

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.

Agroforestry



Agroforestry: The scientific solution

I appreciate the letter of Md. Zillur Rahman of DU entitled "Tree plantation and eradicated land". He shared his concern about the farmers who are using their cropland for plantation. It is a fact that Bangladesh is a country which has to feed 140 million people only from 147,570 sq. km. of land. But it is also true that the country is in acute risk of environmental hazards. According to the experts from the environmental science a country must have 25 per cent of its total landmass under forests. Bangladesh presently has at best 10.2 per cent of its land covered with trees or forests which is far below than the required level for maintaining ecological balance.

Mr. Rahman notes that the farmers are considering agricultural farming as non-remunerable and are planting trees even in their arable lands. It is not a good sign when we are suffering from acute deficiency of croplands. Moreover the farmers are being deprived of the income from those lands for a long period. Instead they could adopt the agroforestry practices in their crop fields.

Agroforestry offers a practical solution -- simultaneously raising trees on crop fields and output of agricultural crops from its early stages of development. It also resists the fields from loss of fertility through nutrient harvesting from deeper soil, adds bio mass to the soil through litter fall, reduces use of pesticides and chemical fertiliser and acts as insurance in case of natural hazards and thereby leads the production system towards a sustainable way. The scientists both from the fields of agriculture and forestry jointly developed various models of agroforestry suitable for different parts of Bangladesh. Now is the time to think for extension of agroforestry practices for our food and environmental safety.

Md. Golam Mahboob
Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh

"Hindutva threatens secular India"

When Babri mosque was demolished by a frenzied, fanatical Hindu mob in 1992, I watched with sheer shock, horror and outrage that many Indian students at Berkeley, an activist, liberal and progressive top US University, rejoiced. This lays credence to Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed's contention that "BJP draws support even from the most modern and highly educated Indians." His 24 July 2003 editorial page article, "Hindutva threatens

secular India" is a real life, horror story of contemporary India. It vividly and movingly conveys the pervasive precarious and dismayed state of affairs for the religious minority, especially the Indian Muslims. It also lucidly describes the second class status that the minorities have been relegated to in a perilously extremist and pernicious, communal India.

My long held core and strong belief that the misery of Bangladesh is exacerbated by a hege-

monic, big brother, self-centred, inconsiderate, control freak behemoth of a lousy neighbour has been reinforced by the ascendancy of BJP and its more insidious crude cohorts, RSS and VHP. India, which once was considered an oasis of secularism, tolerance and avant-garde mind-set, has now turned into a cocoon of repugnant communal domination, atrocities, bigotry and abhorrence by the majority religious group. The staunchly pro-Indian local intellectual cluster, quick to cry hoarse and cry wolf at any real, perceived

and manufactured tales of communalism in this country are strangely and eerily hushed about the religious discrimination and carnage in the neighbouring country. They are content to maintain a deafening silence about the systematic and premeditated acts of violence and subjugation against the religious minority in India. It is a source of great pride that there was no adverse reaction to the Gujarat communal massacre in this country. Most of us would not rejoice at the discrimination against minorities or the razing of a temple or shrine. While religious tolerance is a continuous process and must necessarily be nurtured and nourished zealously, we can be truly proud of the enlightened and tolerant attitude of the masses in this country.

Omar Khasru
One-mail

"Bereft of a moral content it's the travesty of governance"

This refers to Brig. Gen.(Rtd) Hafiz's column "Bereft of a moral content it's the travesty of governance", DS July 21. The column was written in the light of historical incidents, the events that happened in our lifetime -- the partition, the liberation war and finally the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign country -- after been a part of all these events, directly or indirectly, no one can disagree that the core of our problems was always and still is an acute absence of moral authority on the part of those in the helms of affairs. The ability of presenting the subject in such easy and simple language is praiseworthy and we all wish to see good governance soon in the country. His narration of the glorious role and the authority that Bangabandhu enjoyed during the non-cooperation days without having the state power at his disposal prior to the beginning of our liberation war and the brutal/tragic end of his rule while he had all the means and might of the state machinery at his command is now a part of the saga that no one, seemingly, wants to hear or talk about. How can we all, including the leaders, ignore this great failure/sorrow, or whatever we may like to call this darkest chapter of our history, without taking lesson from it for our future? Was it really the deviation from moral high ground, or was it just a result of pure and simple conspiracy/ treachery, responsible this most tragic incident? The impartial historians will probably determine the facts in due course after careful researches.

