

The calypso tigers are hunting



YOUSUF RAHMAN

SINCE our team landed in the Caribbean, earlier than all the other teams, they showed adequate signs of creating an impact in the 2007 World Cup, and the signal was sent to the rest of world as we beat the high ranking New Zealanders in a pre-World Cup warm up match. More importantly, there was an air of confidence that showed in the manner our boys approached each of the four matches they played and won prior to the commencement of the competition.

Bashar and Whatmore both clearly laid out their ambition, which was to make it into the Super 8 round of the competition. This was a reasonable and justifiable target, even though we knew we would have to beat one of the "giants," India and Sri Lanka, in our group to achieve this target. Our preparation for the World Cup was good, and we were entering the championship on a winning note.

The Indians were shell-shocked by our youth and exuberance. Our boys ran faster, applied themselves better and demonstrated a brand of cricket

that was rarely seen in the past. I don't think, as many are led to believe, that the Indians took us lightly.

We played exceptional cricket on that day, as we demolished a much flaunted Indian team, shook up their Cricket Board and broke the hearts of a billion people. In spite of this achievement the skeptics were unsure, and the "minnow" tag remained. Things were about to change.

How many times do you see a No.1 team get mauled by a team that is eight places lower? Imagine Mohammed Ali, in his hey-day, getting knocked out by an unranked heavyweight. The Tigers did just that when, on a sunny day in Guyana, the South Africans were given a hiding that has left them bruised and concerned. This result has also made the World Cup much more exciting. The race for the final four is now wide open again.

When Graeme Smith opted to field on a ground on which they had played and narrowly beaten Sri Lanka, he may have taken into consideration Bangladesh's dismal performance with the bat against Australia and New Zealand. The plan was to get them out quickly for a score under 200, and then knock off the runs within 30 odd overs. What he may not have taken into consideration is the fact that this bunch of Bangladeshis is a fearless bunch, and on their day can be most dangerous.

The young and spirited lads

got it right from the start. Javed and Tamim played with caution and seemed to have a plan in place. They gave the innings some sort of a platform, but then both of them threw it away, specially Tamim who needs to have some sense knocked into him as we have seen him repeatedly throw his wicket away after getting himself in.

What we saw from Aftab and Ashraful was amazingly refreshing. Both of them are similar in their approach. Both are fearless strikers of the ball, they are of the same size; both play all the shots in the book very effectively. Both of them are also well known for raising the hopes of the team and the nation, and then dashing them in a flash.

This time it was not to be. Aftab started the push when he carved Kemp for two massive sixes in one over, and then once again threw it away when he lofted one to the cover region into the safe hands of Nel.

Ashraful took immediate charge and played the innings of his life. I thought this one was better than the one he played in Cardiff against the Aussies two years ago. He played himself in, mixed caution with aggression and played some extraordinary strokes along with way. His invaluable innings of 87 was full of flair, adventure and meaning.

This young lad probably does not realize his ability. He is an exceptional player and his value to the team is unimaginable. As

long as he plans his innings, he will be a threat to any bowling side, and we will invariably get a decent total through his effort.

Mashrafe joined him, and the two of them mauled the South African bowlers. The game was half won when Bangladesh reached the 251 mark, since we saw how this South African team struggled to get 210 against Sri Lanka on this very pitch in their Super 8 match.

The Guyana pitch is similar to that of many in Dhaka, and the South Africans, unlike the Australians, did not seem to play well against class spinners. It was a slow wicket, with the ball not coming on to the bat. Moreover, the ball was keeping low at times. This straightaway prevented the South Africans from playing their natural attacking cricket.

Rasel struck the first blow with a slower ball that not only beat Smith all ends up but also set the tone of the South African batting debacle. Other than Kallis, who tried to take the game away from the bowlers but eventually perished when he holed out to mid-on, none of their batters played the spinning trio with any degree of confidence.

Gibbs, with a strained calf, worked in ones and twos and reached a well-deserved fifty, but the outcome was a forgone conclusion long before his fifty. After both Mashrafe and Rasel bowled tight opening spells, Razzak, Rafique and Sakib ran through



the frontline batters with surgical precision.

It was an exhibition of world-class spin bowling aided by some brilliant fielding that did the South Africans in. Our bowlers exploited the conditions extremely well, and that in itself speaks volumes about our improvement.

