

Waste transfer station in public park

Rank bad idea

NOBODY can take issue with the idea of setting up of waste transfer plants. In fact, given the size of the capital city and the huge quantity of waste uncared for, there is need for not one but many such plants to allow the city corporations the capability to manage waste efficiently, particularly solid waste. But one wonders whether the planners have considered all relevant factors before deciding on the site. If they had, Pantha Kunja would have been the last place they would have considered as a site for such a plant.

Of the several criteria on which a waste transfer site is selected, the exclusionary criteria include public places like parks and preserves. Pantha Kunja is not only one of the few parks that is still surviving in Dhaka city, it is also situated right in the heart of a very busy intersection with perhaps the highest volume of traffic considering the vehicle-to-a-mile criterion. Even the technical criteria, it seems, have been disregarded. Such a plant would not only add to the traffic congestion with few lateral roads and apparently no holding area except the main road, leave alone the impact on the environment and risk to pedestrians. Moreover, given the restrictive nature of the location one wonders where the potential for expansion of the site is.

We hope that the relevant authorities would address the genuine concerns the public have expressed and which we fully endorse. The matter involves much more than just the squandering away of a public park.

Newer variety of zinc enriched rice

Should be put to extensive cultivation quickly

OUR scientists have come up with yet another more productive variety of zinc enriched rice. We compliment the team of scientists who have contributed to the bio fortification process.

Compared to its earlier types, the new variety, labelled as Brri dhan-64, not only has higher content of zinc, but has yield potential of over 6 metric tons per hectare, 25 percent higher than its immediate predecessors. Moreover, apart from high zinc and more yield factors, the breed is also capable of fighting diarrhoea and pneumonia like its previous version. What is notable about this variety is that it will not be more expensive nor will it require special techniques in terms of producing its seeds.

However, the National Seed Board will finalise the approval of Brri dhan-64's cultivation feasibility assessment later this week. We believe its assessment over the wide scale cultivation of this variety will be positive, and steps will be taken to put it into wide scale production quickly.

Given the facts of its high zinc value and yield potential we must ensure that it enters cultivation extensively. In a country like ours its entry into immediate production is an imperative as currently over 40 percent children under five are stunted due to lack of nutrition and an estimated 44 percent children of the same age group risks zinc deficiency. This variety has all the ingredients to cater to the nutrition needs of a vast number of children.

Sky is the limit!

RIDWAN QAUIUM

EVEN though forty two years have passed since Biman Bangladesh Airlines started operations, it is still performing very poorly. Despite giving continuous assurance to its customers that it would improve its service it has repeatedly failed to do so. In fact, the service that is provided by the airline in terms of customer service and on-time performance has always been below par.

Over the years, the Biman management team kept citing shortage of aircraft and operating with age-old aircraft as the reasons for flight delays and flight cancellations. Now the airline has got rid of the gas-guzzling old aircraft and acquired brand new aircrafts, but they are mostly sitting idle at Dhaka Airport instead of being utilised.

Private airlines started operations in the country more than fifteen years ago but, to our great dismay, they are as incompetent as Biman -- if not worse -- in operating a commercial airline. Although about fifteen private airlines started operation in the country, most of them have ceased operating. Today, only four of them are active in domestic routes and only two of them are operating in international routes.

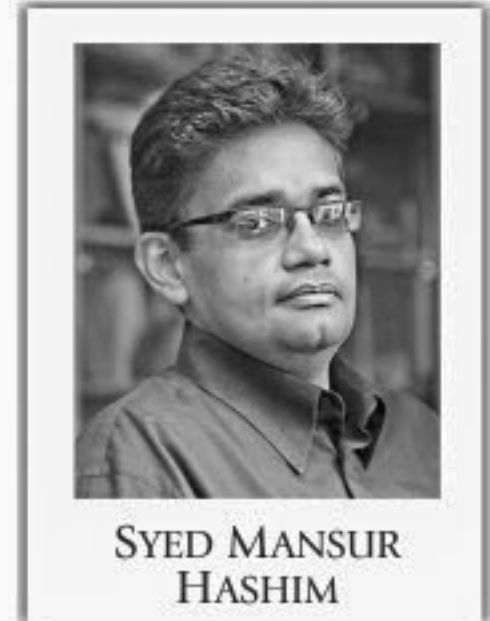
The commercial airline industry is a very fast-paced competitive global industry. Lack of experience and knowledge of the management team of the private airlines are the main reasons why most of them failed to stay afloat. They do not know how to stay competitive and how to take smart and fast decisions in this industry.

