

Jalil's arrest confusing

People deserve to know reasons behind detention

LET us make our position clear at the outset. We at the Daily Star have been supportive of the political reform measures undertaken by the caretaker government. By the same token, we have provided our full backing to the anti-corruption crusade the administration has launched. It remains our expectation that the reforms process and the drive against corruption will be seen through to their logical conclusion. However, we are at a loss to understand why the latest wave of arrests of political leaders, especially of Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil, was undertaken and in such an inexplicable manner.

So far, as we understand, the authorities have not explained the causes why Jalil was taken into custody. Which compels us to bring up an essential point: whenever a political leader of repute such as Jalil is arrested, it is only proper that the public be taken into confidence by the authorities. That confidence comes from giving citizens convincing arguments as to why such arrests are being made. Jalil is a veteran politician who in recent times has played a leading role not only in his own party but also in the fourteen-party alliance. His arrest, and the manner of it, will raise questions that the authorities are now expected to answer. What is to be noted is the statement by ACC Chairman Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury that Jalil's name was not on the list of people accused of corruption. There must be some other reasons that might have prompted the AL leader's arrest. What those reasons are need to be clarified by the government.

At this critical juncture in the nation's history, when the administration and the country are moving towards general elections through putting in place the necessary political and electoral reforms, any ill-conceived move on the part of the authorities can jeopardise the prospects for such changes to be brought about any time soon. Arresting politicians once they become vocal, as Jalil and the recently detained Hannan Shah of the BNP have been, quite mars the credibility of the arresting process.

The priorities today are clear. And they relate mainly to political party reforms, preparation of a voter list and eventual holding of general elections. All of these are matters over which it will be necessary for the government as well as the Election Commission to interact with the major stakeholders here, in this case the political parties. Quite legitimately, therefore, the authorities can be reminded that when their avowed goal remains a promotion and implementation of political reforms, it does not make sense for them to alienate and antagonise the political parties.

It is important that the expectations placed on the caretaker government are not swept aside by moves that might leave politics in a state of disarray, to our collective discomfure.

Farewell to DavWhatmore

We will remember him for what he did for our cricket

UNDER the able coaching of Dav Whatmore our cricket team played as many as 89 One Day International (ODIs) and 46 Test matches since 2003. Of the 89 ODIs we achieved victory as many as 32 times. Of the 46 Test series we played, the team came out successful on two occasions only. However, we have to our credit, wins against such formidable and seasoned teams like India and South Africa during the last World Cup followed by our victory against Pakistan in the World Cut previous to it.

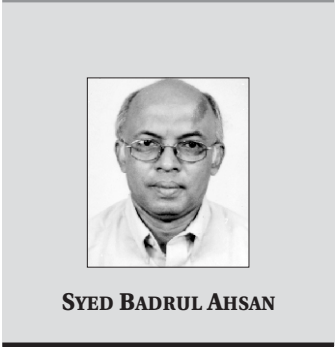
Despite its mixed bag of successes and failures it must be said that our cricket team has stepped into the world of international cricket as an improving side. Much of the credit for this goes to Dav Whatmore. We wish to express our sincerest appreciation to Whatmore for a job well done.

We now have to build on and carry forward the legacy he is leaving behind to raise our standards to a consistently competitive level. A coach is a coach; he can only guide his team both mentally and professionally to give its best, play to its full potential. It is the cricketers who have to perform on the ground. It is our impression that our cricketers more often than not turn euphoric over a victory and thus fail to replicate it in any tangible form. Cricket is a game that requires intensive thinking and concentration rather than indulging in sudden burst of heroics. Here a few words on captaincy also need to be noted. A captain must be proactive in the field and inspire confidence amongst the team members.

Our cricket has indeed made a good beginning. We have to now improve our cricket infrastructure through a bottom-up action programme based on active collaboration between private and public sectors. Our cricketers must play more of competitive domestic and international cricket. The recommendations of Dav Whatmore need to be heeded by our cricket organisers.

We wish god speed to Dav.

