

# Tighten your water taps to fight the water crisis

What is the alternative? How do we come to grips with the demon of the shortfall of 30 crore litres? The answer is simple. The crisis is due more to mismanagement, misuse and waste of water than to short supply. Water is a scarce commodity. Tighten the water taps for efficient use of water and stop colossal and scandalous waste of water.

ABDUL HANNAN

SUMMER is not in full steam yet. But the city is already in the grip of a severe water crisis. Newspapers print pictures of forlorn men, women and children waiting with empty pitchers for hours on end for a pail of water. The cabinet has decided to deploy the army to help ease the water crisis in the city. A friend jokingly said: "It is like using a cannon to kill a mosquito."

The government knows that the crisis is potentially politically explosive, and if it is not treated as an emergency the seething anger and simmering frustration of the city's population may soon spiral out of hand and spill onto the streets.

The prime minister's principal secretary called a meeting of senior officers of Wasa to discuss the matter. But poor Wasa, subjected to hectoring for every lapse, is at tether's end and can supply only 190 crore litres of water against a demand of 220 crore litres. The unprecedented load shedding of electricity every two hours has aggravated the situation as water pumps lie idle. The Syedabad water treatment facility meets only 13 percent of the needed water supply. The remaining supply depends on groundwater drawn by 539 pumps.

What is the alternative? How do we come to grips with the demon of the shortfall of 30 crore litres? The answer is simple. The crisis is due more to mismanagement, misuse and waste of water than to short supply. Water is a scarce commodity. Tighten the water taps for efficient use of water and stop colossal and scandalous waste of water.

Newspapers have reported that the water crisis is acute in Baridhara, Gulshan, Banani, Dhanmondi and Uttara. There is no provision for water, sanitation and electricity for the poor, underprivileged and marginalised people living in slums and shanties. So the question of short supply of water for them does not

arise.

Those posh areas are the principal offenders contributing to the waste of water and, hence, the scarcity. The comparative rich elite living in these areas cannot but bear a fair share of the blame for their indifference in stemming the wastage of water. Take a walk in these areas and you will invariably come across drivers washing cars with hose pipes when only a bucket of water would do the job. The owners never care to warn the drivers about the scarcity of drinking water in the city. The use of hose pipes to water the gardens in these areas is common.

I recall receiving a water use advisory warning every summer from the New York City Corporation, asking citizens to refrain from watering gardens and not let water taps run needlessly while washing and shaving. In Georgia in the US it is a punishable offence to waste water in gardening during summer.

Our army, without confining themselves to the boardrooms and supply stations of Wasa, would do well to patrol incognito in different areas to detect the offenders wasting water and impose deterrent punishment. We suffer from a developing country's illness of waste, carelessness and irresponsibility.

Developers in these areas are the villains of the piece in matters of wasting of water. One can see water overflowing round the clock from the tanks constructed to wet the bricks. Besides, the construction of apartment buildings consumes huge quantity of water. I don't know if Wasa keeps tabs on the quantity of water used by developers and whether the water bills are paid correctly. The workers on the site waste water in gay abandon without any checks or hindrance.

On road 15 Dhanmondi R/A where I live, I have seen workers using hose pipes to spray water on the streets to ward off dust. The neighbours of the Nazrul Institute are witness



Waste not, want not.

to it. When rebuked by me they shrugged their shoulders, gave me a rude stare and carried on defiantly without remorse. What is needed is community awareness and vigilance to resist such criminal negligence.

I was brought up in the early fifties with the middle class morality of thrift, simplicity and restraint in manners, way of life and expenses, and can brook no wastage. I have to scream everyday, reluctantly though, at housemaids who are compulsive water wasters. Incidentally, they wash clothes separately, using 20 buckets of water where 5 would do.

The water they waste during their bath is exasperating. If you have more than two maids, rest assured that there will be incremental rise in water bills because of inordinately high consumption. We are captive to their tyranny. Instead of throwing away the waste water after cleaning the floor, one can

use it to water the garden.

Blaming the government for the water crisis is crass politics. The opposition is already crying hoarse that it is the government's failure. But the government alone cannot solve all problems without active support and willing participation of the people. We have to meet the challenge individually and collectively.

It is the moral obligation of every citizen to use water scrupulously, and to make sure that the errant drivers, gardeners, construction workers and housemaids do not waste water. The shortfall in water supply can be faced more than adequately by launching an awareness campaign by Wasa through TV to avoid waste of precious water. Madam prime minister, kindly enact a punitive law against wastage of water.

