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# Food crisis



Food crisis all over the world has become one of the major problems. Every year 90 million people are being added to the global population, increasing the demand of food. Therefore, there is high demand of food. However, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) warned that the present stock of food all over the world would last only 57 days. This food crisis is happening because of overpopu-

lation and natural disasters ruining crops and grains. Another problem is the cultivation of bio-fuels. Food grains have high demand for producing such fuel. African countries, too, are producing bio-fuels on 4 million hectares of land. The European Union and India are also planning to produce bio-fuels. The cultivation of bio-fuel has a global impact on food crisis. Another problem

is global warming, which has reduced the cultivation of crops significantly. The vital information is that out of 50 least developed countries 41 are food-importing ones and Bangladesh is one of them. So, our agricultural production has to be boosted to face food shortage in the years ahead.

**Suprotap Chaki**  
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Govt Edward College, Pabna

## Political scenario

Very recently, the head of the interim govt., Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, addressed the nation on political developments i.e. election and other issues. In his speech he said the govt. would sit with the political parties soon to discuss various issues. He did not mention which issue would come up for discussion.

The whole nation is looking forward to the outcome of the dialogue.

**Md Zonaid Emran**  
Dept. of Political Science  
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## Free market environment

In less developed countries, it is difficult to introduce and maintain free market conditions, that is, supply (goods and services) should be more than the public demand.

Taking the case of rickshaws, pedal rickshaws are popular, as these are cheaper for the vast majority of the residents of Dhaka DCC zone. Hence the city is flooded with cycle rickshaws. On the other hand, the metered auto rickshaws refuse to go by the meter, and the supply of vehicles is less than the demand (plus, no taxi stands). The hawkers footpath stalls draw huge crowds, compared to the air-conditioned shopping malls --- for obvious reasons. I do most of my shopping on the footpaths (I can go to the supermarkets and dept stores, but the vast majority of the goods are imported---not at all essential).

The planners have to keep in mind these simple basic factors while promulgating rules and regulations. Too many restrictions create systems losses in operation, maintenance, management, and control, prosecution and paper work. Good administration works in the background. Our politics is front-stage tamasha---too noisy and demonstrative. Work quietly in the background, like the air you breathe, and the way your body works quietly through automatic feedback systems.

Our general elections are treated (by the politicians) as periods of revolutionary shake-ups. Why no continuity could be maintained?

There is no professionalism in our politics: it reminds us of our cycle rickshaws, autorickshaws, and footpath stalls. This sort of ad hocism in political culture has resulted in what we witness today after several decades---in fact, since 1947 (partition). Our leadership reminds us of abject destitution---those who cannot take care of themselves, not to speak of looking after 140 million citizens!

Why do we have to hope for the better after the coming general elections? First the reforms, and then the establishment of the right foundation for future political transparency. Why am I speaking against the popular political diatribe? Propped up 'popularity' is not a sign of success! Hard work, no charisma.

**AMahasen, Dhaka**

## Rickshaw menace

It is not only astounding but shocking also to learn how even 'highly educated' people can be so irrational in respect of viewing administrative, social and economic problems such as the rickshaw menace in Dhaka city. In the letters captioned 'Regulate Number of Rickshaws' by Nasreen Khondkar and 'Rickshaw-free Capital' by Mr. Sikandar Ahmed, both have lamented the possibility of a rickshaw-free Dhaka city and advocated for the so-called convenient tricycle without least mentioning how untrained rickshawallahs, totally ignorant of the traffic rules, run amuck on the highways and main streets of the capital city wherever they are. Nasreen Khondkar has mentioned European cities and also Singapore where the number of motor cars has been controlled and bicycles are in abundant use. Mr Sikandar has cut a joke on Mr Rahat's suggestions for introducing mass transport system (MTS). Both of them seem to be oblivious of Kolkata, the biggest city of our neighbouring country, where rickshaws have been removed from the main streets, not to speak of highways. Nasreen has wailed on how she could walk the distance from Neelkhet to Dhanmondi which is less than a mile or two. Does she know that people both

