London. When I met Gen. Ershad I

raised the topic of Secretary General and told him that although Doha had many things in his favour I felt that he would not be acceptable to the governments, who were the real decision makers like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I told Gen. Ershad that Doha was totally unknown in the Arab world. In selecting the Secretary General they would really want to know him. The Arabs believe in the system of Rais (Chief) and the Secretary General had unlimited powers.

Doha became Bangladesh candidate and campaigned energetically throughout the Ummah.

The OIC Summit took place in Casablanca in 1984. Gen. Ershad led the Bangladesh delegation and stayed in a villa assigned by the Moroccan government. Doha and I stayed at Hotel Casablanca (of the film Casablanca fame). I was surprised to note that the two friends Gen. Ershad and Doha were hardly on talking terms. It was decided that Syed Sharifuddin Peerzada of Pakistan would be the next Secretary General. Shortly after the summit I paid a visit to Dhaka and met President Ershad. He told me that I was right in what I said about Doha. He added that he had been telling him all along about his



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ndship with world leaders. 'In Casablanca I found out that he knew no one'.

Our next try for the post of Secretary General of the OIC was during the Prime Ministership of Sheikh Hasina. She nominated her Speaker late Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury. He was a career diplomat, had served as Foreign Secretary and briefly as Foreign Minister of Gen Ershad. He had been Bangladesh Ambassador in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a key player within the OIC. He was supposed to have received support from the Saudis. Yet he failed to get elected because he came up against a formidable candidate from the Kingdom of Morocco. Morocco was thus occupying the post of Secretary General two 4-year terms in succession. The Charter of the OIC states that each country is allowed a 4-year term! The truth is that after the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it is the Kingdom of Morocco, which wields the greatest influence within the OIC, which was born in Rabat, the capital of Morocco in 1969. For the candidate of Bangladesh the picture was complicated because of the presence of a candidate from Turkey.

Bangladesh has now entered the race once again. The candidate is Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury, Political Adviser to the Prime Minister and Member of Parliament. For once his candidature has generated considerable controversy and has become thoroughly politicised. Indeed he has become embroiled with the media including some highly respected names. Leaving the controversy aside if we analyse the situation dispassionately, we will find that those who have held this post in the past had solid diplomatic background. Some like Tunku Abdur Rahman of Malaysia, was a great personality. All the candidates that Bangladesh has fielded so far had background of international contacts. To the best of my knowledge our present candidate does not possess any international experience, which is considered necessary. However, it is heartening to note that several Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, have already extended support for our candidate.

Arshad-uz Zaman is a former Ambassador.

A tribute to the inseparable



AZIZ AMIRUL

THE much-discussed and celebrated Siamese twin sisters Ladan and Laleh Bijani, conjoined on the side of their heads, surely passed a tough, struggling life till recently since their fateful birth in 1974. A pall of gloom cast worldwide, specially in Iran and South Asia when the much-feared news of the passing away of the Bijani sisters arrived over the media on July 8 whilst a marathon surgery of over fifty hours was in near completion upon the twins at a Singapore hospital in a bid for their physical separation.

Born to a poor farmer couple, Dadollah Bijani and Maryam Safari in Firouzabad, a provincial town in southern Iran, the sisters were two of the eleven children in the family. Unfortunately, after their birth, the conjoined twins were deserted in the hospital by their parents, possibly out of superstition. A local doctor adopted and brought the sisters up as his own daughters. During the late nineteen seventies, Dadollah, the father, somehow traced the children in the doctor's custody and asked them to accompany him to their village but Laleh and Ladan refused and opted to stay behind. Yet their real parents and rest of the family members maintained regular contact with them, while they grew up in the urban environment of Tehran as conjoined but two young smart ladies.

Although the sisters knew the operation could kill one or both of them, they decided to face those dangers after a lifetime of living conjoined and compromising on everything from when to wake up to what career to pursue. It was, once before, in 1996 when the sisters approached a team of doctors in Germany for the surgery but then they were refused because of possible fatal consequences.

"If only God wants us to live the rest of our lives as two separate, independent individuals, we certainly will," said Ladan before the operation, at a press conference in Singapore, their temporary residence for the last seven months or so. Ladan, the more outspoken of the sisters, wished to be a lawyer and reside in Siraz, a town of her home district while Laleh Bijani, one of a more reserved nature, had ambition of taking up journalism as a career, had the surgery been successful.

The bravery of the twins made them a pair of near-celebrity and helped them won special corner in the hearts of Iranians while the country's television channel regularly dedicated programmes to the twins for the last few months, while newspapers and journals published news and features on their lives and details about the high-risk surgery. It was indeed a shock for the countrymen whose President pledged to bear the cost of the surgical process, an amount of US \$ 300,000 that would have paid fees to the mammoth medical team that consisted of 28 surgeons and doctors, in addition to some 100 nurses and hospital staffers.

A tensed Iran, along with a majority of world population, who had eagerly been waiting for a positive result whilst praying for over two days, had to, at the end, wipe off teams in dejection due to the untimely departure of the two cheerful lives within a span of ninety minutes.