The lost aesthetics that was football



SYED BADRUL AHSAN

LET us speak today, in fond memory, of a game that once was played with gusto in the towns and villages and hamlets of this country. We speak, of course, of football. Or you could call it soccer. It all depends on the attitude you choose to adopt to the game.

Time was when such teams as the Mohammedans and Abahani and Brothers Union and Wari, besides many more, kept the energy in us going, and in a very big way made us remember that masculinity, even in a game, was all that mattered. There were the lovely moments of good-natured ill-temper we relished, perhaps even took part in, when the team we thought should have won unexpectedly lost, and so broke our hearts into a thousand pieces.

But, of course, much as the players on the losing side were to be blamed for the defeat, our angry gaze was always directed at the referee. It was his wrong decision, as we wrongly supposed, that was to blame for the humiliation of the team we adored. Of course, it was much, much later that we knew the referee had little to do with the defeat. It was the failing stamina of our favourite players that had been

responsible for the mishap.

Be that as it may, there was something of verve, a good lot of electricity that coursed through all of us when, in the football season, we watched the many teams sweat it out in their attempts to beat one another out of contention for the championship, move heaven and earth to stay on top until, finally, there were two teams to choose from.

We prayed hard for our team. We expected God Almighty to be on our side, just as those others prayed seriously for the Lord of the Worlds to look kindly on the team they identified with. Not one of us was ever willing to admit, in this frenzy of prayers, the fact that God was above all such mundane things of life, that He had more precious preoccupations to look to other than making a choice between two soccer teams playing hard ball on some insignificant corner of the earth. But these thoughts did not worry us.

In our teens or adolescence or even middle age, all we cared about was football, the spirit which came into it. The centre forward, the player at the back, the goalkeeper, all in their sweaty, smelly shirts,

were our heroes. We sent up a deafening roar every time they landed a goal, or prevented one from undercutting them.

Sometimes, as one of our heroic players dribbled his way through the field of the enemy and approached that goal post, we barely restrained our own enthusiasm. Raising our excitable posteriors off the gallery, we lifted a foot in sheer imitation of that breezy hero of ours. And just as he kicked that ball into that goal, the goalkeeper having nervously dived to the wrong side of the bar, we landed a terrific kick on the back of the man occupying the space in front of us. He let out a single, heart-rending "oooh," and we quickly went down on all fours, as it were, to say sorry and massage his insulted back.

These are tales that come alive every time you think of the days that used to be. When you watch the Bangladesh cricket team wallowing through one humiliation after another, day in and day out, you cannot but ask yourself why the nation's cricket had to arrive at such a pass.

Such a pass? You suddenly remember that maybe it is just as well, for after all no one in this coun-

try ever really thought Bangladesh's cricket would amount to anything much in a long, long time. When, in the late 1990s, some rather enthusiastic people in our midst told us that cricket was what we ought to be playing, we tried telling them that we were not prepared for it.

Football was a far better proposition. It was a gloomy Gordon Greenidge who told amazed sports reporters in London, right there with the team he was coaching gathered around him, that Bangladesh was not ready for the cricket big league. His remarks were dismissed as those coming from a conspiracy theorist. In a couple of weeks, he was unceremoniously dumped as Bangladesh's cricket coach.

All these years after Greenidge, it makes sense to ask if cricket is something we have mastered enough not to make a silly spectacle of ourselves in the global sporting arena. The defeat by the Indians, on our home ground, the other day was not merely an instance of unmitigated humiliation. It also raises some very crucial questions about the course our cricket should take in future.

Blame the captain all you can for

Coal policy revisited



NURURDIN MAHMUD KAMAL

WILL the endeavour to exploit coal to meet our future energy needs mean that we would lose the gains made so far. The answer may be yes or no. No, if our effort remains pro-people. Yes, if we succumb to the pressure of external forces.

The quest of the country's professional organization, the Geological Survey of Bangladesh, to find coal has already proved successful. But the presumption that in-country resources cannot be mobilized for its development is unacceptable. However, some of our policy-makers almost always prefer foreign investor participation over encouraging local entrepreneurs or joint ventures in the coal sector.

