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Eco-fertiliser

Nasiruddin Khan's article on the subject (DS:March23) is of importance and relevance for Bangladesh. It needs to be seriously followed up by our authorities; and should be brought to the notice of our Adviser for Agriculture and Industries. The subject matter has a far reaching impact on the whole gamut of fertiliser production in the country. I feel that parts of the last paragraph of the article needs emphasis, and is repeated here to emphasise the relevance and the need to follow up on this revolutionary idea in the matter

of agricultural fertiliser. "This active eco-fertiliser, could be initially thought as partial replacement of the chemical fertiliser (recommended on 50/50 basis). The implementation of this replacement is necessary not only to reduce the greenhouse gas emission from agriculture, but to abate the other major obstacles on way to sustainable environmental friendly agricultural production in Bangladesh. Therefore prompt action is necessary in this regard to make the agricultural production environment-friendly and sustain-

able which would ultimately save a huge amount of money and natural resources of the country." It needs to be brought to the notice of our Rice Research Institute at Joydevpur and other agricultural research projects and institutions in Bangladesh. It is no doubt fantastic news for us, providing solution both for fertilisers and the environment. The government must take note of this! **S. A. Mansoor** *Gulshan, Dhaka*

Dream coming true

A new dawn for our Bangladesh! Thanks a lot to the caretaker government. People are looking forward to changes in every area. They are counting on the move of the government to create a new nation.

We have been dreaming of such a great nation. Finally, our dream is about to come true.

Afshan Chowdhury
USA

Good days ahead?

I can't believe my eyes, or my ears. The master crooks of this country are either on the run or put away behind bars. Am I dreaming...?

Shops are closed by 7:00 in the evening. Govt. doctors are available in remote thanas. Mastans have almost disappeared, though mugging continues unabated.

Who do I congratulate? Whose hands do I kiss in gratitude? If this is a dream, please don't wake me up. Please don't burst the bubble. Don't wake me up to the nightmare that was Bangladesh just a few months ago.

Are we witnessing a new dawn? Will we finally see a just society? Is this the realisation of the dream that the 70 million of us dreamt together

in the bleak months of 1971?

God Almighty is giving us a second chance after 36 years. We lost the first opportunity to corrupt, egotistical politicians, the new rich trash, the carpet beggars, mastans, godfathers who plundered the nation's wealth at will. They placed us at the lowest ladder of humanity and got us a name "the most corrupt nation on earth".

Do we dare make the same mistakes again? Please, for the sake of our children, for the sake of our comrades in arms who gave their lives for a free and just Bangladesh, for our mothers, wives, sisters, daughters who quietly, patiently bore all the calamities that came their way, don't repeat the mistake.

This is our golden opportunity. Seize it, make the best of it. Seldom is a nation given a second chance to mould its future.

So where do we go from here? The whole world is watching us. We can be masters of our own destiny, or succumb to vanity and lose our freedom to crafty crooks within and without.

We have to be vigilant. This is about nation building. We need to take cool calculated steps. No hysteria, No emotional outbursts, we need to plan ahead. We

have a legacy of corrupt bureaucracy, a graft-ridden economy, and shortsighted planning. We need vision, determination, and selflessness. Outright honesty and sincerity. A fear grips my heart. Do we have such people? If we don't, we are undone once again. If we do, then let's find them, search for them, beg them to come and give their best in our hour of distress. Where are they, at home? abroad? Let's make a conducive environment so that they can thrive and help us survive.

We start with a few ideas: We may bring in the best of our sons and daughters and form consultative bodies who may draw up plans for reforms in all aspects of governance and civil behaviour.

Let us go for constitutional reforms. Learn from the mistakes and pitfalls of yesteryears. Let us get a people's verdict on a burning issue. How long do we want this caretaker govt to continue? Let's go for a referendum.

Let us constitute an independent body that will continue to carry out this purge against corruption even under an elected govt.

Pray to Allah for assistance and help.

Wasiful Islam
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

Speed-breakers

Speed breakers and road dividers are a matter of concern, given their frequent construction and breaking. Even many beautiful roads have become repulsive because of speed-breakers, for instance Manik Miah Avenue and the road of Dhaka University. We, the general public, cannot understand the causes behind this situation. Many people are questioning why such things occur and for whose interest? Doesn't this take place due to the inefficiency of the people who work in the departments concerned?

