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Come on, Tigers!

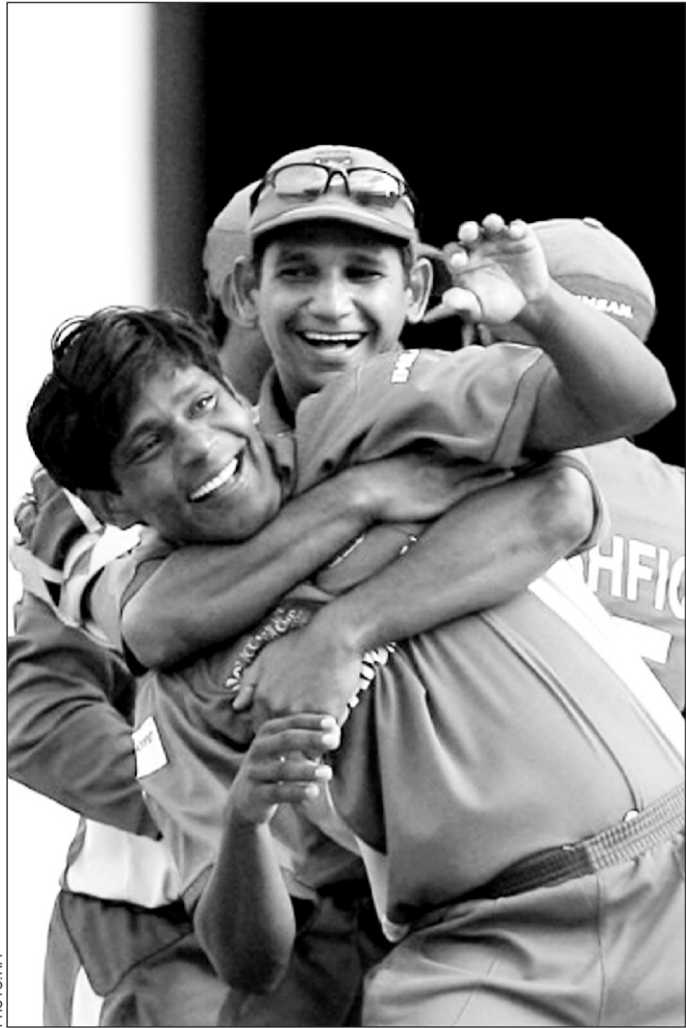


PHOTO: AFP



Winning against the mighty Indians was like a dream come true! No, not really. Rationally speaking, our Tigers played some sort of sensible cricket which gave India an abrupt shock. In other words, Bangladeshi cricketers had a game plan and they fought bravely till the last minute. Shockingly but truly, this unexpected defeat resulted in great misery for India as a whole and they were eliminated from the world's most prestigious ODI cricket event. The Indians sure would love to kiss the World Cup Trophy this time around.

But what actually went through these young and talented players' minds since winning against India? Are they overwhelmed? Is defeating India the final objective for Bangladesh? Those questions seem to squeeze us (the nation's blind cricket supporters) ever since Bangladesh lost to the Giant Aussies and the Kiwis.

We expect our cricketers to play reasonably well. It's not a question of winning against the mighty cricketing nations; rather we desire to witness some sensible performance from these young cricketers.

Md Badiuzzaman Tamal
Jahangirnagar University

General Moeen on political reform

I wish to congratulate you for coming out, indeed quite boldly, on the recent statement made by General Moeen U. Ahmed on Bangladesh politics.

To say the least, the statement of General Moeen about the future shape of Bangladesh political governance is rather baffling, not for its intellectual value which I believe was rather stimulating, but for its lack of institutional discipline. You have pointed quite aptly - should the General, as a serving officer of the government, make such a politically oriented policy statement in front of the President, in the head of the State and indeed, in the absence of Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, the head of the Caretaker government (CG).

People are confused. Political governance is the domain of politicians. What the country is looking for is a political process that is transparent and accountable and a governance framework that helps attract people who are committed to operating within these arrangements.

Certainly, Bangladesh is grateful to its Army for helping to install a government that has embarked on a commendable mission of putting in place a governance framework that is corruption-free and equitable and such a framework is not necessarily waiting to be discovered anew. Such systems of democracy already exist elsewhere and, therefore, we get puzzled with his pronouncement about, 'own brand of democracy'. What does he mean?

Thanks to the Army, at least this time around their intervention gave Bangladesh another opportunity, after 36 years, to correct itself. Like many such interventions in the past, the country would not like to see its mentor turning into its tormentor. That will be a tragedy!

