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## National agriculture policy



It is heartening to know that the Ministry of Agriculture has geared up its efforts to formulate an up-to-date "New National Agriculture Policy". As reported, the ministry will organise a meeting this month to review the draft national agriculture policy prepared by the 'Technical Working Group'. Policy guidelines will cover various agricultural issues including seed, fertiliser, irrigation and agriculture in the drought, flood, salinity prone areas.

It is sincerely expected that the government will very soon complete all the formalities towards formulation and publication of the 'New National Agriculture Policy'.

Professor M Zahidul Haque

Chairman  
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System  
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University  
Dhaka

### Attack on police

The incidents of last 10th and 11th April are obviously worrying. In the name of opposing the women's development policy, the bigots used the national mosque as the shield! Some so called pro(?) Islamic groups attacked the police using the mosque! It has also been learnt that the bigots used sticks and other weapons kept inside the mosque.

The government should take the matter seriously.

Moinul Alam  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

### Patients and doctors

The other night I along with my friend, who was suffering from severe pain in his backbone, went to consult a doctor. My friend had the pain all of a sudden and it was so acute that he could not even sit in the waiting room. As we did not make any appointment earlier, I repeatedly requested the man in charge of the chamber to give us an urgent appointment but in vain. Then I requested him to give me permission to talk to the doctor and unfortunately I again failed. He said that he would be rebuked for allowing me to talk to the doctor. He further said that nobody would be allowed to see the doctor without prior appointment. In the meantime the condition of my friend was deteriorating. So we went to a private hospital and took the emergency treatment from a doctor.

The experience of that night reminded me of a joke about doctors. The joke is: One day at about 12:30pm a man who was bitten by a dog went to consult a doctor. The doctor asked him, "Don't you know that I don't serve any patient after 12:00pm?" Then the patient replied, "Sir, I knew it but the unwise dog didn't. So I had to consult you."

If this is the case, then how will the patient be healed?

Ramij Ahmed  
Department of English  
University of Chittagong

### Student politics

Chief of the Judicial Commission Justice Habibur Rahman placed the report on the violent incidents on and around Dhaka University campus in August last year to chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed on November 15 last year. It was officially published on 23 March, with 28-point recommendations that include a ban on teacher and student politics by amending the Dhaka University Order 1973 and repealing the Political Parties Regulations 1976, if necessary.

I do support the recommendations made by the judicial probe body including a ban on teacher and student politics. In my own experience as a general student, I see the so-called leaders performing politically motivated activities but they rarely take any programme in favour of general students. As the student leaders are not elected by student vote, they do not value any general student's demand. They always lobby with political leaders for getting suitable posts in the committee.

Now we do not want to see the same faces again in the upcoming election. We want new faces who are not only patriotic but have got the vision to make this country a prosperous one. We really are fed up with those politicians who have got endless corruption records.

We are desperate to see a change now.

Minhaj Ahmed  
Uttara, Dhaka

### Train to Kolkata

I wonder why trains will run only once every week between Dhaka and Kolkata. Can people travelling for business stay a whole week before returning? But what is even more perplexing is that both trains from Dhaka and Kolkata travel out the same day and return back on the same day. This is another amazing schedule, certainly not designed to serve the customers. Presumably, the border stations will be manned for only two days in a week and closed for the remainder of the days.

Why can't the Indian train start three days after the Bangladeshi train? This way there will still be one service a week each way, BUT the customer will have the choice of taking the train every three or four days, instead of waiting for a whole week.

But then our governments are not run by businessmen!

A Hasanat Khan  
Uttara

### Environmental problems

Bangladesh suffers from a wide range of environmental problems, arising from drought, flood and other natural hazards because of its geographical location. Frequency of hazards is on the increase day by day. The quality of soil has deteriorated due to excessive use of agro-chemicals, unplanned land use, undesirable encroachment on forest areas for agriculture and settlements and indiscriminate disposal of hazardous industrial wastes. Unplanned land use and intrusion of saline water are causing degradation of soil in the coastal areas.

The surface water of the country is polluted through capricious disposal of untreated industrial effluents and municipal waste

water, runoff pollution from chemical fertilisers and pesticides and oil and lubes spillage in the coastal areas from the operation of sea and river ports and ship wreckage. The arsenic concentration in the groundwater in many areas is a major problem in Bangladesh now. The problem is acute in shallow tube-wells extracting groundwater from 10 to 100 m depth in the Southeast, South-central (the northern part only), and Southwest regions, which creates problems of getting safe drinking water in villages.

