

Greening up the concrete



NAZNIN TITHI

AS I ordered a Hoya and a Dischidia, two beautiful trailing house plants, from a seller online, I was elated to think how easy it has become nowadays to buy

plants from various Facebook groups and online shops. Since working from home from the very beginning of the pandemic, I have rarely stepped outside the house or have had any chance to physically visit the nurseries nearby.

For the first couple of months, I found it hard to maintain the balance between work and life. With no house help to assist me and my mother with the household work, I really struggled to maintain a healthy lifestyle. It gets worse when you have a four-year-old son who finds it difficult to cope with the new normal. To be frank, the pandemic was taking a toll on my mental health too.

After spending the first few months completely stuck at home, I realised that I had to do something to cope with the situation and decided to revive our rooftop garden, hoping it would be the best outlet for stress relief for me and my son. I always had a passion for gardening—I used to grow all kinds of flowers and vegetables on our rooftop. However, during the last few years, I couldn't pay much attention to it. And as I started working on my garden, I felt a big difference in the quality of time I was spending at home in isolation. All of a sudden, I started feeling connected with a wider community of plant lovers through various social media groups.

Becoming a member of these groups, I was amazed to know how people have been trying to live with at least some greenery at their home in a city where all



'As I started working on my garden, I felt a big difference in the quality of time I was spending at home in isolation.'

PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

the green is gradually vanishing from our sight. It felt great to see that people still dreamed of living a better life in what has been consistently ranked as one of the least liveable cities of the world. People are buying and selling all kinds of plants in these online groups, posting pictures of their plants and gardens, seeking help or offering suggestions about how to care for their plants, etc.

There is also a visible trend to buy rare and expensive imported plants and show them off in the groups which often creates a craze among the group members. But that's alright, as long as it means more greenery in these concrete enclosures.

Meanwhile, the online shops are making a hefty profit as many of them are selling plants at exorbitant prices, as many home gardeners allege. But there are also people and organisations who are not only selling plants but also trying to make a difference by performing some social responsibilities.

I came across one such organisation in Khulna that not only sells plants at reasonable prices but also provides some environmental services. The slogan they put in their Facebook group is "Zero waste is possible". One of the amazing services they provide is, they take old, used books and papers as well as non-

biodegradable waste such as plastic from the people, and offer them plants or money in exchange. They are making people aware of the deadly impact of plastic pollution and encouraging them to recycle.

There are people who are not only passionate about growing plants but also try to reduce their carbon footprint through reusing empty plastic bottles as pots for their plants. However, it is disappointing to see how plastic flowerpots are still being produced and advertised in these groups by sellers.

Since I have to spend a lot of time in the kitchen now, I have developed a

habit of keeping all the kitchen waste in a separate container and using them for making compost for my garden. I have learned how to make the best liquid fertiliser for my plants from regular kitchen waste. There is nothing you cannot use as a fertiliser—from banana peels and egg shells to used tea leaves and rice starch.

I have even discovered a man on a YouTube channel who buried two big fish heads underneath his tomato plants to see if that would have any impact on the plants. After several months, he found out that the plants grown on the soil with the fish heads buried underneath were stronger and produced more tomatoes over a long period of time.

Using kitchen waste for making compost and fertiliser has been a common practice among farmers across the world who prefer to do organic farming. It is an easy procedure which amateur gardeners can also learn very quickly.

As more and more people are becoming interested in rooftop gardening during the pandemic, it has also created an opportunity for managing our kitchen and plastic waste in an environment-friendly way. If these online platforms can be utilised to promote such good practices, we can surely expect to see a visible difference in our waste management practices. For a city like Dhaka, it can do wonders.

My few months of gardening experience have made me realise that change is certainly possible. We only need to want it from our hearts. I dream of a Dhaka where every building and structure will wear a touch of green. We cannot completely bring back the greenery that has already been lost over the years. But we surely can create some green space on our rooftops and verandahs.

Naznin Tithi is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star.

Putting knowledge at the heart of our development strategy



REZWAN-UL-ALAM

It is heartening to note that discussion is taking place after the release of the 4th edition of the Global Knowledge Index (GKI), jointly produced by the UNDP and

Dubai-based Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation. Bangladesh ranked low in GKI among 138 countries. Dr. Saleemul Huq, Director of the ICCCAD at IUB, in an op-ed in *The Daily Star* on December 30 rightly stressed the need for a "national consensus" to make the necessary paradigm shift to transform Bangladesh into a knowledge economy over the next decade.

