

## 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 trans-shipment 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 make 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 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.

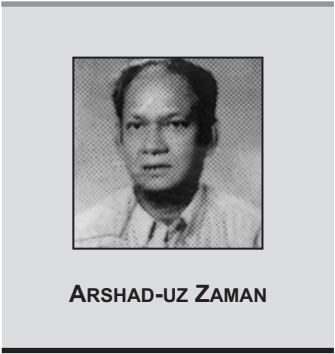
His historic speech on March 7, 1971, changed the course of politics in the then Pakistan in a perceptible way. The liberation war that followed drew its inspiration from the 'voice of thunder' that gave the millions of Bengalees a new sense of direction. It was definitely the turning point in our struggle 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.

# Algerians repose confidence in Bouteflika again



ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

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

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 Boumedienne 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. Since independence Algeria, inspite of the fact that she got embroiled in a terrible civil war, has made remarkable progress in many fronts, specially education.

The people of Algeria have placed their destiny in the hands of AbdelAziz Bouteflika, steeled in the War of Liberation and has a 40- year political past behind him.

Arshad-uz-Zaman is a former Ambassador.

## THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

**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.**

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 Boumedienne. Algeria staged a very successful Non-Aligned Summit in September 1973. An Algerian Delegation led by

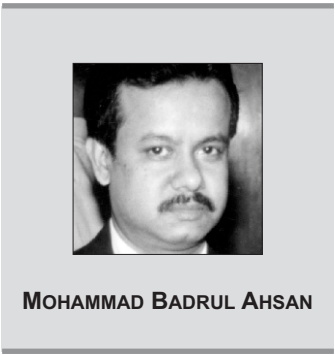
Ambassador". I was then Chief of Protocol.

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 Adjail. 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 Algreian 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.

mentalist threat. Blood flowed freely throughout Algeria as the armed forces were pitted against the Front of Islamic 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. To compound her miseries she got

# 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 grove. 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. She said that if he had told the time and given the small change, when she had asked for them, she wouldn't have married another man. As tears rolled down his cheeks, he looked at the sun and held her hands. While she promised to love him for the rest of her life, he repeatedly said that he shouldn't have waited so long before he returned to the park.

Mohammad Badrul Ahsan is a banker.

## CROSS TALK

**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. 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.**

slides with her legs straightened together like a sabre charging straight at his heart. Many a Friday that saber ripped through his heart, sending him home with a wound that couldn't be nursed. Every Friday he returned to the park with all the strength of his desperation to tell her that he couldn't bear the pain of longing for her.

But then his courage melted at her sight in the manner darkness vanishes at the coming of light. Once she came to him to ask for time, and he told her about the weather. Another time she asked him for small change and he gave her large bills with trembling hands. He could never carry on a complete conversation with her, because his head would get agi-

like silhouettes in a haunted house. The swings, the seesaws, the trail between the Banyan tree and the mango grove, 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.

As 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 deprecation? 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

up 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

# UN reform a pressing agenda

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

writes from Princeton

SINCE its inception in 1945, the United Nations Security Council has been steadfast on one issue -- punishment of the Muslims. Without any consultation with the Muslims, the Arabs or the Palestinians, the western-dominated UN Security Council awarded most of Palestine to the Jews to form the Jewish state of Israel in 1948. Since then, the US, Britain and more often than not France, have vetoed every UN resolution drafted by the Muslim states to condemn Israel's heinous crimes. For instance, when Israel carried out the Jenin massacre last year, the US vetoed any criticism or punishment of Israel. When Israel assassinated Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin last month, the US vetoed any condemnation or punishment of Israel, in effect echoing the Israeli contention that Yassin deserved to die! If Israel's mass murderer Sharon assassinated the democratically elected leader of the Palestinians, Yasser Arafat, as Sharon has threatened to do, Mr. Bush will no doubt accuse Arafat of dying to give Israel a bad name! The fact that the US is forced by the American Zionists to act against its own interest for the primacy of Israel's interests is another matter.

