



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Dave Whatmore

Much was said about Dave Whatmore over the last few days after he expressed his willingness to coach the Indian team. Along with the newspapers, a few former cricketers from Bangladesh were quite charged on Whatmore who would undoubtedly go down in the history of Bangladesh cricket as someone who brought about a big change. These newspapers and the former cricketers had always praised Dave for his

extraordinary capability of bringing about positive results, getting the boys up whenever their spirit was down, and eventually guiding the cricketers towards the right track. No one ever had a single complaint against Whatmore until he was heard to have said that he would be delighted if he were made the Indian coach. Whatmore took over the charge of our team immediately after it came from a poor performance in the 2003

World Cup. Before him many other coaches had been tried by the BCB, but they all failed, except Gordon Greenidge, who had great contribution to Bangladesh's winning the ICC Champions Trophy. Coming back to Dave, our cricket was in bad shape when Whatmore took over. On his arrival here in Bangladesh, the first thing that Whatmore said was that he would transform our cricket team from one of the cricketing minnows to a giant killer, provided he was allowed to work freely. He has lived up to his promise.

He has been criticised for his decisions like not batting after winning the toss. But I'm not sure what difference that would make, given the poor performance of our batsmen. Actually, it's very easy to criticize someone else's decision. If I've not misheard, in an interview to a TV channel, an ex-cricketer of Bangladesh, who I used to regard very highly, openly put the blame on the outgoing coach for Bangladesh's batting debacle in a match against India. He might have forgotten that it was Dave Whatmore who helped Bangladesh cricket reach its present stage.

I should take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dave Whatmore.
Syed Nazmul Alam
London, UK

Commuter train

With the increase in city population, commuting has become very difficult. Because of unplanned urbanisation, an increased number of vehicles and negative attitude of bus, CNG scooter, and cab drivers, the situation has worsened to a great extent.

My suggestion is very simple. We need commuter trains to take some load off the roads. The CTG should consider it in right earnest.

W. Islam
One e-mail

Government's priorities

I appreciate almost everything the present government is doing for us. But I think it is my duty as a law-abiding citizen to clear any ambiguity that the present government may inadvertently create.

I want to make the point clear that donation is not extortion. I can recall several years ago when a leftist political party's activists came to our premises and requested for some contribution to their party funds. As a ten-year old boy and devout Madrassah-goer, I had little liking for that sort of politics. Yet I contributed Tk 10.

I hope that the CTG will prioritize its steps properly. "Look before you leap" is always a useful adage.

Tawhid Shams Chowdhury
BRAC University

Gas meter

The universal practice is to pay for what you consume no more no less - whether it is electricity, water or gas. This is why meters are installed to accurately record what you are consuming so that a consumer is billed accordingly. The other reason why the providers and the consumers of the utilities prefer meters is to cut back on wastage that would otherwise take place when these essential utilities are made available on prefixed rates of un-metered consumption.

Titas Gas supplies natural gas to domestic and industrial consumers at (understandably) differentiated rates. The vast majority of domestic users are without meters and are charged on the basis of the number of burners leading to colossal wastage of gas when kitchen burners are lit and left burning throughout the day and night, not to mention pilferage through unauthorised subsidiary run-off. It would therefore appear logical that Titas Gas would encourage installing meters for domestic users so that both consumers and providers would be benefited.

In Bangladesh, however, that is not the case, at least not for consumers of domestic gas. Suppose, after a year of sustained effort you persuade Titas Gas to install a gas

meter for your domestic connection. Imagine then the surprise when you find that Titas Gas continues to bill you at a fixed rate, irrespective of the consumption recorded by the meter installed by them. What is their explanation for this? The answer - "Why did you want a meter installed?" The govt. does not allow for billing by meter for domestic consumers."

So, I want to put it to the concerned Adviser "Will you allow this gross anomaly to persist and for how long?" If electricity and water consumers have metered connections then why not gas also? Please direct Titas Gas to start installing meters for domestic users and fix an equitable charge for domestic gas consumers. You may be surprised by the positive response of the consumers and the savings in gas consumption.

Iftekharul Karim
One e-mail

Changed circumstances

The scene of Bangladesh changed drastically as soon as the present CTG emerged from the ashes of a corruption-torn country. For years, people have become accustomed to injustice, corrupt politicians and depravity. Public universities ran intermittently. In developed countries, good students show a propensity for political studies, whereas in Bangladesh it is the least appreciated subject. Nowadays the psyche of a good student of Bangladesh is preoccupied by longing for a chance to go abroad and do better, rather than showing patriotism. This is primarily attributed to nugatory politics and the political leaders.

If the present government continues to remain forthright and sensible, its tenure will be felt ephemeral by common people which is unlike any other time in the past when a political party was elected to govern the country.