Our win by 67 runs is, by any standards, a thrashing. We have won two major matches, and that has taken the cricket world by storm. The ICC has to be extremely pleased because, for them, Bangladesh is their success story. We have 3 more matches to play, against England, West Indies and

Ireland. I am sure all three teams are now marking us as a threat.

In any One Day International game, a score of 250 plus is a very decent score to defend. Statistically, the two best teams, Australia and South Africa, have failed to win nearly 60% of their matches when they were set a target of 250 plus. This should encourage our lads a lot, so we need to plan on how to get to 250 against the three teams that we are earmarked to play.

The Barbados wicket will not be like the one at Guyana (although we would hope it to be such). The wicket is probably more conducive to seam bowling, but if we plan our batting well and

bowl a tight line there is ample reason to believe that we can pull another surprise or two in this World Cup. Imagine Tamin Iqbal batting for 30 overs plus. Two attributes make a winning team -- courage and common sense. Fear, we have overcome; it is the common sense that is lacking at times. I am sure the combination will work in synergy in the not too distant future.

The "minnows" have jumped out of their tank, and have transformed themselves into sharks in the ocean. The sharks, like the Sunderban tigers, are on the hunt.

Yousuf Rahman (Babu) is a former national cricketer.

Can Dr. Yunus provide good governance?

SIRAJUL ISLAM

ABDULLAH Momen raised and discussed this question perceptively in this column last week. In response to the editor's invitation to make comments on this question, I record my views on this issue.

The yearning for a great leader to lead the nation was always there in the people ever since the assassination of the architect of the nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We have even seen people making "citizens committees" to search for a competent leader. Big names were floated, but soon they sank in solitude.

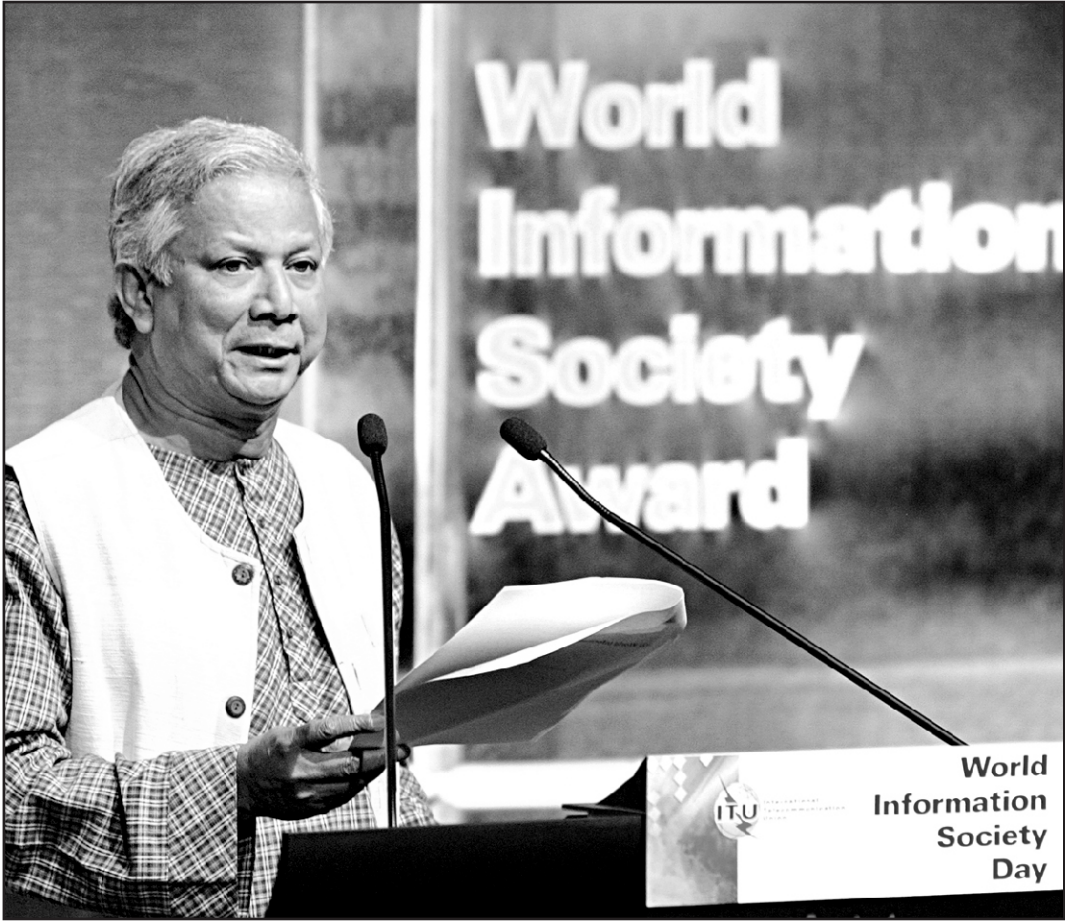
Leadership cannot be created or found this way. The truth is, people do not make a leader, rather a leader favoured by circumstances emerges and shapes the course of history. Thus, it is commonly said that a leader is born and never made. A born leader is one who has a dream, and the dream can surface at any moment in the visionary's life.