Abdul Hannan is a former Press Counselor in Bangladesh UN Mission in New York.

# Beware a comedy of mirrors

Beware the comedy of mirrors, when you don't get what you see -- or, worse, you don't see what you get. Sania Mirza and Shoaib Malik have known "true love," or one of its many transitory manifestations, before otherwise, the first would not have got engaged and the second would not have got married earlier.

M.J. AKBAR

A comedy of errors is a minor fracas. We have all been there. But beware the comedy of mirrors, when you don't get what you see -- or, worse, you don't see what you get.

Sania Mirza and Shoaib Malik have known "true love," or one of its many transitory manifestations, before, otherwise, the first would not have got engaged and the second would not have got married earlier. There is another lady in Hyderabad, Ayesha, who is displaying a nikahnama as proof of an earlier Malik marriage.

The Malik family is careful in its response, describing the document as invalid rather than a forgery. But they are safe, since there is no legal hitch to the Shoaib-Sania wedding: Muslim men can marry four times in Pakistan (or, indeed, in India). Sania recently celebrated her engagement to a childhood friend who turned out, on closer inspection, to be maritally challenged.

Shakespeare took care, when writing Romeo and Juliet, to make them about 15 years of age, in the middle of their teens. You have to be gloriously naïve to die for love. Adults live for love, and hope for sustainable compatibility in marriage. It is ironic that the term "Romeo" has acquired connotations of promiscuity when the actual chap was the very model of high romance and fidelity.

Shoaib is 30, and certainly not a Shakespearean Romeo, either in age or temperament. At 30, the original Romeo would have had a son looking around for his own Juliet. Sania has surely factored in the possibility that her soon-to-be-husband might have been a modern rather than an old-fashioned Romeo. But that is a meaningless quibble. She is perfectly aware of the implications of her decision, including the fact that she is marrying a Pakistani. She has every right to make a personal choice that transcends nationality, but she must indulge in the luxury of illusions.

There are other issues, etched in the sexual subconscious of the subcontinent, some of which can barely be mentioned in print but resonate through a mass psychology created by subsets of false arrogance. Signals will be read into television images once the drama is given its visuals.

Sania and Shoaib are stellar magnets for the media, and

# Bangladesh's face to the world

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the first face of Bangladesh to the world. Currently, Professor Muhammad Yunus is the face of Bangladesh. He is the pride of Bangladesh and a hero to the world. The powerful, rich and famous like Bill Clinton and Microsoft's Bill Gates want to be seen with Dr. Yunus. Dr. Yunus is an asset to Bangladesh.



FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

THE New Year started auspiciously for Bangladesh. One of its illustrious sons, the legendary founder of Brac Mr. Fazle Hasan Abed, was knighted by the Queen. Congratulations to Sir Fazle! Sir Fazle, and the founder of Grameen Bank and Nobel Peace Prize winner Professor Muhammad Yunus are the two famous Bangladeshis the whole world reveres. This article tells how Dr. Muhammad Yunus is regarded abroad, especially in America, and how he enhances Bangladesh's prestige in the world.

When Professor Yunus visits America, he is ubiquitous on television and radio. He appeared on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," a must appearance for the famous and the mighty. He appeared on comedy shows like Jon Stewart's "The Daily Show," exchanging

uttered the name "Muhammad Yunus" repeatedly without the need to elaborate on who he was referring to.

Bill Clinton was an early and persistent advocate for the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Dr. Muhammad Yunus. He expressed this in a *Rolling Stone* magazine interview, as well as in his autobiography, *My Life*. In a speech given at University of California, Berkeley, in 2002, Clinton described Dr. Yunus as "a man who long ago should have won the Nobel Prize [and] I'll keep saying that until they finally give it to him." They did, in 2006.

Here is how American viewers reacted to Dr. Yunus's appearance on "The Daily Show." One viewer wrote: "The guy does have a point though. There wouldn't be so much debt in the USA if the people had to meet whoever they borrowed money from every month, and try and explain why they don't have the money to pay them back." Wrote another: "He's someone I admire and envy. If he's religious, he makes his religion look good." A third added: "That is the kind of men we always want. They are kind enough to help others who are in need of help. We need such kind of people really. I hope to have such people across the world for they are kind and ready to help the poor." Said another: "This man holds to such a great ideal. Religious or not, this man definitely gained humanism points with the comment, 'I think if you are poor, you should be getting the first priority.' Making the world a better place for your fellow humans is the best thing anyone can do." Commented another: "He is truly a brilliant man, well deserving of his Nobel Prize."

