

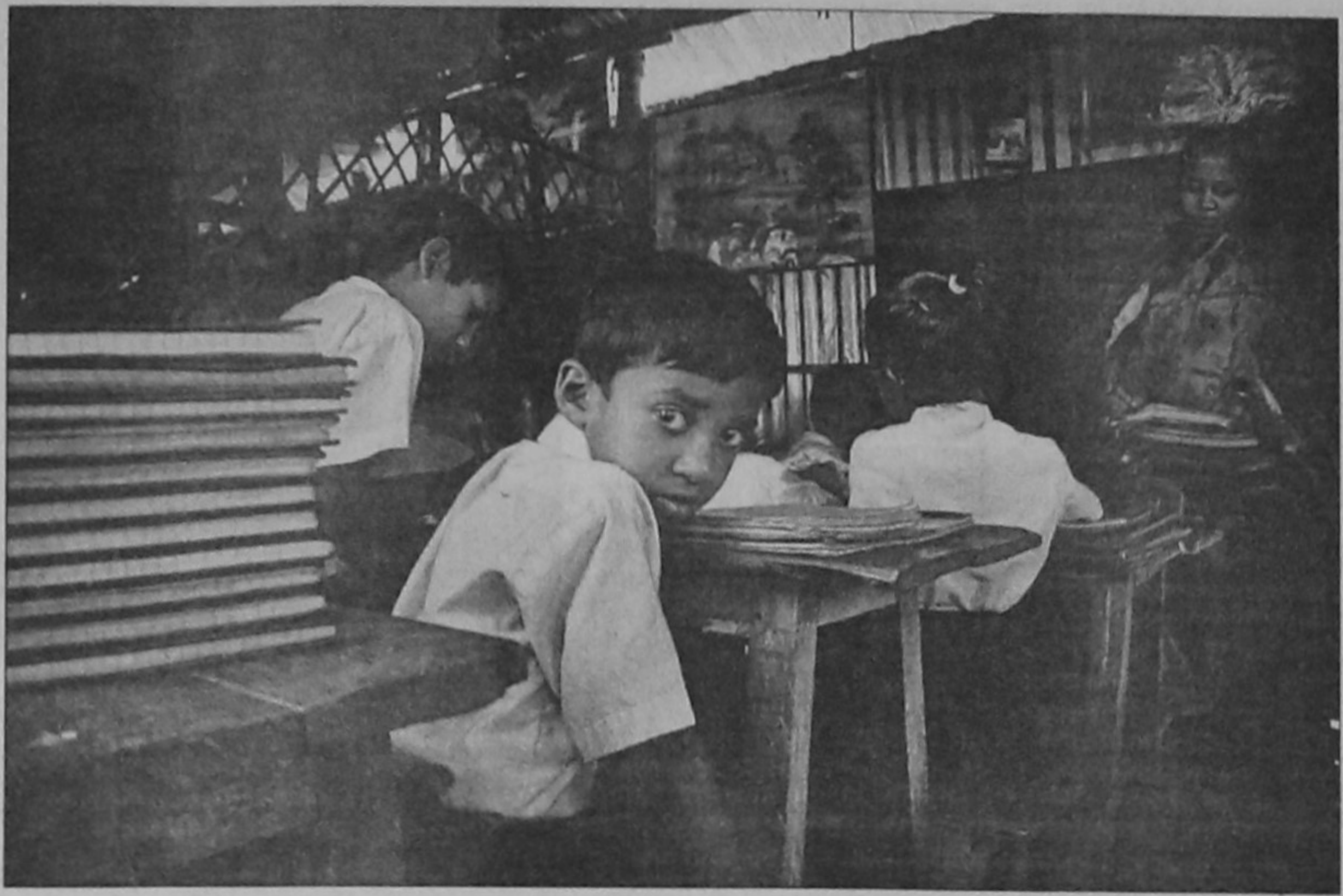
Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

NCTB and some questions

On June 30, 2008 the daily Prothom Alo brought to light some gross and inexcusable mistakes in the textbooks published by the NCTB for our school children. The same newspaper reported on July 01 that the honourable CA of the present CTG had taken the matter into cognisance and asked for explanation from the officials concerned. We hope that the matter will not end, like many other matters of the past, in paper correspondence only. This time we would like to see that the NCTB is reformed to perform its sacred duty to the nation with full professionalism. For that I would like to submit some comments from my 38 years of formal experience as a teacher and as an educational administrator. Before I put my comments it may not be out of context to briefly explain the functions of the NCTB for the general readers of your daily.

Notwithstanding what is actually given as the functions of our NCTB in the Rules of Business, the principal function of any curriculum organisation of any country is to decide the philosophical basis of a subject to be taught to the students. It is called the curriculum of a subject which is designed by keeping in view the history, culture and ethos of the people and the country. Naturally, the curricula of different countries are different. Once the curriculum of a subject is set, it is then set into syllabi, or the list of lessons, for different classes keeping in view the age, experience and average IQ of the students of each of those classes. Only then a textbook on a subject is written by experts as per the set syllabus. The whole process from deciding the curriculum to writing the textbook is a highly important and sensitive job as it deals with the requirement of very young students who will be the future leaders of the nation. Needless to say, the job demands careful study and research from competent and experienced professionals.