In the 1950s and 1960s, anytime the Muslims demanded that the UN Security Council enforce its own

resolution for a plebiscite in the disputed Kashmir which both India and Pakistan claims, the Soviet Union, India's friend, always vetoed the resolutions. While Israeli people or its leaders have never paid for any of their crimes against the Palestinians, or for bombing Iraq's nuclear facilities in 1981 without declaring war, violating Jordan's air space in the process, Iraq's civilians paid dearly for Saddam Hussein's indiscretions. (The UN Security Council passed a resolution mandating Israel to pay compensation to Iraq for the destruction of Iraq's nuclear facility. Israel's UN ambassador ridiculed the resolution, tore the paper on which it was printed and promised that Israel would never pay a cent. Israel never did!) Because of fourteen years of crippling UN sanctions between 1990 and 2003, and the US's and Britain's enforcing of a no-fly zone over most of Iraq, a prosperous Iraq was turned in a pauper Iraq. Millions of Iraqi civilians -- men, women and children -- died because of the UN sanctions. When the Clinton administration decided to come to the rescue of the Kosovo Muslims in 1999, it had to bypass the UN Security Council because of Russia's (friend of the Serbs, who tormented the Kosovars) certain veto.

Born in the heydays of colonialism, for 1945 belonged to the colonial era, the United Nations Security Council was founded on solid colonial principles: there were

going to be masters and servants in the UN Security Council. Simply put, the principle is: Damn the rest of the world, the world is going to be run according to the wishes of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China -- the five permanent members of the UN Security Council with the power to veto any resolution. The opinion of the rest of the world does not matter. The absurdity of this dictatorial hypocrisy is that until 1971, the "China" veto belonged not to the real China, The People's Republic of China (communist, mainland China) but to the west's puppet, fake China, the tiny island of Taiwan (then known as Formosa, Portuguese for beautiful island). The veto-wielding behemoths assured the newly emerging independent nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America that they would be scrupulously fair in exercising their vetoes. "Don't you worry your pretty little head about our fairness; rest assured of it!" thus they pacified the unsuspecting colonials.

Things did not quite turn out that way, did they? When the minority whites of South Africa, through their National Party instituted apartheid (separation of races) in 1948 to rule over the black majority, the white, veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council (the US, the UK, the USSR and France) did not exactly hit the ceiling in indignation and come to the aid of the blacks! No UN sanctions were enacted to bring the racist South African gov-

ernment to its knees. Consequently, racist South Africa was allowed to fester, and remained a part of the west for 42 years, until 1990, humiliating, torturing and murdering the majority blacks all the time. When Ian Smith and his band of minority whites unilaterally declared their independence from Britain and took over Rhodesia in 1965, Harold Wilson's Britain did not exactly rally to the side of the blacks or go to the UN Security Council to bring down the rogue, minority, white regime. On the contrary, Britain used its UN Secu-

ry 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?

So much for the respect of the UN and its head by a permanent member of the UN Security Council! Recapitulating, the permanent members of the UN Security Council are not interested in fairness or justice. The UN Security Council has become a forum for the protection and propagation of the interests of the permanent members and their friends and allies. What is astonishing is that the sufferers of the brutality of the UN Security Council permanent members, most notably the Muslims, do not utter a word in protest! If the sufferers do

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 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 all the world's major religions, except Islam. The US, the UK and France not only look after western interests, as Christian countries (catholic and protestants) they look after Christian interests as well. As an orthodox Christian nation, the

Soviet Union and Russia have always looked after the interests of their brethren in Eastern Europe. China looks after the interests of the Buddhists and the Confucians. The Soviet Union always protected the interests of India and the Hindus during the cold war. Now Russia and America protects India. Always the US and the UK, sometimes France have protected and promoted the interests of Israel and Jews in the UN Security Council. Muslims constitute the world's second largest religious block after the Christians. Yet, no permanent member of the current UN Security Council has consistently protected Muslim interests or espoused the Muslim cause. That being the case, it is foolhardy for the Muslims to abide by those unfair, anti-Muslim resolutions in the UN Security Council. Like Israel, Muslim nations must not be afraid to defy UN Security Council resolutions.

Undemocratic veto in the UN Security Council is inherently unfair and should be abolished. Resolutions should be passed by a simple majority as expressed by the will of the world's nations in the General Assembly. There are 57 Muslim majority nations in 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 none!

members from Europe (the UK, 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 religious lines. As such, to truly reflect the current world, and not the world gone by, if the veto is to exist in the United Nations Security Council, it should be exercised only by the largest nations belonging to the world's four largest faiths: The United States (Christianity), China (Buddhism), India (Hinduism) and Indonesia (Islam).