male and female in our neighbouring country walk miles to go to their respective destinations? Mr. Sikandar has jeered at the introduction of MTS. Does he also feel shy to stand in a queue to collect a ticket and travel in a bus? We people in this capital city perhaps would feel better and more comfortable had there been bus-stops at every door-step. How callous and irrational! Isn't crowding the city with countless rickshaws telling on the law and order and other civic conditions? Moreover, they say more than 60% of our population has gone down below the poverty line. Now, does she, an economist, suggest those people also should come to the capital for rickshaw-pulling as there are no other alternatives for self-employment? Of course Nasreen Khondkar's suggestion to introduce bicycles and providing lanes for it is not very difficult to implement. It can be done simply by removing manually-driven and small motor vehicles from the highways and main streets and introducing wide-bodied, double-decker buses and sky-rails. But none is for that; instead they run after metro-rail. What a joke! They have even failed to implement DUTIP in the last 6/7 years! God knows when responsible people will come to their senses.

**M. Showkat Ali**  
Uttara, Dhaka

## Political developments

The Gono Forum had their chance to unveil their political plan during dialogue - A National Unity Government. Of course currently they want that to happen after the general election. This has two major political implications. Number one: the ensuing election might be held without popular participation and therefore would not get legitimacy from within and outside. Then the option of a National Unity Government would be mooted out, and those who participated in such an election and won seats would be considered as the components of such a government. The number two: the election is deferred indefinitely

and the present CTG would be replaced by political leaders of like minded parties to form a National Unity Government under the cover of the CTG to make an exit door for this CTG.

In both the cases the problem would multiply and the country would fall into deeper trouble. We think the government is losing its best opportunity to come to a consensus with the major political parties and pave the way for the general election between Oct and Dec 2008. We think it is high time to disassociate with the political pundits in the government and open up their eyes and ears and genuinely behave like a "neutral and non political" CTG. Whatever political plan is in their briefcase, it has already failed to produce any positive results. The plan is only helping the "super politician" and political pundit around to manoeuvre and manipulate the situation.

The crack-down on the workers and local leaders of major political parties under emergency law, is another attempt to induce fear among the political activists so that the two major political parties lose political strength at the grassroots level. The explanation of the government is not tenable because, if they are holding criminals, why this was not done on routine basis as soon as the law enforcing agencies got their names? Why the CTG needs a special drive? This has only produced two negative results as far the people are concerned, the people have been terrorised in the rural areas (as we saw during 1/11) and open politics is shut down making the dialogue meaningless. We feel extremely sorry for our senior political leaders talking about national unity government. It appears that they have lost complete faith in democracy and election.

I remember that I heard a joke from a senior colleague, it goes like: A lot of political debate was going on in the country without a solution in sight, one innocent person made a very significant observation and said, Sir, why you spend so much of energy and money in politics and election, why not fill up the position of the ministers, presi-

dent and other political positions through normal system of promotion as part of the public service? As for example, he observed that the secretary of a ministry would be promoted as minister automatically and hold the post for 3-5 years as determined by the rules. It sounds very funny. But in reality we are seeking our political solution through a bureaucratic framework to serve a particular privileged class, ignoring the aspirations of the nation for an elected democratic government.

**Reader**  
**One-mail**

## Whither legal education?

We do talk of a effective legal system and judiciary in Bangladesh. The people deserve that.

However, we do hardly pay our attention to the root cause of the problem. We have to have a plan to standardize the quality of our legal education to meet the needs of the time. This is a pre-requisite to have sound legally educated personnel to fill up positions of lawyers, judges and other professionals. This is instrumental for an effective justice system as well.

Some time back, one columnist questioned the validity of our expectation for the rule of law in the country without any significant investment for quality legal education (except funds for some public universities which have law departments).

