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SHAFIQ ISLAM / DRINKNEWS

Biotechnology in agricultural improvement

Some people say that conventional breeding techniques alone may be sufficient to increase the yield of food grains to feed the growing population of Bangladesh. But do they take the rapidly changing climate and increasing incidence of natural disasters, such as sudden floods or drought, decreasing availability of farmlands or declining water availability on earth's surface into account?

Many of these problems were not as intense in the past as now. And certainly, these will be more intensified in future. So, predictions based on

extrapolations of data from the past and simply from theoretical yields may turn out to be false and may put the nation in a formidable crisis.

In a country like Bangladesh, where 65% of labour force is still engaged in agriculture, what else could be more important than agriculture? And, biotechnology holds the promise of innovative improvement in agriculture. Rice lacks some essential amino acids, is poor in protein content, does not have vitamin A and contains insignificant amount of minerals such as iron. Is it a Balanced Diet?

Biotechnology provides us with

the means to make rice more nutritious. How will we face this changing food demand? Do we know about the current trends of agriculture in other countries? While 23 countries planted commercialised biotech crops in 2007, an additional 29 countries, in total 52, have granted regulatory approvals for biotech crops to import.

Are we ready to be in line with the moving world? We are already late. We should start moving just now.

Noyem Uddin
Mawlana Bhashani Science
and Technology University
Santosh, Tangail

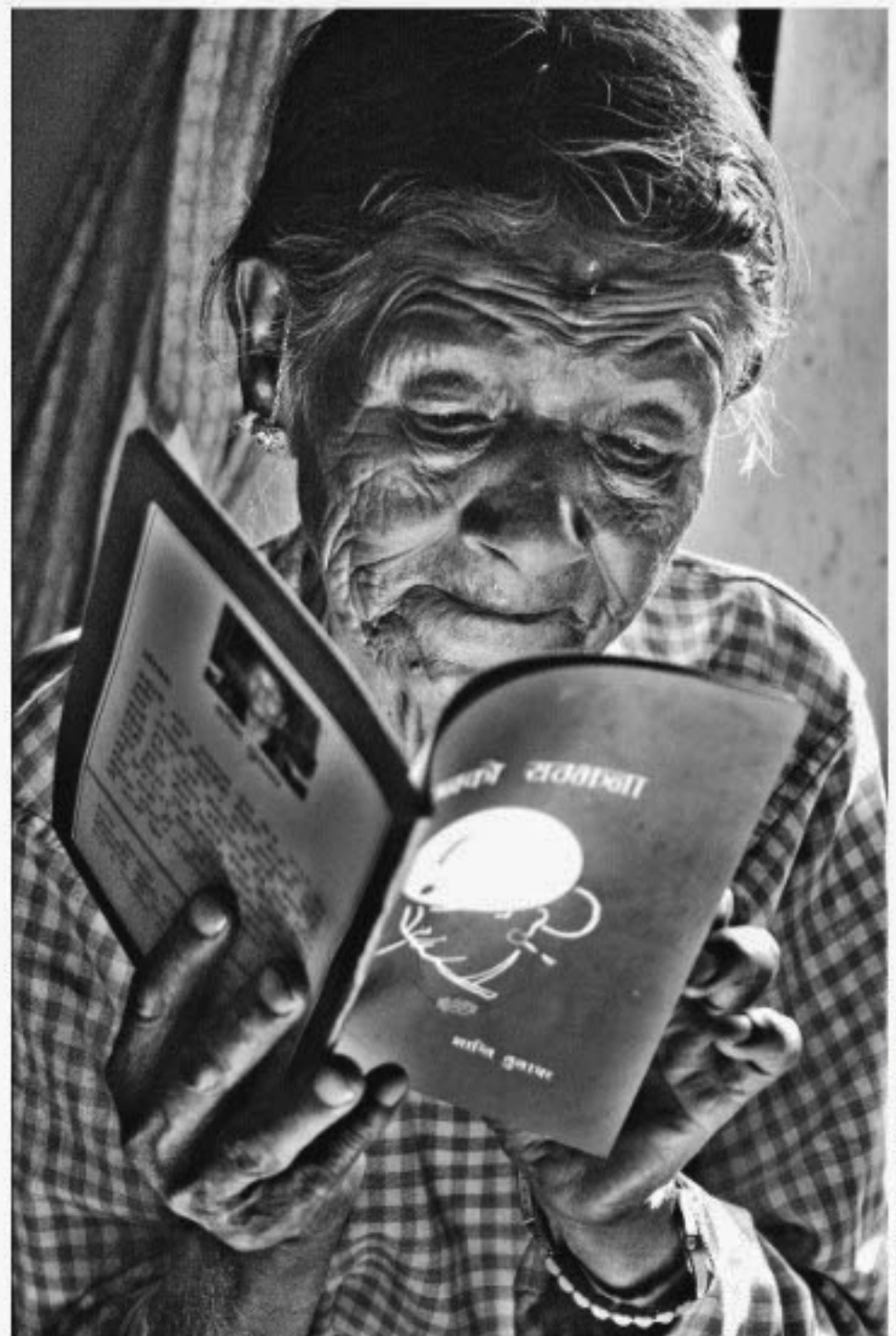
Showing patience to aging parents

This is a story about an old man and his son. It was a lovely day and both were sitting outside in their lawn. Hearing the chirping of a sparrow, the man asked, "What is that?" The son, who was busy reading the newspaper, nonchalantly replied, "A sparrow." The man asked the same question a couple of times, and each time the son replied with increasing impatience and annoyance. At one point, the son burst out, "How many times will I have to tell you that it's a sparrow?" The man went in and came back with a diary, asking the son to read it aloud.

This was what it read: "Today, my youngest son, who turned three a few days ago, was sitting with me at the park. When a sparrow sat in front of us, he asked me 21 times what it was and I replied every time that it was a sparrow, hugging him every single time as he asked me the question, feeling affection for my innocent little boy."

