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Saline tolerant paddy!



FIROZ GAZI/DRINKNEWS

This encouraging BSS news report was published in all dailies on 18 July, but unfortunately not in the front page, that it deserved! This is a very important development for Bangladesh, given the ever-increasing encroachment of saline waters in our rivers and shores, decreasing land available for paddy plantation. It is a great achievement for the BRRI scientists. Over the decades to come, it will help increase paddy plantation acres and increase our production of paddy to feed our ever-growing population! It is a very commendable achievement and it deserves public national recognition!

As reported, the plantation to saving life-cycle has been reduced by two weeks compared to BRRI-53 and 54 the fastest growing rice variety! This too will help us in increasing production during the rice season and the possibility of an extra crop may well be realised!

Given the in-shore encroachment of saline water, these saline resistant varieties of paddy, will be god's gift for us made available by our worthy BIRRI scientists! We can now recover more such fallow saline land, and increase rice production.

Hats off to the BIRRI team, who for Bangladesh have been literally: "A friend in need, is a friend indeed"! The nation is indebted to them for this and many more breakthroughs in the agriculture and farming sector, the most important for our agro-based economy!

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

School inspection

Regarding the primary school inspections, I am reminded of a story, which my grandfather narrated to me, some seven decades ago.

In the village Amda (PS Porsha in the then Dinajpur district, now in Naogaon) there was a small primary school. Now to reach this village, one had to traverse twenty four miles of muddy and uneven roads (nearest railhead was that far) by horse or by bullock cart (twelve hours of back breaking journey).

One fine morning, the English District Magistrate, arrived to inspect the inaccessible village school, to find out how this school was faring. For this he had his own way. The District Magistrate went to class II of the school. He asked the class, "Dinajpur Zilai, baro ana, fasal hoile, eksho gane, kato fasal hoibe" (If in terms of rupees and annas, the rice production is twelve annas, then in terms of percentage, what shall it be). Several students raised their hands and replied that it is 75%. The Englishman entered in the school order book, "A very good school".

Now with the present metalled roads, the village can be reached from Dhaka in about eight hours or so.

As of now there are primary schools in every village in the country, with some exceptions. For inspecting the pri-

mary schools, there are the Upazila Education officer/Assistant Upazila Education Officers. This being so it is hoped that all the schools are cared for adequately. The quality of education would clearly be reflected by the performance of the students in different examinations.
Shahabuddin Mahtab
Gulshan, Dhaka

Savings instruments

A press release quoting Hon. Finance Minister about tax deduction on Savings certificates, appearing in The Daily Star on July 9, 2010, attracted my attention.

In his explanation, the Honourable Finance Minister said "...the new tax rate introduced this fiscal year would not apply to the savings certificates that mature before July 1, 2010." In support, a statement by an official of the NBR has made it all the more clear than one understands. It said, "It was clearly stated in the money bill that the new decision would not be effective for the certificates that matured before July 1."

If this is so as stated, why we public then, continue to suffer with the instrument in question, at the hands of the relevant authorities, for instance, the Post Offices and/or the Savings Bureau. When approached, they expressed their helplessness in the matter. In the absence of a clear government directive to them in this regard, they are not able in any way to have our claims met in whatever manner we

see, in the press.

Such was the experience as myself and wife, had this morning, 11 July 10. Together we went to GPO for getting cashed our savings certificates that matured end of June this year (last FY). I took with me a paper cutting of the said explanation by the Hon. FM in case it was needed. At this, my wife laughed and said that it would not work, as the GPO might refuse us, on the plea of not getting the necessary government orders. Retorting to her I replied, "Were you not aware of the 'Digital Bangladesh' we now live in?" But on reaching GPO, I could realize that my wife was right in her point that we did not come out of our old traditions as yet. Some advised us to wait for a week.

So we wait to get things done. Hope and pray that this would be looked into by the finance ministry and the NBR.
Engr. Shaheedul Islam
Former Member, BWDB
Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Great message

Our dearest Rasul Hazrat Muhammad (Pbuh) said, "If you can afford to do good to anyone, you do so; but do not try to do any harm to him or her. Moreover, if you think that people will suffer owing to your misbehaviour, you should go to the hill (that is, s/he should be far away from people)."

Everyone should always bear in mind the holy message of the Rasul (Pbuh).
Habibur Rashid Ismail
Chittagong

End or beginning of real science?