International air traffic has been experiencing a healthy growth rate of over 7.0% annually for quite some time. It is quite disappointing that Biman and the private airlines of the country are failing to tap into this growing market which has a huge potential to grow even more. Due to the poor performance of Biman and the private airlines, every year new foreign airlines are tapping into this market as a result of which the country is losing a huge amount of revenue.

To ensure that Biman and the private airlines are able to take advantage of the growing demand in the country's domestic and international air travel, and the people are not deprived of flying their 'own' airlines, they may consider enhancing their management team with people who have prior expertise and experience in operating a commercial airlines and may even consider leasing the airlines for some time to other foreign airlines that are performing well. This may help to boost their reeling performance and gain back customer confidence.

The writer is a Transportation Engineer working in Thailand.

Will Gaza ever know peace?



SYED MANSUR HASHIM

LET us look at the facts before the latest Israeli operation in Gaza. According to United Nations data back in 2012, the five year blockade had turned the region's economic situation topsy-turvy. 34% of its workforce was unemployed, 44% of Gaza residents were food insecure and 8 out of 10 Gazans were dependent on aid for survival. In 2011, per capita GDP was "17% below the equivalent figure in 2005, before the last Palestinian elections." On the export side in that same year, less than one truckload of goods exited Gaza per day, which was 3% less than the average amount of exports during the first half of 2007. A third of Gaza's farmlands and 85% of its fishing waters were made inaccessible by Israeli-imposed restrictions. There were massive shortages of fuel and electricity cuts experienced by Gazans went up to 12 hours a day. The situation was equally grim on the health front with 90% of the water pumped out of the Gaza aquifer being unsafe for human consumption (without treatment).

The situation has gotten much, much worse since the fighting broke out this time round. With "collective punishment" being the Israeli strategy, Gaza's built-up area, which is already one of the most densely populated areas in the world (according to 2012 data: over 4,500 people per square km) has suffered immensely and the humanitarian cost is all but plain to see. When the fighting is over and the time comes for Gazans to look at the carnage left behind, they will experience a fresh wave of despair. Things were bad enough before, but with the economic blockade still in force, there are serious questions whether the Gaza can be rebuilt at all. A devastated infrastructure with essential utilities like water and electricity in tatters, it explains why some 80% of Gaza strip's estimated 1.7million residents fall below the \$2 poverty line.

In order for the Gaza government to restore its infrastructure and economy, the blockade will have to go. It will have to be lifted for other reasons that are not economic in nature. For Israel's primary security concern is to secure safety for its citizens. That purpose has gone down the drain. Perhaps Israeli Premier Netanyahu was under the impression that if Israel's defence forces pounded the Palestinians hard enough, they would abandon Hamas. The exact opposite has happened. Fathers and mothers who will have to live with the pain of seeing their children die in their arms, from sniper fire, from shells crashing into their homes; and children, shell shocked and dazed will live with the horrors of war. The only thing beating in their hearts will be revenge -- an opportunity to settle the score, "an eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth," a line condoned by Hamas and not by Fattah. Israel has in effect restored Hamas' political fortunes. The next generation of hard-line fighters have been created -- much to the glee of Hamas's political leadership.

As stated by Maha Yahya (Senior Associate, Carnegie Middle East Center) in a recent article: "The end of the blockade is a central point of contention and a critical component of any sustainable ceasefire agreement. It is

also crucial to addressing the tremendous challenges of rebuilding the lives and livelihoods of Palestinians in Gaza, and to longer-term development, stability, even security." What is now amply clear is that the blockade has failed to deliver on what Israel values most, and that is security. It has, on the other hand, been extremely successful in driving Gaza's economy to the ground and help build a well of resentment of ordinary Palestinians against Israel. This has been a boon for Hamas.

There is no reason to be relieved to see the current ceasefire holding. With the blockade in place, there is little prospect for Gazans to rebuild their shattered lives and their city. If it is Israel's hope that the latest "collective treatment" meted out by its security forces will have subdued the Palestinians, they are sorely mistaken. If it is a lasting peace that the Israeli government and its citizens want, they will have to rethink the whole blockade business that has hampered not only growth of infrastructure, but robbed an entire popula-



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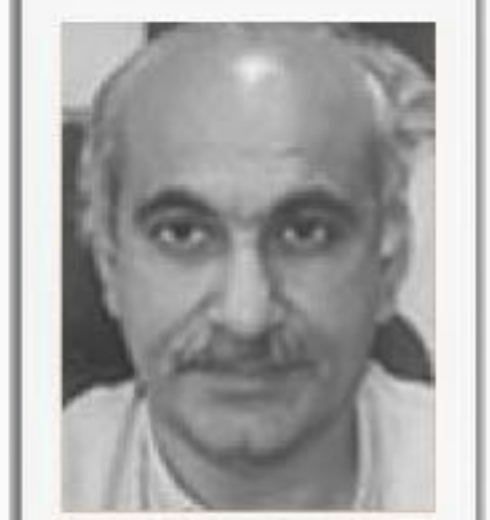
tion of its livelihood.