However it appears that despite the stark as well as chilling reminder of history, presented in the article as elaborately as possible, our leaders still refuse to take any notice. In this context, I refer to the front page news, July 22, under

the caption; "Cabinet division clarifies Hasina's comments on Khaleda's houses" and its contents. Neither the words/deeds of our great leaders nor this clarification by the cabinet division, in the opinion of many, are perhaps good enough to explain the position of moral high ground so essentially required for the people on the top for their people in a democratic country. Both were recipients of state properties of disproportionate values which were given away at nominal values for the use of our great leaders and their families by the then parliament/cabinet with due legal process. For an instance the properties have been occupied and used for more than two decades (as stated in the subject cabinet division clarification to be a settled matter), whereas in the other cases it was not allowed to be used. Do any of the above actions therefore set examples of following a high moral ground, the basic requirement of any leadership in the top which Brig. Gen. (Retd) Hafiz tried so hard to explain in his article?

Thanks to the columnist again.
Z. Rahman, Gulshan, Dhaka

Another propaganda?

The US military had confirmed that Saddam Hussein's two sons, Qusay and Uday, had been killed in a gun battle. It had also been confirmed that the bodies were indeed Saddam's sons. Honestly speaking, the moment I saw this news on CNN and BBC, I did not believe a word of it, because I am sure this is another propaganda of the US and the British intelligence. USA knows that they have failed to discover Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction which, in my opinion, was another propaganda. And they have failed to capture the top most Iraqi leaders and therefore, just to hide their shame, they have created another propaganda by telling that Saddam's two sons had been killed.

Minhaj Ahmed
Utara, Dhaka

The US authorities released pictures of Uday and Qusay Hussein killed in assault in Mosul villa. The video clip of the two mutilated bodies endlessly repeated on CNN shocked many viewers by its explicit content of gruesome details. Whether this truly vindicates the might of Coalition armour or convinces Iraqi public is another matter. But what it does is display another example of "double standards"; outrage and hurt when bodies of two US soldiers were shown (on Al-Jazeera TV), bravado and triumph when mutilated bodies were shown by CNN. Are we being lectured to accept that sensitivities of US families are somehow unique and above the rest of the nations -- thus deserving extraordinary sensitivity and consideration? All the protests about "Double Standards" are proving futile (the offenders are becoming immune to criticism assuming clendifid arrogance). Yet, even cleverly crafted propaganda fails to conceal some racist overtones. It does not and will not wash. Those who claim higher standards of conduct must indeed practice before they preach.

As it is, the use of overwhelming force and weaponry (two hundred soldiers) to kill two besieged individuals is no act of necessity or bravery. This assassination operation, just as putting a price on heads, comes perilously close to methods that mafia dons have long been adept in. Indeed, America is renowned for many admirable practices; its culture of mindless violence is not one of those. It comes as no surprise US troops, trained to kill, are often being so insensitive and heavy handed dealing with civilians in Iraq.

Only time will tell, but the Pentagon bosses might well have judged in error to think that armed resistance will collapse against such assassinations and other violent reaction to resistance. This war already inflicted unimaginable sufferings on the Iraqi people. They deserve from the international community all help and support to revive, recover, and reconstruct -- for which early end of military occupation is the first pre-condition. The UN Secretary General has already appealed to that end. Let the will of the United Nations prevail, however weak and irrelevant it might have been made out to be by unilateral action by one of its members.

Zakir Husain
One-mail

30,000 students: 4 computers

I am a student of Dhaka University. This institution has near about 30,000 thousands students. About two years ago the university authority set up a computer section at the ground floor of the DU central library. But unfortunately the total number of the computers is only four. It is simply ridiculous.

