Season of the bizarre

Things are rarely as they seem in Bangladesh politics, but there has been something unusually inexplicable in the machinations of the past few months, suggests

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MUCH as the Awami League, or a part of it, would like to deny it, the truth is that its deal with the Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish strikes a grievous blow at secular democracy in the country. The party's general secretary has lately been doing all he can to convince the nation that the move for an accommodation with the BKM is not an agreement *per se* but only a memorandum of understanding. That is surely not good enough, for the very plain reason that there is a mere fine line, nothing more, that separates an actual deal and a MOU.

Fundamentally, when two parties agree that certain moves will be made, or certain steps will not be taken, they are in effect convincing themselves that they have a pact between themselves. And that, precisely, is what has now come to pass between the Awami League, historically the fountainhead of Bangladesh's secular politics, and the Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, which by any definition is an organization dedicated to the promotion of Muslim communalism in the country.

The deal between the Awami League and the BKM is, if you have cared to observe, one of the many quixotic happenings that have come to define national politics in this season of ambitions and dreams. There are far too many ambitions than the country can deal with, and these happen to be nurtured within the camps of those who clearly would like pieces of the cake once the dust has settled. And the dreams? That is something you surely cannot fail to spot in the permutations and combinations that have been, and are being, made as loyalties are ditched, new friendships are made, and old enemies are brought together, all through the rather innocuous process of a handing over of bouquets from one set of politicians to another.

Observe the alacrity with which Shah Moazzem Hossain, infamous for the many obscenities he hurled at Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina as Ershad's deputy prime minister, walked up to the door of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party to be accepted as one of its newest members. And with him