

## SQ Chy sealed it for him

### A blot on the nation's conscience erased

AFTER an exhaustive process of trial, the War Crimes Tribunal convicted Salauddin Quader Chowdhury to death sentence. And now on hearing his appeal and adjudicating on it, the Supreme Court has upheld the death penalty of the war criminal. He is going to be the first BNP leader to walk to the gallows for crimes against humanity and genocide perpetrated during the 1971 Liberation War. The judgment was greeted with much relief by the freedom fighters, families of the victims and the people of Raozan.

The verdict rejects the BNP leader's plea for reviewing the sentence. The top court's verdict upheld the death penalty awarded by the War Crimes Tribunal in four charges, 20-year prison sentence for two charges and five-year prison terms for two charges. SQ Chy was, however, acquitted of the charge of murdering Satish Chandra Palit, for which the tribunal had given him a 20-year prison term.

Clearly, through the long arm of law he has got his comeuppance. This verdict marks another headway in bringing to justice the perpetrators of crimes against humanity. Now the nation awaits the expeditious completion of the process culminating in the execution of the verdict.

## A tell-tale road repair project

### Probe the specific instance

WITH the advent of monsoon, muddy and slushy potholes plague several streets of the capital. Now thanks to a report published in our paper yesterday, we know what ails them. The road under the Mayor Hanif flyover is a case in point. Last year, the Dhaka South City Corporation had spent Tk. 79 crore to mend the busy thoroughfare that connects the city with suburban Narayanganj and leads to Dhaka-Chittagong highway. A year on, despite its expensive patch-up work, the road remains in the same dilapidated state that it used to be. The crevices in the street are so huge that only heavy vehicles are able to ply the street and that too with difficulty; it has remained off-limit to private cars. A huge chunk of the money allocated to the refurbishment of the road has been allegedly defalcated as the contractor had only repaired a small patch of the street and did not even care to touch a huge swathe of the thoroughfare. Now, the DSCC has decided to start a Tk. 20 crore project to mend a road it had 'fixed' only months ago.

To start an official probe, the ACC had collected documents of the road, its drainage development project and taken statements of the officials concerned. What, however, beguiles us is that the ACC, for reasons best known to it, has yet to begin an investigation. We believe that it is incumbent upon the ACC to probe the allegations of such gross misappropriation of public fund. An interdepartmental inquiry to find out where things went wrong and how needs to be launched as well. It is now public knowledge that a nexus is formed between some officials and contractors to embezzle funds. This syndicate needs to be broken and corruption in public service rooted out.

## COMMENTS

**“SSF members have to be careful so that my security measures create no distance between me and the people.”**

**--PM Sheikh Hasina**

**Shahadat Bablu Hossain**

You are absolutely right, Prime Minister. But then why do we, the public, have to suffer almost everyday when your motorcade is on the road?

**“Billboard collapses in Motijheel”**  
(July 27, 2015)

**Hanif Repon**

It will happen again and again until the culprits are brought to justice. Negligence of authorities and substandard materials used to build the structure are the main reasons behind this, I guess.

**Syed G. Dastagir Sabah Khan**

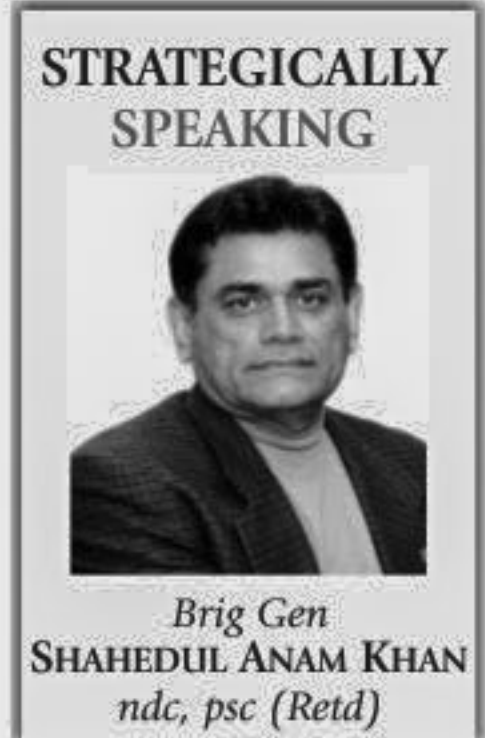
This is absolutely unacceptable. The City Corporations should check each and every such structure every 3 months. What if someone died?

**“From rugs to riches”**  
(July 26, 2015)

**Sadman Bin Or nab**

Innovative indeed. It's a source of inspiration for other small entrepreneurs.