None of the great reformers, revolutionaries and organizers who made history by translating their visions into reality were invited by the people to play the role. No one could imagine that a Baptist priest, Martin Luther King Jr., would be so roused suddenly that he would be instrumental in abolishing racial segregation and establishing equal civil rights in the USA.

It was beyond one's imagination that a Europeanized lawyer like Gandhi would change so suddenly that he would rise to put up resistance to British colonial rule. No one invited the farmer and grain dealer Mao-tse-Tung to organise a revolution to save his country from hunger and feudalist bondage.

One Nightingale was born to the launch nursing movement. A military officer, Baden-Powell, was born to start the boy scouts movement. No one invited them to make the history they did. No one invited Dr. Yunus to leave his classroom and launch the micro-credit movement.

I have said all this to argue that Dr. Yunus made a mistake by calling upon the people, through his two letters and subsequent statements, to let him know whether they would like him to join politics and serve them. By saying so he has subjected his own vision to the wishes of the crowd, if they have any wish at all. If Yunus had a plan to change the nation in his fashion, he should have come up with a declaration like Martin Luther King's, "I have



come here to tell you that I have a dream..."

Furthermore, it was none of his job to tell the press that politicians were all corrupt. Who does not know that? What people did not know was that the Nobel Laureate was developing a vision to transform the nation as a whole. That vision should have been proclaimed to the nation at the top of his voice -- "We can also achieve (Amra-o-Pari)."

The ball was most unwittingly passed on to the court of the politicians, to play in their own way. He was routed brutally by their usual tactic of huff, puff and bluff. The Nobel Laureate, a national icon and international personality, has been tagged with the appellation of blood-sucking shudkhoor (usurior).

They had been saying that all politicians were not corrupt. OK. But where are they? Politics is a cruel game. The word "politics" is derived from the word "poly," meaning "many," and the word "tics," meaning "blood sucking parasites." However, Dr. Yunus's complete silence about the ugly retort worked. Their savage invectives stopped.

Critics are wondering whether Dr. Yunus should join politics, and if so, whether he can organise the kind of political party which can win people's support and bring about good governance and good luck for the nation.

For very obvious reasons, politicians and the vested interests will discourage it. Many of his fans may also discourage his

venture, lest his image be tarnished by the cruel game of politics. For the same reasons, even many among his Grameen family may also discourage the idea.

A common concern is that Dr. Yunus will have to act and deliver the goods as a political leader, which he never was. But these are all commonplace concerns. History is made by extraordinary people with their extraordinary ideas and dynamics. General people making their way to politics become seasoned politicians through a long process.

But an epoch-making personality does not appear as a normal politician but as a statesman, as a liberator. History is replete with the examples of such statesmen emerging under special circumstances. Traditional politicians are increasingly becoming incapable of handling the intricacies and technicalities of modern statecraft and governance.

When the French military hero Charles de Gaulle announced his intention to join politics during political turmoil, he was asked to explain why a man of his stature got interested in joining the messy politics of the time. His famous reply was "I have come to the conclusion that government is too big and too important a matter to be left to the politicians."

de Gaulle did his charted job and became greater in history. The same circumstances often stimulate the same result at both, human and material, levels.

Maybe, under the given political circumstances Bangladesh may find a de Gaulle like statesman in Yunus. Who knows?

Someone whose ideas and leadership could stimulate and emancipate six million poor families of the country can, perhaps, do the same for the rest of the wretched population.

