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Cold storage with a difference

Why not replicate the technology?

THE cold storage built by a seed trader in Dinajpur's Kaharol upazila holds a lot of promise. It runs without electricity and its design has been proven to be effective for the last five years. A structure built on earth, brick and bamboo with paddy residue to line the rooftop, the facility has bamboo flooring and shelves and a water reservoir beneath the building does the cooling. The other interesting feature is that the structure costs a little over Tk 500,000 to build and vegetables like potato, pointed gourds and cucumbers can be stored for 6 months, cauliflowers can be preserved for a month and cabbages for 75 days. This is the news farmers have been waiting for. Traditional cold storage facilities in the country charge up to Tk350 for a 75kg sack of potatoes whereas it can be stored for the same time span at the electricity-less facility for Tk75, which is a fraction of the cost!

Although the initial cost of the building may seem a little steep, the cost savings for farmers is huge and maintaining the facility is very easy for prospective proprietors. This is a design that works apparently, but the full benefit of it can only be appreciated if the government decides to replicate it on a wider scale. The design itself came to fruition with NGO help, but it is the government through its agriculture extension programme that must step in to bring the fruits of this design to famers nationwide.

Hillary Clinton for US president

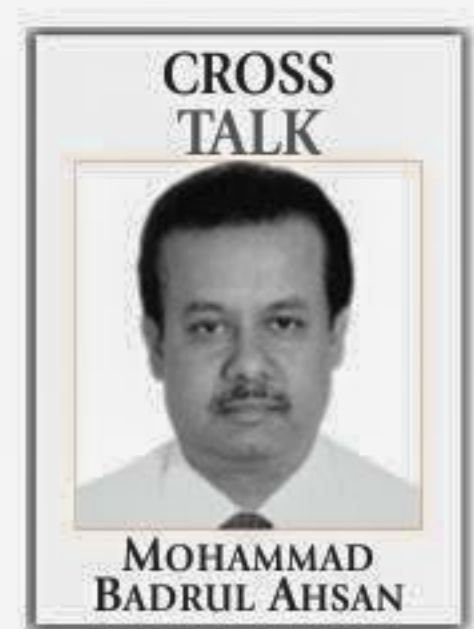
The better candidate

WE congratulate Hillary Clinton who, after a grueling 15-month campaign, has finally clinched the Democratic Party's nomination for US president, making history as the first woman to be picked by a major political party to run for the White House. It is an honour for her and her fellow Americans some of whom remain reluctant to see a woman as the president of the strongest country on earth.

Clinton has a long, proven track record of public service as an attorney, as the First Lady, a US senator and then the Secretary of State. Her lifelong work for women and children, minorities, immigrants, social justice and healthcare; and global security as America's top diplomat is all too well-known and hardly requires description. On the other hand, her republican opponent, Donald Trump, "the ultimate dealmaker," is offering various forms of fears instead of any solutions to pressing issues faced by the US and the rest of the world. Come November the choice should be clear for Americans despite the orchestrated confusion over who is the more qualified of the two.

This is an opportunity for Americans to be on the right side of history. Very recently, the British have elected Theresa May, the first woman since Margaret Thatcher as prime minister. Germany's Angela Merkel has led her country to a new prominence. Is America ready for a woman president? They better be.

Looking for common grounds or common interests?



CROSS TALK
WHEN so much talk of national unity is making the air heavy in Bangladesh, the political leaders are sending discordant signals. The prime minister is claiming that those who need to unite are united already, while the BNP chairperson insists the umbrella needs to open wider. United to divide or divided to unite, the two sides are drifting further apart instead of coming closer.

A yawning gap already exists between the two halves of our political terrain, and neither side is ready to negotiate. So the idea of unity sounds absurd in the midst of persistent hostility as the idea of fresh air does in an airtight facility. Some of us are even asking why unity is so important when terrorism doesn't spare countries, where people are knit tighter than us.

To answer that question, those advanced countries probably have a better chance of braving this escalating crisis. Most of those countries suffered economic, religious, territorial, and racial tensions that divided them in the course of history. These countries are still in one piece because they successfully managed to overcome their divisions and stay united. The countries, which failed, got their maps redrawn and renamed.

Between 1642 and 1646, England was torn apart by a bloody civil war between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians fighting over the power of monarchy.

The American civil war was fought between 1861 and 1865 when the North and the South couldn't agree on slavery. In the 19th century, foreign imperialism had divided China into spheres of influence. History will vouch that many more countries struggled with internal and external demons that threatened to unravel them.

Thus every nation on Earth had its circumstances that served to unite and divide its people. In 1971, Pakistan was dismantled after it failed to reconcile its differences. But the miniscule

Boxer Rebellion between 1899 and 1901 started the reversal of foreign domination in China. The American civil war ended after the North defeated the South in a decisive war.