After seeing Dr. Yunus explain "social (nonprofit) business" on "Real Time with Bill Maher," a viewer emailed: "Proud of u mr Yunus!!! proud of bangladeshiz!!!"

In its 2006 award citation the Nobel Committee said: "Muhammad Yunus has shown himself to be a leader who has managed to translate visions into practical action for the benefit of millions of people, not only in Bangladesh but also in many other countries. Loans to poor people without any financial security had appeared to be an impossible idea. From modest beginnings three decades ago, Yunus has, first and foremost through Grameen Bank, developed micro-credit into an ever more important instrument in the struggle against poverty. Grameen Bank has been a source of ideas and models for the many institutions in the field of micro-credit that have sprung up around the world."

Dr. Muhammad Yunus was the first

Bangladeshi and third Bengali (after Rabindranath Thakur and Amartya Sen) to ever win a Nobel Prize. After receiving the news of the important award, Dr. Yunus announced that he would use part of his share of the \$1.4 million award money to create a company to make low-cost, high-nutrition food for the poor, while the rest would go toward setting up an eye hospital for the poor in Bangladesh.

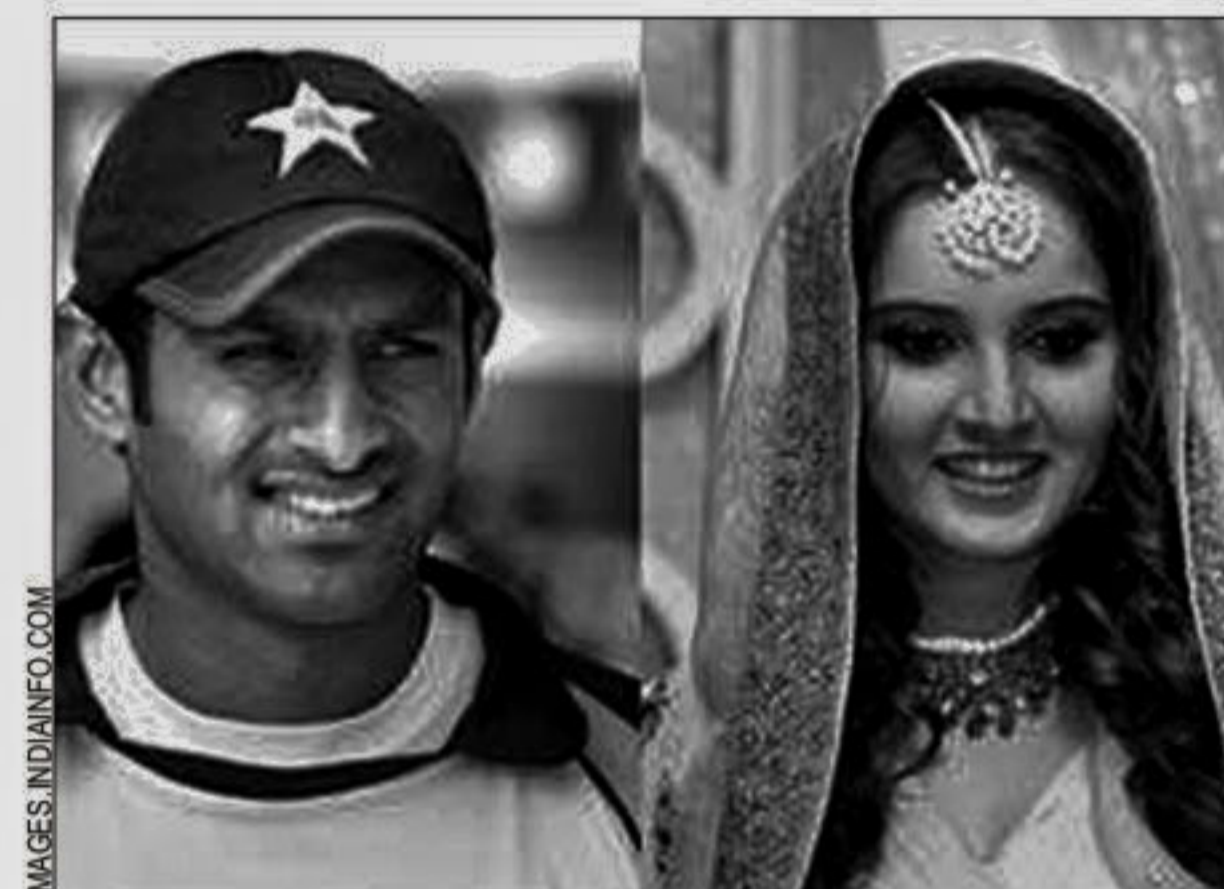
Professor Yunus has won numerous other awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Obama in 2009, the King Abdul Aziz Medal in 2007, the Ramon Magsaysay Award, the World Food Prize, the Sydney Peace Prize, and in December 2007 the Ecuadorian Peace Prize. Dr. Yunus has been awarded 26 honorary doctorate degrees, and 15 special awards. The Bangladesh government brought out a commemorative stamp to honour his Nobel Award.