Jadid
BUET

Abuse of privileges

As part of its anti-corruption drive, the CTG must look into the abuse of the privileges that senior diplomatic staff are entitled to. Such abuses waste hundreds of millions of dollars that a poor country like Bangladesh can ill afford. Most of the abuses take place through the unrestricted personal use of embassy vehicles and other properties of the diplomatic missions.

Sam Norman
On e-mail

US policy



Former US President Jimmy Carter accused the US, Israel and the European Union of seeking to divide the Palestinian people by reopening aid to President Mahmoud Abbas' new government in the West Bank while denying the same to the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip.

Carter, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, who was addressing a human rights conference in Ireland, also said the Bush administration's refusal to accept Hamas' 2006 election victory was "criminal."

Carter said Hamas, besides winning a fair and democratic mandate that should have entitled it to lead the Palestinian government, had proven itself to be far more organised in its political and military showdowns with Abbas' moderate Fatah movement.

Hamas fighters routed Fatah in their violent takeover of the Gaza Strip. The split prompted Abbas to dissolve the power-sharing government with his rivals in Hamas and set up a Fatah-led administration to

govern the West Bank.

Carter said the consensus of the US, Israel and the EU to start funneling aid to Abbas' new government in the West Bank but continue blocking Hamas in the Gaza Strip represented an "effort to divide Palestinians into two peoples."

"All efforts of the international community should be to reconcile the two, but there's no effort from the outside to bring the two together," he said.

The US and European countries cut off the Hamas-led government last year because of the Islamic militant group's refusal to renounce violence and recognise Israel. They have continued to send humanitarian aid to Gaza through the United Nations and other organisations.

During his speech to Ireland's annual Forum on Human Rights, the 83-year-old former president said monitors from his Carter Center observed the 2006 election that Hamas won. He said the vote was "orderly and fair" and Hamas triumphed, in part, because it was "shrewd in selecting candidates," whereas a divided, corrupt Fatah ran multiple candidates for single seats.

Far from encouraging Hamas' move into parliamentary politics, Carter said, the US and Israel, with European Union acquiescence, sought to subvert the outcome by shunning Hamas and helping Abbas to keep the reins of political and military power.

"That action was criminal," he said in a news conference after his speech. "The United States and Israel decided to punish all the people in Palestine and did everything they could to deter a compromise between Hamas and Fatah," he said.

Shazib Chowdhury
On e-mail

13X3

“Yankee Raj” in South Asia?

The Western superpower jote/syndicate is seeking long-term survival tactics in Asia. Bangladesh has been chosen as a strategic partner, along with Pakistan and India, to contain competition from the upcoming giant in the North.

It is cheap imitation of the old British India Raj policy. After partition of British India in 1947, the independent states are not clicking together--look at the limping Saarc. The 'Neighbour-factor' is poor amongst the Saarc members. Why? Note the basic parameters of Partition: and how far friendly relations have evolved in South Asia during the three decades of experiments [the first phase of settling down]. What the new and young generations are thinking of our pioneers?

India and Pakistan are still obsessed with the Kashmir issue: the civil unrest in Sri Lanka: The recent revolution in Nepal; the political instability in Bangladesh: the recurrent changes in Pakistan: the Pak-Afghan relationship.

In one word, the human touch is missing. Why? Not for religion, as a debating issue. The political policies need grounding. The people of these independent nations hardly meet [or can meet] --direct contact at the mass level is not possible. Some one billion people had a common Raj base. Resettlement has psychological barriers. Analyse the political efforts for three decades. Saarc is a stillborn baby. Regional politics is suffering from greenhouse effect!

The Western powers, for survival with continued high standard of living, are seeking transit and exchange conditions in this region similar to that prevailing during the Raj age. United regional cooperation cannot come without friendly

environment amongst the neighbours. The internal trade within the Saarc region is to the extent of only three per cent--97 per cent of Saarc commodities are exported outside the region. It speaks volumes for the state of affairs. The West would be in trouble if 97 could be reduced to 50 per cent!

How to change the mindset? The situation has become more complicated and sensitive with the entry of religion in politics - fanatical terrorism is echoing round the world. The Global Village has not reduced the cultural gaps - the social factors comes later. Our regional politics is claimed to be democratic: but the insulated layers at the vertical and horizontal levels have to be removed. How? Ask the political regimes.

Religion is not a new entity-it is older than political governance. Why the religious clerics are in revolt; and that too violently? The equations between the head and the heart (logic, faith and emotion) have to be made compatible. The two-way communication media are missing or are weak. This needs leadership of the highest order. In the third world countries, it is difficult to concentrate on a single issue, because there are too many compelling distractions, day in and day out, trying to make the daily lives of the masses tolerable and bearable [low GDP and standard of living]. Here politics as a lucrative source of business-corruption is easy to explain.

The next moves would come from which stellar source?

A Mahasen
Dhaka

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