Each of these events had a higher call. The Parliamentary victory reduced the power of monarchy in England and ended the monopoly of the Church of England. The uprising in China was motivated by proto-nationalist sentiments and opposition to imperialist expansion. The victory of the North enforced emancipation and abolished

the United States was destined to expand across the North American continent, while promoting America's democratic way of life to other nations. It was this national aspiration that congealed the American spirit like rennet coagulates milk.

What's our Manifest Destiny? At this point in time, we neither wish to expand our territory nor promote an ideology to other countries. Stripped to basics, the spirit of the liberation war means eternal vigilance against subjugation. Our people simply cherish a homeland where they can enjoy their freedom to live in pursuit of life, liberty and happiness.

In his famous "House Divided" speech in 1858, Abraham Lincoln said that a house divided against itself cannot stand. Yet, nations often come to the crossroads where they look shaky and lost. National unity saves a nation in crisis like the immune system of a body fights infection.

But an exaggerated and desperate immune reaction can lead to sepsis. Scientists compare this medical condition with a military situation. Let's say an army is sent to expel the enemy from the land. If it employs too much force, then it ends up destroying the very population it set out to defend.

It's bad that this nation is divided, even worse it can't get united. When birds of the same feather stick together, it's at best a brotherhood or cartel. National unity is something more. It's not so much about looking for common interests but finding common grounds.

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If national unity is an issue today, it also was an issue before. Our leaders didn't want to recognise it then, and they don't want to recognise it now. Meanwhile, a crack has grown into a giant hole.

opposition to the creation of Bangladesh continued to erode the gigantic unity amongst its people. A handful of divisive collaborators consolidated their position, while the unity of the united splintered into factions.

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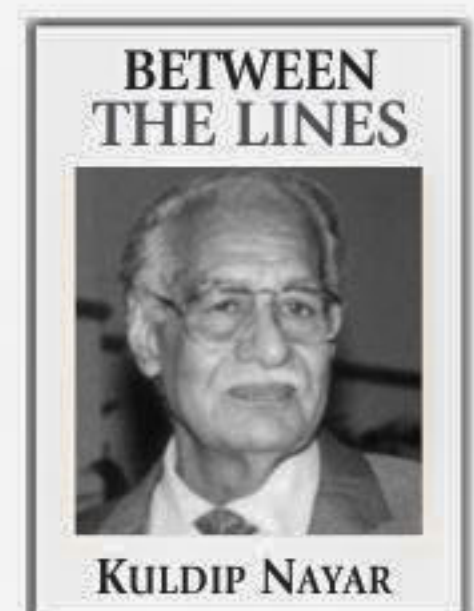
The civil war in England effectively ended with the Parliamentary victory at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. The

slavery throughout the United States. Nations are often divided to forge stronger unions.

The higher call for our divided nation is the triumph of the spirit of the liberation war over those who are undermining its influence. And, the transition from smoldering to flaming has taken many years. The question is how long it's going to take for the conflagration to run its course.

Historians believe that a factor that helped unite the United States during the 19th century was the concept of Manifest Destiny. This was the idea that

A page from quit India movement



BETWEEN THE LINES
AS India prepares to commemorate 68 years of freedom from British imperial rule, it may be worth remembering a dusty town in Uttar Pradesh that

suffered the consequences of declaring itself an independent country for a few days in 1942.

The sovereign Republic of Ballia, headed by Chittu Pandey, managed to survive for some seven days before British-led military and police forces managed to regain control and unleashed a series of atrocities that are still remembered by the descendants of those who were raped, beaten and killed by shooting, firing and burning.

At the orders of an English police officer called Fletcher, an estimated 130 leaders of the local independence movement were hanged. Those who were not hanged were forced to climb trees where they were bayoneted. Those who managed to avoid the tree punishments were taken to local jails where they were suspended by their legs and starved. Those who avoided the leg suspension torture were forced to sit together on the floors of the jails where they were fed *chapattis* that gave them dysentery.

Ballia offers a small insight into the realities of colonial rule where 'lesser breeds' like the Indians suffered unimaginable miseries at the hands of their white rulers. Some of those tortures resulting in death, whether it involved bayoneting or being forced to lie on blocks of ice for hours on end, were not all that different from what the Jews endured at the hands of the Nazis.

The difference is that what happened in places like Auschwitz in Germany has been well documented and some of those responsible for what happened in the concentration camps have been brought to justice, if not by the allied powers and post Nazi Germany at the international court of justice in the Hague, then certainly by the modern state of Israel.

