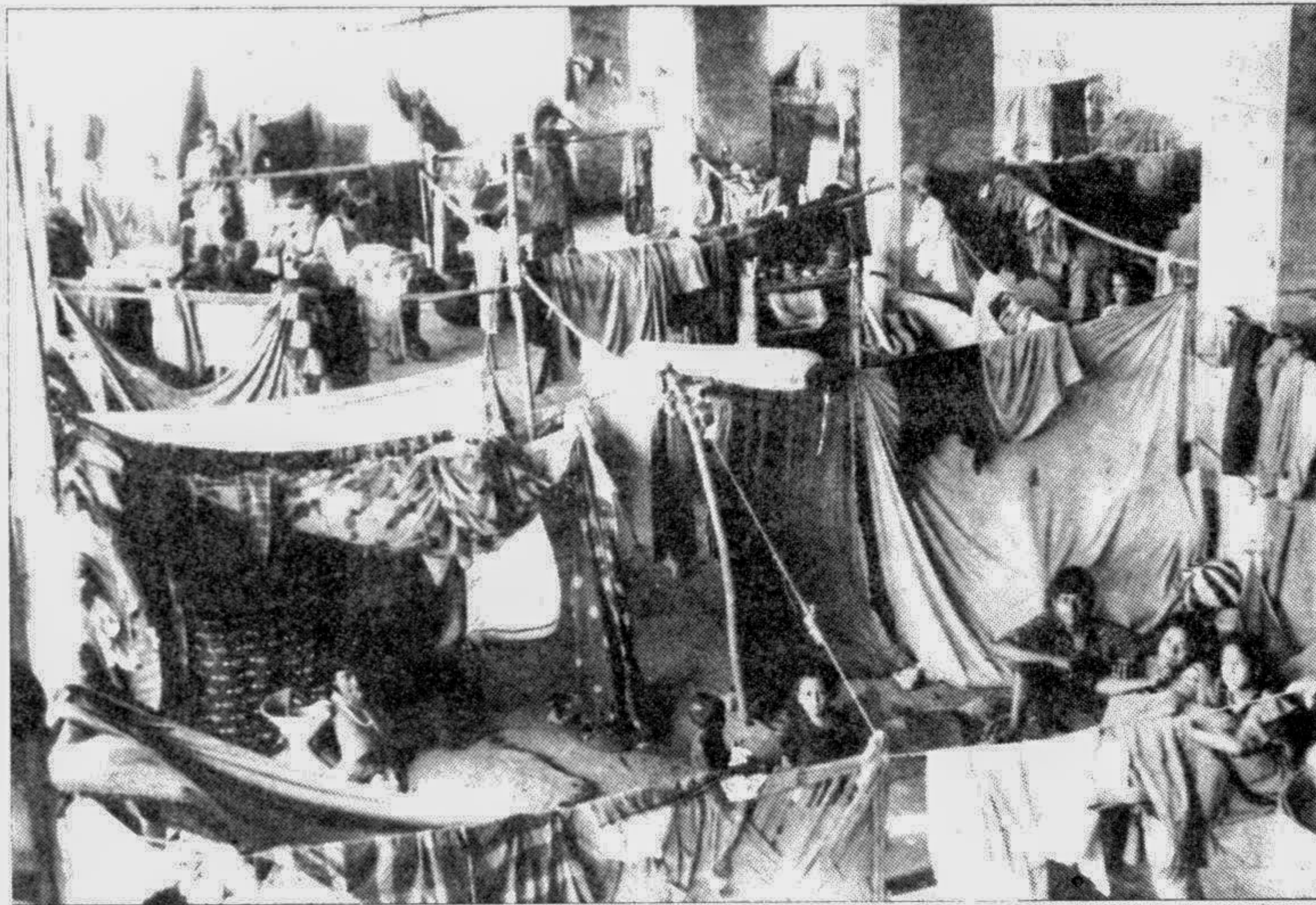
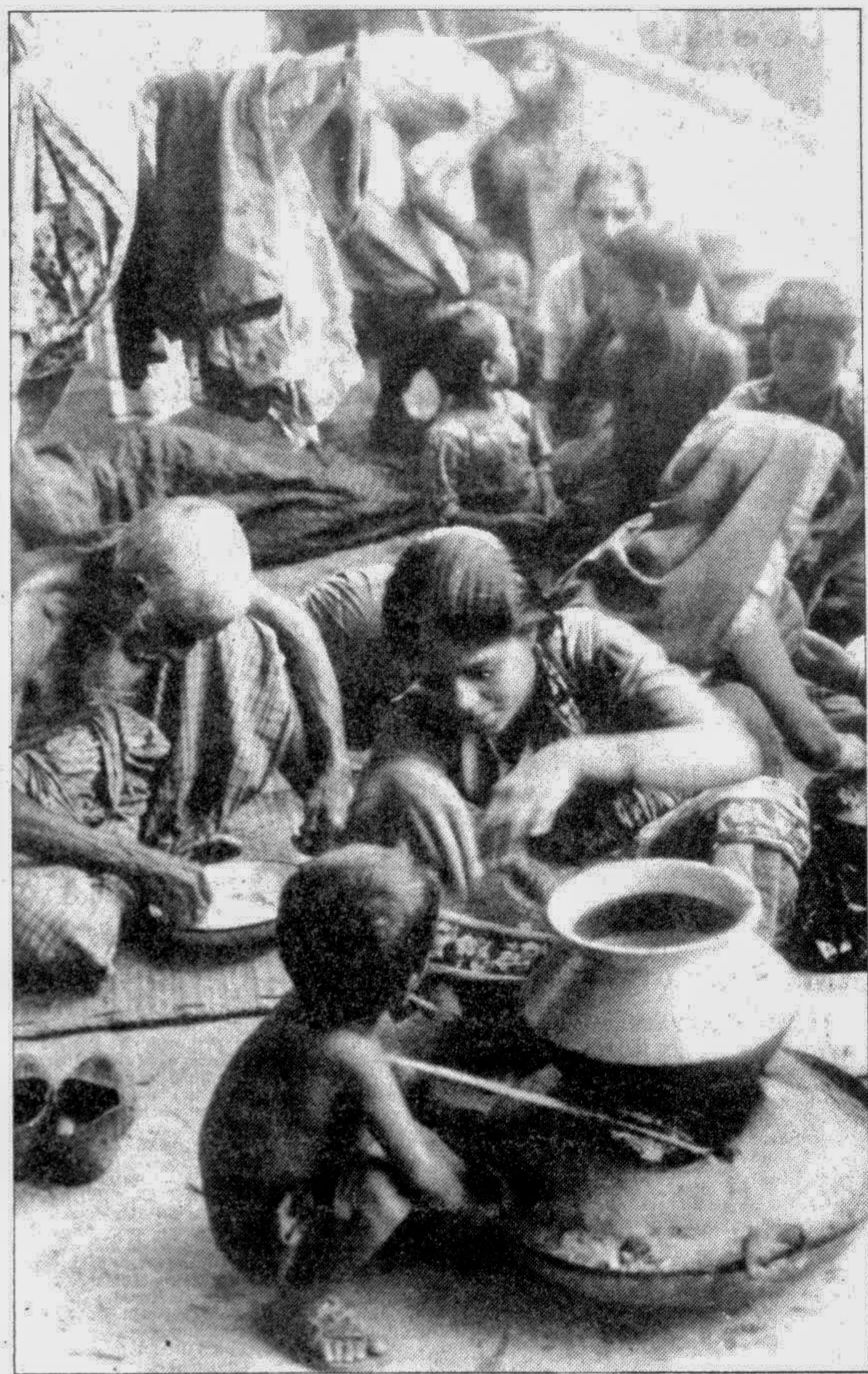