Jute is one of the most important fibre crops after cotton. Jute has a significant commercial potential for the generation of diversified value-added industrial products, in addition to its tremendous potential for industrial production of packaging material. Plant breeders have indicated that each of the two jute species contain very limited genetic variability with respect to adaptability to different agronomic environments, fibre quality, fibre yield, and susceptibility to diseases and pests. Jute genome sequencing and the subsequent gene discovery works from the refined jute genome sequence would greatly accelerate jute genetic improvement works.

Recent jute genome draft sequencing might pave the way of refining the sequence and eventually identifying the genes and their control elements for economic traits. The draft sequence needs to be refined first by resequencing and confirming that there are least possible mistakes in the sequence. After sequencing comes the daunting task of gene annotation or gene discovery. That means finding the real meaning of those long stretches of A, T, G, and C's. Then complex gene networks and gene interaction should be identified. The most important works would be to find the quantitative trait loci for agronomic traits. We need to train our young people in bioinformatics. They would carry out the follow up works of gene discovery and other complex genetic system from the genome sequence.
Dr. M. Rafique Uddin
Banani, Dhaka

Energy saving?

The government is distributing energy saving bulbs among the people in Rajshahi. On the other hand, road lights of Rajshahi City Corporation have not been replaced with the energy saving bulbs yet. Not only that, road lights are switched on at least one hour before dusk and put off two hours after dawn!!

I would like to draw the attention of the people concerned to the matter.
Mawduda Hasnin
Rajshahi

Suicidal tendency

I refer to the increasing incidence of suicide among school & college students. When a student commits suicide, everyone is affected. Students are a vulnerable group. Age, competition and relations in the family are all contributing to the growing cases of suicide among school goers. Experts, doctors and even the World Health Organization (WHO) believe that a multi-pronged strategy needs to be put in place to tackle problems ranging from anxiety, depression, stress and finally suicidal tendencies.

The reasons behind a teen's suicide or attempted suicide can be complex. Although suicide is relatively rare among children, the rate of suicides and suicide attempts increases tremendously during adolescence. There are some common symptoms of

depression, which we must notice in child such as: tiredness and loss of energy; persistent sadness; loss of self-confidence and self-esteem; not being able to enjoy things that are usually pleasurable or interesting; feelings of helplessness and hopelessness; sleeping problems - difficulties in getting off to sleep or waking up much earlier than usual; avoiding other people, sometimes even your close friends; finding it hard to function at work/college/school; loss of appetite etc.

There is a gamut of problems; Bangladesh lacks the required number of psychiatrists as well. The mental health system needs an overhaul. Our schools might be giving good education but we need education in life skills. So it's important to understand the forces that can lead teens to suicide and to know how to help.

What is the future of these children? The need of the hour is to inculcate values of tolerance, perseverance and confidence in the tender hearts. They should be taught to accept defeat.
Gopal Sengupta
Canada

Justice delayed

"Dirgho-din rayer copy napawaya bichar-prarthider charom voganti" meaning "Sufferings of justice seekers for non-receiving of copies of verdicts" was a news headline of a Bangla daily on 19 July 2010. We remember, immediately after assuming office, the present Chief Justice vowed to deliver justice to all. He especially emphasized the poor whom he promised voluntary services from lawyers to deliver justice to their doors. The above headline is contrary to what we heard from him. Now the justice seekers have taken to the streets not for justice but for copies of pronouncements of verdicts which they might have heard on the concluding day of a case. These pronouncements might have come to them, may be after several years of ordeal in lower courts and then to the High Court.

Where will the people then go for justice? When will they be relieved of sufferings from court cases? Correctly, the sayings in Bangladesh "if you want to punish your rival lodge a court case against him", most appropriate blow. The prime minister promised a change to the nation, has she deleted change in the judicial department? If she has done so, she should include it in her list of changes.

I am not concerned about the big ones whose cases are for restarting of their business houses, I am talking about the poor who have lost their lands to the grabbers, who have been implicated by the powerful and so on. Why does it take so much time to deliver a copy of a concluded verdict?

We are really worried about the future of our native land.
Shafiqul Islam, NY

Age limit

In British-India the maximum age limit was fixed for entry level of a government job. At the beginning, 18 years was the maximum limit. In Pakistan time this limit was changed on several occasions. After independence, in Bangladesh also the limit was changed. The present maximum age limit is 30 years at the entry level for all citizens except freedom fighters. There is no scientific rationale for the existing maximum age limit of 30 years. We can have some logic but that is, of course, not beyond controversy.

