

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Global warming

Close your eyes and imagine the Earth getting warmer and warmer in the next few years. Can you picture in your mind how the change of temperature will affect us? Do you think you can help us slow down global warming?

Global warming is caused by the use of fossil fuels. Fossil fuels give off Greenhouse gasses when they burn. The build up of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere makes the atmosphere warmer. We use fossil fuels to make electricity. If we want to slow down global warming, we have to use less electricity.

Global warming is getting worse. The proof is that eco-systems are changing. For example: more plant and animal species are becoming endangered. Ice is melting at the poles. We are having a severe weather caused by an enhanced water cycle (warmer air allows more moisture in the atmosphere, which in turn causes more precipitation).

I do know the feeling of caring about your

own self. But if the Earth is destroyed, you can't take care of yourself. And I'm sure you might think that by the time you die, you won't face the horrible heated up Earth.

However, did you think about your sons and daughters? It is not too late to solve this problem. So come and join us and slow down global warming.

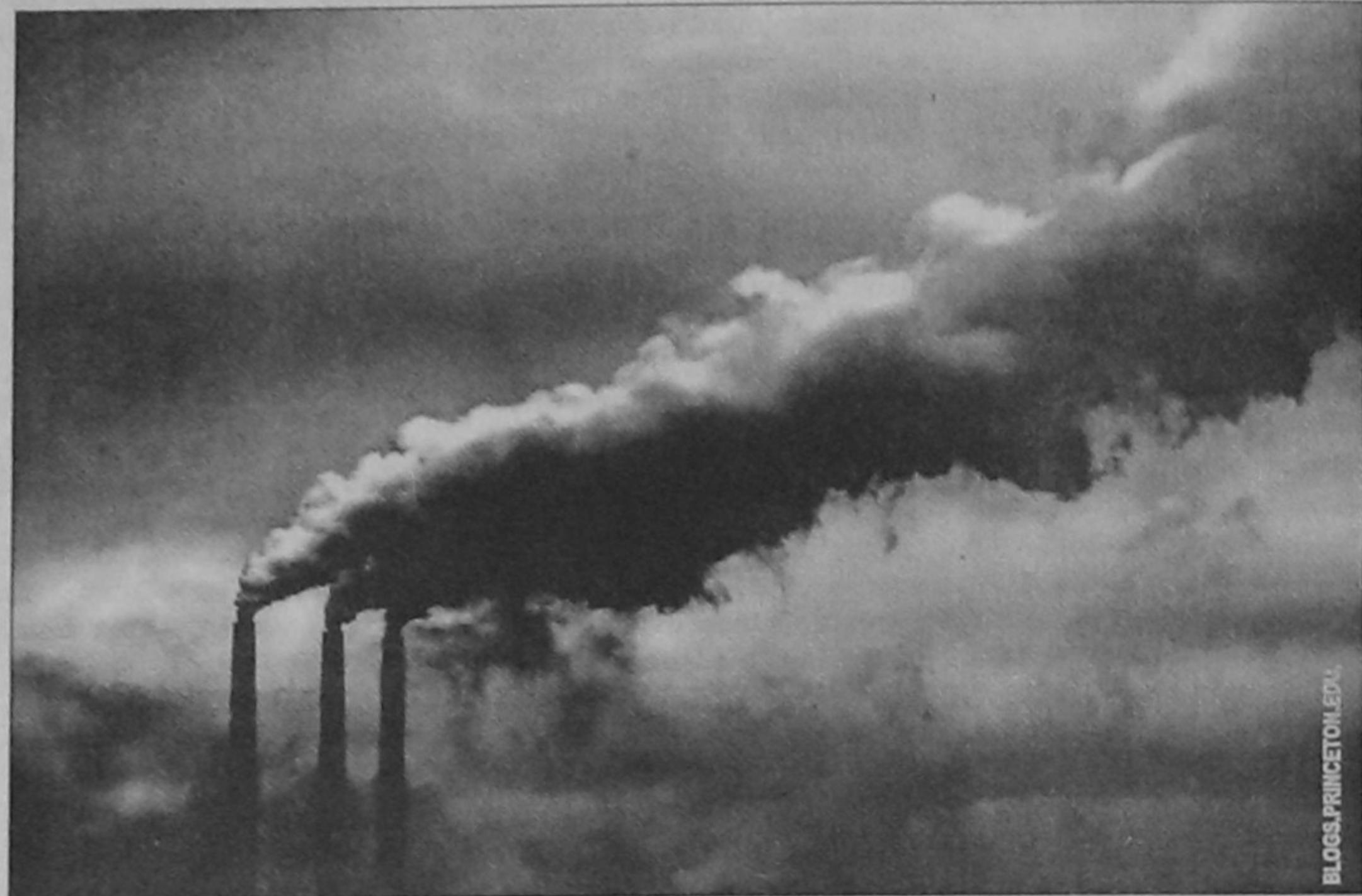
I'm sure you would like to save our beautiful planet. So here are a few solutions:

1. Use less AC.
2. Use computers only when necessary.
3. Watch less TV.
4. Turn off lights while not needed.

The time is now to help ourselves in slowing down global warming.

