

# Clandestine yaba dealing takes toll

## BITTER TRUTH



MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

in recent times. According to National Mental Health Institute, the number of female addicts within the age group of 16 to 22 now accounts for some 17 per cent of total addicts.

The crackdown on drug barons in 2007 in some of the most posh areas of the city with seizure of about 1,30,000 yaba tablets and arrest of four sons coming out of very affluent families, exposed the ugly side of wealth and power acquired in the past days of the last caretaker government.

However, recently, two reports about clandestine yaba dealing carried by the dailies are frightening. Reportedly, Prado jeeps owned by the affluent class are being used by drug peddlers for ferrying yaba tablets from Teknaf to Chittagong, and then to the capital city. On suspicion, Police on the night of 8 august stopped a Prado jeep coming to Chittagong from Teknaf and seized some 55000 yaba tablets from under the seat of the car. One Abul Hossain arrested with yaba tablets confessed to police that about 12 such Prado jeeps are rented for yaba trade. In the second case, detective branch of the police raided a house at Banasree and arrested a drug trafficker based in Myanmar with huge stock of yaba tablets and machinery for setting up a yaba factory in that house.

Unfortunately, till the clampdown by Rab in 2007, law enforcers took little notice and the citizenry

seemed oblivious of the insidious trade looming up in the society. Every time drug dealers or traffickers arrested from different parts of the country along with huge quantity of drugs came out on bail because of weak case framing. Drug lords who operate from a safe sanctuary remain always safe due to their unholy alliance with a group of law enforcers.

Yaba, as it appears has replaced other drugs as the favoured social lubricant among affluent urban Bangladeshis who largely view this drug as a recreational or good-time high. Only recently a law maker in Cox's bazaar has been sued by ACC for his alleged involvement in this ugly trade besides accumulation of huge wealth through invisible sources.

As the country's urban affluence spreads mostly through corrupt means, so does the number of drug users. The worrying trend is that the age when the youngsters begin experimenting with such party drugs has dropped to 16 and 17. It has been reported that there are about thousands of such dealers in the country and reports suggest that there are about 10 million drug users including kids as young as 15 belonging to the wealthy class hooked to such party drugs. In a word, as it appears from reports, the whole country bristles with these illicit drugs of all brands.

After a thorough analysis of the nature of the problem, one is led to believe that till now mainly youngsters including college and university going girls belonging to the wealthy sections of the society and high income groups are involved in such drug dealing and abuse. But what is most worrying is that the abuse is gradually spreading to the other strata of the society in an epidemic form, ruining the economic backbone of the middle and upper middle class people. What's concerning are addicts who refuse to accept that their drug dependence and later face serious psychological, physical and financial problems.

"Money is often used as a surrogate for affection", so says a social analyst. Their reaction to drug use by their kids is usually denial. In a bid to find out a solution for drug problem, we must fulfil our commitments as parents.

When we realize that we are hurting those young members of the family through excessive access to

wealth that is not required, we will begin to deal realistically with this problem; Meaning that parental rights must be evenly balanced by parental responsibility. It has to be emphasized that the major enemies of children today are illegal drugs, tobacco and alcohol abuse that inspires anti-social and destructive behaviour in children. With adolescent kids, both male and female being caught with the Yaba tablets, Viagra, and alcohol the drug trade is extending to the farthest corner of the country beyond anybody's knowledge. Even in a small upazila Nikli of Kishoreganj, it has been reported that there are forty drug sale centres, but either in Nikli or in other remote areas of the country, never a strong drive was launched to bust these dens. Punishment of six months' jail term to the traffickers or dealers awarded by the mobile court is no deterrent to the spread of this vile trade.

In Malaysia, the only punishment for any kind of drug trafficking is death penalty. Nearly 450 people in Malaysia have been executed since 1960, two of them being Australians. Now a French woman in her 30s in Sabah state may face death penalty for keeping half kg of cannabis and growing cannabis plants in her flat. These unscrupulous people after serving the jail period or after coming out on bail when arrested start the business again in full vigour. On the other hand, Bangladesh border points with India and Myanmar have become so porous that weapons and drugs are getting into the country with least obstruction. Shockingly, in many cases law enforcement personnel are alleged to be in league with this criminal trade. The government has to frame stricter laws and implement them to curb drug smuggling. The law enforcers as well as the judiciary have to realize the way it is eating into the vitals of the nation and the arrestees must not be allowed bail under any pretext.

Frankly speaking, it is not these youngsters who are at fault but it is their environment and parents who need the corrective measures as all social scientists have spoken in different seminars and talk shows.