Perhaps it is true that we Bangladeshis have become so nervous because of the crises of all kinds that we have been facing for the past few years, and we have not taken time out to catch our breath and look at the big picture. There may not be any such thing as a crisis to end all crises, but at least the energy crisis has opened our eyes to how connected everything is.

We do not need to be tempted or intimidated by external interest groups. They may have a correct

road-map to suit their purpose. But why should our government feel responsible for problems concerning a coalmine project, and why should it promote a contentious coal policy proposal formulated at the behest of a foreign company? In search of a second-best energy source, we simple cannot ignore the future role of coal in Bangladesh.

The proposed coal policy was in the final stage of approval of a political government in 2006, but it was refused and referred back to the Ministry of Energy. The plan is that it will now be placed before the council of advisors of the caretaker government for approval or direction.

Tracing the background of the proposal, it will become apparent that the Ministry of Energy has unwittingly brought in ideas from one foreign company and its associates to reincarnate the debatable proposal. The draft coal policy, it may be noted, was formulated by a private sector organization called the Infrastructure Investment Facilities (IIFC) financed by the World Bank.

Since late 2005, as many as six versions of the draft policy have been prepared, each time with the inclusion of some controversial clauses that would favour a foreign company/investor. In essence, the

CHRONICLE

The one thing we have to guard against is consulting the wrong prescriptions and reaching for the wrong bottles to take a panic over-dose of quack medicine. Some foreign companies are offering us such medicines for development of one of our most important energy sources. We must be very careful. The game has been going on for the past nine years. It must stop now. The CTG cannot allow this to be aggravated.

proposed coal policy is clearly export-oriented and export-biased. The anxiety of the public is increasing, as the documents have not been made public.

The most recent version shows a coal reserve of 1,460 million tons, while one previous version (May 2006) stated that with a reserve of 2,700 million tons of coal in Bangladesh, the energy demand-supply situation in the country would be much relieved. How, has not been analysed. And how the reserve decreased in ten months has also not been explained.

However, the most critical factor in this case is the mining method proposed, and also the percentage of recoverable reserves. More importantly, unlike gas development, mining of coal is fraught with serious dangers and challenges regarding the devastation that open-pit coal mining can cause to the site and also the overall environment.

The issues which are seriously debated, apart from mining method, are royalty, production capacity, and, above everything, export. While the percentage of royalty was 20 percent it was, for some mysterious reason, drastically reduced to 5 percent in the mid 1990s.

The government did not even carefully examine the export option (as the only option mentioned in the draft policy document). The other possible options could be profit/production sharing, joint venture, or even a service contract.

In all the latter options, the ownership of the people of Bangladesh could be retained. Incidentally, the market price of the reserve (1,160 million tons as stated in the draft policy paper) could be around \$84 billion at \$60 per ton. But our charitable Ministry of Energy is in a give-away mood to a foreign investor, in exchange of six percent royalty.

The Ministry of Energy has, however, underscored that, with a view to ensuring the energy security of Bangladesh, almost 80 percent of the produced coal would be exported.

The draft policy has reiterated that in considering the reserve-to-production ratio to be fixed at a minimum of 50 years (neither any percentage or volume of in-situ reserve has been mentioned as recoverable reserve). Based on that assumption, within the next 10 years from July 2007, 20 million tons coal would be produced per annum. Thereafter, in the next 10 years, the production will increase to 40 million tons per year up to 2027 or

the debacle. Point the finger at the departing coach. Beyond the matter of captaincy and coaching, however, lies a much more critical question. It is simply this: why do our cricketers keep slipping? Agreed that they have sometimes played well, but sometimes is not good enough. Exceptions cannot, and must not, be allowed to be the rule.

When you defeat India once, and then an entire nation goes into a spin of celebratory torpor, you have that pretty constricting feeling somewhere inside you that the ecstasy is misplaced, that sooner rather than later your cricket players would go back to where they are generally wont to be.