Solomon

Fifth Grade
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CTG's job

Going by media reports, it seems the caretaker government is looking for a way out of freeing our two former prime ministers from incarceration. Call it anti-climax!

When the Fakhruddin administration took over, we sighed relief. Of its numerous corrective measures, anti-corruption drive that exposed the shameful misdeeds of many of the 'illustrious' politicians and bureaucrats was widely credited. We were genuinely glad to see them docked in courts. People silently suffer the price spiral of foodstuff and basic necessities, globalisation being benefit of doubt, simply because they do not want a return of the politics of hooliganism.

But we silently watched, too, a dithering to vigorously employ the legal instruments against the former prime ministers, accused of corruption and plundering of national wealth. Remember when the administration pathetically wished them to go into self-exile? That they did not but the speed and fervour with which they were charged took a sluggish turn. Their parties are now demanding their release. It now seems to be on the caretakers' card too.

Different explanations speak for the palpable inaction, or the possible release of the former prime ministers. Political necessities, pressure groups, etc., but one that is most probable is the caretakers' wish to see themselves unscathed

at the end of their innings. Naturally, compromise overtake all other considerations; we are back to square one!

As a nation, we are an unfortunate lot. Let's be honest about it. Our post-independent politicians are bizarrely capable of lying, and are experts in siphoning off national resources with impunity. All in the name of democracy, of course, with no dearth of solemn trips to holy places. Ministers in civilized countries resign and retire to private life when their integrity is questioned, a naval chief in the US committed suicide over unauthorized use of a simple medal. The immediate past finance minister and chief whip saw their sons jailed for looting national assets, land grabbing, and assorted vices, but looking at their activities, we know clearly that 'shame' is a word they are gleefully unfamiliar with.

To the caretaker government please do not push us down. The world looks down upon us as big-time thugs. Hard truth. This is perhaps the last chance for us to bring to book the now-fallen high-ups and save whatever image we are left with in the outside world. We are aware that there is no simple fix to the mess, we know that there will be orchestrated street demonstrations and violence, but you ought to be resolute and decisive.

Time is critical. It requires you to be tough. Don't watch silently the numbo jumbo of so-called leaders of the past regimes who had molested the entire nation repeat-

edly, or let go unchallenged the fanatics who disrupt peace over the proposed changes in the inheritance law. Bring down the hammer. And you will make history.

Nayeem Jafar
New Jersey, USA

DAE & potato farmers

My attention has been drawn to a letter captioned "Good potato harvest" which appeared in this column on April 14, 2008. The letter-writer, Mr. Golam Ashraf, has asked the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) to assist the potato farmers with labour and transport costs for post-harvest facilities which include marketing and storing of potatoes.

In reality, the DAE has no mandate or provision for providing such facilities to the farmers. In Bangladesh, the government Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) performs two major functions, viz. (i) Human resources development through imparting non-formal education and (ii) Technology transfer. Through imparting non-formal extension education, the DAE ensures transfer of modern technologies for increasing crop production, economic emancipation and to raise the living standards of the farming community.

Meanwhile, it is indeed a pertinent question, who or which organisation will help farmers in marketing their produce? Perhaps the DAE can organise the farmers and motivate them to adopt the

advantages of using private healthcare facilities. The public healthcare system administered, and created by the lawmakers, is ironically inadequate for their own selves!

Access to foreign healthcare is demanded as a necessity for the politically connected, rather than a privilege. In 2007, "four Shanghai prison officials were sentenced up to 11 years in jail on bribery charges after giving preferential treatment to a jailed real estate tycoon" (Chinese State media). However, in South Africa, white juveniles still receive better treatment by the criminal justice system and in prison, than their coloured counterparts. Apartheid arguments are redundant in Bangladesh, though.

Mental health is important. All prisoners, especially those convicted for abuse of power, need special attention to bring about behavioural changes. There is no better way of restoring justice, than

cooperative system of marketing of agricultural commodities. The govt. may provide technical/financial support to DAE for performing such additional activities.