Our aim will be to look for a political arrangement that is based on rule of law; puts in place instruments of checks and balance that not only control corruption, but also attract people who are committed to and remain honest in politics. Let there be no illusion that anybody other than the politicians can rule the country. What is needed is a process that promotes integrity and demotes self-seeking indulgence among the politicians.

It will be a tragedy if Bangladesh Army gets embroiled in politics and fails the country this time around. Frankly, politics is not their domain and they should steer clear of it. Let us not allow the lender of the last resort to bankrupt itself! This will be disastrous!!

Adil Khan
New York

I am impressed by going through your commentary 'Gen Moeen Goes Public on Politics'. 'Many' may not like your comments but you have rightly tried to give a pragmatic analysis on the basis of empiricism. In this context, the 'concerned people' should read thoroughly the recent works of living Harvardian legend Samuel P Huntington. His earlier advocacy of the contribution of armed forces

around the world after cold war was refuted by himself in the late nineties on the basis of thirty five years' of empiricism.

It is also a fact the activities and actions taken by the present government with the implicit and explicit support of the armed forces are laudable but for the sake of long term positive and tangible impact they need to undertake both political and administrative reforms. You are absolutely right to advocate for reform agenda.

Thanks again for your bold and pragmatic comments.
Dr M. Matir Rahman
(Former MDS, BPATC)
Stockholm

I was a half hearted reader of The Daily star because there was no substitute. I started liking the paper a few years back when you started raising issues of corruption and fundamentalism.

Today, I decided that The Daily Star is my newspaper. Congratulations for your commentary.

Please go ahead.
MS Siddiqui (Shah)
Bangla Chemical
Dhaka

Your commentary appears to be totally against the sentiment of the common man. It tends to drive a wedge between the harmonious working of the CTG and its chief backer by bringing in many superficially similar but irrelevant Army-led previous governments in Bangladesh and Pakistan. The remarks by the General was in terms of wide policy direction against corruption and dynastic dictatorship in the guise of democracy which had the country by the throat since its independence and it is a pity that you found it fit to paint it foul, vaguely pointing out dangers from the recent past which we all are aware of. As the General's comment had no detailed plan or directive for anyone, especially the CTG, it is completely far fetched imagination to construe it either as a show of strength or a bid for direct power. Of course we all know that the Army as the most powerful institution in the land cannot be precluded from such bids in the future if the welfare and survival of the country as a civilised nation demands it.

Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Thank you very much for your commentary. A bold expression at the right time. Though we supported this govt. initially but their dilly-dallying in transferring power is not good for the country.

Kamrul Naser
On e-mail

Real estate sector

This government has done quite a few things that give people like me some hope and confidence to write a letter such as I am about to write now. People like me have already lost all confidence and faith in a state that has, so far, been unable

to provide its citizens with any measure, whatsoever, of security and peace the two most fundamental elements of a beautiful and decent life, without which we are only animals, and sometimes even worse than that.

The present government has already done many laudable things. However, one sector that needed serious attention and scrutiny has been entirely overlooked. I am talking about the real estate sector of the country. The agriculture adviser, a few days ago, said something about the garments sector that attracted my attention as something noteworthy. He said that BGMEA has no right to sell 'beautifully comfortable' apparels to the foreigners, when many people in the country are in dire need of clothing. I applaud this assertion.

It says something about the 'apparently pragmatic' attitude of the present government. But is not the same accusation applicable to the real estate businesses of the country? The 'league of real estate firms' also do not make houses and homes for the homeless, for the people in general at an affordable price. Their homes, houses, and mansions; their business centres and plazas are built mostly for the rich and well-to-do segment of the society. It will be quite safe to say that most of the real estate firms in Bangladesh do not do business 'for the people'. Their clientele at large consists of the rich and well-to-do segment of our society.

However, what should be of immediate concern is the fact that there are significant evidence some of which come up in the newspaper at fairly regular intervals which shows that the real estate sector of the country is a major source of crime and corruption. There are no less than hundred real estate companies that have their head offices in Dhaka. Who are their clients? What are the sources of their income? All these questions remain unanswered. Finding answers to these questions is important.

In short, there is an artificial environment there created by these real estate companies - that could be used to commit any sort of crime and satisfy any sort of criminal intent.