# To 'kill' a political party!



STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING

THERE is much talk in town about one of the largest political parties in the country 'dying' out. And in fact some senior members of the BNP, some of the very few that have managed to keep themselves out of jail, have accused the AL of conspiring to 'kill' the BNP. But can a political party, which claims grassroots support base, be really 'killed' until it suffers death itself, having gone through the decaying process infused by its own folly before finally succumbing?

However, it is not beyond the pale of political gamesmanship to neuter a political opponent. This is a common practice in our part of the world where politics has become a mix of pastime and business; breaking up a political party, if not 'killing' it, is a handy method employed through coercion, cajoling and enticement. The first expedient, in the case of Bangladesh in the present context, appears to have been most effective.

The military rulers in Bangladesh with democratic pretensions formed political parties that were initially nothing more than agglomeration of people from the many parties in the country. Surprisingly, in their schemes were complicit many leaders with credible political credentials. But the exodus of the turncoats from the major parties could not weaken the bigger parties in any significant way, notwithstanding the underlying aim of the exercise. This time around it is neither money nor lure that has compelled some 'wise' and some 'otherwise' political cadres changing camp but the fear and threat of litigation which the government has used very craftily to chastise the BNP.

The AL appears to have no qualms in admitting into their ranks many from the BNP with criminal cases instituted against them recently. As a wise man had said, "Some men change their party for the sake of their principles; others their principles for the sake of their party". In this case it seems that the AL is changing its principles for the sake of others from outside the party. Even some of the much maligned Jamaat cadres have found a safe haven in the AL.

It is surprising to hear the ominous portends from the mouth of the BNP politicians which seems to suggest that the party is not clear where it is at the moment and where it is heading. One wonders whether the thinking-ones among the BNP elites have come to realise that they have quite lost their way and they must identify the loadstar and reset their compass accordingly for a course correction.

In talking about 'demise' of a party, it is a fact that while it has taken the collective effort of many to bring up the BNP as a party, whatever may have been the circumstances of its birth, it has taken the gross folly of the party chairperson aided equally by the unmitigated infantile and imprudent policy of the senior vice-chairperson to bring the party to the moribund state that it is now in.

A political party cannot be merely reactive to political events and even much less suffer from duality of command exacerbated by string pulling by the absentee landlord. The party indeed has become a personal fiefdom where the voices of the many are drowned by the voice of the two. Thus no amount of regrouping or reordering of the leadership structure can infuse life in the party until saner counsel is given due importance and the dictates of the brain is given preference to the heart's.

The injudicious BNP strategy to bring down the AL government through violence

has provided a golden opportunity to the AL to make it a political non-entity through litigations under the law of the land. Filing of cases against the grassroots as well as top ranking leaders of the BNP on charges of killing and arson has divested the party of leadership at all levels. The aftermath is there to see.

It is therefore not the time for the BNP or Khaleda Zia to put conditions for election. The party must use the four years between now and the next election to set its house in order and prepare to put up a credible show in 2019 without fearing of losing it. It must contest in election unless it wants the country to suffer another five years of a pseudo-democratic dispensation, with the

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inevitable mutation to a monist structure. It can serve the nation, if it wants to, by playing its role as an effective opposition, something that neither of the two parties has played when it was in the opposition. That would be much better for the people than the existing situation which can best be described as being neither here nor there.

The prospect of a political arrangement without a credible opposition may appear tantalising to the AL, but its ominous effect on democracy in Bangladesh should not be lost upon the country's polity.

The writer is Editor, Oped and Defence & Strategic Affairs, The Daily Star.

# ADIEU APJ ABDUL KALAM

## the teacher

ABDUL MANNAN

An honest man here lies at rest  
As e'er (ever) God with his image blest;  
The friend of man, the friend of truth,  
The friend of age, and guide of youth;  
Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,  
Few heads with knowledge so informed:  
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;  
If there is none, he made the best of this.

—Robert Burns

I could not think of a better way to pay tribute to the former president of India, late APJ Abdul Kalam than to quote the national poet of Scotland Robert Burns (Robbie Burns, died 1793). The former president, commonly known as APJ, died of a massive heart attack in Shillong while he was giving a lecture to a group of students at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Shillong on July 27, 2015. His personal aide, Srijan Pal Singh remembers the last few hours with APJ while they were taking their flight to Guwahati from Delhi, from where they would travel to Shillong. APJ wore a dark coloured 'Kalam suit', writes Singh in his Facebook post. But little did he know that it would be the last colour he would see on Dr. Kalam, the person with whom he has many memories to share over the last six years. The flight was bumpy due to the monsoon and whenever he saw his aide's face pale with fear, Dr. Kalam would pull down the window shutters and say, "Now you don't see any fear!" APJ was a fearless person.