If the authorities fix the maximum age limit at entry level of a government job at 40 years, a government official will be able to serve for 17 years as the retirement age is 57. It is expected that the retirement age will be re-fixed at 60 years soon. The government has re-fixed age limit at 60 years for workers recently who are under the purview of Labour Law 2006. The age of retirement for the workers of a public enterprise has also been enhanced to 60 years by the present government.

The government may consider the maximum age limit of 40 for recruiting government servants.
Md. Ashraf Hossain
Central Bashabo, Dhaka

Tigers perform poorly

Our national team lost in most of the matches in Asia Cup and played miserably in five day matches with England, I feel the reasons for which our young players fail to win are as follows:-

- Lack of confidence.
- Players are careless.
- No determination.
- No fighting attitude and challenging mood.
- Not competitive.
- Lack of patience to play long innings.
- Poor shot selection.
- One or two players play a defensive game and others try to hit every ball even in five days matches.
- Bowlers slow or fast need good length bowling.
- Lack of stamina.

In order to win our players should have fighting and challenging attitude like Pakistanis, Indians and Sri Lankans without which it is impossible to win the game. When The Tigers bounced back recently in second ODI match winning it by 5 runs against England,

they suddenly got back their energy, determination, fighting attitude to win the match and they have won. If they can grow team spirit within themselves and fight hard and get defeated, we would not mind but they must try.

Some of the good players like Ashraf, Sakib, Mushfiq and Razzak need lots of training to overcome their fear. When I see them playing, I can see their face indicating nervousness against fast bowlers particularly. It is my request to Bangladesh Cricket team manager and coach to train them properly so that they can face all the bowlers, fast or slow, confidently.

Mortaza, Rubel and Shafique are very good fast bowlers but they need more practice.

Millions of people in our country have lot of expectation from our national team when they play against any team. We always feel proud of their success and feel miserable when we see they lose without a fight.

Chowdhury Imam
Syed Grand Centre
Uttara, Dhaka



Agri university at Rajshahi

While addressing a reception to the meritorious students, the Mayor of Rajshahi A H M Khairuzzaman Liton disclosed that an agricultural university and a girls cadet college would be established in Rajshahi to meet the long-cherished demand of the local people.

This is indeed a pragmatic move towards ensuring development of the Rajshahi division. Rajshahi has a vast potential for expansion of higher agricultural education plus conduction of agricultural research. The present Faculty of Agriculture under Rajshahi University may be taken to set up the Rajshahi Agricultural University.

It is sincerely hoped that the government will soon take appropriate measures to build the new agricultural university in Rajshahi.
Professor M Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka

The veil issue

Your 18 July issue holds special interest for me. Firstly for the bold and enlightened article by Engr. A.B.M. Nurul Islam and secondly the letter from Md. Nazrul Islam, both have similar topics on veil, Niqab/Burka in Islamic Society.

There is no dispute about Hijab for the women in Islamic Society. But we consider Niqab or face covering Burka for women as an unnecessary social burden imposed by over zealous mullahs. Molestation and harassment of women depend largely on social order and discipline and not on forcing them to cover their faces.

It is true that our Holy Prophet (Pbuh) prescribed veil and face covering Burka in 4th Hijri for his wives whom we very respectfully refer to as "Ummahatul Momenin" but it was not for all women of Madina. Here I refer the great Classic "The Spirit of Islam" by late Syed Amir Ali where he stated that Burka did not exist during the time of our Prophet (Pbuh) rather it came into Muslim society two hundred years after his death. Burka or veil was used by women in Byzantine and fire worshipping Persian courts.

During the early Abbaside Khilafat when the life in Baghdad was overshadowed by sinful practices imported from the Greeks, decent Muslim women started to wear veils to assert their pious upbringing.

So Niqab/ Burka still remains a controversial social practice but to the Christian

World it, unfortunately, symbolizes Islam! Burka clad woman are considered as security hazard in some European countries. During the recent "Peace Jirga" in Kabul three Talibans clad in Burka sneaked into a abandoned building and fired rockets on the Jirga.

Muslims settling down in Europe and North America should be conscious about the sentiment and ethos of the host population.
Sakhawat Hossain
Gulshan, Dhaka

Sanchay Patra

As we have seen in the newspapers, the govt. has recently reduced the rate of interest on three-month interest basis Sanchay Patra.

