

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 discomfiture.

Farewell to Dav Whatmore

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 Internationals (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 Cup 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 AHSEN

GROUND REALITIES

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?

responsible for the mishap.

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 Mohammadians 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

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 posters 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 make 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

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.

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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 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 semi-tropical 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?

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Coal policy revisited



NURURDDIN MAHMUD KAMAL

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.

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, yes 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 Facility (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

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.

It is outrageous to even think that the people were never consulted

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 million 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

2030. But for whom is such a highly increased coal production necessary? For export, of course. Incidentally, for generation of say 1,000 megawatt (MW) electricity one would require only 2.8 million tons of coal per year. Multiplying that number with any thousand-megawatt capacity, the country's needs in the next 20-30 or 50 years may be calculated.

For generation of 5,000 MW electricity, one would need 14 to 15 million tons of coal per year, for 30 years the number would exceed 400 million tons. Now the question is, do we possess adequate "recoverable reserves" of coal for meeting our future energy demands? If we do, would we have exportable surplus?

There is one other aspect. The proposed Phulbari project has been sponsored by an internationally unknown company. Interestingly, this company's proposal envisages an annual production of 15 million tons, with 12 million tons to be exported, out of their estimated total reserve of 572 million tons at Phulbari.

In simple arithmetic, the company plans to produce between 80-85% of the total reserve for export. What I presume is that the under discussion draft coal policy has taken a cue from the Phulbari coal proposal to formulate a scheme for Bangladesh. The plan was shelved in late 2006, but resurfaced in 2007 when the CTG came to power. It is now alleged that the bureaucracy in the Ministry of Energy has once again taken up the challenge to promote the contentious project.

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with regard to the transfer of ownership of mineral rights, and that the politico-bureaucracy of the country never considered it necessary to inform the people about the provision of the law insofar as it relates to the dangers of open-pit coal mining at Phulbari.

Having learned about the consequences, the people protested violently, some even got killed. The government was not perturbed initially, but finally agreed to sign an agreement with the local people not to pursue the issue. Now, it is trying to break the contract.

We must consult our own professionals, academicians, and legal experts. We can learn from them. They are people like us. No one among us has the only correct guidelines. However, all of us, in our respective roles of consumers, producers, taxpayers, voters, and, above all, citizens, have the final say so as to the direction we will take. You and I create the market-place and fill the halls of meetings/seminars, the CTG, and also the parliament.

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What is the relevance of World Bank after the scandal?

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.

His departure leaves deeper issues

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.

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