



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.

Alternate irrigation



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

This new method, developed by agricultural scientists at BRRI is a wonderful innovation for Bangladesh. It drastically reduces the water needed for irrigation of our rice crop. The news has been published in all the dailies over the last few days. It represents a valuable breakthrough for our agriculture greatly benefiting the country.

Very simply it does away with flooding of rice fields all the time, which our farmers have been doing over generations. BRRI recommends that the rice sapling be covered with only two or three inches of water. No water needs be added till the water is all soaked and the field has no standing water and dry. Then again another two or three inches of water be filled on

the paddy field. This step is to be repeated for irrigation, rather than keeping the field continuously flooded with high level of water covering the rice saplings as these grow.

Two things are needed, and it must be done. Firstly, widespread public recognition must be given to the team of scientists by our national government; those involved in developing this water saving method of irrigation.

The government should arrange to send them to different rice growing regions in Bangladesh; to spread the idea first-hand with our farmers and talk to them, explaining the cost savings for them by adopting this method of irrigation for their paddy fields! This is of more impor-

tance and relevance for north Bangladesh, where water is comparatively scarce.

Secondly, the government should give wide publicity to the farmers all over the country, widely covering all audiovisual media. Our MPs should be informed about this method of irrigation and advised to go to their respective constituencies and explain this method of irrigation to farmers and villagers involved in rice cultivation. The idea needs to be followed up vigorously, to put it into widespread practice all over the country in national interest, to conserve our water resources.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Smart governance?
How good it was to see the word 'smart' used correctly in the beautifully-written article 'Smart Governance' in the edition of February 24! One of the chief tasks of those of us who are concerned with moral education everywhere is, surely, to change what people mean by 'smart'. The writer defined 'smart' as 'simple, moral, accountable, responsible, transparent' and went through each of those words describing how it should work in Bangladesh today, especially in government.

Some think it is 'smart' to tease, harass and even persecute those who are seen as weaker than they are. On the same day as this article, there was shocking description, in the 'Point and Counterpoint' section, of the behaviour of Saudi Arabian students who think it is 'smart' to go round the streets, harassing 'foreigners' - by which they mean those who are not Saudis - and even beating them up.

I had a worksheet for my students on 'How to react when bad things happen to you'. One way is 'aggressive', another is 'passive' and the third I had written as 'smart' -

but I quickly realised that this word had different meanings and had to re-write the worksheet with a definition! Nevertheless, they quickly got the idea and did some excellent work for me with illustrations from their own lives. I learnt a lot about the realities they live with today.

Every person in society needs to do something to redefine this term. Those who think it is 'smart' to smoke cigarettes - or drive a car when they are 14 - must be given some facts about health and safety. Those who think it is 'smart' to grope a woman on a bus should get thrown off by men who do NOT think so. If pupils think it is 'smart' to assume their home tutors, parents, big brothers or Class Prefects should do their homework for them, then they have to be told it is NOT smart but stupid! If a government department thinks it is 'smart' to accept a charter or report and then ignore it, they have to be disillusioned. If a builder thinks it is 'smart' to replace the cement recommended by the architect by lower-quality cement and to pocket the

difference in price, he must be discovered, named and shamed along with those who failed to supervise him. (The Englishman supervising the building of the Pakshi Bridge was up at 2.00am to check the quality of the cement being poured into the uprights!) Those given new jobs in government departments where corruption is re-emerging causing a number of well-funded NGO's to be fed up, cancel their projects and leave Bangladesh if they think it is 'smart' to ask for luxury cars, it would surely be 'smart' to offer them one of the numerous confiscated ones from the last party in office!

Some villagers noted that each upright of a bridge being built near them had 6 steel cables in it instead of 10 and reported it and it had to be rebuilt. A poor farmer developed a new kind of seed that grew well in his area. Now THAT is 'smart'!

What the author implies above all, it is considered 'smart' to be rich and not to bother about whether the means of getting rich are fair or unfair.

He is right: if all of us are not a great deal 'smarter', how will the better Bangladesh ever be built?

Angela Robinson
Gulshan 1, Dhaka

Harbouring terrorists

As a lawyer and a human rights advocate, I am absolutely against the proposed law by our Law Minister as to penalising the landlords for renting their properties to terrorists. This proposed law will open up lacunae for landlords to abuse the privacy of peace-loving pious people in the name of keeping an eye on their private family lives.

We are sure to see abuse of power by the landlords in harassing tenants who fail in their rents owing to financial constraints. The proposed law will also create unreasonable pressure on landlords who may already be burdened with bank-loans to build the houses. Rather laws can be promulgated which will have penalty mentioned against people who will harbour or shelter terrorists. These simple differences in definitions as to the proposed laws will ensure fulfilment of human rights and fundamental freedom and deviations may infringe on our fundamental rights as citizens.

However, the formal inauguration of the Ekushey can and should be held at the Bangla Academy premises keeping in mind the glorious tradition.

Mufassil Islam
Human Rights Advocate
UK

unit needs not only money but time also. At least three years is needed to build a power station. And what will we do during this period?

There is only one way to meet this crisis. We have to buy electricity from our neighbouring countries. Nepal and Bhutan are surplus in power. They are not unwilling to sell that to us.

Muhammad Harunur Rashid
Retired Professor and Head of Civil Eng.
RUET & faculty member of the BUET

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