Now, there are mostly four streams of legal education in Bangladesh. These are four public universities, 10 to 12 private universities, non-governmental colleges under the National University, and distance/external programmes of UK-based universities. Apart from that there are a few self-styled centres of some overseas institutions or linked programmes that cheat the 'degree-seekers' in the name of offering degrees through so-called online courses.

There have been LL.B. (Honours) and LL.M. programmes at four public universities. One could easily raise questions on the level and standard of the existing curriculum, medium of instruction and teaching methods, research works and publications carried out by the faculty members, extra-curricular engagements of students etc.

In recent years, politically-patronized individuals have grabbed faculty positions in almost all of those law departments.

Despite that some students from law departments at public universities could achieve remarkable standards as a result of their individual efforts during student life and afterwards.

Our legal luminaries have been busy in the corridors of courts and politics and on overseas missions as well. They hardly have time to think of how to facilitate quality legal education. The professors (we have few of that standard) are also busy with consultancy work and their own NGOs.

Therefore, it is a high time to make avenues for offering quality legal education and research in the country. In an Asian Development Bank-sponsored study renowned Professor N. R. Madhava Menon (of India) has provided an excellent review of our existing legal education. It could be a benchmark for any future relevant activity.

**Udatta Bikash**  
Legal and Human Rights Practitioner  
Dhaka

## Politics in doldrums

In the first place, I would like to clearly mention the fact that I've by no means any hope about our politics and the politicians. Still, being a conscientious citizen of the country I have the right to voice my thoughts pertaining to the welfare of the land I was born and brought up in, and am still living.

Today, however, I would not pen down or ventilate much of the thoughts that at times go perforating my inner being for many reasons.

What we take note of, today after 37 years of freedom, with a broken heart, is a complete political disaster resulting from the wholesale misuse /abuse of power, corruption of monumental height and so forth by the people we call politicians. After a series of shuffle and reshuffle in the CTG, the caretaker government took charge at a critical juncture and since then they have been doing a great job for the country.

At this point, however, it is to be well borne in mind that it was the top two leaders who brought about some sort of equilibrium in their respective parties. Being the leaders of the two major political parties, they were a must for bridging the gap created in their parties. So, we want to see a much better handling of the political situation by the top leaders. We don't want to go back...

**Rafiqul Islam Rime**  
Agrabad, Chittagong

# Responsible tourism

Discovering Bangladesh is surely enlightening. Henceforth, it should be challenging too. With tourism taking its toll on the flora, fauna and cultural identity of exotic Bangladesh, local populace across tourism pockets of the country should extend the onus of sustainability of the destinations on visiting tourists through responsible tourism.

This will certainly mean that the next time tourists should not be allowed to litter waste foods or try chasing a wild beast during one of their visits to the destination.

Taking a leaf out of eco-tourism and rural tourism, where tourism is made sustainable with participation of stakeholders, responsible tourism will be bringing into its fold tourists to ensure longevity of the essence of the region.

