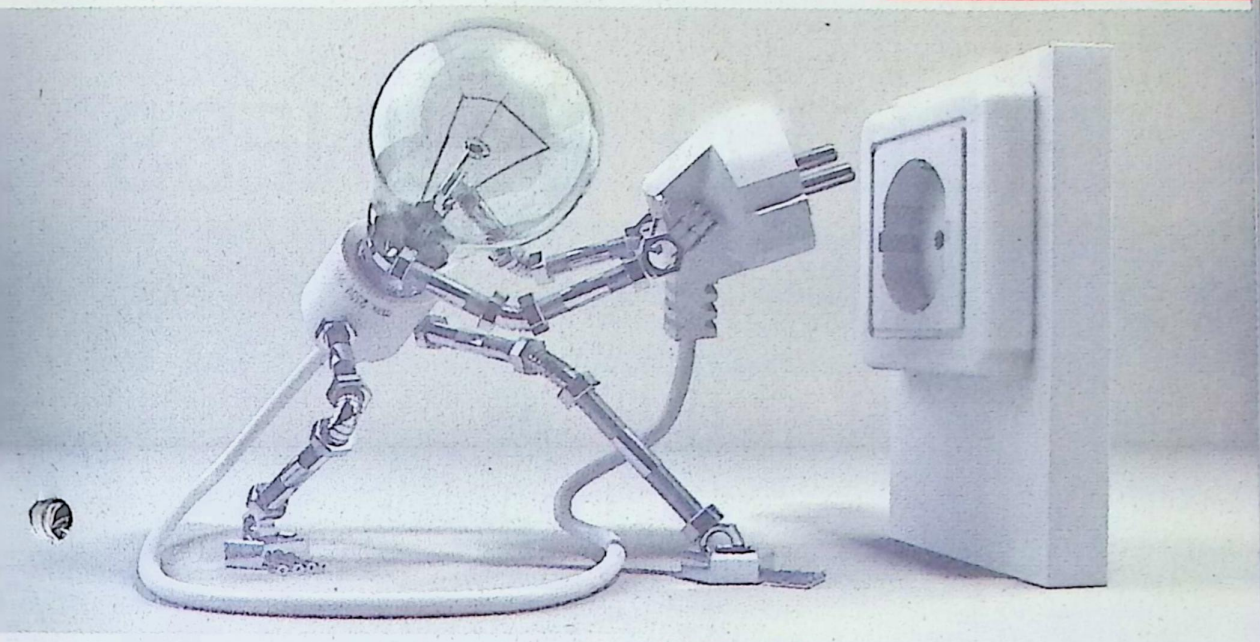


OF APPLES AND IDEAS

AMITAVA KAR

If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas.

— George Bernard Shaw

The first thing that strikes a visitor in Bangladesh is the joyous, positive attitude to life. The smile on the faces of the people is symbolical of one of the greatest assets of the Bangladeshis. We are friendly, confident, optimistic—and without envy. We give a new meaning to the word resilient. We live in a small country. Yet we show a great interest in international matters. We are conscious that in an interconnected world, the destinies of all countries are closely interwoven.

The poverty level in Bangladesh has plunged. It is one of our greatest achievements since independence. But it is not enough. The economy is suffering a widening gap between rich and poor. The idea that people should benefit from their hard work is a cardinal tenet of a healthy economy. There is ample evidence that it hasn't held true here for quite a while.

The prosperity of a country depends on more than lifting people out of destitution and giving them the middle income status. It requires that they thrive in peace and harmony. Some of our problems have got out of hand. We need to fix them now. We need ideas that will tell us how.

As part of our focus on ideas, *the Star* is honouring some emerging ideas in business, technology, and art and culture. These are concepts with potential to change Bangladesh: to make us healthier, better educated and more prosperous, to give us back our pride and dignity.

We are not reinventing the wheel. We have not addressed all our problems. The reasons are obvious. Many of these ideas have already gained traction. Some may never take flight. But all may spark dialogue among thought leaders in their fields. That's why they're all worth pondering. We don't always grasp the importance of one when we see it for the first time, but we recognise them in hindsight.

These ideas come from a wide range of leaders in their respective fields. They are agents of change. They don't assume–they analyze. They have courage. They build things instead of cutting deals. They ignore the nonsense of conventional wisdom. People matter to them. They do what they say. They care about genuine issues. They go for great not just good. They are humble about their revolutionary success.

Therefore, have courage—care about others—be humble.

How's that for an idea? ■