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## SHYKH SERAJ His vision of agriculture



ABED CHAUDHURY

BANGLADESH, geographically, is nothing but one large agricultural farm, a rice farm to be precise. Except for the minor spaces taken by cities and smaller towns the vast space of the Nation is taken by rice and other minor crops such as mustard and pulses. Most of the population, living in scenic villages, 87000 of them, spread miles after bucolic miles, eke out an existence from a land so fertile that, there is still enough food for 160 million of people, and even some to export. Bangladesh certainly in that sense is a marvel to world agriculture for its sustained endurance in self sufficiency. Incredibly, such success is not widely understood or appreciated in the nation. Our city bound urban population, content as they are with tolerable price of rice, remain oblivious to the plight of the rural farm-living poor whose hard work and sheer love of rice production keeps this agricultural production machine going. Our cultural space is taken by events in the cities, comfort of citizens of cities and towns while the rural population work so hard, often behind the scene year after year. Were it not for the work of a few celebrated personalities the story of our rural hinterland would remain completely unknown.

Shykh Seraj is one such person. He has made agriculture and its development his life's work, in a way that he almost personifies agriculture in Bangladesh. Whenever I discuss any issue of agriculture in Bangladesh people routinely ask me if I have discussed it with Shykh Seraj or indeed if I knew him. Shykh and I go back many years. When in 1972 I came to Dhaka to study in Notre Dame college I was introduced to him by our common friend Faridur Reza Shagor and though our paths later diverged I rediscovered Shykh when I started coming back to Bangladesh since 2002. I talked to him off and on Camera endlessly of many issues related to agriculture and found his enthusiasm most infectious. We discussed issues such as the manner of application of fertiliser, the role of hybrids, micronutrients in soil, how best to utilise our land; central issues of agriculture that ought to be discussed by everyone in the country. It is indeed the relentless enthusiasm of Shykh that such vital matters are subjects of public discourse and high public profile.

Our public debate is dominated by people of social sciences and agriculture does not have a high profile. Most people talking about agriculture do not have specific proximal knowledge of agriculture and hence the discussions are very abstract. It is often from such a distance that policies are made. In popular media and social media agriculture still suffers from low prestige and the perception that it is just too hard and too far away. Although we have assimilated rural pathos in our songs and stories we have moved away mentally from the true reality of our 87000 villages. This is where Shykh's work has been so seminal. By going to spaces, such as fields of rice and pulses, places where cattle are raised or fish are nurtured, Shykh using his charisma and celebrity status has made it acceptable for city kids to think of agriculture and Shykh's popularity has travelled hand in hand to create this useful nexus whereby our new generation is again thinking of agriculture.

On some occasions I have travelled with Shykh Seraj and have found his popularity first hand. But he is not just a TV celebrity. He is hard worker who does his home work and his enthusiasm for the nitty gritty of agriculture is impressive indeed. His energy and genuine enthusiasm is in plain display when he does his programs and garners the kind of warmth that he receives from people. FAO has been quick to recognise his contribution and has bestowed on him an important award.

As we move into an era of scarce land and threatened food security, depleted biodiversity, and threat of climate change, the role of people like Shykh Seraj cannot be over emphasized. Both his persona as a model and his action on the ground are needed to convince a new generation of dedicate their talent and energy into agriculture. We must educate and convince our urban population that agriculture is an important and prestigious vocation and Plant Science represents amongst the highest in intellectual pursuits.

Shykh Seraj confided in me many years ago about his dream of having a TV channel solely dedicated to agriculture. I hope he fulfils his dream soon. I would also like to see something lasting, maybe in the form of a new Institute that contains his life time of energy and dedication. The path in front of us, to feed the burgeoning population from a shrinking and depleted land, is full of challenges and peril. In this imperilled journey to future it is heartening to have a compatriot like Shykh Seraj with us. May his future days be long and fruitful.

The writer is a Bangladeshi geneticist and science writer living in Australia.

## JUDGES' IMPEACHMENT BY JS Govt chooses narrow path

SHAKHAWAT LITON

INDEPENDENT courts are the hallmark of a strong democratic society. Many countries including UK, India and Canada have functional parliamentary democracy; therefore, keep reforming the process for judicial appointments along with other efforts to ensure independence of the judiciary. In these countries, judges were appointed by the executive branches of the governments, but the appointments are handled differently without the governments' exercising little or no power.

Parliaments in those countries are empowered to impeach higher court judges as a means to balance state power. But the legislatures find rare occasions to exercise the powers and this has been possible for the proper appointment process that has been upgraded through reforms.