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Our future

Your business page (B3) presented interesting expressions of contradiction about Bangladesh. The Star Business Report quoting BTMA President states "So, the government's move with regard to gas rationing will obviously affect investment." He also expressed the fear that textile sector entrepreneurs will incur a loss of Tk 120 crore per month due to this wrong decision.

Already power is rationed, and through it, gas too is indirectly rationed.

With direct rationing of gas on the cards, will kerosene, petrol and POL products follow suit? May be we may end up with rationing of drinking water - already in short supply!

Contrastingly, in the same page, GrameenPhone's advertisement about its

Brand Forum begins with Price Waterhouse Cooper's ambitious and somewhat farfetched statement; "Bangladesh to become one of the top 30 economies of the world by 2050". 2050 is still 42 years away, but all our present trends that we know and see point otherwise!

The two diametrically opposite views are confusing. The president of BTMA works and lives in the day-to-day environment of Bangladesh; while Price Waterhouse Cooper only knows Bangladesh from news and other media information. Logically, the accuracy of their prediction is not based on ground realities! Will our local economists please comment on this contradiction, so that we (the common people) may know which statement is right and realistic!

Let us hope and look forward to the days of milk and honey. Pragmatically speaking though, our coming generation should be prepared for the worst. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Healthcare in prison

The elite prisoner enjoys the advantages of using private healthcare facilities. The public healthcare system administered, and created by the lawmakers, is ironically inadequate for their own selves!

The government should look into the matter with a sense of urgency. Muktadir Hussain Chowdhury
Uttara, Dhaka

allowing the perpetrators of abuse to have dialogues with the victims. The benefactors of power are now presented with the unique opportunity of interacting with the sufferers of the systemic failures. After all, the nations' incarcerated are a true reflection of the inconsistencies within the state.

Healthcare should be a constitutional right for all prisoners. But the distribution of resources should also be equitable. If five prisoners have access to healthcare in Singapore, and another twenty-five not in their cell due to lack of access (to any form of healthcare), the math becomes contorted. The counterpoint that the five prisoners are paying for their own travel and expenses reinforces the ancient notion, 'the privileged will always retain privileges'.

Political career is that of sacrifice and compassion. Political rhetoric is evidence of such declarations. People engaged in public service have dedicated their lives to realising the rights of the deprived, and creating true platforms for social justice. In doing so, they surely need to identify with the miseries of their constituency. It seems like prison is a good place for initiating reforms. After all, as many of the current inmates are beneficiaries of privilege, the prison seems to be the most appropriate spiritual retreat.

The public servants take pride in sharing the burden of the unjust system and thus, work sincerely towards a more equal society. There is a need to applaud the efforts of those in prison that reject preferential treatment (if there is any), and believe that the shortcomings in the public healthcare system need to be embraced by the top hierarchy.

While they are still in prison, it would be useful if they would look at other prison conditions like juvenile detention, violence against female prisoners, education facilities etc. Better fodder for the next administration.

There is no denying the institutionalised abuse of the incarcerated and, strangely, the 'not incarcerated' poor. It would be fairly effective to allow policy makers an opportunity to be on the receiving end of these systemic deficiencies, and better equip them in executing their jobs. Suppose they are all required to send their children to local public schools and universities! The possibilities are delightfully endless.

Sumaiya Islam
One-mail

Uttara Lake

We must thank The Daily Star for publishing a photograph of polluted Uttara Lake in its 13 March 08 issue. It is adjacent to Sector -3, 5, 7 and 13. The authorities should divert the large number of drains which carry dirty water and wastes to the lake.

The government should look into the matter with a sense of urgency. Muktadir Hussain Chowdhury
Uttara, Dhaka

Compact Township

I strongly support Professor Salim Rashid's idea of Compact Township (CT) as explained by him in the article on CT in DS on April 9, 2008. This year's food crisis and skyrocketing prices have shown us the need for protecting our agricultural lands by all means. CT is one of the means in this regard. The huge problem of increasing population, their housing and produc-

tion enough to feed them needs out of box thinking and the concept of CT is one of those. I would like to add a couple of points of my own in support of CT.

CT will alleviate the problem of drinking water supply in rural areas, especially in arsenic-prone areas. In our country, most of the arsenic mitigation technologies have failed for one reason or the other. In order to save the population from arsenic contamination, the government is now seriously contemplating supplying piped drinking water from deep tube well. The only drawback of piped water supply in a rural setting is that it is not very cost effective as the houses are scattered. A CT will largely overcome this problem and will become more attractive to the people if it has a piped water supply system, especially in arsenic-prone areas.

Professor Rashid has mentioned many potential sites for CTs. I would like to add the proposed Padma bridge site to that list. The bridge will require resettlement of a large number of people. We can take this opportunity to build a number of CTs not only to settle displaced people but also to attract other people.