Bangladesh has 57 trans-boundary rivers, of which 54 are shared with India and 3 with Myanmar. A significant amount of water flow is withdrawn and diverted upstream by neighbouring countries for irrigation and other purposes and thereby reducing normal flow of water. The Farakka Barrage on the river Ganges is a notable example. Desertification prevails in some north-western areas of Bangladesh due to withdrawal and diversion of upstream water in the dry season by India. Besides, due to the proposed Inter-basin River Link Project of India, when implemented, the annual water flow of Bangladesh will be drastically decreased which will have a profound negative impact on economy, society and environment of Bangladesh.

The most serious consequences of climatic change for Bangladesh will be a rise in sea level along the Bay of Bengal coasts, causing inundation and submerging of 10 to 20 percent of the coastal land including the Sundarbans, as well as saline intrusion in the rivers, affecting millions of people.

Md. Tareq Mahmud  
Department of Environmental Science and Resource Management (ESRM)  
(MBSTU), Tangail

### Empowering women

We all want women to be empowered and also think that Bangladeshi women enjoy more respect and honour compared to the women of the world over. We also admit that we have a lot more to do. Islam has empowered women in the best possible way (though the so-called intellectuals without having adequate knowledge say that Islam has suppressed women) and changing the Sharia will not only be a great blow to the feelings of the common people of our country but will also be a major setback to the scheme of empowering women.

Syed Asifur Rahman  
Reaz Kazi Lane  
Sutrapur, Bogra

### Follow good examples

I heard from reliable elders that during the 1943 Bengal famine, Dhaka Nawab families (Ahsan Manzil-based 2nd family and Armanitola-based 3rd family) had changed their eating habits: whole-grain chapati (servants' food) was included and 'faan' (rice-starch/maar) was not spared. This is one of the reasons why people had confidence in them and they were the leaders of their times.

Why not those who run the government and their families queue up at the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR)-run fair price shops to buy rice - even as a symbolic gesture?

M. Emad  
Oxford, UK

### Maximising resource utilisation

This letter is in response to Gen. Moeen's interesting article in your Bangla New Year issue of April 14th.

I am putting some more technically sound and valid practices for maximising electric power utilisation and power generation without fuel-needed for Bangladesh in national interest.

Regarding CFLs (compact fluorescent lamps), I have been writing in the dailies and also the Energy & Power fortnightly (the relevant publication) about it for the last many years. One idea I suggested was to eliminate all import duties on these energy efficient lamps and their components, to make it affordable to the common man. Simultaneously, discourage the use of filament lamps (that we commonly use) by increasing the import duties on its materials and components! This combined step will offset the small financial loss of import duty, if any, on duty free import of CFLs and at the same time reduce our power consumption.

Similarly, increase the duty on electronic starters for fluorescent tube lamps, which are very costly, and therefore not commonly used. It can vastly reduce the power needed in fluorescent tube lights.

These two steps if taken will save us around 250MW all over the country, particularly during maximum demand evening hours when lighting load is at maximum!

Another source of electrical power generation without any fuel being required is from the natural gas pressure drop at the Gas Pressure Reducing Stations all over Bangladesh.

This was presented as a technical paper by the undersigned, at the Int. Computer & Elect. Eng. Conference held in Dhaka in 2004 but unfortunately it fell on deaf ears! By installing these Expansion Turbine Generator Sets in each Pressure Reducing Station in gas transmission line we can possibly generate around 500MW of electricity in Bangladesh without using any fuel whatsoever!

These subjects being my technical hobby, as well as my fond desire to implement, I would request General Moeen to seriously take it up in the overall national interest.

S.A. Mansoor  
Retired Engineer, Dhaka

## 'Resumption' of train service

It is wrong to suggest that Dhaka-Kolkata train service has been resumed after 43 years with effect from Pahela Baishakh 1415. Resumption relates to an issue which was in operation in the past and then restarted. In the case of Dhaka-Kolkata there has never been a direct rail link between the two cities. So the question of resumption of train services does not arise. One should term the event as introduction for the first time of direct rail link between Dhaka and Kolkata which has been possible with the construction of Jamuna Bridge. It may be mentioned here that prior to this, 43 years ago, trains used to run from Dhaka to Jagannathganj and then the passengers had to cross the river Jamuna by ferry.

It may be interesting to note that during the

sides!

Furthermore, the alleged corruption of the AL had taken place during 1996-2001 which were not apparently considered worthy of legal action by the following BNP govt. But now those have become priority cases. This has obviously raised questions in the public mind.