I do not know whether it is possible to imagine thousands of students sharing four computers. Is it possible? As a result everybody do not get the opportunity of using computers. But more surprisingly, the authority does not pay any sort of attention to this problem.

Would the DU authority pay attention to this matter and provide more computers with internet connections for the students.

Saumitra Sarder Piklu
Jagannath Hall, DU

Converting Muslims

bring about misunderstanding which can further endanger the image of Christianity.

Elizabeth Adams
Baridhara, Dhaka

Shock and awe

Dramatically the table has turned, now America and Britain are being 'shocked and awed' by the current situation in Iraq and President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair are facing troubles in their countries because they com-

Chittagong

IBA (DU) should change

This is in response to the letter of Ms Samiha Esha (DS July 24).

I fully disagree with Ms Esha about the proposal of waiting list system of IBA. The example stated in her letter does not give a true story. Let me explain in details.

Always the first semester of any new batch (both BBA and MBA) starts with the maximum number

Mass consciousness slogans

Taxi Cabs, Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) scooters and different types of new buses are running in Dhaka city and people of different economic status are benefited by the introduction of these public transports. We see many CNG scooters carrying slogans, as for example "Send your child in school (Apnar shishuke school-e pathan)", "Plant tree and preserve environment (Gach lagan ebong poribesh bachan)", "Follow the traffic law (Trafic ayien mene cholun)", "Either male child or female child, two children are enough (Chale hok ar meye hok duti shontanei josthesto)", "A little family is a happy family (choto poribar shukhi poribar)" etc.

Now, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTC) is a government owned semi autonomous organisation. And we see the BRTC buses covered with advertisements. Many other bus companies, like Nirapad, follow this tradition -- they carry advertisements. If government owned BRTC uses its buses for mass awareness slogans like the CNG scooters, it will certainly make an impact on the general people. There is great possibility that the advertisements will influence them greatly and easily thus many social erosion will be removed. The authority concerned can do another thing -- make it compulsory for every public transport to carry minimum one or two mass consciousness slogans like the CNG scooters. And the result will be more rewarding.

Md. Zillur Rahman, Bangabandhu Hall, DU



Advertisement, or awareness?

to Christianity

I am responding to the letter written by Armaan Ayyub of Oxford, England, who wrote about a TV programme televised in Bangladesh on Christianity which was made in a mixed language of Bengali and Arabic, which closely resembled Islamic programmes on the media.

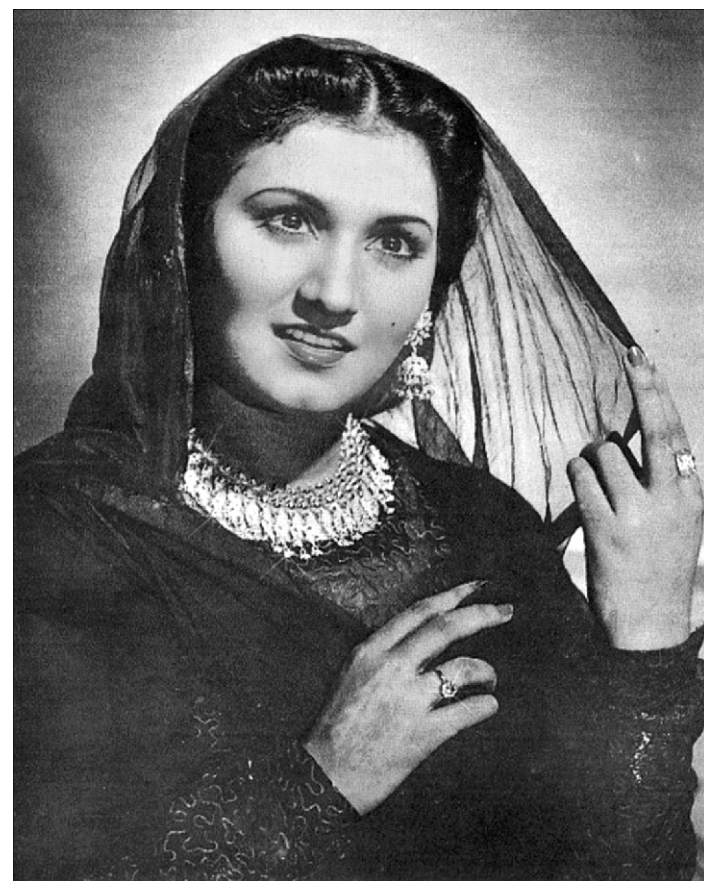
I think what he suggested (that such programmes are disagreeable for two reasons: they confuse people and display a certain amount of discrimination towards viewers of other religious backgrounds) is well-grounded. The church, which has already come under fire in various countries for its modus operandi, should abandon any move aimed at converting people which may hurt them and