Now it is observed that many slim speed-breakers have been constructed on the highways. We can understand that these speed-breakers have been constructed to slow the speed of vehicles or to stop the drowsing of drivers to avoid road accidents. But the reality is that drivers of heavy vehicles never control or slow the speed of their vehicles before the speed-breakers, and so the passengers and vehicles face fatty jerks. Of course, the drivers of light vehicles follow the rules and so it takes them a longer time to reach their destination because of an interrupted journey. The authorities concerned

should look into the matter. **Mozammel Haque Neogi**
One e-mail

Comments on Dr. Yunus

Convey my best wishes to Mr. Irtishad Ahmed for his comments on Dr. Yunus.

"I did not get all my questions answered. I am not sure how capitalism can be turned upside down. I kept pondering as I sipped from my cup of decaf. It was getting late-I decided not to take the real coffee. But I saw a plain-speaking, honest, confident, and down-to-earth individual who can deliver," wrote Irtishad Ahmad who is a professor at Florida International University in Miami.

Abdullah Mahmood
Retired from BSCIC

Our judiciary

I have recently moved back to Bangladesh after having studied in Washington, DC and London. I have qualified as a Barrister-at-Law from the Society of Lincoln's Inn, London, UK and have returned back home to practise law and to hopefully contribute to and improve the state of the Judiciary in our country.

First, I took the Bangladesh Bar Council's Advocateship exam in 2006 and was absolutely appalled by the examination conditions. Nearly all the candidates taking the exam were cheating and talking to one another. There were cheat notes and torn out textbook pages everywhere. The invigilators turned a blind eye to the shocking activities of the candidates and instead chose to speak on their mobile phones. In fact, there was one invigilator who kept answering all the questions to some of the candidates. I thought to myself "What excellent aspiring future advocates..."

Recently, I have been going to the Tax Tribunals that are scattered around Dhaka city. The lack of a well-structured, honest and efficient judicial system is painfully apparent. I was horrified to witness that the clerks do not accept any legal documents, which are to be filed or handed to the Bench, without first extracting something out of you. I have had the opportunity of working in several Crown Courts, as well as the Old Bailey, in London, and such conduct is unheard of in a proper Court of Law and indeed most unacceptable and shameful.

My experiences in Dhaka have made me understand that every layer of the judicial system is in desperate need of an extreme makeover. People need to change their attitudes and respect the rule of law. Being a Barrister or a lawyer is one of the most respectable and admirable professions anywhere in the world and having such disgraceful standards in Bangladesh is indeed grim for the future of the judiciary and the country. I think it is vitally important that there is an open criticism of the system, which is in place at the moment, so that someone, somewhere, can stand up and set things right.

Simeen Hussain
Barrister-at-Law
Judge Court, Dhaka

Good governance



I hope it is not a brief period of sanity in Bangladesh. I feel highly emotional to see that we have leaders with strong integrity and principle, who are also patriotic. Our hats off to all the members of the present caretaker government, the army and other law enforcement agencies. Everywhere we look around, we see the truth is prevailing, and there is no hypocrisy, no deception.... it feels almost like a dream. I hope and pray that the people of Bangladesh will appreciate the efforts of these honest leaders and correct themselves accordingly. No need to deny that we the people either were forced or in some cases voluntarily condoned the corruption and dishonesty in all government activities for such a long time. Thus, it is only us, the people, who can make sure that this present integrity among every individual including the government is maintained.

Please let us not go back to the past hell any more. Let us only work for a beautiful future, where there is honesty and co-operation.

Imran Khan
San Diego, CA

Mazar of Bangabandhu

The chief Adviser deserves congratulations for breaking the years old taboo by offering "Fateha" at the Mazar of Bangabandhu. You have proved that Bangabandhu does not belong to any party, rather he belongs to the 14 crore Bangladeshis, and made us feel once again that he is our Bangabandhu like before.

You have made another history by taking the three chiefs of our Armed Forces with you for Fateha at Tungipara. It indicates that the whole nation is paying respect to Bangabandhu. You have also handed over the Mazar to the ministry for better maintenance.

May I request, please deploy the members of the armed forces to guard the Mazar round the clock.

