

Chittagong arms haul

Let us keep politics out of it

EXPERIENCE teaches us that it is almost impossible for the political leadership in this country to act in a bipartisan manner for the good of the nation and to ensure that certain matters are kept above politics. However, if ever there was a time for such bipartisan cooperation it is with the recent arms haul in Chittagong that shocked the entire country.

The probe into the discovery of such a huge consignment of smuggled arms, where they were headed, and who might be involved in the operation is still in its early stages, and the head of the official inquiry committee has said that so far no political links to the incident have been uncovered. The national security implications of such a probe are of such seriousness that it behoves the inquiry committee to conduct its investigation without any prejudice and with utmost caution and deliberation.

That should put at rest the rhetoric of accusatory political finger pointing between some BNP and AL leaders. BNP leaders have speculated that the arms could be linked to the opposition and have hinted darkly that these were the "big surprise" that the opposition had been referring to in its rhetoric of government's fall by April 30. The opposition, for its part, claimed that they were brought into the country for the purpose of liquidating opposition party leaders and cadres. In the process, the focus of the investigation got defused.

In our latest editorial on the subject the other day we made it clear that stuff like Chittagong mayor Mohiuddin's statement that the USA and Pakistan had hand in the transhipment of the arms allegedly intended for insurgents in India's North-East was extremely irresponsible. We are glad that AL general-secretary Abdul Jalil has since clarified to the effect that Mohiuddin's statement didn't reflect AL's party position.

Speculation and rumour-mongering can get us nowhere in uncovering the truth. Indeed, it doesn't do the cause of impartial and unprejudiced investigation any good to have accusations and counter-accusations flying around with sinister imputation of country linkages to top them off without any proof furnished. Is it too much to hope that when matters of national security are at stake, the political leadership of the country should present a united front?

The greatest Bengalee

Bangabandhu accorded due honour

We are greatly heartened to learn that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has been adjudged the greatest among the 20 Bengalees of all times in an opinion poll conducted by the BBC. It is due recognition to the man who was the supreme leader of our liberation war and the founder of the state of Bangladesh.

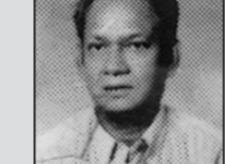
What makes this man stand out are the courage of his conviction, a tremendous capacity for self-sacrifice and an unflagging determination with which he fought for the rights of a subjugated nation and established them in his lifetime against stunning odds. It was his charisma that made him stand apart from most of his political contemporaries. Indeed, the freedom fighters held his image in their hearts as they fought for the country's liberation during those excruciating nine months.

His historic speech on March 7, 1971, changed the course of politics in the then Pakistan in a perceptible way. The liberation war that followed drew its inspiration from the 'voice of thunder' that gave the millions of Bengalees a new sense of direction. It was definitely the turning point in our struggle for establishing our rights. Bangabandhu had that rare quality of internalising the awesome power of the people and radiating it back to the people.

The BBC list includes a galaxy of luminaries who could make any nation proud. There are scientists, literary personalities, an economist, language martyrs, politicians, reformers and vanguards of social and educational movements whose cumulative contributions to the advancement of Bengalees were stupendous. They are all sons and daughter of the soil we as Bangalees can be immensely proud of.

The Daily Star has always been consistent in its portrayal of the great leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. So, the highest public ranking of him in the BBC opinion survey resonates with us.

Finally, we believe the BBC deserves a round of plaudits for undertaking the survey which would definitely help the new generation of Bengalees know about the great souls that we are indebted to for their contribution to our politics, culture, education, literature and social advancement in general.



ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

according to European Standard". The US State Department has made similar observation.

In an editorial the famous French daily *Le Monde* has stated, "This is the last mandate for the last Representative of a generation of leaders born out of the War of Independence against France". The paper points out that now a real transition begins between the army and the civilian power.

Since her independence in 1962, which I had the honour of

M'hamed Yazid called on Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and invited to join the Non-Aligned Summit. He announced the recognition of Algeria to the newly independent state of Bangladesh. For us at that time recognition of states was of great importance specially from Arab and Muslim states. Yazid requested that Bangabandhu opens a Bangladesh Embassy in Algiers and pointing at my direction stated "we want him as your

rian TV and I became an instant celebrity in secretive Algeria, where Ambassadors rarely met the Foreign Minister. I informed our Foreign Minister Dr. Kamal Hossain that the Algerian Foreign Minister had assured that we would join the Non-Aligned Summit as full member. Dr. Kamal Hossain waited in Geneva for the Foreign Ministers to unanimously decide to invite us as member. The Algerians opened their doors wide for us and our bilateral relations

Then came the tragic assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his almost the whole family and close associates in the jail. In an unusual gesture President Boumediene received me in a farewell call and admonished, "Why did you have to kill my brother Sheikh Mujib? You could have sent him to me and I would have looked after him".

The eighties and the better part of the nineties the Algerian state had to grapple with serious funda-

locked in a conflict on Western Sahara with her close neighbour Morocco. That dispute continues to this day.