Soon enough, before you even know it is actually happening, the very players you lionised as heroes all across the streets of your town only the other day are taking a huge drubbing at the hands of the self-same Indians you thought were finished at the hands of your tigers. It is a curious thing, this business of deciding to call yourselves tigers when you are not sure that you can live up to that symbolism.

The record of the past decade demonstrates, to our intense regret and even shame, that we have inflicted unnecessary humiliation on a species that has always deserved better. You celebrate the Royal Bengal. If you do, why must you bring its dignity down a number of notches every now and then through playing bad cricket?

It all takes us back to the football question. Where, in your school-days, you ran through the hard, fallow fields in your village pretending to play football with that much knocked about jamboora fruit, and all the while your fellow villagers cheering you on, today you see

elitism of a kind creeping its way into that old rural locale.

There is no more any talk of football, of the hundred and one ways in which you can manoeuvre the ball past your rivals before kicking it firmly into that waiting goal. In your urban setting, the terrific roars that went up, year after year, through the streets of the city as the nation's football teams clashed mightily, in the manner of the Greek gods of legend, are sounds you seem to hear only in the dark recesses of fading memory.

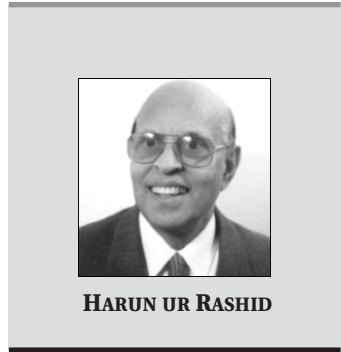
The stadia are empty, the festivities are no more. The milling crowds that turned themselves into spectators, sometimes into well-meaning mobs, have given way to men and women generationally and psychologically removed from the times of their parents, of their elderly siblings.

No, we do not advocate a requiem for our cricket. But that it is in bad need of a life support system should be obvious to anyone. And our football? Our links with the game have always been umbilical. Our love affair with it is as old as the hills. It has regularly been part of our tradition.

Your brother, in his youth, traversed many villages and crossed many rivers to get into a football tangle with my uncle's team in a faraway hamlet. They are both old men now, inhabitants of a strip of mental geography we call memory land, telling us over and over again of their old glory days. Where have their soul children, those who could have carried the tradition farther down the lanes and by-lanes of sports history, gone missing?

Syed Badrul Ahsan is Editor, Current Affairs, The Daily Star.

What is the relevance of World Bank after the scandal?




HARUN UR RASHID

PRESIDENT Dr. Paul Wolfowitz (63) of the World Bank had to announce his resignation on May 18 under extreme pressure. Prior to that he found fault with every one -- directors of the Bank, Chairman of the Ethics Committee, the staff and the countries which wanted him to go, but never found fault with himself.

Some say that Wolfowitz will be remembered by many, not as a fighter for the poor but as a lover of Libyan-born Shaha Riza. He has lost his job as the president of the World Bank because of his girl friend.

He had engaged an expensive Washington lawyer, Bennet, to plead his case, but to no avail. It



BOTTOM LINE

Deeper questions as to the fragile structure of current governance are being raised, including whether the post-war settlement, under which the Bank and the IMF are led by the US and European powers, is past its sell-by date. For example, the sharing of the heads of the Bank and IMF by the US and European nominees should go, giving chance to competent candidates of other countries. The existing system of appointment does not reflect the realities of economic power in the world.

seems that he believes he is right when everyone thinks he was totally wrong in his actions toward the fantastic pay rise to Riza on transfer from the Bank to the US State Department, when he took over the presidency in 2005.

This is the fault of the man who started as an academic, was an ambassador to Indonesia during the Suharto regime, and became a neo-conservative with a missionary zeal to reform the world, specially the Middle East region, without considering the realities of the social and economic conditions of that part of the world.