The aging parents need to be dealt with extra patience and love.

Monica Islam
Dhaka



SHEHAB UDDIN / DRINKNEWS

WikiLeaks revelations

This whistle-blower website should be applauded for leaking so many secret documents. The best governance or democracy is one that is fully transparent and accountable. These leaks will have a sobering effect on reckless public servants at all levels and will bring greater morality to their behaviour.

Of course, many, especially those in diplomatic and political circles, will be embarrassed, but it will

eventually have a moderating effect, because from transparency comes accountability. Imagine if such leaks were made public prior to the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan, the world would have been much better placed and all those millions of war victims would have been living amongst us in peace and harmony. Bush and Blair wouldn't have been able to conspire secretly with other world leaders, if the public found out the real reasons for going to war. It is only after the war, which we are now finding

out how factual reports were doctored.

Except for perhaps research and development and certain business and commercial secrets, public servants should have nothing to hide from the very people who have put them in power. Most cabinet meetings, legislation and court sessions must be aired on special dedicated TV channels. After the sensationalism is over, the world will be better informed and served, and no one will be able to fool or deceive the naïve and uninformed

innocent public. Certain leaks may even have grounds for the prosecution of those who violate the trust of those being governed.

Muhammed Jamil Ather
Karachi, Pakistan

Utter disrespect for law!

As soon as anyone comes out on the street, he or she is sure to be confronted with this phenomenal problem. It seems there is no respite from it. No one is willing to abide by the law; be he a rickshaw

puller, truck driver, bus driver or car driver; everybody behaves in the same manner. Everybody wants to go ahead of the other, no matter whether it is right or wrong. Even a rickshaw puller, knowing very well that he cannot go faster than a motor vehicle, would, by all possible means, try to overtake the car in front, in a bid to establish his supremacy over it.

Then there is a tendency among all types of commuters to go on the wrong way, in order to avoid the traffic jams, giving a damn to the law. The pedestrians are no exceptions; they jaywalk anywhere and everywhere at their own free will.

