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Alternate irrigation



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

This new method, developed by agricultural scientists at BIRRI 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. BIRRI 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

BDR mutiny

We are not only shocked but also disappointed to see the army officers' dead bodies rescued from manholes, sewerage lines and mass graves. It's really an irreparable loss for our nation. I know that nothing can pacify the pains of the victims' families who were victimised by some misguided soldiers. Now the government have to take immediate steps to bring back the confidence in all forces. It is very much clear that there was a conspiracy against our sovereignty. Those who organised this mutiny might have been motivated by some enemies of the state. There are so many questions coming into our minds about this incident. I hope the government will investigate the whole matter seriously and elaborately.

And I pray for salvation of all the departed souls.

Anis
Pahartali
Chittagong

I am deeply saddened and outraged at the events unfolding at the BDR Headquarters. I could not hold back my tears as I was reading your newspaper's online edition.

All Bangladeshis, wherever we are, should remain united in this hour of national tragedy. There should be no mercy for the killers. My prayers are with the families who lost their loved ones.

Yasmin Zaman
Toronto, Canada

The govt has formed some high-powered committees to look into the incidents, about which I have nothing to comment, but I would like to make the following recommendations:

1) The BDR HQ be moved from the capital away from residential areas to suburbs of Khulna, Jessore, or some other areas.

2) The present BDR areas should be allocated to schools, colleges and some universities of Dhaka (there are many such schools in Dhanmondi area). This will also help to reduce traffic congestion.

Jamil
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Hell broke loose on the BDR Headquarters in Dhaka on February 24, 2009. Soldiers opened fire at their officers, killing many of them.

It is a macabre incident, we are numbed with shock and despair. People of the whole country became very scared, not knowing what was going to happen.

In no way the action of the soldiers could be justified, they may have grievances but it is not the way to redress those, they could have resorted to other ways. They are employed to secure us, not going on a killing spree, shedding blood of their own people. It is so unfortunate and detestable.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Woes of bank employees

Before the 1980s there was a clear path of career progression for all staff in the then state-owned commercial banks in Bangladesh. In fact, major recruitment was held to the post of clerk and cashier and based on their annual confidential report (ACR) most of them were promoted after a certain period of time. A person with graduation degree could have been promoted to the rank of officer within 5-7 years of his/her satisfactory service. Still there are lots of Senior Officers in all those banks even in the Bangladesh Bank also who had started their career as clerk or cashier.

However, with the passage of time, the system of recruitment and promotion might have been changed at all those commercial banks. As a result, the careers of a good number of people who started their jobs in 1980s with a hope of glorious life, are in a shambles. Most of them are still struggling with their lives in the same posts or just a post higher than the post they had joined and have been doing the same job for the last 20 years or so. So far as I came to know, at Agrani Bank alone the number of this type of employees is 800-1000. I do not know whether the poor guy can seek justice to the court or not. Even if it is possible, it will bring another hassle for him to continue the case for an indefinite period of time. This is simply impossible for a person like him.

The situation thus compelled him to sell his father's property to adjust the loss.

I think it is humanly impossible for a person to do the same thing for the whole life. The person about whom I am talking is suffering from diabetes. His eyesight has also been in trouble. He has to change his glass so frequently.

I therefore urge the authorities to please review the status of those hapless people and reclassify positions of the potential ones to the rank of a Junior Officer. Others with less calibre may either be given some clerical jobs or asked to go on voluntary retirement with some handsome benefits which they may invest for some earnings to maintain their livelihood.

Md. Sirajul Islam Molla

Kanthal Bagan

Dhaka

Nightmarish train journey

I was going to Dhaka from Mymensingh by Teesta Intercity train on 24-2-09. I had a ticket of Shovan Chair (class) with seat no. Ga-58. Of the three classes, Shovan Chair stands in the middle.

The train reached Mymensingh Railway Station at 5:25pm-- about half an hour behind the schedule. But it reached Dhaka at 9:25pm-- one and a quarter hour later than the schedule. The distance it traversed was only 120 km which means it maintained an average speed of 30 km per hour in these days of

ICT of the 21st century! The train was getting late to later increasingly with the passage of time due mainly to several unscheduled stoppages.

The compartment was dirty all over and the seats were below standard. Further, it was jam-packed with excess passengers, possibly without tickets, who had blocked the path way in the middle of it causing inconveniences to the bona fide passengers.

The greatest suffering caused was its toilet system that went beyond description and reflected poor taste of the authorities concerned. The door of the toilet could not be closed when someone got into it for use. My seat unfortunately was close to the toilet and hence bad smell was coming from it all the way through the ever open door. Further, it had no water supply and the lower part of the basin was broken to move to and fro with jerking of the moving train.