There were no innocents among incumbents in this conflict. Both the Israeli establishment and Hamas are equally guilty of hindering peaceful settlement of this conflict. Hamas's insistence on the destruction of Israel has not helped the situation, nor has Israel's total disregard for human rights that comes through its indiscriminate shelling and firing on a largely defenceless population. Forget about a negotiated, long term peace treaty along the two-state solution.

Contrary to Israeli calculations, the horrendous human suffering caused by this war has the bulk of Gazans rallying to the Hamas cause. Even after all the suffering, Palestinians and Israeli negotiators still cannot sit face to face, they need Egyptian mediators rushing from room to room to carry proposals and counter proposals from one party to the other. That is not how you make peace; rather, that is how you negotiate a temporary lull in the fighting.

The challenge of hope

BYLINE



M.J. AKBAR

PRIME ministers choose one of three options when they step up to the podium at the Red Fort on Independence Day. They speak to their governments; or mumble to themselves; or talk to the people of India. The first is easiest, since government is both narrator and narrative, and can enjoy the false comfort of self-congratulation: we did this [applause]; we will do this [obligatory high-five].

The second option is a consequence of diffidence more than introspection. And if Dr. Manmohan Singh made it a habit, it was possibly because introspection told him he had much to be diffident about. Dr. Singh was a curious case of a prime minister who had to bow before a Supreme Leader in a dysfunctional relationship. He got stuck with the responsibility while Mrs. Sonia Gandhi and her temperamental son Rahul Gandhi enjoyed power. The country suffered.

No prizes for guessing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's preference. He spoke to the people. His problem was not being better than the competition. That would have been too easy. His challenge was to excel himself, after the extraordinary standards he had set during a tumultuous election campaign. Now he had to establish his destination, notch priorities along the perspective and chalk out the route map of delivery, for if you soar without direction you can end up on a long flight to nowhere.

On the morning of August 15 we saw and heard the quintessential Narendra Modi. The horizon was set by his heart, the compass was magnetised by his mind. The thrust of his message was controlled by an elemental idea: India's progress is not just a government project; it is a people's project. As he put it in an eloquent metaphor: if 125 crore Indians take a single step each, then India moves ahead by 125 crore steps.

And so what in previous hands had degenerated into a bookkeeper's report to the annual general meeting of shareholders, swivelled on a fulcrum that probed, on the one hand, any malaise in national character, and repeatedly dragged our focus towards the curse and indignity of poverty, or the many crimes of gender bias. But this was realism, not pessimism. He also offered a vision that transformed the national mood with the conviction that achievement was not only possible, but within our grasp. The loudest cheers came from the young; the applause of teenage children in the audience at the Red Fort echoed the hopes of hundreds of millions in towns and cities across the land.

The exhilaration was explicable. India had found not just a prime minister but also a leader. Narendra Modi asked the questions that no one has raised: Why are we indulgent towards sons at the expense of daughters? Who is responsible for the utter shame of female

foeticide? Do we need a law to keep our homes, our streets, our nation clean? When is the poison of caste and communal violence going to end? He challenged Indians to witness the rewards of harmony within ten years. Perhaps it is only the outsider, which is how the prime minister described himself, who can clearly see the plain truth of Delhi's insiders; but it needs leadership to tell the oldest elite of Indian democracy, the governing political-bureaucratic class, that its civil wars had damaged governance to a point where drastic reform was the only alternative.

An obituary notice was read out for the Planning Commission, for the very good reason that it has lost purpose. The significant failure of this body in the last decade has been its smug and arid approach to our gravest national crisis: poverty. A common sense estimate shows that in six decades of planned economy, we have reduced the number of Indians living under the poverty line by only an abysmal half per cent or so every year. This is both astonishing and unacceptable. Moreover, instead of searching for solutions through cooperation with states, the Planning Commission functioned

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through a series of imperial commands. It told state governments to beg before Delhi, so that they might be awarded their scrap or two. India is a federal nation, in law and practice. The Union government does not rule directly over any geography other than a few tiny territories. Development works best through state governments. Delhi must be an enabler, not a dictator.