It is said that the respect for law is best demonstrated on the streets, hence it can fairly be concluded that the people in general have an utter disrespect for law, which makes the people world over look down upon us. In order to gain respect of the other nations, people must be taught to respect law at any cost. It is a prerequisite for success.

Saleh Ayub
One-mail

Dhaka University campus

Dhaka University is one of the leading public universities of the country. But it is a matter of regret that the campus environment is going from bad to worse day by day. The university is situated in the middle of the city. As a result, the campus is always overcrowded. The roads are always busy with rickshaws, microbuses, ambulances and even local buses. Road accident is regular news. There are about 100 rickshaw garages in the campus.

Besides, there are a large number of unhygienic roadside food shops. There is no place left for the DU students to sit, because outsiders gather everywhere. Roads are dirty and also in a bad condition. DU campus is now a place for the vagabonds, beggars, rickshaw-pullers and drug addicts.

For creating a good educational environment, a change is necessary. The university authorities should take effective measures to save our campus.

Jahidul Islam
Student
Dhaka University

Tribute to a war hero

I came to know about him when I started reading books on our Liberation War. I did not see him face to face, but his activities gave me inspiration. He was Lt. General Mir Shawkat Ali, Commander of Sector-5 in our Liberation War. He was a former minister, lawmaker and ambassador. He was also an active member of the Sector Commanders' Forum.

He said that as a soldier it was his responsibility to fight for the country; but the people's role was most important, who did not have the training but showed their courage and fought along with the regular soldiers against Pakistan army.

He was vocal against the war criminals. He always stood by the Muktijoddhas and never compromised in this regard. May Allah keep the departed soul in peace! He will remain alive in the history of Bangladesh.

Seefat
University of Dhaka

Tilting buildings of Bangladesh!

Centuries after the leaning tower of Pisa was built, we in Bangladesh are determined to build many tilting buildings in the many urban areas of Bangladesh! The easy way out seems to be to pass the blame on building designers! The reality is however something very much different! It starts as a case of 'ignorance is bliss'; with economy drive being the sole criteria of work! To begin with, ground clearance between adjacent buildings, which is quite important, is ignored! Every one wants to occupy as much land as possible, and the important clearances between built-up areas are ignored! Unlike Dhaka and may be Chittagong, there are no Rajuk like organisation to give approval, after taking into consideration these factors!

Next comes the construction and material quality, which is critical for the foundation and other load bearing members of the structure. Then comes the specification of cement mix ratios and the re-bars, stones and sand quality. The pouring and proper curing of concrete, an important matter, is neglected most often! More often than not, the importance of curing the concrete is ignored! Three days of casual wetting is often considered sufficient! Another fact is ignoring to compact the subsoil properly before starting the foundation!

All these factors contribute to the early demise of



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the structure, which, like a tired and sick person, wants to lean, rest and lie down! Thus we have the birth of the 'leaning buildings of Bangladesh' with very short lives and premature deaths!

Engr.S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Traffic jam on highways

Now-a-days inter-district buses plying on Dhaka-Chittagong highway face severe traffic jam frequently at different points. Traffic jam starts from Sayedabad Bus Terminal and continues till the Kanchpur Bridge in the beginning of a journey. It occurs again on Gouripur-Motlob road and then on Moynamoti road of Comilla cantonment area. The authorities can build overpasses or take other alternative steps to save the commuters' time and lessen their miseries.

Mahmudun Nabi
One-mail

Acid violence

Acid throwing is one of the most heinous crimes and very common in our country. Almost every day, we find the news of acid throwing in the daily newspapers. A frustrated lover who fails to win the heart of his beloved usually commits such obnoxious crime. In most cases, the victims succumb to injuries. Those who survive lead a miserable life with irreparable scars on their face and body.

It is undoubtedly a barbarous act. Therefore, stern steps should be taken to stop acid violence; and the criminals must be brought to justice.