Atrocities committed in places like Ballia that joined in the Quit India

movement of 1942 are still not fully documented. As for the likes of Commissioner Fletcher, no one to this day knows what happened to him and whether he was ever held to account for the murders of so many innocent civilians.

In recent years it has become fashionable among some historians try and suggest that the 200 years of colonial rule were not all that bad and that India gained more than it lost from interacting first with the East India Company, a gang of thugs dressed up as so-called gentleman traders, and then

Queen Victoria. Today that same Kohinoor forms the centrepiece of the British monarch's crown.

Back to the benefits of 'gora' rule. It was the British after all, so the argument goes, who introduced Indians to the English language and helped to develop the country's infrastructure, whether by bringing in piped water, electricity and sewerage facilities to urban areas, or laying the foundations both of the railways and the posts and telegraph services. And it was the British again who introduced key religious and social reforms such as the abolition of *Sati* and



Mahatma Gandhi giving the Quit India speech on August 8, 1942, on the eve of the Quit India movement.

face-to-face with the British government.

In practice there was not that much difference between the brutality and exploitation practiced by the company and the government. One small example should suffice. It was British government representatives who forced baptism on Maharaja Ranjit Singh's son and heir, Duleep Singh. And it was British government officials, including Lord Dalhousie who, after presiding over the looting of the Lahore treasury, 'persuaded' young Duleep Singh to hand over the fabled Kohinoor diamond in person to

child marriage in 1829 and the Widows Remarriage Act of 1856.

Yet the Indians were quite capable of behaving like gentlemen. When the East India Company established control in the name of trade in 18th century India, its officers duly went about trebling the taxes that the local peasants were obliged to pay. These taxes remained in place even during times of dire famine. How different it was when local rulers were in charge and dispensed with taxes during times of calamity!

In Ballia, 200 years later, it is

instructive to recall just how the British administration was treated by the leaders of the independence movement. British officials and their local toadies were gathered together and peacefully ushered across the railway line that divided the civil and military lines of the town. None were harmed in any way.

Even more instructive was the unity that prevailed in those days between Hindus and Muslims. Inevitably, when they returned the British committed all kinds of atrocities. They did not want the national flag to be hoisted in Ballia and they shot and killed anyone who dared to do so. Emerging from the shadows of the town was a young Muslim who was killed when he tried to raise a flag that was not the Union Jack. It is still a matter of local pride in Ballia that before the flag fell to the ground, another volunteer took it upon himself to grab and support that symbol of national pride. Some 11 men were killed one after another by soldiers of the crown.

Significantly, this gesture of defiance by the citizens of Ballia was never reported in the British media. This was during the Second World War when Winston Churchill was Prime Minister. As the war was coming to a close he is recorded as saying that Britain would never give up its Indian Empire.

His recorded comments include, "I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion." Just as shocking were his earlier comments about Mahatma Gandhi. "It is alarming and nauseating to see Mr Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the east, striding half naked up the steps of the vice regal palace, while he is still organising and conducting a campaign of civil disobedience, to parlay on equal terms with the representative of the Emperor-King."

Churchill did not and could not anticipate that Ballia would ignite the fire which five years later would engulf and destroy colonial rule both in India and beyond. Ironically, the statues of both Gandhi and Churchill today stand close to each other in a prestigious location opposite the British parliament in London.

The writer is an Indian columnist.

COMMENTS

"Storm 26, a plan well executed"
(July 27, 2016)

Sujon Reaz

The captured militant may have important information. So please, don't shoot him in the name of 'crossfire.'

Tuhin

Militancy should be rooted out.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Finding peace

Degradation of morality is, in my opinion, destabilising world peace and harmony. Rising inequality is crippling people's ability to make good decisions. On the other hand, a wrong application of religious philosophy is weakening the human condition. The question is how to overcome this critical situation? We need an open discussion to find a solution.
Professor M Zahidul Haque
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System, SAU, Dhaka

Violence against children

We are horrified by the increasing violence against children in our country. Last year, a number of children were brutally killed and the memory of that still haunts us. The recent killing of a 10-year-old boy in Narayanganj by some factory workers who allegedly pumped air into his body shocked us to the core. We wonder what's wrong with these people.
Hashem Miah
On e-mail



Improve services in vet hospitals

It is a matter of concern that our country suffers from the lack of expert veterinarians as well as proper diagnostic facilities for the animals. Many accuse that in the government veterinary hospitals, there are many corrupt, inept vets who kill or do more harm to the sick animals in the name of treatment. In many cases, they use expired drugs or sometimes, totally wrong ones.

These types of vets working in these places seem to have learnt nothing to earn their degrees and are involved in malpractice. Our government is least bothered about monitoring and upgrading facilities in these hospitals. Please make the respective authority aware of this damned condition.
An animal lover
On e-mail