During the flight, APJ expressed his concern about the terrorist attack in Punjab the previous day, where innocent lives were lost. He expressed his displeasure about the way the Indian parliament had been functioning for a

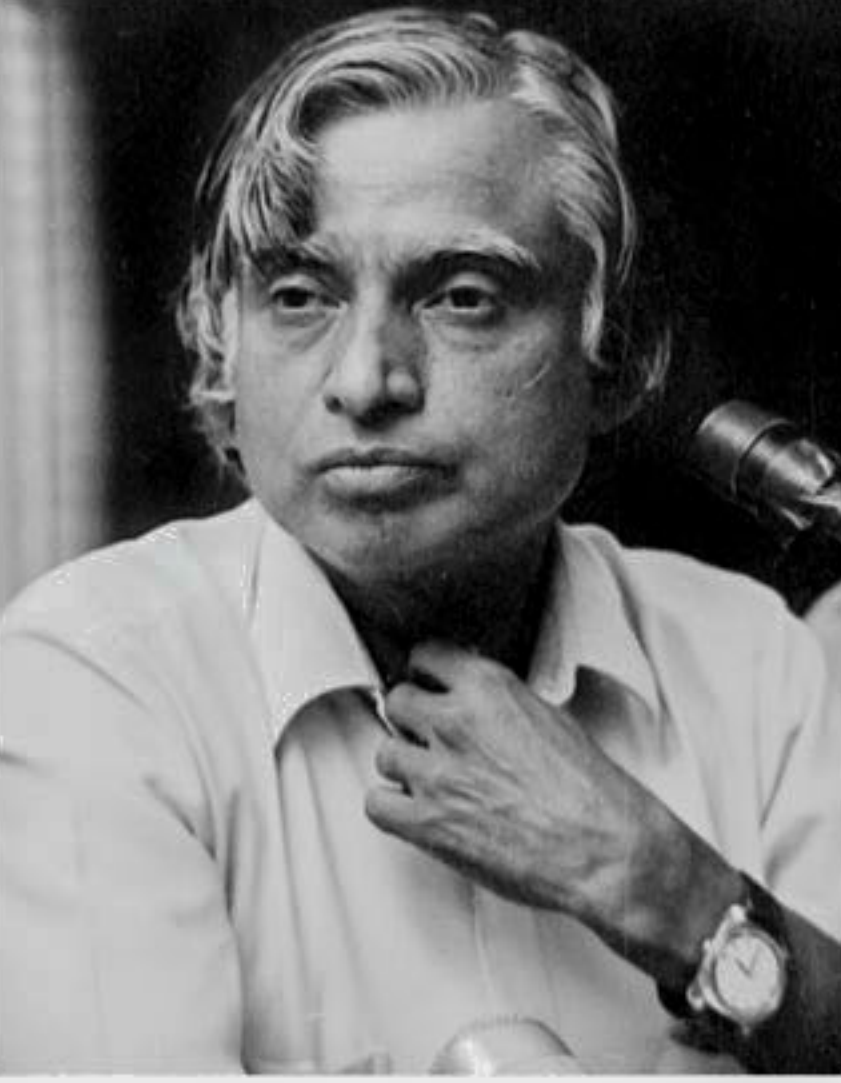
while as he said to Srijan that he saw two different governments during his tenure and was witness to the decay of parliamentary practices in India. APJ was planning on writing a new book *Advantage India* and wanted to include all these and other issues in the book.

Dr. Kalam wished there weren't so many people involved with his protocol and security. He expressed his concern for a soldier standing in a jeep ahead with a machine gun. He asked Srijan to send a message over the wireless to ask the soldier to sit as he may get tired. Srijan was unable to do that as he did not have any communication gear. When they reached IIM, Dr. Kalam asked the soldier to be brought to him, which his aide did. The soldier was taken inside and Dr. Kalam greeted him, shook his hand, and said, "Thank you, friend. Are you tired? Would you like something to eat? I am sorry you had to stand so long because of me." The young lean guard, draped in black cloth, was surprised at the treatment. He was at a loss of words and just said, "Sir, *aapke liye 6 ghante bhi khade rahenge.*" (For you, I can keep on standing for six hours).