May I draw the attention of the authorities concerned as to how a compartment like this could be considered as useable by the passengers? By the same taken, would they feel that the compartment should be repaired fully or replaced by new ones? Also, illegal intruders should be expelled after proper ticket checking (there was not a single checking all the way).

Prof. Dr. Md. Mahfuzul Huque
Department of Agricultural Extension Education
Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh

AR Rahman

Congratulations, AR Rahman, the music maestro winning two Academy Awards for his outstanding music for the movie Slumdog Millionaire. I was quite sure about that. As a fan I'm rejoicing. At last he's got his long due international recognition. I think he's the best music director of our time. And if he were a British or American he might have won several Academy Awards.

Some call him the Mozart from Madras, he's unique. He himself is a genre of music. Such is his impact that we don't call a song "Slumdog Millionaire or Delhi 6" song but we simply call it AR Rahman's song. To me he's the last word of music.

From "Roja" to "Delhi 6", "Roja Jane Man" to "Dil Gira Dafatan" we are mesmerized by his awesome music. His first album "Roja" declared one of the five best ever music track used in movie history by Time magazine. The judges conceded that they did-

n't understand a single word of the lyrics of the songs. And here lies the true strength of his music. It breaks the barrier of language & culture. In his music we find a cosmopolitan touch. Time and again he raises his bar higher and higher with amazingly diverse

fans across the world are now celebrating his success; they are captivated by his alluring music. Movie producers used his name in the promo like cine star; singers are delighted if they get a chance to render his music.

Regardless of what you



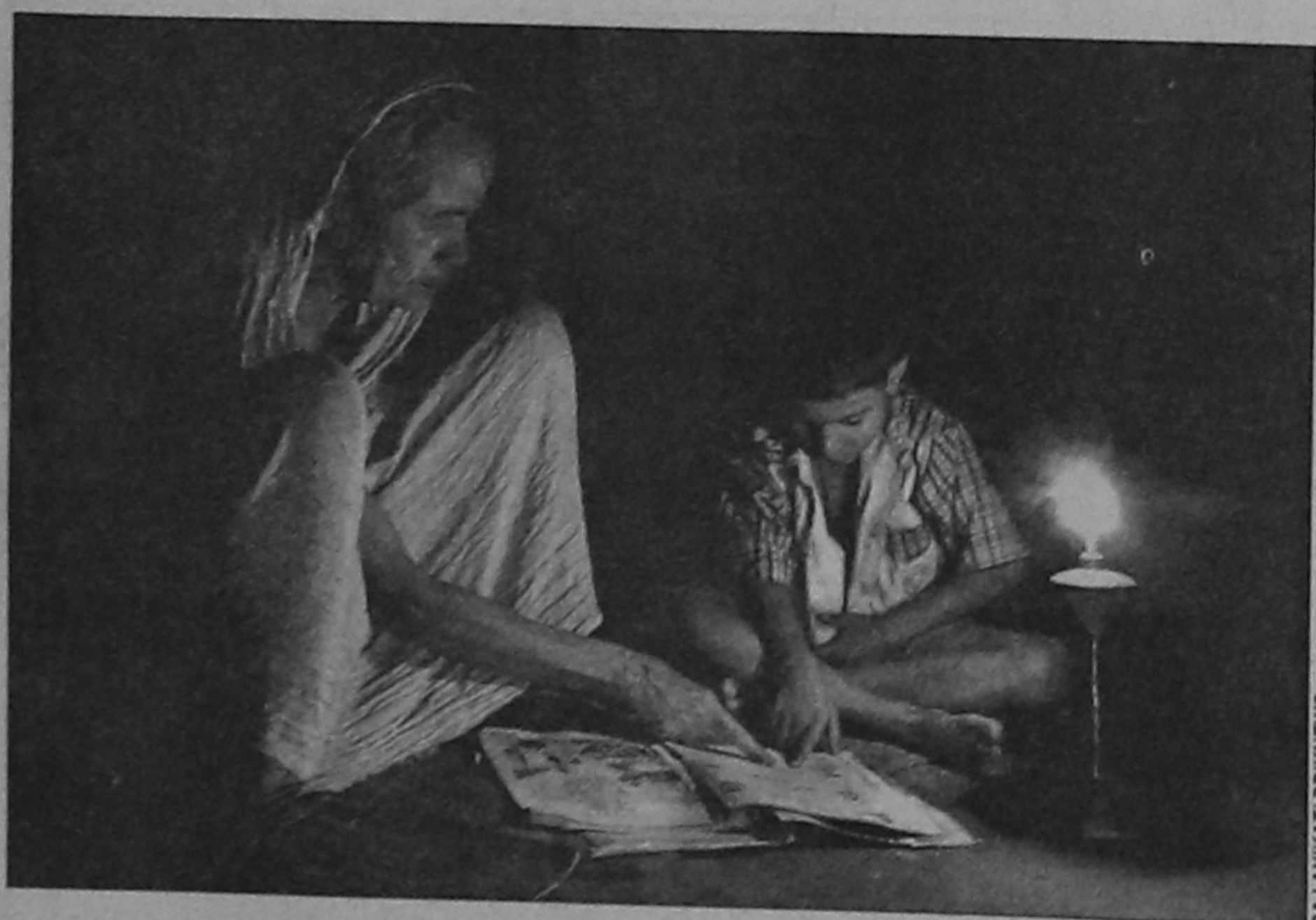
soundtracks.