Many projects in our country - for example, Chittagong Livelihood Project - are assisting poor people to raise their homesteads above the flood level. If such projects explore the possibilities of building CTs, instead of individual homesteads then it will be quite helpful.

As Professor Rashid has mentioned, resettlement in CTs will be voluntary and people will pay a charge for housing in the CT. Some economic incentives however, can be thought of. For example, if by moving to CT, a person frees up some land and brings that land under cultivation or any other productive use, he may be allowed certain rebate.

Rezaur Rahman
Professor
Institute of Water and Flood Management (IWFM)
Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET)

Politicians and intellectuals

It seems some influential citizens and even the common people are losing patience on the present government. The price hike is one reason but is that all? We really get frustrated when we see most people along with some of our 'intellectuals' want those corrupt politicians freed. Why? Where does their interest lie?

Is democracy the only concern? Shaifur Rahman, London

Overbridge

To ease the traffic jam of Dhaka city and ensure safe crossing of roads, the government has erected a few overbridges in the downtown. Though a substantial number of overbridges have been built in the busiest spots, pedestrians are not using those for smooth crossing of roads. Rather, they are using busy roads. The people are doing so as they want to cross the roads quickly. The overbridges are crowded with beggars, drug addicts, hawkers, rootless people and goons. Then the pedestrians think that they can save time by not using the overbridges!

The situation must change for the better.

Md Zonaed Emran
Dept. Political Science, DU
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Labour migration

Labour migration is now the largest foreign currency earning sector for Bangladesh. According to official statistics, 800,000 plus migrant workers had overseas employment in 2007 while earnings from the remittance is US\$ 6.3 billion. (Most of the migrants had jobs on their own initiatives, however, they had been registered with BMET as per rule). The remittance is five times higher than the official development assistance (ODA).

However, the sector has not drawn proper attention of the policy makers of successive governments. Whatever the ministers (including the Advisers now) and senior government officials are saying is very much limited to lip service. Nothing has been done to streamline the sector. This has been reflected in the incidents in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia and continuous and unabated exploitation in the labour migration processes.

The government established a new ministry styled Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MOEWOE) on 20 December 2001. The Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) is its main implementing agency. Both the MOEWOE and BMET lack required logistical support and human resources. Corruption and lack of dedication among a section of officials and employees are reportedly norms over there which contributed to malpractice by a section of recruitment agencies, increase in migration costs, and continuous deception and exploitation of migrants. The District Employment Offices are also under-resourced and under-used.

Although the main objective of the new ministry is to ensure welfare of the expatriate workers and enhancement of overseas employment, this is still an elusive goal which is frequently highlighted by the media.

There has been an unholy competition among the recruitment agencies run by influential individuals belonging to political parties and other groups. (This was the norm during the rule of the four-party alliance in particular. Some of them are now in jail).

The caretaker government should take effective steps immediately. There should be a significant development budget allocation for the migration sector. The MOEWOE needs to be strengthened in terms of its capacity and efficiency. There should be exemplary measures against the corrupt officials including Labour Attachés posted in overseas missions.

The government should be cautious about the activities of a section of NGOs (both national and international) which are always trying to create confusion between human trafficking and exploitation in the labour migration processes. This attempt aims to curb our people's right to mobility.

The unscrupulous recruitment agencies and dalals need to be brought to justice. The lone official recruitment agency, Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd (BOESL) and BMET need to be decentralized up to upazila levels.

The political parties should come forward with a plan in their election manifesto mentioning what they want to do for the sector in future.

Udatta Bikash
Human Rights Practitioner
Dhaka

Kaptai Lake & power generation

There have been discussions about the decreasing power generation in Kaptai Hydro Electric Power Plant during the dry season, but nothing has been done so far to rectify the situation. A

Chittagong daily has reported that gradual decrease of water level in the lake is also decreasing power generation. Generation of power has fallen drastically and the government is

urged to take some steps to rectify the situation before it is too late.