The world, as the prime minister noted, is changing. We cannot be insular; we need the creative energy of international cooperation in an era where technological innovation and state-of-the-art manufacturing are largely in the private sector. Jobs, in both industry and agriculture, are the best antidote to poverty, for they link individual welfare to national growth. India must prepare itself, as he said, to become a manufacturing hub of the world.

Prime Minister Modi knows that dreams become a reality only during waking hours. You cannot sleepwalk your way towards enchantment. He has the will to rouse the nation from inertia. The next months will show us how.

The writer is Editor of *The Sunday Guardian*, published from Delhi, India on Sunday, published from London and Editorial Director, *India Today* and *Headlines Today*.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

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Journalists must be united in protest

The social welfare minister recently made some abusive remarks about journalists. It is sincerely hoped that people holding honourable position in society will not make any derogatory remarks undermining or insulting a person or a community.

Meanwhile, I was a little disappointed to read in some newspapers that the leaders of a faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists and Dhaka Union of Journalists demanded withdrawal of his abusive remarks. My question is, why a faction? Is it not an issue of protest for the entire journalist community? Unfortunate but true, one of the reasons for our backwardness in establishing a powerful institution of democracy is our professional division, due to political narrowness.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
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Reply to "Is chromium scare scientific?"

I would like to reply to the comments of Professor M Lutfor Rahman, Department of Environmental Science, Independent University, on my research work published in your column on August 02, 2014.

Of the different types of poultry feeds available in the market, some are prepared with expensive, imported protein sources. Others are prepared using 20-25% of deshi meat bone (DMB). The DMB is prepared from tanned skin-cut wastes (SCW) and leather shaving dust (LSD) available in Hazaribag area. Different poultry farms of the country use these feeds. The objective of our research was to find out the transport of chromium from tannery wastes to chicken through poultry feeds. For this purpose, non-DMB and DMB poultry feeds were collected from market and both were analyzed for chromium. The first one contained no chromium (below detection limit of 1 mg/kg using Atomic Absorption Spectroscopy), while DMB contained 8210 mg/kg of total chromium. So our aim was to find out the transport of chromium in the chicken which are fed a DMB mixed feed. As it is available in the market, about 20% of DMB was mixed with other feeds to prepare DMB mixed poultry feed and this was fed to 30 days old chicken. The different body parts of these chickens were analyzed for total chromium after feeding first month (1st batch) to second month (2nd batch).

Acceptable limit

In 1980, WHO and Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences (USA), recommended the range for trivalent chromium 50 to 200 microgram per day for adults as the "safe and adequate daily dietary intake" but in 2001, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences (USA) recommended the Adequate Intakes (AI) of chromium for different ages at 2 to 35 microgram per day.

Is separate analysis necessary?

In our finding, after two months of feeding the chickens with DMB mixed poultry feed, the total chromium in brain, meat, liver and bone of chicken are 4561, 349, 611 and 1990 microgram/kg, respectively. Now, I ask Professor M Lutfor Rahman, under these circumstances is it necessary to analyze hexavalent chromium and trivalent chromium separately to evaluate its toxicity?

Our proposal is to stop the production of DMB from tannery solid wastes (skin-cut wastes or leather shaving dust) and stop mixing it with other ingredients to produce poultry feeds.

I request Professor M Lutfor Rahman to go through my article published as the BEST PAPER in the International Journal of Civil, Structural, Environmental and Infrastructure Engineering Research and Development (IJCEIERD), Vol. 4, Issue 4, page 1-10, 2014 (Trans Stellar: TJPRC Pvt. Ltd.; ISSN (P): 2249-6866; ISSN (E): 2249-7978; USA, UK, Singapore, Qatar and India).

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Comments on report, "Nation in mourning," published on August 15, 2014

Hasan

May the Almighty Allah place Bangabandhu and his family members in heaven and those culprits in hell. We would have gone a long way, had Bangabandhu been with us now.

Zia

Very good article. It covered almost everything that happened on that dark night. We should make a movie on this so that the whole world and our new generation can know about this.

"Under threat from underage drivers" (August 11, 2014)

Clearthoughts

The government should make it mandatory for the drivers to attend a course and gain a certain level of knowledge about road safety, identifying the dangers on the road, the reasons for yellow and white marks on the road and the rules of traffic signal. They must learn to drive safely.