The son of a musician who was once forced to rent the music instrument of his late father for living. He joined a band as a keyboardist at a tender age of 11! That prodigy is now a world beater. Millions of

believe, Rahman is an international phenomenon producing music at a level higher than anybody else right now. Listen to him...

Solaiman Palash
East Jurain, Dhaka

Power shortage



RAJ ANKAT/DRINKERS

Much has been told and many opinions were expressed in round table conferences and seminars in the bevy of experts. But it's true that we are going to have a shortfall of near about 2,000mw of electric power in the coming summer. Leaving aside the public discomfort, our vital food production is bound to be jeopardized. It is a fact that rice cultivation needs lot of water and we need power to run the pumps.

Seminars will not help stop the outage of power. To set up a generation

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

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 lacunas 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 fall 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.

Mufassil Islam
Human Rights Advocate
UK

Ekushey Boi Mela

During the last couple of years, the number of visitors to the Boi Mela has increased tremendously. Moreover, the number of stalls has increased manifold. The stalls now extend to the road in front of the Bangla Academy premises. Paucity of space has made it difficult for the visitors to roam freely around the bookstalls. The premises are extremely congested and resembles an open bazaar. With due respect to the Martyrs of the Language Movement, may I suggest that the Ekushey Boi Mela be shifted to an area earmarked for the Industrial Fair at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. The Industrial Fair could conclude at least two weeks prior to the Boi Mela.

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

Shamim Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

Internet at DU

The University of Dhaka is the biggest educational institution of Bangladesh. All Internet facilities should be available here. But the reality is different. There are two cyber centres in Dhaka University. One is in the central library & another is in TSC. Central library cyber has only 16 computers for the students. It was inaugurated last year. TSC cyber has 35 computers but students can use only 20.

Central library cyber time is 9:30am to 4:00pm. TSC cyber opens at 12:00pm & closes at 10:00pm. Moreover, every day load shedding kills at least one hour.

Every day we see a queue for using Internet. Here students use Internet with a card. The 60 taka card is for 5 hours, which means 12 taka for every one hour. This is really costly.

We know this government wants a digital Bangladesh. But in our university Internet charge is so high. This is really sad news.

I think, to ensure Digital Bangladesh, every student needs to use Internet.

Mahfuzur Rahman Manik
IER, University of Dhaka

Indian visa centre

There have been reports in our dailies on miseries faced by Bangladeshi nationals while queuing up for filing application for Indian visa at the Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) managed by State Bank of India. I had the opportunity to stand in queue for applying for the Indian visa at IVAC in Gulshan. Here is my experience. I reached the place at 5:00am when it was quite dark.

I was directed by the police on duty to go towards Aarong and stand in queue there, about 600 yards away from IVAC. There in the darkness I found hundreds of people were already in queue since midnight. As the first ray of daylight broke in we were told by the police to put our hands on the shoulder of the person in front and march towards the lane where IVAC is housed. A policeman led the march.

It was like criminals being marched into prison. By then it was about 6:00am. Suddenly another group rushed in from nowhere. There was chaos and confusion followed by a mild lathi

charge. In this melee I found a place behind about 500 people.

Let I mention about the jostling in the queue, pestering by visa brokers, and hours of wait with no certainty of submitting a visa application but the ignominy that you go through is unbearable - just for the sake of getting a visa to go to India. Apparently IVAC is not concerned about what goes on outside their office.

My experience tells me the only way IVAC can ease the situation and bring some respectability is either by extending the time for receiving visa application by two more hours and delivery of visas at a later date or appoint sub agents as was done by the Indian High Commission before IVAC took over.

I would also like to draw the attention of our government to the fact that IVAC enjoys no diplomatic immunity and police should not be deployed at taxpayers expense to manage the crowd outside IVAC office.

A concerned citizen
One-mail