# A Shelter Indeed!

This (below) in fact is an under-construction five-star hotel building at Begunbari, Tejgaon. Flood affected people of nearby slums and squatters have found it ideal for a temporary shelter. They have made their own arrangements for cooking (right) and living on its sprawling floors. And there is perhaps no dearth of water for washing and bathing (bottom) from connections at the site, and they have no dearth of drapings to create compartments (bottom right) for themselves.

The flood waters will soon recede and they will go back to their own abodes. None of them may ever come here to enter as a boarder but, while passing by, may point his/her finger to the posh hotel and say, he/she also lived for a while under its roof, thanks to deluge.

— Photo feature by A K M Mohsin



## Paying the National Toll

by A Husnain

THIS budding nation is familiar with the patronizing culture of illegal toll collection (blood-stained cash) by lawless and unauthorised groups, under anonymous and powerful god-fathers who wield a lot of influence in the upper circles, and hold sway over the society and run the country and the people by the nose, and by the ears (the tyranny of ornate and unproductive oratory inflicted on the unwilling ears).

The same aberration continues in other sectors, where the national planners face problems sorting the bad from the beautiful; for example, the mighty potential of the contribution of the rickshaw industry to the GDP is ignored, while nagging with the traffic jams and unauthorised vehicles and drivers (one has to be developed, the other de-developed).

In the campus also, hypocrisy par excellence prevails: the budding careers of the future leaders are patronisingly ignored while quietly endorsing the cult of violence, year after year, regardless of the change in regimes.

Are we aware that we have all along been paying another kind of community collective fine or moral toll since independence for not being able to run and develop the country in a routing peaceful manner, as national consensus demands.

We can detect such signs in the continued political instability for a generation, and deep polarisations in the society in the garb of 'holy' politics, cul-

tural vehemence, and 'vile' or 'unholy' religious movements or cults suspected to be infecting the society with poisonous 'radioactive viruses' which would cripple the nation for generations.

Why this continued moral punishment on this poor (economically and otherwise) nation year after year, since we 'gained' independence in 1971? Independence cannot guarantee future freedom from violence (in any country or society), and we saw it in 1975; followed by political instability, which continues to this day even after the induction of the democratic form of governance since the early '90s.

We are paying the price for what sins and moral and ethical lapses? Simply moaning over our current 'fate' will not bring relief. The maladies have to be analysed, and the purgative medicine prescribed, through the right leadership taking the right measures at the right moments.