Mazhar Haq
Gulshan, Dhaka

Freedom of press

We have read in The Daily Star the most significant judgment of the year, as I consider it, on a defamation suit against a newspaper.

Two very vital issues have been dealt with in this judgment, one is regarding freedom of press and the other is "judiciary is not above criticism" provided there are genuine grounds for the media to speak out. As a reader and listener of media reports, I feel very relieved that we are going to see qualitative and objective reporting of national events by our valued journalists without fear or favour.

Thanks to the High Court Bench for such an important judgment keeping in mind the people's constitutional right to freedom of information.

Freedom
On e-mail

Voting right for overseas Bangladeshis

I thank you for write-up on the above subject, which has been a long-standing demand of the expatriate community that was ignored by the previous governments.

In 1997 an advocacy group from the UK sought legal intervention and was able to obtain a verdict which clearly stated that any person holding a Bangladeshi passport should be eligible to become a voter, but this verdict was never implemented hence the present government deserves our accolades for initiating the process and committing themselves to including the expatriates in the future electoral rolls. The modalities of enrolling and casting votes may be obtained from the rules currently in vogue in other countries through the Embassies/High Commissions/MoFA.

Such a large expatriate community cannot be left out in exercising their choice to elect a representative to protect their interests in the highest law making body, especially under a democratic system. Considering the contribution of this community to the nation by way of their remittances, their sense of patriotism, their dream of seeing a prosperous motherland, their ability to invest are all the more reasons to involve them in the decision making process of electing a representative on their behalf.

One thing that needs to be clarified by the Election Commission is that the current election rules make an expatriate ineligible to contest in a General Election if he/she has obtained the citizenship of another country. Currently, GoB has signed Dual Nationality agreements with some countries, most notably Australia, Canada and a few others. Expatriates of these countries might consider contesting in the future elections as the election

rules are being framed to allow and encourage honest, capable, educated, patriotic and "clean" money holders to participate, thus creating a "level playing field." By being a voter will such expatriates be eligible to contest future general elections under the existing rules? If not, then this rule need to be waived at least for citizens of the countries with whom GoB has signed Dual Nationality agreements. This will encourage willing, patriotic, resourceful and committed expatriates to at least consider contesting in elections and thereby find a way to get involved in the "highest form of social service" which is politics in their native land. This compliments the "Reverse Drain Philosophy" as well.

I hope the Election Commission will let our dream come true by not only making us voters but also clearing the way to get involved in the service to the nation by making us eligible to contest in elections.

Mohammad U. Afzal
Toronto, Canada

Catalysts of change

They have shown a new way of dealing with corruption and injustice. I would like to call them the soldiers of good fortune. May the Almighty Allah give them all the strength and honest will to accomplish their job.

Mazeed Sumon
Dhaka

Duty free car

The offer of a duty free car to the elected MPs was made by Ershad to bribe his MPs to support his autocratic rule. Even after the fall of autocracy, both the champions of democratic government continued with the same policy and could not dare to withdraw this lucrative offer since their intentions were no better than the past autocratic government's.

For an elected MP who has been elected by the people to serve his/her constituency and the country at large, an offer of such a duty free car (an indirect payment from government funds) is the first step to indulging in corruption.

Engr. Mahub
Australia

"Remembering the dark night"

"Remembering the dark night" by a staff correspondent in The Daily Star made me realise that history cannot be suppressed. The past governments have tried very hard to change the facts of history. For all the killings, rapes and injustice we need an unconditional public apology from the Pakistani government.

We need compensation for the war crimes committed by them.

Segufta Samad
On e-mail

Banning TV channels

The current non-political government banned the airing of seven Bangla channels and then another Indian Bangla (Tara News) TV channel. Perhaps it was a justified move, as those channels did not get any prior clearance from the government. Some of those channels did not originate from Bangladesh, but our cable operators were down-linking them (perhaps illegally). In response to our govt's direction, the operators stopped transmitting them. But what do we have now? In order to remain competitive, the operators have switched over to several Hindi channels like Lemon, Music India, Star One, Z Trend, S and whatever free-to-air access they have. The net result is we have traded the Bangladeshi or Bangla channels for Hindi and non-Bangla channels. We are now watch-

ing Hindi Music India instead of Bangla Falgun Music.

