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Utilising water hyacinth



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRIKNEWS

We have plenty of water hyacinth, growing in almost all water bodies of Bangladesh, and almost all rivers, canals and low-lying areas under water are covered with innumerable green water hyacinth plants. It seems to grow very easily, and is not eaten by birds or animals. Some of the plant that comes to dry ground, or is thrown there, gets rotted and mixes into the soil, possibly acting as a fertiliser! All said and done, the plants are totally wasted, and not used in any manner.

Given its abundance, our agricultural and food scientists should try to find some way, so that it can be used as food. If not as naturally grown, then they can find some easy and simple way to modify it, and make it palatable, like other vegetables, that can be either taken raw or cooked as a vegetable dish.

If this can be made possible, then a cheap and readily available source of food can be established. This can be a popular food source for the poor. The government should take initiative to encourage and support necessary scientific food research in this direction, so that we can readily utilise the plentiful availability of water hyacinth plant as a ready source of nutrition in our daily diet!

Engr. S. A. Mansoor
Dhaka

one of her houses. But I could not even go to the press when I lost my career, my livelihood. I was a district level officer in 2001 when she won the general election. I was in the threshold of my career which I so carefully nurtured with utmost honesty.

But all of a sudden, without any notice whatsoever, I was thrown out of my job. I was literally on the street with all three of my school going children and an ailing wife. I had to make over charge and leave the government quarter within 24 hours. My only fault was that one of my six brothers was in politics and belonged to the party opposing Khaleda Zia government.

Our attempt to get immediate relief in the High Court was thwarted by unusual interventions. After a gruelling legal battle for 7 years, I got back my position. In the meantime, I had attained my retirement age. I got post facto pay and position, but not the lost years. My eldest daughter, a brilliant student studying abroad, faltered seriously at our family debacle as did other family members.

I did not enjoy Begum Zia's tears in front of the media, but urge upon our leaders to feel others' distress.

A sufferer
Uttara, Dhaka



AMDADUL HUQ / DRIKNEWS

Decentralisation

On October 11, 2010 a letter was published in The Daily Star on decentralisation in which the writer highlighted some of the issues that have contributed to the current unliveable conditions in Dhaka. Among the remedial measures, it was suggested that further construction of buildings, housing areas, etc., should be banned immediately, and that incentives should be provided to schools, colleges, establishments and hospitals for shifting across the country.

We support the proposals and would like to supplement the author's position by providing specific cases in the Dhanmondi area. If one starts from the intersection of Road No. 27 (old) and Mirpur Road, one would come across a large shopping mall on the left, which is already a point of serious traffic congestion. However, we shudder to think of the situation when the two under construction high-rise buildings adjacent

to the mall are completed shortly; and there are plans for construction of many more such buildings along that road. As one turns left and enters Satmasjid Road, the traffic becomes worse because of the large number of malls, universities, restaurants and hospitals.

Dhanmondi residential area is supposed to be used for only residential purpose, but there are schools, hospitals, shops and offices, particularly at critical intersections, giving rise to security issues as well.

We can complain endlessly about traffic congestions and other problems, but those will not disappear unless the government strictly implements zoning laws. Doing so will also facilitate decentralization of the city as the writer suggests.

A Group of residents
Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka

Smoking in public places

We have many laws and rules which are not usually implemented. Smoking in public places is prohibited, and if anybody violates the law, he has to pay Tk. 50/- as a penalty. Some years ago, this very important law was passed.

Many people smoke on the roads, in the markets and public places. The smokers do not care that they are harming all the people around them.

Smoking in bus, train or public places should be stopped immediately. The existing law should be implemented to stop this bad practice.

Md. Iqbal Hossain
Zafraabad, Sankar
Dhaka

The Ghailani verdict

US President Barack Obama promised during his presidential campaign that he would close down the military prison facility at Guantanamo, a promise yet to be fulfilled.

However, he did try a detainee in a US civilian court. Thirty-six-year-old Tanzanian Ahmed Khalifan Ghailani was found guilty of one out of 285 charges. Officials will now be considering how to proceed with other detainees, whether to give them fair trial or let them go. The detainees have spent almost nine years in their semi-permanent residence while being subjected to new techniques of torture.