Evidently, the government of Bangladesh is well aware of the significance of knowledge economy and how it contributes to the overall development of a country. In the 7th Five Year Plan, the government observed that the country was a long way from catching up to the standards of the global Knowledge Economy Index (KEI) of the World Bank, and hoped to improve its rating through expanding ICT-specific initiatives.

While technology is an important component of a knowledge economy, there are, however, more interrelated and multidisciplinary aspects that require a strong political commitment on the part of all leaders and stakeholders to turn such aspiration into reality.

As a knowledge management practitioner, I would like to use this opportunity to highlight some of the aspects that may generate further discussion on this topic.

In 2018, Manusher Jonno Foundation

(MJF) set up a knowledge management team with the goal of gathering evidence on what works and what doesn't and capturing lessons learned from its human rights and good governance programmes, implemented by nearly one hundred partner NGOs across the country. Covid-19 lessons learnt by MJF's partner NGOs clearly demonstrate that multi-stakeholder partnership is key to achieving the desired development outcome for the beneficiaries during a pandemic situation.

In 2020, MJF also joined the Vienna-based international multi-stakeholder Knowledge for Development Partnership (K4DP) to advance knowledge for development in Bangladesh. MJF supports K4DP's 14 knowledge development goals which were presented at the UN Office in Geneva in April 2017. The goals are based on the statements of 130 thought leaders from various countries, among whom 10 were from various fields in Bangladesh.

The goals include pluralistic, diverse and inclusive knowledge societies; people-focused knowledge societies; strengthening local knowledge ecosystems; knowledge partnerships; knowledge cities and rural-urban linkages; advanced knowledge strategies in public and development organisations; capture, preservation and democratisation of knowledge and fair and dynamic knowledge markets. Also included are issues such as safety, security, sustainability; legal knowledge; improved knowledge management competences; the role of institutions of higher education; information and communication technologies for all; and finally, the arts and culture, which are central to knowledge societies. It may be mentioned here that SDG 17 calls for enhancing "knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms".

Various studies have found that several

elements of knowledge management (KM) such as acquisition, creation, capture, storage, retrieval, sharing and utilisation of knowledge lead to higher performance of organisations as well as a sustainable development in society.

In the past few years, knowledge sharing has moved to the centre of global development as a third pillar complementing financial and technical assistance. In fact, knowledge management tools have increasingly been recognised by most governments as strategic resources within the public sector. One study found that a government with a strong learning culture is 37 percent more productive. The US Congress passed several laws aimed at bolstering federal learning cultures, including the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act.

The Indian government has developed a system based on a knowledge management maturity model to transform the country into a knowledge economy. For tackling climate change related issues, the government of Nepal has established the Nepal Climate Change Knowledge Management Centre (NCCKMC) as part of the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) process. Bangladesh has also incorporated knowledge management in some of its climate change strategies.

Austria implemented a national knowledge management strategy in 2015 and Uganda developed a National Knowledge Agenda, while Kenya is currently implementing a national knowledge management policy and strategy.

Sri Lanka successfully used a knowledge management campaign to resolve maternal healthcare issues in its tea plantation sector. Public Health England and Health Education England scaled up knowledge services within a short space of time to meet the demand

for timely and accurate understanding of the development of the coronavirus.

In 2012, the UAE formed a Knowledge Management Steering Committee in government departments and is now reaping its benefits. The Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation of the UAE has applied a comprehensive KM strategy for nuclear security. Many UN organisations and multilateral agencies such as World Bank, IFAD, ADB, UNESCO, WHO, UNDP, ILO, UNICEF, and IAEA have applied KM strategies for many years.

Armed with these insights, MJF and K4DP had approached three important government functionaries in August 2020 for jointly developing a national knowledge agenda for Bangladesh. Our argument was very simple: Knowledge is at the heart of any societal development and if knowledge is managed in a strategic, targeted, and integrated way, development happens better and faster. Knowledge-based development addresses all societal aspects ranging from inclusion (knowledge inclusion leads to financial, health, economic, and social inclusion) to economic development (knowledge industries are globally the fastest growing sector) to national identity (acquiring new knowledge while preserving traditional knowledge), and more.