Shall we just think for a moment will we have traded for? **Prof Mamunar Rashid**
Ibrahim Medical College
Shahbagh, Dhaka

"Ofvices and vice-chancellors"

This is in reference to an article written by Shahnoor Wahid.

Being amused, I could not help myself quoting a nice and nay, an appropriate quotation in this connection here. I discovered it in a conversation with the chairman of an organisation that I once belonged to. Being loved by him, I was very free with him, despite my rank and status in comparison.

One day, seeing the files not being cleared in the time it deserved, I said to my chairman, "Sir, you need to create the post of vice-chairman" which was taken by him smilingly. He said, "Provided he is not full of vices." I was amused by his sharp reply that I still remember. As referred to in the article, the very word 'vice' in designation of positions should better be replaced with some suitable word like 'Deputy' etc.

Engr. Shaheedul Islam
Gulshan, Dhaka

Hawkers back to business

We observed many good actions of the present 'interim government'. But now I observe that many foot-paths of Dhaka city have again gone to hawkers and makeshift shop-owners (with the direct approval of police?).

The matter deserves a closer look.

Motiul Islam
Mirpur, Dhaka

Tragic history of April Fools

April 1 is a day of great sorrow for Muslims. Almost 522 years ago, about 700,000 Muslims were mercilessly burned to death after being locked up in mosques by the forces of King Ferdinand. With that ended one of the most outstanding centres of knowledge, science and literature of that time and 800 glorious years of Muslim rule over Spain.

During the Muslim rule, thousands of people being enthralled by the justice system of Islam took shelter in Spain and science, medicine, literature and arts began to flourish. So the country became an eyesore to the leaders of the surrounding countries.

After nurturing many plots and conspiracies the jealous leaders could finally win over the Muslim prince of Spain and managed to take him to their side. All the enemy armies joined together and advanced towards Grenada the then capital of Spain burning and destroying everything on their way. They managed to cut off all the food supply to Grenada which resulted in a famine. King Ferdinand declared, "If the Muslims open the gates of their city and take refuge in the mosques then they will be set free without any bloodshed." The Muslims were forced to oblige.

But once the enemies entered the city. They locked up all the Muslims in the mosques. Then they savagely set fire to all the mosques with the Muslims inside. Then Queen Isabella, wife of Ferdinand, cried out in laughter saying "April Fools!"

Md. Shaanur Rashid
On e-mail

US empire in the Middle East?



The overall scenario in the Middle East is becoming fairly clear with the US adding more forces to the region aimed at the "ultimate victory" over the Arabs. The earlier impression gained was that the USA and other nations that have sent forces to Afghanistan and Iraq would go for a gradual withdrawal beginning with troops reductions, leaving the Islamic nations to choose their own "democratic" establishments.

Before the US Congressional election there was indeed a plan discussed among the contributing nations to Middle East wars about their withdrawal once the elections were over. But the defeat of the Republicans and the majority gained by the Democrats in the Congress have changed the overall perception of the USA, not just the Republicans alone. Notwithstanding the fight in the Congress over troops withdrawal or additions between the Democrats and Republicans, there seems to be consensus between them as well as in the CIA-Pentagon combine to stay on in Afghanistan and Iraq and concentrate on the Iranian and Syrian borders. This idea seems to have run into rough weather with other nations differing largely on the subject, but Washington has the capacity and means to persuade them to fall in line of the USA. Ideally, then, the USA will manage

the affairs single-handedly, including the resources in the region, aided by the UNSC and NATO. The most credible conclusion of all this maneuvering was to ensure that the USA would stay on and all other countries would withdraw themselves at their convenience or completely. Over 17 nations across the continents have already withdrawn their troops fully or partially, while the USA has added more troops to the field.

That means that Washington has decided to annex the energy rich nations in the Middle East and these nations would be made part of the US empire according to its Neo-imperialistic plan. Agreement, then, rather than any disagreement, on the USA controlling the Middle East seems to have been worked out among the occupying forces in favour of US decision to stay on. Establishment of a New Middle East supported efficiently by the US brand of democracy is at best a farce, if not a joke.

Meanwhile, Russia and the USA have resumed their old cold war tactics, probably to detract the world attention from the US agenda for the Middle East. Would some spokesperson in the White House speak out the real intention of the USA in the Middle East?

Dr. Abdul Ruff Colachal
JNU, New Delhi