During the trial, prosecutors suffered an early setback when federal judge Lewis Kaplan in New York barred a key government witness from testifying, saying he had been named by Ghailani while the latter was "under duress." Despite losing its

key witness, the government was given broad latitude to refer to Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden throughout the trial. It was pointed out that unless the ground was established regarding the connection, this referencing was illegal; it was prejudicial. It gives grounds for appeal.

Defense lawyer Peter Quijano welcomed the acquittal of Ghailani on 284 charges. He said the one conviction would definitely be appealed. He said: "We still truly believe he is innocent of all these charges." The charge against Ghailani was conspiring to attack the US Embassy in Kenya and Tanzania.

The question is, should the Guantanamo trials be held in civilian courts or military tribunals? If it is civilian court, then how should evidence gained during interrogation through torture be handled? **Muhammed Jamil Ather**
Karachi, Pakistan

Learning from history

After 40 years of our independence, our politicians are still busy quibbling on issues like who the announced independence of the country. Our lawmakers usually spend hours citing history of their leaders in the parliament.

Though I've studied History at the University of Chittagong, my question has always been: why should we study history somebody's story of someone else's past? What is the use of the information that thousand years back, a person owned the land, on which I am now standing, whose right hand was shorter than the left and was squint eyed? Some of my friends asked me: "How would you know from whom you have descended, from where they came and their

culture?" My counter is: "Why should I bother? I am what I am and will be what I have to be. Further, when a politician with corrupt record comes to power, you silence his/her critics saying 'past is past; we should look for what s/he does in future.' Then, why should the historians dig up the past and produce juicy controversies?" I have not got the answer till today.

When two cultures clash, the loser is obliterated; and the winner writes the history books books that glorify their own cause and disparage the conquered foe. When this is history, does it make sense? The history of humanity is extremely valuable for redesigning life. One aspect of history is learning from mistakes. We cannot do what is right unless we are willing to learn from the past.

Govind Sengupta
Canada

Hartal

Hartal is the most destructive way of protest. It hampers our national economic growth. Politicians of our country call hartal for their own benefit, they do not think about the common people's interest. If we look at the political culture of the developed countries, we will see that the politicians there never call for a hartal, they always solve the problems through effective discussion.

Md. Faruq Hossain
Political Science
S.M.Hall
Dhaka University

Khaleda Zia and me

I can't compare myself with Begum Khaleda Zia, because I never joined politics, but I suffered much more than her at her whims and for no fault of mine. She could weep in front of the world for loss of

Effects of TV programmes



STAR

Television is a source from where we can gain knowledge, pleasure and information about the whole world. About 45 years ago, TV was considered a magic of science, but now we can question is it a curse or a blessing for the youngsters?

Television is considered to be the most effective means of educating the students. At the same time, it has become the most popular means of recreation. Some TV programmes are really attractive and exclusive. We must say that television is benefiting our youngsters by educating them and giving them recreational facilities. But some of the programmes are detrimental to them, destructive to our society and threatening our values, traditions and religious beliefs.

The young generation is indulging in the bad practices they have acquired from the TV channels. They are leaning to adore western values and lifestyles instead of their own values and heritage. We can see the ill effects of western culture on our language, literature, and social relationship. We have to teach our youths our own values, so that they would watch western programmes, but will not be guided by the other culture.

Sakhawat Samir Choudhury
Uttara, Dhaka

Shaheed Mainul Road residence

The other day, an Awami legal practitioner opined on a TV channel that the residence at Shaheed Mainul Road is exclusively earmarked for the deputy chief of Bangladesh Army. As such, allotment of that to the family members of late President Ziaur Rahman by the then government was illegal. Now the question is if that particular residence is earmarked for the deputy chief of army, then will it not be illegal too, to turn it into a residential complex for the family members of those officers killed in the BDR mutiny?

The government should explore all aspects relating to that particular residence before arriving at a final decision for the greater interest of the nation. To be very honest, I have not noticed the government doing any thing good for the nation in last two years other than taking vindictive actions resulting in extreme lawlessness. **Saleh Ayub**
One-e-mail

Weekly holiday

Government offices, multinational companies, banks and other financial institutions enjoy a two-day weekly holiday, but the educational institutions have one-day weekly holiday. It is true that the educational institutions enjoy some extra holidays including ten national holidays.