The Bijani sisters proved themselves to be inseparable here on earth and, as wished by all, would prove the same up in the heavens only to rest in eternal peace.

Containing bank robbery

BRIGADIER GENERAL SHARIF AZIZ, PSC

ROBBERY in Pubali Bank, Rampura Branch early last month (3 June) is not an isolated incident. Contract killing, hijacking, kidnapping, extorting and bank robbery have recently increased when the present government came to power in 2001, improving law and order situation of the country was their number one agenda. In face all the governments placed greater importance on improving law and order situation. In spite of that it is deteriorating day by day. Ultimately joint forces were called in last October to handle the situation. After the deployment of the Armed Forces law and order situation of the country remarkably improved. But few months later after withdrawal of the Armed Forces it started deteriorating sharply.

Bank robbery has added a new chapter in the crime list. Last year Pubali Bank Tejgaon Branch and Sonali Bank Khamar Bari Branch were robbed in broad daylight. Till now the law enforcing agencies have not been able to find out a clue or recover the money. This has in turn encouraged the robbers to carry out such act again and again. Decamping with Taka 27 lac from Pubali Bank, Bangabandhu Ave-

nue Corporate Branch on the night of 13/14 June exposed lack of respect to security by some of the bank staff.

Police is primarily responsible for maintaining law and order situation of the country. Our police force is as old as our independence. With their inherent limitations of resource they have apparently been trying to maintain law and order situation so far. But of late it has seemingly become difficult for public to combat anti-social elements who hold more sophisticated weapons and technology than the police. One may be happy to note that the private security

Features of robbery incidents

Pubali Bank Rampura Branch robbery was a typical robbery but with some new techniques. It was well organised, well-planned with sound execution and clean escape.

Rampura is a crowded area with heavy traffic. Only a determined group can carry out robbery in such area. Before carrying out the operation, the robbers must have carried out detail survey of the bank premises, observed the routine activity of the bank staff and studied the types of the customers.

Robbers numbering 10-12

such incident in future.

On the night of 13/14 June a security guard of Pubali Bank, Bangabandhu Avenue corporate branch fled away with 27 lac Taka from the bank's vault. This was the second security branch of Pubali Bank within a span of 11 days. The officers responsible for the keys left it in the bank, which was marked by the security guard. At night he opened the vault and decamped with the money. There were three guards in the bank but for long time two guards were performing duties. The suspected guard was earlier arrested by police on a criminal charge. It was known to the bank authority but surprisingly

An evaluation of incidents of last few years shows that the robbers have not yet targeted private banks. Security arrangements of private banks are comparatively better than the government banks. Private banks employ more guards along with CCTV and modernised alarm system.



All health information to keep you up to date

Anxiety and shyness

There is a social problem with some people with real anxiety and shyness whenever, especially, in a social situation. According to the medical science, anxiety is a feeling of apprehension, worry, uneasiness, or dread, especially for the future.

Many people feel anxious in social settings and some experts estimate that as many as one in 10 people withdraw from social activities they fear. And if their severe anxiety means they start avoiding certain situations altogether then they may be suffering from a social phobia or social anxiety disorder. The consequences of this can be devastating and include depression, relationship difficulties and work stresses. The exact cause of social phobias remains unclear, but there may be biochemical and psychological triggers.

As each person's situation will vary, it's very important to talk to a doctor for initial advice. Otherwise you ask around family, friends or trusted work colleagues for a recommendation of a good local doctor. Your doctor will be able to take a full history of your problem and make recommendations regarding treatment options. Very often the graduate doctor will refer a person for specialist help. In the western world, many people respond well to a variety of treatments that can include medication and/or individual or group therapy.

Did you know?

If you spend a lot of time at a computer, make sure your wrists remain in a neutral position, following your arm's natural line. Finding something soft to support your wrists is helpful.

Next: Heart palpitation

divided themselves into four groups. One group placed themselves inside the bank in disguise of customers. Other three groups came by taxi cab and got down little away from the bank. At 12 noon these groups entered the bank. One group overpowered the security guard at the gate. They also keep watch over the customers. Another group entered the manager's room. They disconnected the telephone line, threw away the mobile phone and locked the manager along with two customers inside the bathroom. The last group collected cash from the cash counter. They did not attempt to break open the vault. Officer in charge of the bank vault cleverly merged with the customers so that robbers could not identify him. Cashier of the bank also showed some kind of intelligence by dropping a bundle of Tk. 10,000.00 on the floor. About Taka. 56,000.00 were also on the money counting machine, which escaped the robbers' eye. After collecting the cash they put it in a jute bag and went away.

When a bank staff attempted to switch on the alarm bell the robbers switched off the electricity by shutting down the main switch. Alarm bell was also of poor standard, it could not make enough sound. Through the window of a bathroom one bank staff alarmed a pedestrian and asked him to call police. Police was little away from the bank. Although they reached the place within 15 minutes but by then the robbers had escaped with their booties.

The age group of the robbers was surprisingly higher than the age group of other bank robbers. Their average age was 35-40 years. Some people think that they were from Rampura locality but majority think they were from some out-lawed parties.