That Dr. Yunus has not been politics before, hence may not be qualified to ensure good governance is the traditional way to look at it. We are accustomed to the traditional thought that politics befooves the politicians, and not the others in non-political persuasions. But, in reality, sometimes the lack of political experience may prove to be an advantage rather than the opposite.

Statesmanship means not remaining fixed to fossilized ideas and institutions, and materializing one's vision unencumbered by archaic habits and institutions. The statesman can open up all the windows to the new ideas and thoughts he/she possesses, and also can marshal specialized cooperation with greater facility and speed than the tied politicians.

Our state institutions, like the judiciary, executive, bureaucracy, armed forces, police, local government, politics, education and training are all inherited from the colonial rulers, and they built those institutions to safeguard and promote their own interests, not ours.

The colonial system was

characterized by domination and control, and the character still persists very markedly in our institutions and habits, from the lowest to the highest authority. Our political independence never led to corresponding independence in our governing system. Thus, people say that whichever party may be in power the people's fate would remain the same, and there is no exaggeration in the saying.

Only a statesman having deep learning, enlightenment and vision can shake off the colonial heritage and bring about emancipation at grass-root level. It is my personal belief that Dr. Yunus, who is endowed with all these qualities, can show the way to emancipation.

It is the people who will emancipate themselves, but they need guidance and promotion from the state system. To me, the people of Bangladesh will make history if they uproot the moorings of traditional politics and build a new leadership to build a new Bangladesh, and this was, indeed, the dream of our liberation martyrs and activists.

Finally, it is my personal feeling, and the feelings of everyone I talked to, that Dr. Yunus must not join politics unless he can take upon himself the exalted role of a statesman, and unless he can take a vow to tear off the colonial tradition lingering tenaciously in our governing, social and production systems.

He, as a statesman, must say what he means and mean what he says, something that a traditional politician cannot afford to do. National emancipation processes must be kicked off from below. Representative local boards must be allowed to function like a mini-government, with all the powers of decision making, law and order management and human and material resource generation.

The national government must stand on its feet, which is the local government, and not on its head, which is the central government. The central government must deal with central things. I support those who want Dr. Yunus to join public life as a statesman.

Sirajul Islam is an historian.

MANZUR RAHMAN

THE next time some politician tries to sell you on the virtues of democratic politics ("Yes democracy is messy, but it is better than all the alternatives," "Democracies don't make war," before running with your life and possessions in the opposite direction, please remind him that Hitler was a product of democracy.

On second thoughts, forget history, and just cite Bush (well, at least, the second term), Blair, Berlusconi, Howard, Aznar, Barroso ...until nausea overcomes you. I don't know about you, but if democracy is so good for me, call me a masochist if you must, but I say, thank you but I pass.

Well, maybe not the last bit ...or, at least, not for all time. At the moment, from this perch on the East Pacific, the possibility raised by Barack Obama provides just a glimmer of hope that my tottering faith in democracy may yet be salvaged. But frankly, my own experience to-date has given me little confidence in the outcome of the exercise of my franchise, and thus, my relative equanimity with the turn of events since January of this year. Let me explain further.

Thirty-one years ago, in the month of January, a twelve-year old boy entered a Bangladesh Biman flight alone, heading towards a country he had never visited, leaving his home with no set date of return. That parting -- parents intentionally distancing themselves from the very one they held dearest -- represented the end of a dream, a sorrowful recognition that the Bangladesh movement to which they had given their heart, soul and plenty of sweat had turned towards a path that held no promise for their children's future.

Over the three decades that have passed, through many returns and departures, it seemed that what in 1976 may have been a bit premature, perhaps even extreme, prognosis by my parents about their native land, was indeed being borne out, as our leaders -- political and military, commercial and religious, and so on through all layers of society -- managed over and over again to stupefy us with their incompetence, carelessness and venality, treating all public resources as their own private property.

This past January 11, during another one of my periodical visits home, and after thirty-one years of fitful starts and the inevitable retrogressions, I felt that I may just have -- this, of course, only time can ascertain -- witnessed a new beginning.

Of course, I wasn't here in December 1990, when a "new beginning" had perhaps seemed a possibility as well. But the events of January, and the careful, measured optimism expressed by Bengalis (other than, of course, the erstwhile political class) at home and abroad seems to me to be of a more mature variety. We are no longer the naïf --

independence will cure all, electoral

democracy is the be all and end all -- our innocence shorn by 35 years of false promises and broken dreams.