Wolfowitz was one of the chief architects of the flawed Iraqi war. He appears to have a fatal flaw, which is not being able to see the

consequences of his judgments. For example, his publicity of bogus intelligence about WMD, and a nonexistent 9/11-Saddam connection; his assurance to the world that Iraq's oil money would pay for reconstruction, and his public humiliation of General Eric Shinseki after the General dared tell Congress correctly that seven hundred thousand troops would be needed to secure Iraq after the invasion, are instances in point.

His departure leaves deeper issues

It does not matter to the world that he will be gone, disgraced, on June 30. But the concern is that the World Bank needs to be relevant in the current international economic architecture. Two core issues need

to be considered:

- How relevant is the Bank?
- How is the Bank run?

Relevance of the Bank

The World Bank was established in 1944, along with the International Monetary Fund, to restore international economy when the whole world was in a bad shape following the Second World War. The World Bank was supposed to rebuild Europe, and reduce poverty elsewhere with loans and grants.

When the Bank was established, the number of independent countries was a little over fifty. Now the number of sovereign states is about two hundred, of which one hundred ninety-two are UN members.

The economic scenario was totally different from the present one. Japan, Germany and China have become economic powers, and a dozen middle-income countries play a key role in economic and trade matters in an increasingly globalised world.

Against this background, Robert Rubin, a former US Treasury secretary and now chairman of the executive committee of Citigroup, reportedly stated that the Bank had become outmoded. Eckhardt Deutscher, a senior German development official who serves as the dean of the Bank's Board of Directors, called for the re-examination of the roles of all the international financial institutions including the World Bank.

In 2000, an advisory commission created by the US Congress and headed by Allan Meltzer, professor of political economy and public policy at Carnegie Mellon University, recommended stopping loans to middle-income countries and converting loans to the poorest countries into grants. The recommendations were put aside.

It is reported that middle-income countries are now getting more from the Bank than the poorer countries. Last year, more than \$14

billion went to middle-income countries and only \$9.5 billion to poorer ones. One of the reasons appears to be that the middle-income countries keep their commitments to repay the loan.

World Bank figures reportedly show that the Bank's own contribution to the poorest countries amounts to 7% of the government-backed aid they get from 230 agencies.

It seems that private charity foundations are providing more funds to the poorest countries than the World Bank. In the light of these records, the relevance of the World Bank is being questioned, and it should seek a new identity.

How is the Bank run?

The victors of the Second World War divided the booty amongst themselves. As a result, the US nominates the president of the World Bank, while the European powers nominate the head of the International Monetary Fund. This most undemocratic system has been in practice in the world's two biggest financial institutions for more than sixty years.

Although voices have been raised by various member countries, including Japan (the second econ-

omy in the world), on the restructuring of the institutions, both the US and the European powers remain complacent about the method of appointment of the heads of the two influential organizations. This is because the current method favours them, to the exclusion of others.

Reforms

Deeper questions as to the fragile structure of current governance are being raised, including whether the post-war settlement, under which the Bank and the IMF are led by the US and European powers, is past its sell-by date.

For example, the sharing of the heads of the Bank and IMF by the US and European nominees should go, giving chance to competent candidates of other countries. The existing system of appointment does not reflect the realities of economic power in the world.

The World Bank needs drastic reforms. The scandal has provided an opportunity for the member-states to carry out the necessary reforms in the voting system of the Bank, including the method of appointment of the president.

The common perception is that World Bank is being run for

American interests, rather than for the broader interests of the world as a whole. It is not good for the image of the World Bank. It should be seen as a strategic partner for poor countries, and move into 21st century.

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen suggested in 2001 that there was a need for changes to reduce poverty across the world, a strong case for a far-reaching re-examination of the institutional structure of the international financial institutions.

It is surprising that such an undemocratic global institution is allowed to exist in the 21st century, when democracy is advocated by the US and European powers. Does it not constitute an example of flagrant double standards?

With regard to the current situation of the World Bank, it seems appropriate to quote US author and humourist Mark Twain (1835-1910) who once said: "It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either of them."

Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.