In January 2008, Houston, Texas declared January 14 as "Muhammad Yunus Day." He was invited to, and gave, the MIT commencement address on June 6, 2008, and Oxford's Romanes Lecture on December 2, 2008. He received the Dwight D. Eisenhower Medal for Leadership and Service from the Eisenhower Fellowships at a ceremony in Philadelphia on May 21, 2009. He was also voted 2nd in Prospect magazine's 2008 global poll of the world's top 100 intellectuals. Dr. Yunus was named among the most desired thinkers the world should listen to by the FP 100 (world's most influential elite) in the December 2009 issue of *Foreign Policy* magazine.

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The Awami League government swept into power with a huge mandate and, therefore, it should be all-inclusive. The government of Bangladesh should appoint Professor Muhammad Yunus as Bangladesh's goodwill ambassador to the world. That way Bangladesh can tap into the enormous regard and affection the world has for Dr. Yunus, and through him for Bangladesh.

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their marriage will be a public event with repercussions and interpretations beyond their mutual relationship. Pakistani tennis authorities have already made a claim on her; although we have not been told whether Pakistani morality monitors have endorsed the short skirts and T-shirts Sania wears on tennis courts. Her mother-in-law, apparently, has already said that such sartorial minimalism is not her preferred taste. India has no problems with skirts, but it might have one with such mothers-in-law.

Love is about wives and husbands; marriage is about mothers-in-law. Fed with the adrenalin of illusion, it is easy to rush in where angels dare to tread. In your happy delirium, you do not notice that the honeymoon has been named after a moon, and a moon wanes after it waxes -- and if you are not careful, disappears behind a cloud. Sania's first serious lunar probe should be to find out whether she has become a wife or a trophy wife. This would apply on both the individual and collective level.

Shoaib Malik's track record is not very encouraging, if his "alleged" first wife Ayesha is to be believed. It was a marriage, apparently, made in a telephone bhavan, since the nikah was solemnised over long-distance phone on June 3, 2002. Ayesha's photographs, in which she seemed slim, it seems, entranced Shoaib. According to Ayesha, she was dumped when he discovered that she was fat. Shoaib contests this. But it would be unusual for a conventional Indian woman to invent a high-profile accusation of such a sensitive nature.

In any case, the relevant point for Sania is not the weight of an allegation that may or may not be true, but the weight of the reason. If Ayesha's problem was the difference between pose and adipose, I hope, for her sake, that Sania is immune to rising fat levels in her body. Equally, for her sake, I hope Sania has not become a trophy wife for her husband's country.

Sania still believes that she can continue to be a citizen of India. This is correct in theory; the practice might be another story. India and Pakistan do not permit dual citizenship. Pakistan law demands that if a citizen's spouse wants to live in the country, he or she must become a Pakistani citizen. A sub-continent mother-in-law might wonder why her son's wife can only meet her with permission from the government. And Sania would need a separate passport booklet only for Pak visas.

For the couple, Dubai will be a residence, not a home. Sania and Shoaib are sports professionals. Their flutter with the limelight is lucrative, but brief. Their children will need a nationality, and, unless they shift to London or America, they will be Pakistani. Sania is welcome to whatever future she has fashioned for herself, but she should not fool herself into believing that she can marry a Pakistani and retain the rights and privileges of an Indian. On April 11, Sania Mirza will acquire the right to become a Pakistani citizen, with its mother-in-law's dress codes. She should grasp the opportunity. Why the reluctance?

The columnist is editor of *The Sunday Guardian*, published from Delhi, and *India on Sunday*, published from London.