I would like to mention that pension holders at the age end of their lives live simply on the income from the interest of the Sanchay Patra which they purchase with their whole life's savings, pension and provident fund money etc. They do not want to take the risk to invest their hard earned money in business for more earning. They do not know business. So they are happy with the little, honest and safe earning from the Sanchay Patra to have dal-bhat. Honest and sensible people do not want more money. They are happy with their honest and safe small income.

The reduction of rate of interest will seriously hamper their simple living.

So may we earnestly request the govt. to reconsider the matter of reduction of rate of interest of Sanchay Patra so that the old pension holders can get some relief at the age end of their lives.
A pension holder
One-mail

Transfer system

One of the secrets of good administration during the British Raj era was the regular transfer system of employees in the public offices. The change in the environment kept the management healthy; and it discouraged the building up of powerful clichés by the subordinate groups.

In Dhaka, Bangladesh, the young nation has been presented with a practical and encouraging budget for 2010-11, but the regime should pay attention to the invisible losses due to human factors (corruption and bribery).

Most of the posts in Rajuk and the city corporations are not transferable; with the result the incumbents dig in and make mini fortresses for self-gain. This type of cultural setbacks cannot be solved through attractive budget proposals. The system losses

are huge; but controllable with dedication.

The other drawback is the acute centralization of powers in Dhaka; enabling the MPs to exert undue influence in the public services. The human factor is the weak point in the LDCs. Digitalisation of the offices is a good move, but it would take time to fine tune the computer networks. The upazilas and union councils are hibernating; mocking democratic principles. The educational sector is passing through a phase of unwarranted politicisation. The public service counters have no one-stop centres.
AHusnain
Dhaka

Moral education

The minister in charge of education had the courage to introduce the new education policy as one could learn from the media. As a humble Bangladeshi, I feel that moral education including family budget comprising income and expenditure should be incorporated from eighth class and onwards so that children know the real state of parents' behaviour. As a citizen, I am to pay bribe to income tax, Wasa officials, electricity authorities, city corporation people, land revenue officials etc for survival. Should the education minister conceive the reality as none can escape dealing with those officials, I believe. Thus moral education, practising honesty in day to day life relating to income and expenditure need be imparted, I believe. Let something really happen in our society.
Mahmud Ali
New Eskaton Road
Dhaka

Corporal punishment

On behalf of the millions of abused Bangladeshi children who suffered the horrors of corporal punishment in school, I would like to thank Sir Frank Peters, lawyer Sarah Hossain and the Bangladesh High Court for the roles they each played in abolishing the inhumane practice.

Although it's been well over 30-years since I last attended school and suffered the humiliation and both physical and mental pain of corporal punishment, unpleasant memories haunt me to this very day.

The decision makes me feel proud to be a Bangladeshi and indicates we are leaving the dark ages at longlast.
Dr. Ali Ullah
Banani, Dhaka

Traffic management

With great reluctance I had to make two trips to Uttara recently from my sanctuary in Niketon between 1:00PM and 10:30PM. On both occasions it took more than an hour to reach my destinations while the general comment of the driver was "We are lucky today, there is practically no traffic!!" All motor vehicles were weaving about in all lanes and overtaking from all sides. No traffic discipline was seen. Perhaps the on-going Mobile Courts were busy elsewhere.

Traffic controllers are invited to replicate traffic discipline as on Road No 2, Gulshan-1. This was a notoriously grid-locked road for Niketon and Gulshan (South). During rush hours, you were lucky to traverse its 1 km length in less than an hour. A few months ago, parts were made one-way, about half a dozen paid volunteers man the road strictly. Parking is banned (though not fully implemented yet) and rickshaws are allowed free access both ways. Result: You are through in minutes even though the road is in terrible condition. HOORAY FOR GULSHAN SOCIETY!! (especially for realizing the importance of rickshaws in Dhaka's transportation). Now if only the Road 2-Niketon (adjacent to the Park) turning could be streamlined, traffic from/to Niketon would be ideal.

If the crores of pot-holes large and small, shallow & deep, old and new on Dhaka's roads are divided by the sum allotted for road repairs in the budget, we will probably come to the grand sum of 02 poisha earmarked for each pot-hole.

The "ban-the-rickshaw" disease has now spread to Uttara according to two letters of DS readers recently. I saw it being enforced in all its majesty on my enforced trips to Uttara recently. Have the traffic controllers become totally bereft of ideas and reconciled to rickshaw-free roads being their only salvation till the multi-crore 'freeway lollipop' being dangled before the gullible public becomes a reality, if ever?

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka



KAZIER/DRINKNEWS