Abul Mohsin  
Siddheswari  
Dhaka

### Number of doctors

The Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare of Bangladesh claims that the country has a doctor patient ratio of 1:3169, considering all the doctors (42,881) registered so far with the BM & DC. However, there is a gross error in the report on working physicians (Govt. & Private) available for care & treatment of ailing patients. Because, many of the doctors (42,881) registered so far with the BM & DC have already expired (dead) & many of the doctors (42,881) registered so far with the BM & DC have left Bangladesh, working abroad (many of whom will not return as they have accepted citizenship of foreign countries), & many of the doctors (42,881) registered so far with the BM & DC are no longer involved in medicare & treatment, that is, they are either involved in business or some other profession, or retired, i.e., they are quite old and infirm for involvement in care & treatment of the people of Bangladesh. When all these factors are rightly considered, the number of working & living physicians (govt. & private) available for care & treatment of ailing patients would be probably less than 13,000. Thus there seems to be a gross error in the report on working physicians. This error needs to be corrected. As the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare is run by bureaucrats, who de facto possess no responsibility, they will take no steps to correct the statistical errors of health, the BM & DC, the DGHS, the BMA should take the pioneering role in correcting all discrepancies in health statistics. The BM & DC should first enlist the registered doctors who are living & working in Bangladesh. The BM & DC should enlist the registered doctors who have already expired. They should also enlist the registered doctors who are no longer involved in the profession. Moreover, a good number of registered doctors are involved in health administration, who are in no way directly involved in caring & treating patients. They should also be enlisted. The DGHS & the BMA can't avoid their responsibility in correcting the errors in health statistics.

The recent violent demonstration by the fanatic Islamic organisations against the government regarding the issue is really heart-breaking. What surprises me the most is the fact that despite assurance by the government that the move is not anti-Islamic, those fanatics continued the carnage and destruction of public property. I hope the government does not get off-track by actions of those fanatics. If this administration is to achieve full-fledged democracy, then it has to enact new laws which protect human rights. No democracy can thrive without proper protection of such rights.

A. Siddiqui  
Cornell University  
New York, USA

### Cartoon on corruption

I am referring to Sharier's cartoon published in The Daily Star on April 2 in which it was pointedly shown the mindset of the powers that be! On a weighing scale, some prominent leaders of the Awami League and the BNP were put on either side of the scale. But strangely the AL with comparatively less corruption was weighed down, whereas the BNP with much larger volume of corruption, particularly during 2001-2006 was shown lighter of the two

their future careers.

It will be a disaster to go for experimenting on SSC examinees. Please save our children from this disaster and stop this immediately before the 1st terminal exams in the schools. The imperfect system should be rectified and improved as he has suggested.

I am a guardian of a student of class nine. Please write an editorial on this subject. I am deeply anxious about the future of my son.

Dr. Nurul Islam  
Mirpur, Dhaka

## Footpaths



Footpath is a mysterious issue in our country! When political governments were in power we saw the media being vocal for freeing the footpaths from the illegal occupants. When this CTG started the drive against these occupants we saw the media appreciating it except the issue of evicting hawkers. But now everything is back to square one!

The pedestrians are the worst sufferers in Dhaka city because footpaths are occupied by beggars and hawkers.

Common people were happy to see the drive against occupation of footpaths and illegal parking. We expect that the authorities concerned will start the drive again and clear the footpaths, once and for all.

Imtiaz  
Uttara, Dhaka

## Sad truth



I read in the newspaper that the prices of hilsa fish rose by 50-100% before Pahela Baishakh. Why?

I have been in Japan during different festivals and saw that all shops reduced their prices during New Year, Christmas, Chinese New Year, etc by up to 80%. May be the reason is business. But do you think it is only for business? Isn't there any social responsibility?

But the situation is different in Bangladesh where businessmen look for opportunities to fleece the customers round the year. It's really sad.

Md. Shakhawat Hussain  
One-mail



Welcome Bangla Year 1415. Pahela Baishakh is a great festival for us. It is nice to see thousands of people on the streets wearing saree and panjabi. That gives me a feeling of great happiness. It is true that we are not happy in our daily life because of price hike, load-shedding, water shortage and so on. But we want to forget all our sorrows on joyous occasions.

This is the age of globalisation and we have to become part of the world at large while retaining our cultural identity.

Mohammad Anisur Rahman  
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Pahartali, Chittagong