I have to admit with sorrow that we have been unable to sustain the excellent beginning that we had made in our bilateral relations. The Algerians opened an Embassy in Dhaka and have closed it since and we have closed our Embassy in Algiers.

Through their massive mandate in favour of AbdelAziz Bouteflika the Algerians have opened a new page. Tired of senseless bloodshed the people of Algeria have signaled that they want to get on with their lives. They have won freedom from France after a bitter war of liberation. Thus Algeria strikes a chord in our hearts for we too fought a heroic War of Liberation.

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Arshad-Uz-Zaman is a former Ambassador.

VERY recently elections have been held in Algeria, a vast country in north Africa, which has failed to attract our attention. Yet in the beginning of our journey through independence, this country meant a lot to us.

In the just held Presidential elections incumbent President AbdelAziz Bouteflika has scored a stunning victory getting 83 per cent of the votes. His rival Ali Benflis got 7 per cent of the votes. Thus 67 year old President Bouteflika has been reelected for a new term of five years.

Benflis has denounced the election as a fraud. Yet it is like a landslide and he will have a hard time to make his claim stick. There were plenty of election watchers. A Belgian Senator Anne-Marie Lizin has stated, "election took place

witnessing then as a member of the Pakistan Permanent Mission to the UN, Algeria had a rough ride. The elected leader Ben Bella was overthrown and imprisoned by a military coup led by Col. Houari Boumediene. Algeria staged a very successful Non-Aligned Summit in September 1973. An Algerian Delegation led by

Ambassador". I was then Chief of Protocol.

I rushed to Algiers and opened our Embassy. The day after my arrival I was received by Foreign Minister Bouteflika, then in his early thirties and his close adviser from the Ministry Abdel Hamid Adjali. My meeting with Bouteflika was prominently shown on Alge-

picked great momentum. The Algerians are big producers of oil and gas and our engineers joined their giant organisation Sonatrach and Algerian youngsters joined our jute establishments for training. Bangabandhu made a deep impact on the Non-Aligned Summit and we received the recognition of nearly 100 members of the Summit. To compound her miseries she got

mental threat. Blood flowed freely throughout Algeria as the armed forces were pitted against the Front of Islam Salvation (FIS). This country of 32 million people superbly endowed with gas and oil and a coast rich in natural resources and excellent climate, was unable to realise its potential.

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September love



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

THE sun was hanging in the mid-sky when he entered the park with the longing of a pilgrim returning to holy site. A hot wind blew through the trees and shrubs like a strong sigh heaved through leaves and twigs, sending dry leaves and dust swirling in the quivering air. He sat on a bench, and thought how this park looked so much like a graveyard to him. The trees, shrubs, jogger's trail, benches, the pond and everything else were scattered like graves, where his dreams and wishes were buried like fallen victims of cruel fate.

He looked around with wistful eyes, the apparition of a teenage girl in blue satin chemise and white pajamas configured in the air between the Banyan tree and the mango tree. She looked real and alive, hurtling down a spine-like trail, her milk-white nape flashing each time her tresses swung from side to side. He felt the firm pressure of a desperate pain, because he knew what was lost couldn't be recovered.

She used to come to this park every Friday in the afternoon, accompanied by her parents, two brothers and one sister. She was young, and her complexion reminded him of the colour of fresh milk squirting from udder. His

friends often joked that she was too fair, that she was going to embarrass any man who married her because she would glow in the dark. He could hear the noise of melancholy inside his head, its clenched fist pounding on the walls of his heart, making him shudder in the bitter sensation of a futile life.

He used to watch her from a corner of the park, skipping and running like a sylvan beauty, her pliant body bouncing in swings and seesaws, then coming down the

tated like an upset stomach and disrupt his thoughts. He would feel dizzy and nervous, his voice choked by an uneasiness that gathered like an angry mob.

She didn't come to the park for three Fridays in a row, and he remained in a state of dementia, sleepless at night, restless by day, appetite lost, tears in the eyes, a stream of emptiness convulsing inside him like a sea grown harsh. The park looked desolate to him, the streams of people appearing

the sounds of his life.

When she returned to the park after a month, her tresses were rolled into chignon, her hands coloured with Henna, earrings, necklace and bangles had transformed a restless young girl into a cautious woman. She avoided the seesaw and the slide, taking only the swing for a while, but mostly talking to a man, who was struggling to keep his composure. She introduced that man to him as her husband, and while he didn't know

air with a sense of chaos that resonates with all things coming to end. A middle-aged woman with two children entered the park from its eastern side and sat down under the Banyan tree. Her saffron sari with black borders accentuated her lustrous complexion, her hairs neatly combed into a knot in the back of her head with stripes of gray running across it. She looked elegant in the diminishing light of the day, which reminded him of what his friends used to say. She lit

looked for him every day she came and hoped she was going to meet him again. He asked about her husband, and she said he was still alive and that was all she ever cared to know about her man. Then she said women were like rivers where people threw anything they liked and assumed it was fine when the sheet of water on the surface restored its calm. Conjugal life, she added, was more habit than harmony because true love died on the altar of obligations when man and woman took each other for granted. She never loved the man whom she had married, she said staring at the sky.