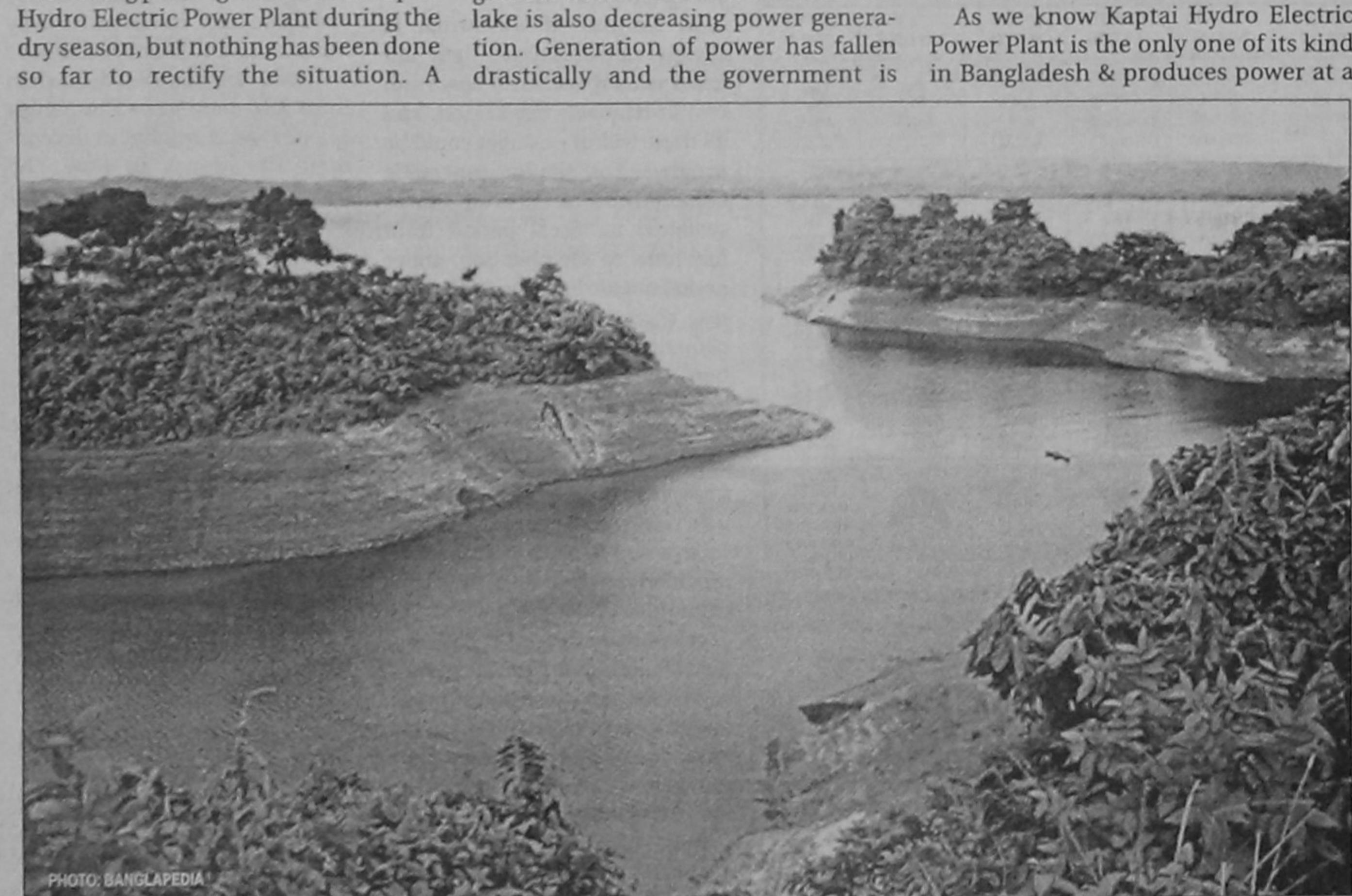
As we know Kaptai Hydro Electric Power Plant is the only one of its kind in Bangladesh & produces power at a

low cost. The other power generation units are now run on gas and currently the supply of gas being low, a number of power stations are either closed or generating much below their capacity. For both reasons - being cheap and not dependent on gas, the authorities concerned should take immediate remedial steps so that we can avoid similar problems every year during the dry season.

The report says that water level of Kaptai Lake is going down due to which some of the power generation units have been shut down, resulting in decreased power generation from this power plant. Actually, I feel that the lake is being silted up and if this continues then we may face a major problem with the Kaptai Power Plant. There has been some discussion in the past about dredging the lake. Yes, dredging may be a costly proposition but considering the low cost of power generation and its being not dependent on gas, the government should seriously consider dredging the lake as soon as possible.

Of course, an expert committee has to look into the above problems and decide on the remedial steps to be taken.

Shuja Alim
Agrabad, Chittagong



Pahela Baishakh

I am not against the cultural practices on 'Pahela Baishakh'. But when I see people lining up in OMS (Open Market Sale) outlets to ensure food for their hungry family members and at the same time crowd overflowing the shopping complexes and buying designer wears to satisfy their so called sophisticated mind to celebrate the Bangla New Year, I feel disturbed. The recent price spirals did not touch



the rich. The