We also argued that the range of challenges Bangladesh faces is wide, and without an integrated knowledge agenda and a knowledge management strategy for the public administration, various activities and initiatives of the government may lack necessary integration and effectiveness. While communication with the government is ongoing, we are also fostering partnerships with private universities to train and educate students and professionals in knowledge management and to generate further research and

innovation for sustaining Bangladesh's development achievements.

We are still unclear if knowledge management has been included as a separate development strategy in the recently adopted Eighth Five Year Plan of the government. My two-decade experiences in the development sector clearly showed that knowledge is power; however, how people use knowledge is more important than mere knowledge itself. Having said that, creation of new knowledge, developing people-centric



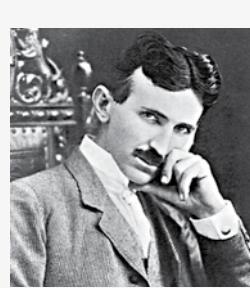
Knowledge is power, but how people use knowledge is more important than mere knowledge itself.

analytical models, designing effective tools for organisation and management of knowledge, and understanding knowledge management processes are essential in the era of VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) induced by Covid-19. In this context, knowledge, development, and partnership are three important tools for the 21st century, and if used together, can open the doors to prosperity and success.

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QUOTEABLE

Quote



NIKOLA TESLA
(1856-1943)
Serbian American inventor and
engineer who discovered and
patented the rotating
magnetic field.

*I don't care that they
stole my idea... I care
that they don't have
any of their own.*

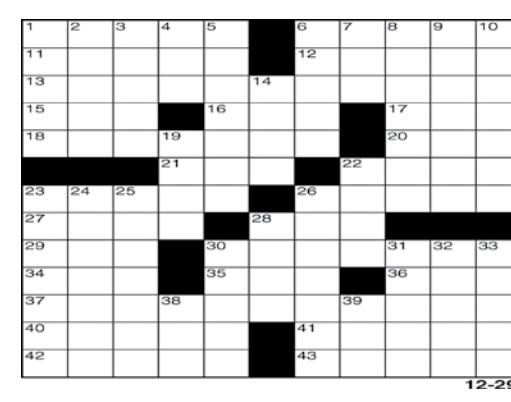
CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Lighthouse (confused)
- 2 Settings "Open Sesame"
- 6 Pacific island sayer
- 11 Group Make a speech
- 12 Want badly
- 13 Jester
- 15 Snaky shape
- 16 Flock father
- 17 History stretch
- 18 Some square
- 19 Dancers
- 20 Plopped down
- 21 Water cooler
- 22 Sitar's cousin
- 23 Slugger Sosa
- 26 Used a sponge
- 27 Singer Laine
- 28 Sleeve filter
- 29 Loss

DOWN

- 1 Shrink in fear
- 2 Stand
- 3 Out of style
- 4 Summer, in Paris
- 5 Requirement for surprise
- 6 Con games
- 7 Curved path
- 8 Fabricates
- 9 Pigged out
- 10 Filled with bubbles
- 14 Quite uncommon
- 19 Long car
- 22 Tree part
- 23 Eat greedily
- 24 Pennsylvania city
- 25 Grazing areas
- 26 Twists in pain
- 28 Woeful cry
- 30 Tolerate
- 31 Wise saying
- 32 Southern lass
- 33 Inquired
- 38 Rent out
- 39 Skin art, for short



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

A	C	T	U	P	H	O	E	S	S	A	L	L	E	Y
S	H	A	N	E	A	L	L	E	Y					
P	I	K	E	R	B	E	E	N	E					
I	C	E	S	I	A	A	A							
C	O	N	T	E	S	I	A	S	T	A	N	T	S	
R	A	B	A	T		J	E	R	R					
E	R	R	S	P										
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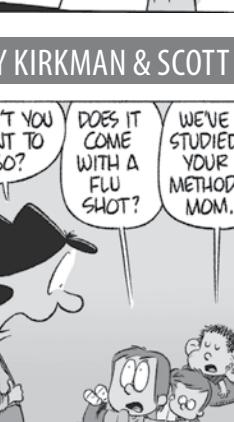
BEETLE BAILEY



BABY BLUES



BY MORT WALKER



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