Mohammed Iftekharuddin
On e-mail

The CTG's role

Some of the things they are doing are really praiseworthy. Especially, no one can deny their courage to reach the powerful people when the question of corruption comes. But how far can they make the common people 'honest' and 'pure' as they never were responsible for their present situation? And how far will it be wise to change them overnight? It is ultimately the people who make a state. I am indicating the common people, the masses. I think the present government is prudent enough to understand it.
Shahed Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

"Sick" buildings

If you move around any residential area of Dhaka city, you will see the

apartment developers raising multistoried buildings anywhere and everywhere. If you look at those works from a common citizens' perspective, things might appear to be all right. But if you know the technical aspects, you will be horrified to see that in construction they are not using required quantity of water. Bricks and khoa are not soaked and saturated in water, plaster, mortar and concrete are not being "cured" for at least three weeks after construction. Even in many work sites there is no arrangement for sufficient water supply. Thus they are violating a rule which can considerably weaken the newly constructed

Indian commentators

India is out of the World Cup. This is a lesson not only for the Indian cricketers but also for the Indian fans. Indian fans become too agitated

whenever their team loses any match. Bangladesh definitely played extremely well against India and when everyone was praising the performance of Bangladesh, the Indian media could not stand it.

Mandira Bedi was one of those people who kept on blasting Bangladesh whenever she could. She kept on saying that India had lost against a minnow but it is so

funny that, apart from a few Indians, none of the Indian TV hosts or commentators said that Bangladesh played well and that they deserved to win.

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka

BCS exams

There are so many candidates who have already crossed 30 years of age in 2006 but didn't get chance in the 27th BCS. They cannot apply for any more BCS exams because there was no circular after 2005. But it is a rule of the PSC that there should be at least one circular of BCS exams every year.

The government should look into the matter and make sure that justice is done to all.

Mrinal Sarkar
Assistant Teacher (English)
Khagrachhari Govt. Girls' High School

Rajuk

Every day the newspapers and TV project Rajuk being busy in demolishing unauthorised structures all over the city. Are they doing it willingly?

Possibly not, as the unauthorised construction was the result of political connections and bribing of Rajuk employees at various levels! Today demolition has been practically forced on them by the CTG, and looks so good for a change. Has the CTG looked into the modus operandi of approvals for new construction? The only way out is graft (temporarily somewhat suspended) and the all-conquering influence.

The established process of procrastination was a sort of cash-cow for Rajuk's employees and officials; which was milked with enthusiasm all round! Except for cash rich builders; to the normal retired people; it was nothing but misery! Even going to the relevant Rajuk department

was a punishment by itself. Way back in July 7, 2006 a letter was published in a daily; where I proposed a pragmatic and realistic approach to accepting or rejecting a construction proposal by Rajuk within sixty days! Unfortunately it cut no ice anywhere: as there was no incentive (lubricant) in this method. It was only a process designed for time efficiency, which no-one in Rajuk ever liked! Way back in mid November 2006, I submitted a proposed construction plan for approval; based on Rajuk's new rules. Till today, more than four months since, there has been total silence from Rajuk! Does it mean that since nothing was said and no response came from Rajuk I can go ahead? How long can one wait after arranging for money and keeping it pending with financial institutions, while Rajuk takes its own sweet time; with no concept of time value of

money? Unfortunately I cannot muster peer-pressure, and have no lubrication available.

What can people like us do? Will the CTG seriously investigate the approval procedures of Rajuk? If need be I can provide the adviser concerned with a pragmatic suggestion of expediting the approval procedures. It is nothing extraordinary; except getting it done on a piece rate basis, under the scrutiny of an approved body of Architects and Designers in the construction sector, under established Rajuk guidelines and building codes.

Approaching the Rajuk authorities is a sheer waste of time; I have tried and failed.

A landowner
On e-mail



PHOTO: STAR

Dr. Yunus as a political leader



buildings.

Before you buy an apartment, please visit the site and be sure that you are not buying a "sick apartment" with your hard earned money.

Engineer M.Z Haider
Banani, Dhaka

Dr. Yunus and Bangladesh

I am quiet happy to see the article by Abdullah Momen in "Point Counterpoint". He has answered very successfully the questions raised about Dr Yunus. Some quarters may be directly affected because of hard competition between good coins and bad coins. They may lose ground if Dr Yunus comes to politics.

Others are very dogmatic and looking for revolution according to books. They are brainwashed by some ideological confusion and they fail to be pragmatic. They rather indulge in theories not compatible to current globalisation and current socio-economic situation of Bangladesh. We need good economic management with social commitment in this country.