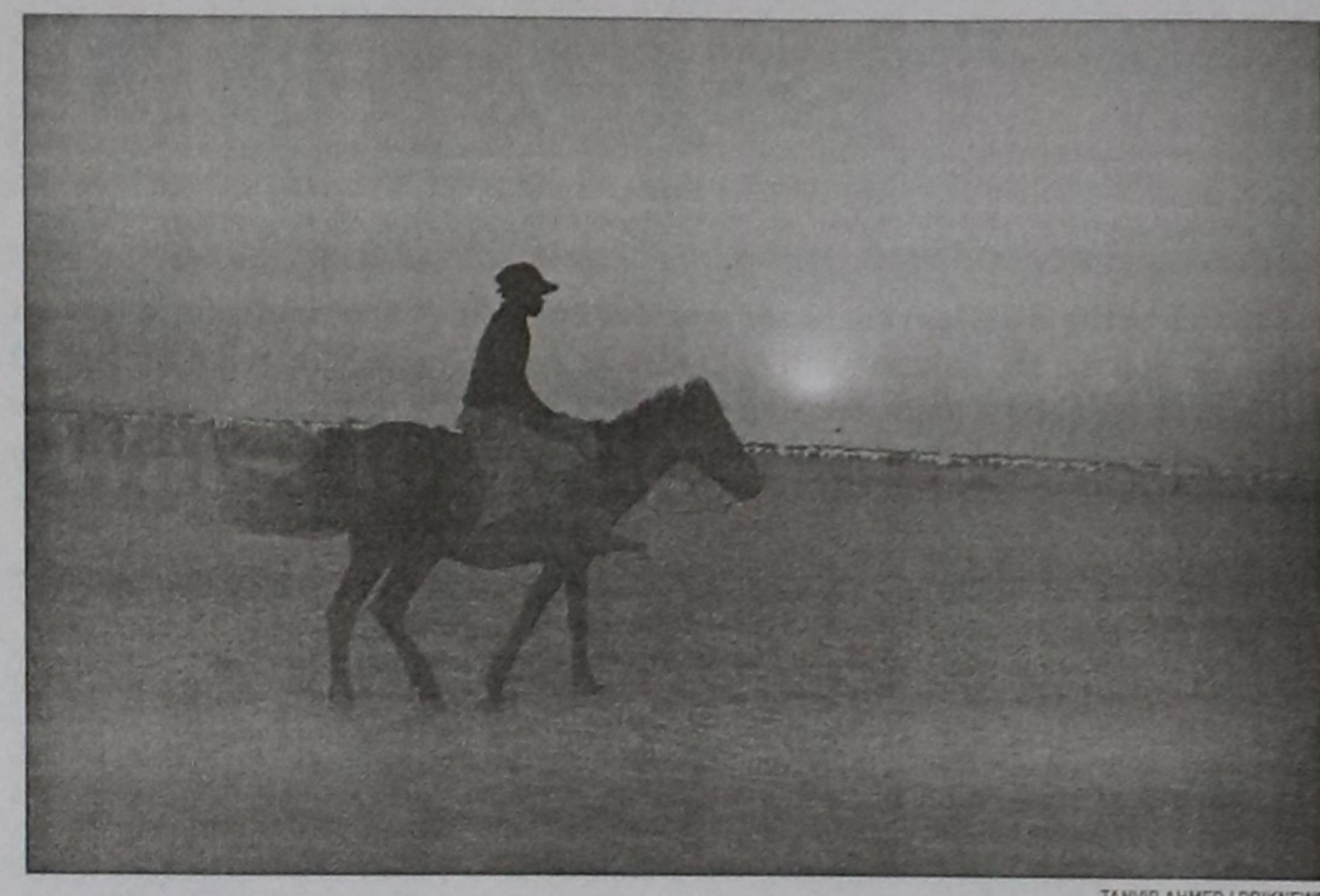
The entry of motor vehicles to check pollu-

tion should be banned in all hill stations. The hotel and motel owners in drinkable water-scarce places of Rangamati, Sylhet and the Saint Martin's should ask tourists to keep a check on water usage.

The authorities concerned should be teamed up to check poaching of wildlife. Tourist guides should be careful to make tourists responsible. Not just public awareness, but also the government has to be proactive to promote responsible tourism.

Although responsible tourism is in its nascent stage, there will be a growing realization among policymakers that until stakeholders are made accountable in the process, tourism would not survive.

**Mohammad Shahidul Islam**  
A tourism worker  
On e-mail



## Encourage local ceramics

In recent years, a very small number of cottage ceramics industries have come up producing hand-crafted, hand painted stoneware and porcelain decorative products. The range of products includes mugs, vases, showpieces tableware etc. with high quality, exclusive designs, both western and traditional. Eighty per cent of ceramic decorative products are imported from China, Thailand etc and the ones which are manufactured here are also sold as imported because of quality. The customers should buy more local products which will encourage the local industry to develop and contribute to the economy. We urge the caretaker government to assist these SMEs to expand rapidly for employment generation.