But there should be a two-day weekly holiday in the educational institutions also. I wonder why no one has yet addressed this issue. I think it is because of the fact that a very

few people realise the amount of work that a teacher has to do. A teacher not only takes regular classes, but also examines students' exam scripts after class hours. Also s/he has to study to get prepared for the class and be aware of the latest findings and developments in the field of teaching.

During summer and eid vacations, teachers have to examine the answer scripts, prepare question papers and result sheets of the periodical exams which are held three times a year. Moreover, s/he has to examine the answer scripts of SSC/HSC and recently introduced JSC exams. Teachers have to perform all these duties after class hours, at home.

Considering all these aspects, I would like to request the Honourable Prime Minister and the Education Minister to take the decision of declaring a two-day weekly holiday for the educational institutions.

Md Jalal Uddin
Assistant teacher
Natore Govt. High School
Natore

Tourism board

At last, Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) has been created in the country. The private tourism stakeholders were demanding for a long time to form BTB. In the body, an academicians from the Tourism and Hospitality Department of Dhaka University has been included.

Since its inception in 1972, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation embarked on some activities for tourism development. The BPC Ordinance gave mandate for promotion and development

of tourism, build country's image abroad, acquire and establish tourism infrastructure, organise safari tourism, set up travel agency, train up human resources and regulate the country's tourism industry. Though BPC could not do anything up to the expectation due to many limitations, but it tried at least to educate people about some basic things of tourism.

Now BTB has started functioning. It has already done some works with its sights on the cricket world cup. Here, BTB gets a good chance to showcase the country to the foreigners. It is an opportunity for us to improve the country's image. BTB and BPC - the two bodies - can work with synergy for tourism development in Bangladesh. **Ziaul Haque**
DM, BPC

Mobile courts are not enough

Recently, I read a statement of the Education Minister in the media that the existing Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2003 will be amended shortly, as enacting a new law is time consuming, but he assured that the new law would be initiated (some day).

Besides the harassment or 'stalking', the new law must cover another form of harassment we are observing over the past few years, that is harassing and/or blackmailing women using the Internet. Personal photographs and videos are uploaded on the 'social networking' sites, may be 'just for fun', by the harasser. The worst part is, most of the criminals are getting away unpunished, which only proves that the mobile courts are not enough.

Amending the Act can be a temporary solution. But if the situation demands and the existing Act does not cover all types of harassment, then the government must make a new law with more severe and stricter punishment. The types of harassments have to be defined clearly in the new law. A woman can be abused not only physically or verbally, but also mentally, which can lead her to take away her own life. This has to be addressed clearly in that law.

The nation is waiting for this issue of harassment to be addressed with utmost importance and urgency. For once, let one quick decision be taken for a good cause. **Sangeeta Ahmad**
Baridhara-DOHS
Dhaka

Niketan lake at Gulshan is a safe roost of cattle egret

Its shocking news published in the Daily Star that a large number of migratory waterfowl are poisoned in Hakaluki Haor. The incidents of poisoning birds happened several times in the past in Hakaluki Haor. The Coastal and Wetlands Biodiversity Management Project (CWBMP), the multimillion dollar project of the Environment Department has spent huge amount of money for saving the wetlands biological diversity specially the migratory water birds.

The project claimed to have developed a replicable model of community based wetlands management. They also claimed to have

provided safe habitat for the birds. The NGOs were given a lucrative amount to organize and motivate the local community for protection of water birds. But bird hunting, trapping and poisoning is going on. Now it is the right time to form an independent committee under MoEF to assess the real condition.

Besides, this image is taken from an urban polluted lake in Niketan, Dhaka, where the Cattle Egret were seen during Eid festivity. The colonies of nearly 500 cattle egrets were seen feeding and roosting in this lake despite the huge crowd and busy urban life. They feel secure and that's the

reason they are roaming within Dhaka city. None has invested a single penny for this lake to save water birds. The UNDP and Global Environment Facility (GEF) had invested huge amount of money to secure the birdlife of Hakaluki Haor in the last few years. But the CWBMP have literally failed to provide them a safe habitat. How long will this non-productive investment continue in the name of CWBMP?

Dr. Anisuzzaman Khan
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Gulshan-1, Dhaka



PHOTO: WRITER