

Why this fertiliser crisis at all?

Speedy resolution warranted

Verbal duel raging between the government and the fertiliser importers over the intertwined issues of pricing of imported fertiliser and disbursement of subsidy during the last four months...

The increase in international prices and enhancement of freight charges have added to the domestic market price, according to the Bangladesh Fertiliser Association (BFA).

Here is a glaring instance of insensitivity to the pressing needs of the farmers ironically where an agricultural subsidy worth Tk 271 crore was announced four months ago and yet it remains unutilised to this day.

A tussle is seemingly on between the government and the BFA to strike a deal based on how little each side ends up paying in terms of subsidy and sacrifice on profits respectively.

DESA'S dismal deeds

A glaring governance failure

THE aim of increasing the efficiency of power distribution and revenue collection through creation of an appropriate body has turned out to be a dismal failure. DESA, a child of power sector reform in which donor pressure had played a great part...

By the admission of the state minister in charge of the ministry of power, there is an 'untraceable' amount of Tk 2500 crores from DESA funds that have vanished due to what the minister says, graft, theft and mismanagement.

Certain endemic systemic failures have come to light from the minister's statement. One, the whole system is plagued by our national default culture.

Whereas we are suffering from a shortfall in power, the most important input for GDP growth, and whereas the exchequer is suffering the gravest loss through system seepage in the power sector...

The large amount of loss, both untracked and in the form of dues, has accreted over the last decade for DESA. This only exposes a lack of supervision and failure to initiate timely action and appropriate measures by all concerned.

It will do very little to put the blame on unscrupulous officials and workers of the organisation. However, it is never too late to take actions to retrieve the loss and hold those that are responsible for the losses to account.

Can Iran be tamed?

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

EUROPEANS are reportedly angry and confused over Iran's seemingly protean policy in seeking exemption from a deal to suspend sensitive nuclear activities...

zone, and negotiation for a EU-Iran trade agreement. But the Americans are not fully satisfied. Though Colin Powell expressed happiness over November 26 IAEA resolution...

and former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani are politicians and not defence strategists. They see Western policy of nuclear ambiguity relating to possession of nuclear weapons by Israel...

need to ponder is whether possession of a few nuclear weapons would necessarily enhance Iran's security. The sheer disparity in the number and quality of conventional and non-conventional weapons...

alleged Iranian involvement in the 9/11 tragedy -- an allegation most suspect in the eyes of the world; and (d) another Iraq-like misadventure will most certainly inflame anti-American sentiment globally...

to rein in Iranian nuclear programme the West needs to address the question of Iran's potential demand for nuclear weapons. Perhaps the West in conjunction with Russia and Japan may wish to involve Israel and the greater Middle Eastern countries more actively in regional non-proliferation efforts...

administration's stated security goals being non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and to prevent at any cost the nightmarish possibility of acquisition of WMD materials by non-state actors...

interdict both overtly and covertly transfer of equipment that would have helped Iran in its nuclear programme. As George Perkovich (of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) points out...

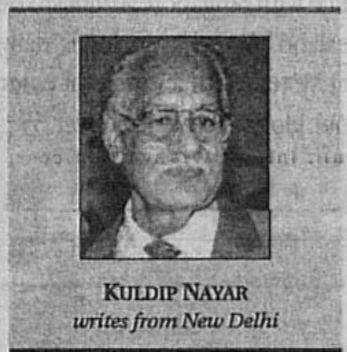
Prina Werbner has described this feeling of progressive alienation 'as the vulnerability of the Muslim diaspora communities in the West, susceptible to being essentialised as fanatical and irrational...

considered that during the process of acquisition of large number of weapons US and/or Israel may launch a preemptive attack on Iranian nuclear installations.

Cooler heads in the US, not to speak of in Europe, strongly advise against such preemptive actions on the grounds that (a) logic of preemption would necessitate the US to wage war against 12 nations...

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

Musharraf can't decide all by himself



KULDIP NAYYAR writes from New Delhi

prison after eight years, the scenario may change. There can be an increasing support for a civilian rule. Musharraf may face tough opposition, particularly when his move to retain the uniform is gathering storm.

What Musharraf says on Kashmir is his point of view and that of the military in Pakistan. Political leaders like Benazir and Sharif do not agree with him. Nor do most of the people. A referendum, if held on this

the "peace process." In the same way, no Pakistan government can minimise the role of Sharif in pushing forward the peace process. He invited Vajpayee to Lahore and signed a joint declaration. Similarly, the Benazir-Rajiv Gandhi accord was a step towards India-Pakistan détente.

It is strange that Musharraf says with a flourish that all Kashmiris, whatever their views, should participate in the talks. But this should hold good for Pakistan as well.

endorsement of both the houses and it has to be within the precincts of the constitution, unless political parties decide to amend it.

