

## Fertiliser supply

### Better handling needed

WHAT has gone wrong in the fertiliser distribution system? It couldn't be streamlined even after what happened in Nachole a few days back. A report from Bogra gives a disquieting picture of farmers in desperate need of urea queuing up for it. They are not getting even 20 per cent of their total requirement of urea during this Aus cultivation season.

The local urea dealers in Bogra have put the blame on inadequate supply of the fertiliser. It is precisely here that a glaring gap between what has been claimed by the decision-makers and the fertiliser dealers' version of the stock position surfaces. The decision-makers have always claimed that there is adequate stock of urea. But the dealers have a different story to tell. Clearly, there is lack of coordination between the ministries of agriculture and industry on the one hand, and between the BADC and the dealers on the other. Distribution system is obviously not geared up to meeting the farmers' requirements.

Production of urea can be boosted through efficient management of the existing factories and, if necessary, setting up of some new ones. But scarcity results from poor planning, lack of coordination between relevant government agencies, inaccurate assessment of farmers' needs, not timely availability of fertiliser at the dealers' end and lack of monitoring of the market behaviour, especially speculative and manipulative trading activities.

If "crisis" is the term that the decision-makers have a dislike for, then they must streamline the distribution mechanism from which crisis stems. The Nachole incident should have awakened the agencies concerned to the need for maintaining a steady supply of fertilisers.

So, the government agencies have to do something more than being apparently caught unawares and then claiming that stocks are sufficient and things are under control. The ground situation speaks otherwise, calling for a comprehensive action plan to meet the demands of the farmers.

## Truant teachers

This shouldn't be allowed any further

OUR concern and disappointment become profound when we hear of teachers in an educational institute doing everything else but teaching. And something of that deplorable nature has been going on for years together at the National University (NU).

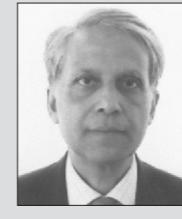
We are appalled to learn from a report that as many as 86 lecturers of the institute never performed their assigned duties of taking classes in NU affiliated colleges, though they drew their salaries on a regular basis. It was further revealed in a report that when 38 teachers were directed by the NU Vice Chancellor through a letter on June 26 to take classes in some specified colleges they refused to comply. Furthermore, these teachers forced the VC to withdraw the notice within two days following strong resistance from the teachers' pool on the alleged ground that the words used in the notice were incorrect and indecent.

The teachers' pool was introduced in 1992 with the objective of sending teachers to NU affiliated colleges to take classes. From the initial four teachers the number has grown to 86 over the years, with 50 recruited during 2003-04 period allegedly on political consideration. And there is widespread allegation that though most of the teachers do not report to the authorities in the university on every office day, they sign attendance registers once a week for all the days.

What transpires from the detailed report is that the National University lacks proper administration to effect faculty discipline and commitment that an institute of its stature deserves. Therefore, it is only natural that questions regarding teacher appointment procedure, monitoring mechanism to ensure attendance and quality teaching and taking corrective measures when required would come to our minds. It is unacceptable that such a large number of teachers have been playing truant for such a long time and that the university authorities had failed to take actions against them. This also remains unclear who would answer for the students who had been denied teaching lessons for so many years.

We understand that between allegations and counter allegations what has suffered most is education itself. This must not be allowed to go on any further. We strongly suggest the relevant ministry to give a deep look into the affairs at the institute in question. This should be treated as an eye-opener since there may be more such truant teachers in other academic institutes in the country.

## Reforms and accountable leadership



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

reforms in the truest sense of the term.

Some of them have indicated to the media that they were unable to address the incongruities within their political parties because of the absence of participatory leadership and emphasis on dynastic informal socio-metric overlays. It has also been suggested by a few others that they had referred to such inadequacies within their respective political party systems, but that such refer-

greatly facilitate reform within the existing political structure of the two major political parties within the country. It will also encourage the minor parties to take necessary steps.

This will generally make the political and electoral processes more meaningful and functional also. Particularly assist in the decision making and selection processes within the party. In turn, that will reduce action being based on

several steps. They have seriously initiated the collection of electoral data, re-drafting of existing laws pertaining to elections and the registration of voters and issue of voters ID cards. All concerned are attempting these with due care and diligence. The litmus test will however come at the time of the next election. It is then that political parties will have to stand up and be counted as to whether they have played their part (selection of candi-

tion).

In the past we have seen disgraceful examples of representatives from the business community obtaining nominations on the basis of voluntary or involuntary contributions to the party or to certain members of its leadership. During the last parliament 70 per cent of the MPs from the ruling Alliance had business interests. Consequently, it was not strange that corruption and under-hand dealings should have

been embarrassing situations over the politicisation in the observance of important national occasions.

I firmly believe that our expatriate community should be given the right to vote. They can register for this purpose in our different diplomatic missions. They can then, like the expatriate population of many other countries, exercise their right of vote on election day in the different diplomatic missions or use the postal ballot to express their opinion and political preference. Expatriates are playing an important role in our economic development through their remittances and they must also have a say in the political process. There should not however be front organisations of different political parties abroad. Everyone holding a Bangladeshi passport should deem himself/herself to be just that and nothing else in terms of open political affiliation.

The third is regarding the imposition of a time frame before NGO officials and bureaucrats can seek candidatures in elections. Many have suggested that such a restriction will hinder the availability of expertise and experience within the political process. I do not agree with them. I have seen many cases of personal ambition being the cause of poor prioritisation in development expenditure. That will be averted.

There are many ideas of reforms that are presently under scrutiny. Let them be discussed, openly and collectively. For this we need the official lifting of the ban on political activity. The sooner it comes about the better it will be.

The senior leaders of the political parties will then have the opportunity to exchange views among themselves in formal meetings and also with the Election Commission. This will enable politicians, not guilty of corruption, to thrash out a more acceptable process within their respective parties.

I similarly welcome three other proposals from the Election Commission that are presently under consideration.

The first two relate to the delinking of political parties from their front organisations and the maintenance of branches abroad.

These factors have unnecessarily complicated our domestic industrial and educational environment and

also at times tarnished the image of our country. There has been more

than one instance where law and order personnel from the host

community had to be called in to

stop open fighting among factions of the same political party and also

between representatives of different political parties. There have also

found special status during the past

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