Md. Yeasin Khan
One-mail

USA's economic woe

The root cause of America's unprecedented economic recession is the non-performing home loan. So-called 'sub-prime' loan i.e. lending to a borrower of poor credit history with high flexible interest rate was made assuming abnormal degree of non-payment risk. Again, mainly basing on banks' huge home-loan business different kind of non-bank financial and non-bank, non-financial institutions in great number, such as Realter, Processor, Discounter, Underwriter, Insurer, Re-insurer, Inspectors' firm, Service agency, title agency, closing agency etc. appeared and started playing in the market. Derivative financial products like bond, share, debenture etc. were assiduously structured and floated in the market. Most of the banks including the mega ones started to fail one after another due to capital and reserve inadequacy.

To compound and aggravate the present state of USA's shabby economy there are some catalytic causes: (a) Over-blown security concern, fear-phobia at home played damper in investors' sentiment. Large-scale military engagement overseas

draining hundreds of billions of tax-dollar strained oft-beaten treasury.

(b) America's per capita knowledge base lags far behind many developed and developing nations of the world.

(c) Narcotic drug from across the Mexican border, youth obesity greatly contributed to incidence of social crime and healthcare cost, both constantly squeezing national exchequer.

As a septuagenarian, superannuated banker I sincerely tried to identify the major road-blocks hindering optimum, vibrant growth potential of the world-no-1 economy with pious hope that least it adds another dimension to on-stage divergent views on this gigantic global issue.

SA Samad
General Manager (Retd.)
Janata Bank
Dhaka

Showing tolerance

We watched in the media how Begum Khaleda Zia broke down at her Gulshan office as she was evicted from her cantonment residence where she had lived for nearly four decades. Whether the eviction was legal or not is not my concern. It is clear that she loved the house very much and that is quite natural.

We have a lot to learn from this incidence analysing related issues. People living on the banks of the rivers Padma, Meghna, Jamuna, and Modhumoti lose their homes very often due to erosion. They are not evicted by the govt. but by the nature's fury. They do not have a second shelter. Now we should realise - how much they are shocked by losing not only their houses, but also their belongings. Even then they live and survive showing much tolerance and praying to Almighty Allah. Normally, they build their houses with their hard-earned money and they cannot complain to anybody, and nobody is there to show sympathy to them.

Begum Khaleda Zia and her party could have set an excellent example by showing extreme tolerance before the Eid that could attract lots of sympathy from all levels of citizens of the country.

Prof. Lutfor Rahman
Senior citizen
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Notice

Dear readers,
We appreciate greatly your contributions to this page. In order to give space to more of our valued readers in the "Letters" page may we request you to please restrict your letters / comments / opinions to a maximum of 250 words.
---- Editor

Parliamentary democracy

There is a dilemma, and the BNP there is no saying who or what will provoke her. The thought that the destiny of our nation is determined by such people is indeed alarming. Though for long she has been famous for her tantrums, her latest act was a little too much. Unruly behaviour by a senior parliamentarian sets a bad example for first-time MPs. People watching the proceedings of the parliament as well as reports from print media received a jolt on seeing how casually an MP dishonoured parliamentary democracy and the rule of law of the judiciary.

Some months ago she boycotted the parliament, apparently displeased with the Speaker over seat allocation. Disruptions have long been a hallmark of the House. We are disappointed that the

demands of some opposition MPs to discuss issues that are indeed of immensely vital importance to Bangladesh are in the current session of the parliament. Thus, we have not only lost an opportunity for the House to address the burning national issues, we have lost also an opportunity to add to the culture of parliamentary debate, something that is so woefully lacking in Bangladesh. In a democratic dispensation, where the parliament is the centrepiece of all legislative activities, participation of the opposition in parliamentary debates not only gives life to the parliament, it also adds to the very notion of checks and balance and ensures transparency of the government that is so critical in a democracy.

Gopal Sengupta
Canada



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