I find it interesting, and this has also been expressed by several commentators in these very pages, that this time around, we the people are not in too much of a rush to get our democracy back. By now we have learned that democracy in Bangladesh is perhaps better described as kleptocracy, a parlour game for the Dhaka elite to see how they will carve up their portions during their turn at the helm.

Actually, I think the "we" in the previous sentence is limited to those of us in relative proximity to power (or who like to think so), as most of the rest of the country have always known otherwise. A couple of years ago, one of our great NGOs, Proshika, generously allowed me to visit with them and interact with their members in various parts of the country. One thing was very clear, each and every man or woman that I met, mostly with little or no formal education, knew in their bones that they lived in an autocracy, that no matter who they voted for -- whether it was Hasina, Khaleda, Awami League, BNP -- the sovereign in Dhaka was not of them, by them, and certainly not for them.

Of course, my professed disenchantment with electoral democracy (in Bangladesh, particularly, though not uniquely) naturally begs the question; if not democracy then what? As has been widely noted, and particularly eloquently so by the editor of this newspaper, nations' fortunes under military dictatorships have, as a rule, ranged from the disastrous to the merely desultory around the world, in South Asia, and, most poignantly, in Bangladesh (the singular exception of South Korea proving the rule).

Thus, the recently raised profile of the chief of army staff (Cas) Lieutenant General Moeen Uddin Ahmed in matters political and administrative can provide no solace to any rational well-wisher of Bangladesh. The good general had been doing quite well till now, positioning our armed forces as the protector of those carrying out the widely-desired, necessary reforms.

The Cas should know that he and the armed forces will have our full support, and thus be infinitely more effective, so long as they continue to act as the guarantor of last resorts, keeping themselves firmly planted within the cantonments until they are absolutely needed.

Of course, eliminating the role of the army from the government only goes so far in answering the question on what alternative form of government we should have. At first blush, the curriculum vitae of the chief adviser (CA), Fakhruddin Ahmed (and his early performance, if, indeed, they can be attributed to him rather than the Cas), would seem to favour comparison with that notably successful neighbourhood autocrat, Lee Kuan Yew.

But once we go beyond their common academic brilliance, we

start to note that Prime Minister Lee was first and foremost a political animal, fully-versed in the ways and means of maneuvering the legal and political levers inherent in governance.

Furthermore, the prime minister first rose to his position via free elections at the age of 36, and the 30-years or so that he maintained an iron-grip on power provided an equally unmatched, concurrent record of accomplishment in raising the quality of life of the island nation's citizenry. The CA, of course, has not yet shown (nor has he had to) similar political acumen; furthermore, he comes to his position at the tail end of his distinguished career in public service.

I have no reason to believe that the CA has any intention of making himself the permanent head of the government. But I also don't find any reason to be in any hurry in holding the elections; as also advocated in another recent article in these pages by Taj Hashmi, that preceded the CA's statements indicating an (presumably) indefinite postponement of elections pending the completion of "necessary electoral reforms," conducting elections without first effectuating a full and complete change from the previous political order will only be setting us up for yet one more retrogression into the much too familiar quagmire of corruption.

So, as for elections, like the majority of our countrymen today, I am entirely for erring on the side of patience. The anti-corruption drive, the limits on campus politics, revival of judicial independence, etc., are but the first of the baby steps in the institutionalization of an environment of a well-functioning polity; the rooting out of dynastic patronage, nepotism, violence, and religious bigotry that have become so endemic in our political culture is not to be expected in the near term.

There does remain the little problem of what type of government we have, or will have, in the interregnum. So long as we can convince the Cas to keep the army genie firmly bottled in our cantonments, I propose we remain open about the nature of the caretaker government; if constitutional niceties require, we can allow our more creative legal brethren to formulate an appropriate edifice for its operational legitimacy.

The effective legitimacy of the caretaker government will endure only so long as it performs its mandate of systemic reform that the people have so far been willing to entrust it with.

Of course, the non-negotiable element in this mix is the freedom of the press. If the CA's assurance of submitting the government to the vigilance of an unfettered media is not maintained, all bets are off; Bangladeshis of all stripes will withdraw the government's mandate then and there. In the meantime, forgive me if I don't lament the early return to electoral democracy.

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