Historically, we have been ruled by politicians and bureaucrats with minimum intellect. They really lack vision, which Dr Yunus possesses. Bangladesh shouldn't allow second grade politicians to hold sway. And they are the main critics of Dr Yunus and his philosophy, rather than the people in general. Personally he might lose his charisma and popularity after coming to politics. But there is no doubt that he has all the virtues of a good leader.

Dr Mohammad A Karim
Dandenong, Australia

Submarine cable

I don't understand one thing. Every morning I read the newspaper with the hope that it'll say something about the "submarine cable" of our country. It is really high time for us to address the issue. The government is taking many good decisions, then why isn't it concerned about the submarine cable? I think this is one of the most vital elements for our prosperity.

And why are the newspapers not saying anything about the submarine cable? How much backward should we go, how long should we wait for it...?

ABM Adnan
On e-mail

Mandira Bedi

I appreciate the report on Mandira Bedi by Mohammad Islam published in the sports page of DS on 27 March.

Mandira Bedi, the host of the show 'Extraa Innings', really crossed the limits of decency while commenting about the Bangladeshi cricket team. From the Day Bangladesh beat India in WC, she is continuously insisting that it was only our luck that helped us to win the match! It was visibly clear from her expressions that she was just not ready to accept the truth that our boys played really well and from the very beginning of the game, Indians could do nothing to resist the Bengal Tigers.

Mandira Bedi is a renowned celebrity in India and in some cases also in Bangladesh among the Hindi movie/serial viewers. But her attitude in the programme reflects the idea that being such a celebrity doesn't always help to have the minimal level of wisdom or neutrality. Her ridiculous comments about our team only hurt our sentiments. Though the report in the sports page says that Ayaz Memon saved the show from being called 'Bangladesh Bashing', I think, if the producers of 'Extraa Innings' just showed the courage to accept and show live telephone calls from

home & abroad, this show would obviously be called 'Mandira Bashing'.

Nabila Nudrat
DBA, J.U.

General's speech

Every single word General Moeen shared with the freedom fighters during the tea party was correct. Yet I do not think it was proper for a General to criticise politics or politicians, ex or present governments.

Jami, Dhaka

Iran and the Middle East

It seems that Shiite Iran wants to dominate the Sunni Middle East. Although Sunnis are the majority among the Muslims in the world, they are mostly dispersed in non-Arab countries like Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Shiites, on the other hand, are concentrated in Iran and Iraq and this gives them a strategic advantage over Sunnis in the Middle East. As long as the Sunni minority under Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq, it acted as a buffer state between Shia Iran and the Sunni Arab countries. But after the American-led ouster of Saddam and the rise of the Shiite majority in Iraq, the situation has changed dramatically. By dismantling Sunni minority rule in Iraq, the Americans might have paved the way for the rise of an imperialistic Iran bent on dominating the Arab world.

To complicate the matter further, Saudi Arabia, the richest Sunni nation, is no match for Iran in population and military clout. Iran's 70-million population is three times larger than Saudi Arabia's small population of 20 million.

This is why Iran's desire to acquire atomic weapons has sent alarm bells ringing across the Arab world. It is feared that acquisition of nuclear weapons will enable Iran to intimidate the Sunni Arabs to surrender leadership to the long-oppressed Shiites.

With Shiite Iran determined to dominate the Sunni Middle East, any hope of moderation may be wishful thinking. It is far more likely that Shiite Iran, in conjunction with Shiite Iraq, will turn the entire region into a far-reaching conflict, like the one currently in Iraq. Iran threatens Israel with destruction, but Sunni Arab countries are far more afraid of a nuclear-armed Iran. The Sunni Arab countries may have to look for other means to counter Iran.

Although the Arab countries lacked the military clout of Iran, economics can be a successful instrument of foreign policy against the Iranian regime. The World Bank has noted that Iran's real GDP is one third below the level it enjoyed in the late 1970s, just before the fall of the Shah, while real GDP has surged tenfold in other states in comparison. Despite the fact that its oil revenue has gone up to \$70 billion it has allowed inflation, unemployment, corruption, subsidies, inefficient government monopolies to drag the economy down. All Saudi Arabia will have to do is to raise oil production, bringing down the oil price along with Iran's nuclear ambition. Faced with reduced oil incomes, Iran will have to cut down its expensive nuclear programme and seek cooperation, not confrontation, with its Sunni neighbours.

Mahmood Elahi
Iris Street, Ottawa, Canada