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as the State of Emergency is in effect, the fundamental rights of the citizens have been suspended, and it is even not possible for the "aggrieved", as the new emergency law puts it, to seek justice in the court.

Having hawkers and vendors blocking the footpaths and roads have been an eyesore, there is no denying it. But showing them the door, without rehabilitating them, may cost the country's social harmony dearly. How to rehabilitate them and where, are million dollar questions, and politicians and the technocrat advisers of the recent government tend to shirk from the answer. History of such rehabilitation is mired in corruption and mismanagement. Hawkers' leader Waliullah says though a number of hawkers' markets are built at Bangabazar and Nilkhet, getting possession of a booth in these markets have remained far beyond their means as each stall costs around Tk 2,00,000 to 3,00,000. It is also alleged that in most cases the shops are allotted to members and supporters of the ruling parties. Instead of benefiting the poor hawkers these rehabilitation projects become another money-making drive for the country's lumpen middle class businessmen.

So, the fate of the country's hawkers hangs in balance. The government, which is a constitutionally mandated one, has so far remained silent about making a new arrangement for them so that these people do not slip into the extreme poverty line. If rehabilitation does not take place soon, chances are there that however minimum social balance we have in our economic life will be lost; this is a dangerous prospect, which can rapidly become a reality. ■



After a devastating eviction drive in Karwanbazar, the hawkers are left with only debris. A street-side restaurant owner sits desolately after his little eatery was demolished.