Immediately, APJ went to the lecture hall. He did not want to be late for the lecture. "Students should never be made to wait," he said. Dr. Kalam was scheduled to give a talk on 'Creating a Livable Planet Earth.' A special large seat was kept on the dais for him, which he declined to sit on, as it was different from others. Straight away, he went to the microphone and began his speech. Two minutes into the speech, there was a long pause. Suddenly, he fell down. His eyes were almost closed. His hands clenched, curled onto Srijan's finger.

There was a stillness on his face, and those wise eyes were motionlessly radiating wisdom. He didn't say a word. He did not show pain, only purpose was visible. Dr. Kalam was rushed to the hospital in minutes. On arrival, the doctors announced that India's "Missile Man" had flown away, forever.

Dr. Kalam would often ask Srijan, "You are young. Decide, what do you want to be remembered for?" Srijan



writes, "I kept thinking of new, impressive answers, until one day I gave up and resorted to tit-for-tat. I asked him back, 'First you tell me, what would you like to be remembered for? President, scientist, writer, Missile Man, India 2020, target 3 billion... What?' I thought I had made the question easier by giving options, but he sprang a surprise on me. "Teacher," he said, without even blinking an eye." Teacher he was. He taught millions to dream but

his definition of dream differed from the traditional one. To him, "Dream is not which you see while sleeping, it is something that does not let you sleep."

APJ, born in a humble, lower-middle income family in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu was a lifelong bachelor. He was married to his quest for knowledge and wisdom. However, his love for children was legendary. Wherever he went, whether as a president or a commoner, he always liked to spend an hour or two with the local children. But he was also worried about today's children. He would often say, "Children need to take care of their parents. It is sad that sometimes this is not happening." In the same breath, he would also assert that there are two things elders must also do: "Never leave wealth at your deathbed - that leaves a fighting family. Second, one is blessed if one can die working, standing tall without any long-drawn ailing. Goodbyes should be short, really short."

That is exactly what happened to APJ Abdul Kalam. He entered the Presidential Palace in New Delhi with a worn leather suitcase and after his tenure was over, left with the same one. Till his last moment, he lectured as a teacher to students, which was his passion. He stood tall, left the world without any bank balance but was showered with love and good wishes of millions of people in the subcontinent and beyond. He was a people's president and a commoner's friend. He taught people to dream. Not many people are successful till the end. APJ was. He will be missed. Adieu Sir, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the teacher, scientist and former president of India. Your memory will live longer than you.

The writer is chairman, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh.

## Easiest way to reduce arsenic from your rice

M. JAHANGIR ALAM and KHURSHIDA BEGUM

MILLIONS of people (including infants) of our country may be affected by arsenic from rice and they do not know much about the sources. Rice tends to uptake arsenic more readily than many other plants from soil and water. Prolong exposure to arsenic in food and water can cause cancer in the skin, lungs, bladder and kidney.

Removing arsenic from rice is hard and therefore scientists are trying to develop methods solve the problem. A recent article published in a well-recognised journal (PLOS ONE) demonstrated that we can remove a significant amount of arsenic by modifying our rice cooking procedure.

Boil your rice with water (water to rice ratio: 12:1) and discard the water after cooking. Significant amount of arsenic will be released from rice to water (depends on type of rice, with average removal of 57±5 percent of arsenic). Use of more water is better.

Many year ago, we wrote a letter (Arsenic contamination, *The Daily Star*, December 14, 2002) with a different type of solution. People may use that procedure as well (copied here for quick

review): "Water that is not absorbed during rice cooking is discarded by inverting the cooking pan. Thus the actual amount of arsenic in cooked rice could not be either used, by chelating the arsenic in water by binding on rice grains, or decreased if water-



soluble arsenic is released from rice into the water to be discarded. Since an adult Bangladeshi man consume an average 1500 gram of cooked rice per day, which contain at least one litre of drinking water,

water intake through cooked rice would add substantially to the amount of arsenic ingested. (. . . )

Recently, a research group reported that the amount of arsenic in cooked rice was 10 to 35 percent higher than predicted, suggesting either that arsenic in the water is chelated by rice grains, or that the arsenic becomes concentrated during the cooking process because of evaporation. Furthermore, it would be raise concerns about the amount of arsenic retained in curry, which is cooked with a large amount of water and simmered for a long time.

It may be better to use less water for cooking food. Also, people must use surface water (pond, lake, river water) for cooking and drinking purposes, as heating kills all dangerous germs. Rain water is a very good source of safe water. Surface water is comparatively free from arsenic contamination. Related NGOs and teachers should teach general people to overcome the severe arsenic problem in Bangladesh"

The writers are PhD, University of Houston College of Pharmacy, and PhD, Baylor College of Medicine, respectively.