Few days back OC Khilgaon PS advised the banks of this area to strengthen their security. But that was ignored. From this incident we can draw several lessons and basing on the lessons may put forward few recommendations to prevent

they retained him.

Suggested measures

Close circuit television camera should be installed in every branch at important locations to keep record of all movements. Since camera records all the activities within its sight, the robbers would not possibly take a risk of being identified later by police through the recorded video tape.

The number of guards at bank branches should be increased with deployment of armed guards. Though some of the private security companies have armed guards but they are small in number. Besides, now-a-days new armed guards are not available because all personal weapons have been deposited to police station on a government order. However, banks may hire Ansars with arms. Some of the multinational banks such as Standard Chartered Bank deploys more than ten guards during transaction hours to reduce the risk of robbery. (These guards are used for transports control, queue control, handling metal detector, keeping vigilance over suspected persons.)

An officer in rotation may be deputed for keeping continuous watch over the people entering the bank. If somebody is found waiting inside the bank apparently with no purpose, he may be politely asked whether he requires any help or not.

Modern electronic alarm system should be installed at a place apparently out of the reach of robbers. The sound of the bell should be as high that it should be able to draw the attention of the people outside. Main switch of the bank should also be located in a concealed place protected and locked.

Carrying mobile phone inside the bank should be prohibited. Customers may be requested to deposit their mobile phone with the security guard at the gate and collect it while leaving the bank. American Express Bank and Standard Chartered Bank are practicing

this system.

f. Bank officers/staff may be briefed/rehearsed and oriented to handle such emergency situation.

g. Pickets/patrols of law enforcing agency should be relocated near the bank if possible.

h. A guard should be put in the parking area to organize parking in front of bank and to give early information of arrival of any suspicious group by taxi cab or microbus. One or two guards may be deployed in civil cloth to monitor entry and exit from the bank.

i. Security guard must not be employed for any other purpose other than security duty.

j. A dedicated land telephone should be kept in a secluded place so that it can be used in emergency for informing law-enforcing agency. It is also advised to keep a mobile telephone exclusively for the purpose of informing law enforcing agencies in case of such incident.

k. All emergency telephone numbers should be typed, laminated and hung at a convenient place for emergency situations. This should include telephone and mobile numbers of police station, police control room, fire brigade and hospitals.

l. There should be effective supervision and inspection of the security forces by higher authorities. There should also be surprise checks at any time of the day or night to ascertain the state of readiness/preparedness of the guards.

m. Antecedents of all personnel employed by the banks and the security company must be verified.

n. Specific orders should be given measures taken about control of key of the bank's vault.

o. Inter branch transfers/posting of staff must be carried out periodically.

Government security agencies: Police is primarily responsible for maintaining law and order. The force includes Metropolitan Police, C.I.D. Detective Branch, District Police, Armed Police, Riot Control Police, Range Reserve Force etc. Besides, battalion and embodied Ansars are also aiding them in maintaining law and order. Truly speaking, police could not be successful in curbing down the rate of crimes. Police has its limitations also. They are ill equipped. Their weapons do not match with the sophisticated weapons used by terrorists. They do not have enough vehicles, wireless sets, protective vests etc. In fact terrorists are better equipped than the police force. Despite all these limitations police force are putting up their best effort to combat terrorists. But we guess this is not enough, our national police force will have to be more efficient and

capable of outsmarting the anti-social elements. They will have to contain the rising anti-social activities at any cost.

Private Security companies: Private security is an emerging industry in Bangladesh. Over the years, the need for private security has increased manifold. During the eighties one would only see hardly a few private security companies, but now the number has shot up to more than 200. Indeed the security companies in Bangladesh are performing in a big way. Private security men guard the entire UN system in Bangladesh. Most of the non-government organizations, banks, factories, installations, plants, apartments and even the US Embassy is guarded by private security companies. All the oil and gas companies have vested their security to the private companies too. These are good indicators of 'confidence' the people have in the private security companies. One should also feel happy that, in a country like ours, where job opportunities are extremely limited, thousands of youths earning their livelihood through employment in the security companies. Many ex-service personnel, policemen and officers who may be whiling away their time and energy because of lack of job opportunities after retirement could be brought into the security service. In fact retired armed forces and police officers are basically running the private security companies.

Interactions: We have to accept the fact that only government security agencies will not be able to totally control law and order situation of the country. In fact private security companies can complement the role of government security agencies. We are certain that private security companies would be interested to extend their support to police if invited. A coordination committee should be set up to formulate a mechanism so that greater cooperation can be received from the private security companies.

Concluding remarks

Recent series of bank robbery incidents have alarmed the whole community. No doubt the law enforcing agency has to be more active and agile in hunting down the criminals. Although they have their own limitations but this must not slow down their initiative. Banks also cannot ignore their own security responsibility. An evaluation of incidents of last few years shows that the robbers have not yet targeted private banks. Security arrangements of private banks are comparatively better than the government banks. Private banks employ more guards along with CCTV and modernised alarm system. Keen and dedicated evaluation of the recent events and thereafter sincere efforts to mitigate problems should be a top priority.

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