**Shaukat Hassan Chowdhury**  
Govt official  
Bangladesh Ceramic Institute  
Tejgaon, Dhaka

## Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the multitude of different living beings in a particular ecosystem or on the whole earth. Biodiversity can be seen and studied at different organisational levels: genetic and ecological. It touches upon both native environments on land and sea as well as agricultural and other man-made surroundings.

The issues involved in the inter-

action between biodiversity and biotechnology have far-reaching consequences and need to be subject to an open and knowledge-based dialogue in society.

**Jewel Rana**  
Dept of Biotechnology  
Bangladesh Agricultural University  
Mymensingh

## Barack Obama

After the longest and most expensive nomination race, Barack Obama made history by capturing the Democratic nomination as the first black candidate. On defeating Hillary Clinton, the 46 year-old Barack Obama will now face a five-month campaign against a 71 year-old Republican Senator John McCain, a Vietnam prisoner of war and staunch supporter of the US led war in Iraq. On the other hand, Barack Obama opposed the invasion of Iraq, called for an early troops withdrawal and is in favour of settling Iran issue only through diplomatic means.

It is widely believed that Mr. Barack Obama will really turn the page on the US policies of the past and bring a change that the US as well as the entire world is longing for. At a time when America's image around the world has fallen to the lowest level, this call for change by Barack Obama has raised new hope. At this juncture the US and the world need a person like Obama who has demonstrated discipline, principle, tactics & smartness in the nomination race

## Rude foreigners

On Friday (6/06/08) I went to a boutique shop at Banani. After picking my chosen Shalwar-Kamiz I put my things in the booth to pay the price for the things I intended to buy. I stood in a queue there where two English women were talking in between by putting their things in the counter. The cashier was having a slight problem with the computer, requested me and others to wait for a while. Meanwhile, I was talking to the manager about the beautiful set-up of the shop. Suddenly, one of those two women grumbled very rudely how long she would have to wait to pay a small thing. All of us became really surprised at their behaviour. Seeing their attitude the shopkeepers became embarrassed and I became apologetic on their behalf for their unintentional delay.

We have to tolerate all the injustice these foreigners inflict on us and accept their attitude as the right way of life.

**Rubab Abdullah**  
Dhaka Cantonment  
Dhaka

# Population explosion

Our country is a not bigger than Wisconsin, a small state of the USA and is home to nearly 150 million people, that is, half the total population of the USA. This country is already heavily overpopulated and we just cannot take any more new mouth to feed. Our family planning activities are very lax and it does not give us the impression that any family

planning activity worth the name is going on in the country. We just cannot afford to allow our population to grow unchecked. It is high time that we, like the Chinese, adopt the one-child policy. If we do not take drastic measures in this respect, then the country will ultimately sink under the weight of its own population. Poverty and malnutrition have

direct relationship with the growth of population. While dealing with family planning we must also ensure that poverty is tackled at the same time.

We have to study and find out as to how the countries of the Far East have successfully curbed the growth of their population and also do research to find out effective means of curbing our population growth. We have to build up our own expertise in the field of family planning and this has to be done on a priority basis.

Side by side with population control we have to develop our education system so that we can provide trained manpower to developed countries who need them. This will reduce pressure on the home front. Development of local industries will generate employment.

We should also make serious efforts for reclaiming land from the sea and also train the rivers, so that we do not lose any land due to river erosion. The Dutch are the leaders in this field. We can take their help and develop our own expertise in the field.

Population explosion in such a small country can not be tolerated. Positive steps have to be taken immediately.

**Salahuddin Ayubi, On e-mail**



# Water logging

Who doesn't like when it rains in Dhaka? When the sky turns grey just before the rain, and the cool rain comes down, who doesn't like to see the world around transforming into a fresh one? But that is not the end of the story. Right after the rain, the city dwellers face the unending problem of water-logging. Commuters bear the brunt of it,

and also the drivers.

The water remains stagnant and thus the condition of the roads gets even worse.

Better planning and coordination among the government agencies concerned is needed to solve the problem.

**Cantara Wali Rubi**  
DU