In Bangladesh, the appointment procedure is quite the opposite. The Awami League-led government has suddenly focused on the impeachment of Supreme Court judges by the parliament, instead of upgrading the judicial appointment system which could make it transparent and accountable. The government has recently approved a constitutional amendment proposal to restore the parliament's authority to impeach SC judges on ground of misconduct and incapacity. As a consequence, the existing constitutional provision for the chief justice-led Supreme Judicial Council for doing the job will be scrapped. The constitutional amendment bill is set to get passed in the current parliament session. The government, however, has no plan to set up any mechanism for appropriate appointments as it wants to retain the sweeping authority over appointments.

In defence, the government has cited the existing provisions for impeachment of higher levels courts' judges in some democratic countries like India, Canada, Australia and USA—where the parliaments enjoy the powers to impeach the judges. But the government clearly avoided saying anything about the mechanism for the judicial appointments in those countries. Does the government believe the mere restoration of the parliament's authority to impeach judges will improve the situation?

The UK parliament, the most powerful legislature in the world, is empowered by the Act of Settlement 1701 to remove judges of the High Court and above.

But it has never removed any English judge in over the past 300 years. To maintain and strengthen judicial independence, the Judicial Appointment Commission was set up in 2006 with the responsibility for selecting candidates for judicial office in a transparent and accountable process. The 15-members of commission are drawn from the judiciary, the legal profession, non-legally qualified judicial officers and the public. On receiving the proposal from the commission, the prime minister recommends to the Queen to make the appointments.

The parliament of India has not impeached a single judge either of the Supreme Court or High Court in over the six and half a decades. One judge facing impeachment proceeding resigned before the parliament moved to dismiss him. The impeachment proceeding against that judge named Shri R Ramaswamy took place between 1991 and 93. In the end the inquiry committee found the judge guilty. In the Lok Sabha the Congress Party abstained from voting and so the motion could not be passed with requisite majority.

The Indian parliament has recently amended the constitution to build mechanism for better judicial appointments, replacing the 20-year-old collegium system of judges choosing judges, which has been under severe criticism. The amendment made provision for the setting up of a National Judicial Appointments Commission which will appoint and transfer judges to the Supreme Courts and the 24 High Courts. Chief Justice of India will head the NJAC. Besides the chief justice, the judiciary would be represented by two senior judges of the Supreme Court. Two eminent personalities and the law minister will be the other members of the proposed body.

The parliament in Canada has impeached only one higher court judge since 1867. Four other judges facing impeachment proceedings resigned to avoid dismissal. However, the government still continues to reform the judicial appointment system for avoiding controversy. About a decade ago, the appointment process was further modified somewhat to allow for greater parliamentary, provincial/territorial and public consultations. In 2004, Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin announced that nominees to the Supreme Court would be reviewed by a special parliamentary committee. And the committee would report their findings to parliament. This led to the establishment of an *ad hoc* parliamentary committee.

Subsequently, a formal Advisory Committee on Supreme Court appointments was announced, which is formed each time a vacancy on the Court occurs. The advisory committee consisted of an MP from each of the parties representing the parliament, a retired judge, attorney general, a representative of the law society and two prominent Canadians who are neither lawyers nor judges. It works from a list of seven candidates submitted to them by the minister of justice (usually in consultation with the Prime Minister) for an appointment. Then the prime minister chooses the final nominee from the committee's short list. Neither the committee nor parliament has however the power to block the prime minister's final decision.

The US president - the world's most powerful chief executive in the presidential form of government - cannot appoint Supreme Court judges at his will. The presidential appointments to the Supreme Court must first be confirmed by the US Senate. The Senate has the power to reject or block the appointment. Moreover, the confirmation proceedings usually involve a lengthy review process in which the Senate Judiciary Committee is permitted to directly question the president's nominee.

In South Africa, a judicial services commission has control over selection of candidates for the judiciary. The commission is comprised of judges, lawyers, an academic, some government nominees and parliamentary nominees. This commission appoints judges autonomously below the Supreme and Constitutional Courts. The president appoints judges of the Supreme Court and Constitutional Courts after consulting with this commission. Removing a judge requires the president to have two-thirds vote in parliament in favour of removal, and a recommendation of dismissal from the judicial services commission.

Given the above examples, it can be said that our government has in fact chosen a narrow path by focusing only the impeachment of judges by the parliament and refraining from developing the process for appointments. Will this contribute to enhance or undermine the independence of judiciary? Does the government want to make the democracy functional without effective independence of the judiciary?

The writer is senior reporter, The Daily Star.

### BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



### HENRY

by Don Trachte



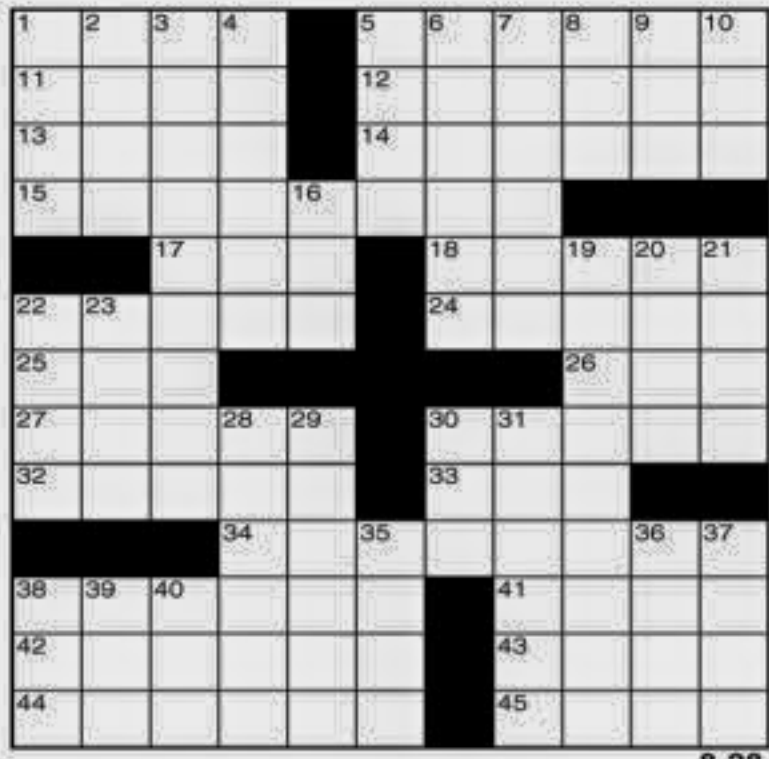
### QUOTABLE Quote

A successful man is one who makes more money than his wife can spend. A successful woman is one who can find such a man.

Lana Turner

### CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>           | <b>DOWN</b>               |
| 1 Egyptian serpents     | 1 Battery fill            |
| 5 Egyptian beetle       | 2 Cooking mint            |
| 11 Shopping aid         | 3 Excess                  |
| 12 Inmate's hope        | 4 Accent                  |
| 13 Lab aide of film     | 5 Set eyes on             |
| 14 Made speeches        | 6 Winter airs             |
| 15 Baryshnikov, for one | 7 Ark's landing site      |
| 17 Employ               | 8 Turn bad                |
| 18 Is missing           | 9 Heady brew              |
| 22 Fresh                | 10 Garden section         |
| 24 Sculpting medium     | 16 Baseball's Ron         |
| 25 Yale student         | 19 Puzzlement             |
| 26 Maiden name label    | 20 Patella's place        |
| 27 Find darling         | 21 Crystal gazer          |
| 30 Put off              | 22 Pants line             |
| 32 Stately home         | 23 Emmy winner Alan       |
| 33 Flightless bird      | 28 Wakes                  |
| 34 Patriotic symbol     | 29 Composer Bloch         |
| 38 Queasy feeling       | 30 Singer Shannon         |
| 41 Ready for picking    | 31 Come into view         |
| 42 Preoccupy            | 35 One of the Mamas       |
| 43 Leaves               | 36 Mimicked               |
| 44 Wild ones            | 37 Private dinner         |
| 45 Goals                | 38 San Francisco's - Hill |
|                         | 39 Homer's dad            |
|                         | 40 "Born in the -"        |



### Yesterday's answer

LAIR RADIOS  
ULNA ALUMNA  
LEFT VAMPED  
USE HERB  
REALM INA  
STEAM SINEW  
URNS SHOE  
RACES BLEND  
EYE LAUER  
FOGG EGO  
SAVAGE SNAP  
ICE MAN ACME  
REGENT TEEN

**CRYPTOQUOTE**  
SKN KWKKNGS FBGQWMDN GSCXN WL  
UBTCD RYDSYTN WG HKNL HN TNRBXLWIN  
SKCS HN BYXKS SB RBLSTBD BYT SKBYKSG.  
- RKCTDNG OCTHWL

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:  
THE FIREWORKS BEGIN TODAY. EACH DIPLOMA IS A LIGHTED MATCH. EACH ONE OF YOU IS A FUSE.  
- ED KOCH

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