He shored up his courage and told her how much he would have enjoyed being with her if he only knew that she was again coming to the park. She threw her head backward and unlocked her hairs with a few jerks, redoing them with magician's sleight of hands. He told her that she looked like a fairy flapping her wings when she folded her hands behind the head to roll up the hairs. She asked him where was he all these years with his play of words... The sun was now dipping in the west, smearing the sky with an orange glow that shone on the man and the woman who were facing each other.

He sat on the bench under the scorching sun, he could still sniff the smell of that sorrow circulating in the air of this park, the sense of desolation and abandonment, which pierced him, like thousand spears. How could love, the most profound and the purest form of man's emotions, condemn a man to burn in the hell of his own depreciation? For all these years that elapsed, he never wanted to visit this park, because he was afraid of being reminded that he was defeated in love.

The sun had already begun to descend in the western sky, the noise of people and birds filled the air around her with the halo of her beauty that was not tarnished by time.

Old age brings the gambler's instinct to a man as his own sense of coming to an end gives him the courage to raise his stakes. He stood up and walked towards the woman, organising his thoughts in his head like an actor rehearsing his lines. By that time the woman had recognised him with a smiling face. He took a long breath and asked her what had brought her to the park after so many years and who were those children who came with her.

She replied that she had been

coming to the park with her grandchildren ever since they started going to school. She said she

Mohammad Badrul Ahsan is a banker.

CROSS TALK

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like silhouettes in a haunted house. The swings, the seesaws, the trail between the Banyan tree and the mango tree, everything was deserted and bleak, a sense of loneliness gripping him with cutting and dull hands, squeezing so hard that he couldn't breathe.

As he sat on the bench under the blazing sun hanging over his head, he thought of how life burned each day like a fuse, until one day the bomb went off. Memories were nothing but the lengthening trail of crumbling life. He started to sink into a delirium as if the heat of the midday sun was affecting his head, as if remembering too much for too long had made his head spin while he ingested the silence of the park, the silence which had absorbed

what to say, he forced a smile on his face in the most difficult performance of his life.

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LETTER FROM AMERICA

ritary Council veto power to block several actions against the rebel whites, thus prolonging the suffering of the majority blacks. It took fifteen years of British dillydallying before the blacks finally gained majority rule in 1980. Recently, the world has learned from the former Labour Minister Claire Short that Tony Blair's government had bugged the office of the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and distributed and discussed the transcripts of the secret conversations of Mr. Annan at the UN in New York in Blair's cabinet meetings in London. Where was the world's outrage? Should not the British government be punished for such treachery?

not protest, why should the perpetrators reform? Muslims are too busy playing the criminal. Instead of standing firm and saying that since Israel has the nuclear bomb and has threatened many times that it would not hesitate to use it against Muslim nations, Iran has every right to make the bomb, Iran is bending over backward to comply with the UN agency for nonproliferation and pleasing the US. Muslim nations and leaders, with the honourable exception of Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad, fail to show determination or courage. Sometimes defiance helps. Earlier this year, when the US stipulated that every visitor to the US would be photographed and fingerprinted, Brazil promptly instituted the same for American visitors to Brazil! Unlike Iran, recently Brazil declared that some of its nuclear facilities are not for UN inspection. If the Muslims are gluttons for punishment, why should the permanent members of the UN Security Council not dish more of it out to them?

Faced with Muslim docility, the image of UN reform that the current permanent members envision is not of instituting democracy over which they go ga at all other times, but to add more members who are their mirror images: Germany and Japan. Just as the Jews were rewarded with Israel for their suffering at the hands of the west during World War II, perhaps the two nations that brutalised the Europe and Asia by starting WWII in their respective continent, deserve rewarding with permanent UN Security Council seats! In their mind, the best way to make the UN Security Council more representative is by adding one more western nation (Germany) and the most western nation in Asia (Japan)!

As currently constituted, the permanent members of the UN Security Council protect the interests of nations belonging to the world, yet, because the Muslims have no seat or friend in the UN Security Council, as a people they are the most abused by it. The current composition of the UN Security Council is flawed racially, geographically and religiously. The US, the UK, France and Russia are predominantly

white nations. Whites constitute about 15 per cent of the world's population; yet, they hold four out of the five (80 per cent) permanent seats of the UN Security Council! The mongoloids (China) hold the other 20 per cent of the seats. The blacks and browns hold 0 per cent of the seats! Since the US, the UK, France and Russia are also Christian nations, Christians, who constitute about 30 per cent of the world's population, hold 80 per cent of the permanent seats of the UN Security Council. Muslims who constitute 25 per cent of the world's population and the Hindus, who constitute about 20 per cent, have no permanent members in the UN Security Council. France and Russia, one member from Asia (China). There are no permanent members from Africa and South America! On what basis do the UK, France and Russia deserve permanent seats in the UN Security Council, and South Africa and Brazil do not? Whether one likes it or not, the world is divided predominantly along