However, it is time that India had a policy on Kashmir. So far it has

antagonism by the common market. Galbraith had also done what he called a Harvard Exercise (named after the university where he taught). He had suggested the reopening of the road between Islamabad and Srinagar through Baramulla, Uri and Murree...

This was more or less the proposal that Sheikh Abdullah discussed with me in 1969. His argument was that the border should be 'soft' so that the Pakistanis had an easy access to the valley.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Realism is thought and action based on realities. It is strange that the reality of political situation in Pakistan does not dawn on Musharraf. There is no doubt that he is the monarch of all that he surveys. But it is also true that the military control has suppressed the real voice of people.

point, may surprise Musharraf. But then the referendum is not his way to determine things in Pakistan. The rigged referendum in favour of his presidency is too recent to be forgotten.

parties, what does New Delhi do? Sharif told me at Jeddah last year that they would not accept any solution on Kashmir that the military regime had brokered.

That a Prime Minister is a civilian does not change things. He is only Musharraf's nominee. While in India, Shaikat Aziz could not add even a comma to Musharraf's proposals, although he was eloquent in renouncing them.

None. New Delhi's formulations are a reaction to what Pakistan says or does. A high-power committee of all shades of opinion should be constituted so that it is clear how far New Delhi can go to accommodate Islamabad.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

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.

Kibria's reply to Latifur Rahman

A number of articles have been written in response to my article on reform of the caretaker government law. I welcome a lively debate that is always useful.

Latifur Rahman seemed to have been hurt by my omission to use the honorific Justice before his name. I had no wish to hurt him by not using the honorific and the omission was not intentional.

On the question of selection of advisers, I did not say that the method followed by him was illegal. In my view he acted within the letter of the law but he violated the spirit of the law.

sides' I was referring to. I was simply referring to the ruling party and the principal opposition party in the Parliament.

I was also amused by his attempt to cast doubts on my democratic credentials. I am proud to have been a bureaucrat with good reputation. I had the honour to rise to the position of ambassador of Bangladesh abroad and Foreign Secretary at home.

Justice Latifur Rahman has shown his poison fangs in the last paragraph of his response where he described the misdeeds of the Awami League government. In fact he has accused the Awami League government of 'criminality, corruption and terrorism'.

Shah AMS Kibria Dhaka

Please remove ugly structure

Because of the impending SAARC summit in Dhaka, brisk activities are going on to give the capital a much needed face lift. There is a structure behind Fargate Police Box four brick pillars supporting a rusty and broken water tank that is no longer in use.

Major QS Ahmed, psc, te (ret'd) One-mail

BUET admission procedure

BUET is one of the most important educational institutions for higher studies in Bangladesh. Its admission procedure and influence-free admission system are also known to all.

the practice for many years. I think it needs a change.

We know that the HSC level syllabus has undergone a major change. The emphasis on English, in this case, is probably the most noticeable and the reason behind it is very simple -- efficiency in English is a must in today's world.

Now about the admission procedure. Previously, students had to go to some particular lab to get their medical reports (against payment, of course) and we never really understood the significance of such test.

Sweet Chowdhury Rashid Hall, BUET

We need BRTC bus service

We, the office going people of Chittagong, are badly suffering

from transportation problems. We need BRTC bus service here like in Dhaka. We do not mind paying a little more for a comfortable journey. The current city service is very poor in quality.

Anonymous Chittagong

Leaders and followers

This is the season of work and also the season of parties! The leaders and followers of the political parties from the union level to the national level, should become alert and careful so that they do not waste their time engaging themselves unnecessarily in the daytime too much talking over cell phones, and in the evening attending several important and unimportant dinner parties.

should be cautious so that their prime time for working for the 'growth' of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 'Increasing the National Income (NI) of Bangladesh are not robbed by 'touts' and 'sycophants'.

Golam Ashraf DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka

CIPs?

The Daily Star reported on November 27 that no commercially important persons have been declared by the government for its third year. I don't see why it's necessary that we must declare people to be CIPs. The story says that lack of declaring people to be a CIP is causing frustration among exporters, traders, and entrepreneurs, and that 50 people "got that status" the last time. It adds that the Anisul Huq, President of BGMEA (who himself is identified as a CIP since 1989) says the government should declare CIP status to accommodate new faces to

bring dynamism in the business community, and that CIP status is announced after approval from the Cabinet Division.

I don't see any reason for that. That status should be achieved by performance and position, not by government declaration. If a person has achieved significance in business and commercial affairs, his or her contemporaries would know that the person is important.

Declaratory someone important doesn't make them important. Is it necessary to declare Professor Muhammad Yunus 'important'? Even if a person is considered important in Bangladesh commercial affairs that should be the result of his/her perceived importance. It should not be the result of the cabinet of a government. Doesn't the Cabinet have a more important agenda?

MM Haque NewYork