We are gasping and drowning in the matters of the moment, having little energy left for perspective reviews. Foresight and judgement have forsaken us (or are not allowed to intrude into our subjective pre-occupations with 1001 issues). This is typical in emergency and ad-hoc situations (such as floods, national calamities, war, strife, and abnormal situations).

Weak and bad governance can never reverse this situation and bring in conditions for

normal routine working (the efficiency is much higher when practising a proven system). A look around the globe reveals that experiments in governance never ends. The sine wave will continue; only the amplitude and the frequency changing local and epoch-wise.

This moral toll will continue to be extracted at the national level till the puss has been removed from the infection, and the blood has been cleansed, and the patient discharged by the doctors. We are now passing through this cleansing process.

It is a painful and a fearful period, causing instability, chaos, confusion, clash of interests. It is a long war of fight against the evil forces in the society. More than political tools will be required to combat this battle for survival.

Hence it would not be enough to depend only on the politicians to provide the solution and to bring relief, to rise to the next higher stage of freedom (there are several levels of freedom). The leaders in the other sectors of the society have to rise and be prepared to make personal sacrifices to be prepared to suffer hardships and pain for the survival of the right principles.

This is the way civilization has progressed, and this eternal law will also be enacted in Bangladesh. Those who think otherwise are living in a world of illusion and delusion. Nature's toll must be paid—in full. For whom the bell tolls? May be for me!

## Carcass Mountain Grows as 'Mad Cow' Cull Continues

### Britain's cattle crisis

- 1986 BSE ('Mad cow') identified
- 1988 Cattle slaughter begins: compensation 50%
- 1989 Farmers required to notify any BSE cases  
Ban on feed containing animal protein
- 1990 Compensation increased to 100%
- 1991 Ban on export of certain offal (SBO) to any country  
Ban on SBO in fertiliser
- 1992 EU bans trade in suspect bovine embryos
- 1994 Compensation for infected cattle reduced  
EU stops feeding animal protein to cattle
- 1996 EU imposes export ban on British beef



Source: VIVA

The British government is continuing its campaign to reassure domestic and foreign consumers that there is virtually no risk from "made cow" disease. It has also has to deal with the problem, reports *Gemini News Service*, of disposing of a mountain of carcasses. **Dan Palmer writes from London**

A growing lake of cattle-fat and a rising mountain of condemned meat are the by-products of the British government's attempt to prove that the "mad cow" epidemic is under control.

Every week, 1,500 tonnes of tallow are added to the three tanks which already contain 176,000 tonnes of fat, and 2,000 tonnes of ground meat and bone meal (MBM) are heaped on to the 331,000 tonnes awaiting disposal.

The leftovers are the results of the Over Thirty Month Scheme (OTMS) brought in by the British government in 1996 in an attempt to restore confidence in British beef exports.

About 2.4 million cattle have been slaughtered under the scheme, which follows the imposition of a ban on the use of cattle-feed containing sheep brains.

Some scientists believe use of the feed may have caused BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, commonly known as "mad cow" disease). There have been 170,000 recorded cases in Britain since it was identified in 1986. It is associated with Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) in humans, which attacks the brain.

Three people died of CJD in 1995, five in 1996 and 10 in

1997, according to Britain's Department of Health. Numbers may be far greater because it has an incubation period of up to 10 years.

Farmers receive compensation for slaughtering cattle, or their offspring, which might have eaten the feed.

The government hopes this voluntary cull among the nation's 11.6 million cattle will convince the European Union to lift its ban on British beef exports.

Cattle confirmed as infected with BSE are incinerated immediately. But there is no agreement on how best to dispose of the tens of thousands of other slaughtered animals.

"We haven't figured out what is the best way to dispose of [the carcasses]," says Ayesha Hazarika, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food.

The search is on for contractors to burn OTMS cattle carcasses directly, rather than grinding them up first and producing more tallow and MBM for storage.

Plans to burn 4,000 carcasses a week have been postponed because the Ministry has not found a company willing to do the job cheaply enough.

In the meantime, some stored tallow and MBM has

been burned by a company contracted to destroy 15,000 tonnes of MBM a year for three years.

The burning of tallow to generate energy is under consideration, but nothing concrete has been decided.

"There's quite clearly going to be the need for new storage facilities," says Gordon Munro, a spokesperson for the Ministry's Intervention board Executive Agency.

Incineration is opposed by Vegetarians International Voice for Animals (VIVA), which says that there is a risk that the ash and fumes will spread BSE.

VIVA also claims that tens of thousands of BSE cattle are buried in farmers' fields throughout Britain, risking soil contamination.

Tony Wardell, a journalist who works with VIVA, says farmers are burying carcasses to maintain their reputation as reliable beef exporters.

He also argues that some farmers have made money out of the BSE crisis. For example, farmer A, knowing he has unsellable BSE-infected cattle, gives them to farmer B. Farmer A thus maintains his reputation as having a BSE herd free from infection, while farmer B receives about £80 government compensation for each cow.