mitted a grave crime -- they invaded Iraq on unjust, illegal and immoral grounds. They wanted to win the hearts of the Iraqi people, instead they have only planted hatred. Iraqis do not want the coalition force in their country so whenever they get a chance they are attacking and killing American and British soldiers.

The sudden and unnatural death of British weapons specialist David Kelly, who probably knew a lot of information on Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction, is a very shocking and sad incident. We hope the truth will come out and the world will know what actually happened, who had concocted to invade Iraq declaring it has Weapons of Mass Destruction and is a threat to the world.

Nurjahan

Music maestro



Kisi tara se muhabat mey...

I read with vivid interest the write-up on music maestro Kamal Das Gupta (DS 20.7.003). Shafin Ahmed however inadvertently did not mention that the nightingale of India, Kannan Devi, the melody queen Noorjehan and the formidable diva, Khurshid Bano also sang under the baton of Kamal Da in Hindi films in the forties. Kanan Devi's *aj ahand chupna juna* (in P C Barua's film "Jawab"), Noorjehan's *Kisi tara se muhabat mey achen pa na sakey* (in "Badi Ma") and Kurshid's *angora pe koel bhocy* (in Ranjit Movetone's "Moorti") were hit songs that left an indelible impression in the minds of musical buffs. Noorjehan said Kamal Da's comprehension of the various nuances of Indian music was simply extraordinary.

Robert Kader, Chittagong

of students. If we assume that 75 students got admitted in a given year of a particular batch, then the first semester starts with these 75 students. Then gradually the number of student decreases from the middle of the first semester until the end of the course. We further assume that 55 students finally graduate from that particular batch. Then it means that 20 students short of the original number of 75.

However, it is not necessarily true that all these 20 students left IBA before the start of the course work. They left IBA at various stages of the academic year. Therefore, it is not possible to take new students in the middle of the semester or later part of the year. The new students will not be able to cope with the old students, who started classes from the first day. That's why I strongly disagree with the idea of waiting list system.

Md. Rahmatullah
University of Tsukuba, Japan

This is in reply to Ms Samiha (Utara) and her letter dated 24th July. I am amused at the way she is 'misquoting' herself and deliberately denying statements she made earlier.

Madam, you explicitly called, and more than once mentioned our admission test in IBA as 'pathetic' in your first letter (dated 16th July 2003). Please be informed that the admission test in this institution in the entire Dhaka University is competitive and held ahead of other units so that students escape the vicious grasp of inevitable session jams. Our professors try their level best to select the most competitive students amongst the vast majority, and that is why IBA has been able to keep up its good name till date. Yet in no way am I claiming it to be impeccable.

IBA's official capacity of holding students in every batch is around 50 (that is also after students have left or have dropped out). In that case, why would professors take in greater number of students, and reduce the efficiency of the entire system? What good would waiting lists do anyway, they guarantee intake of less competitive students who scored less than the average in the first place. If you are forgetting, waiting lists contain those students who scored less marks in admission tests than the lot originally selected for a particular batch. Lastly, if you were talking about changing the entire system; why does your topic pertain to IBA (DU) only?

Arani Siddiqi
IBA, DU

the world bank...

providing sound financial advice to developing nations... WE PROMISE!