While visiting some foreign countries compatible with socio-economic conditions of Bangladesh I found such subject specialists had at least 25 to 30 years of teaching experience at the concerned level with commensurate research experience on their subjects before they were given the solemn task of making curricula and syllabi and writing textbooks for school children. They were not usually posted out of the curriculum organisations. Periodically, they went to the urban and rural schools in different



TANVIR AHMED / DRINKNEWS

parts of the country and took part in teaching their respective subjects at the appropriate levels to get the feedback on the existing curricula, syllabi, and textbooks from teachers and students. With the gathered experience and feedback they returned to the headquarters to continually improve the existing curricula, syllabi and textbooks.

Unfortunately in Bangladesh the irresponsible political leadership and the senior bureaucrats never in the last 36 years followed the above thumb rule to run the NCTB. They have been using the NCTB as a haven for the spouses/sons/daughters of their friends and relations, or their own relations once they are at the seat of the power. For example, when a politician or a bureaucrat lands on the corridor of power, one of the first things s/he does is to bring her/his own spouse/son/daughter, or the spouse/son/daughter of her/his relative/friend, who is teaching, say political science, in a govt college outside the capital to Dhaka. If a vacant post is not available in a govt college in the capital city for such a relation s/he is posted in the NCTB as a sub-

ject specialist for, say, mathematics! This political science teacher at the college level is given the task to frame the curriculum/syllabus for mathematics for the students of classes III, IV, V or VI! Once the syllabus of a subject for a particular class is thus decided, some nincompoops from among the relations or friends of the concerned politician/ bureaucrat are given the task of writing the textbook, in most cases, anonymously. Some well-known scholars then allow their names to be printed as the writers, editors, coordinators on the textbook without knowing what exactly the contents of the book are. In the process the nincompoop writers, the dishonest scholars, all make money at the cost of the taxpayers for whose children all such trashes are published. The ultimate result is what we find now in our NCTB.

I am a former principal of Jhenidah Cadet College, Faujderhat Cadet College, Udayan School (Dhaka), Director Education, Bangladesh Army. **Brig Gen (Retd) Syed Ashrafuzzaman Mohakhali DOHS, Dhaka**

Disgraceful!

We were astonished to hear the news regarding stealing of a mobile phone set by an ASP from a Thai woman at ZIA. How can a police officer commit such an offence? At one stage, the woman slapped the ASP. Actually, she slapped all Bangladeshis because we have such men even in our law enforcing agencies.

We have such politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, police etc. **Harun-Or-Rashid Sobhanbag, Dhaka**

Tree Fair - 2008

Recently, a tree fair was organised in Rajshahi. From the opening of the fair on 25 June, 2008 and till its

closure on 10th July, 2008 the Rajshahi Madrasa field was full of enthusiastic visitors. Many were seen taking interest in the wide variety of plants and a lot of people were also buying them. As a part of the tree plantation movement, this initiative taken by the Forest Department, District Administration and Agriculture Extension Department was a tremendous success. Cultural functions in the evening were also organised to entertain the locals. There were numerous stalls showcasing medicinal herbs, little fruit trees, flower plants and even a nursery was training people on how to cultivate mushrooms.

To maintain a solid ecological structure, every country should have at least 20% of natural vegeta-

tion. But unfortunately only about 4% of forest land has been left in our country. As a result we are facing the adverse effects of the changing global climate changes. To combat the natural disasters, tree plantation has to be increased further for a better Bangladesh. Such fairs should be organised on a regular basis. **Shatabdi Biswas Officers Quarter Regional Public Administration Training Centre, Rajshahi**

Humour in DS

Nuri Vittachi's column is a welcome relief from all the unwelcome news that I read every day. But I miss what I think was the best humour column in DS. That is the

"The Week in Re (ar) view by Gorkha and Mood Dude in the Rising Stars every Thursday. What has happened to it? Aren't we going to get it back? **Fuad Mallick Gulshan, Dhaka**

Our mistake

Perhaps, it is now clear to each and every citizen of the country that these people in the CTG and their supporters namely the SHUSHIL SHOMAJ are nothing but the agents of the neo-imperialists operating as the tools of the World Bank, IMF etc.

Diesel, fertilisers, kerosene, petrol, rice and everything, you name it, are out of the reach of 60% of the population.

Our politicians of all hues have brought to us this misery through inserting the most undemocratic provision in the constitution, that is, Article 58C -- the provision of caretaker government. Through that loophole, with the help of the Shushil Shomaj, we are overtaken!

The politicians, if still any tinge of patriotism is left in them, should know what to do. They must remove Article 58-C from the constitution as soon as possible.

We are shown the International

Market!! In Europe you can travel from one end of a mega city to the other just for 1 Euro, while in Bangladesh you have to pay Tk. 20 to travel from Mirpur to Motijheel. You can have a meal with 5 Euro, while in Bangladesh you have to spend Tk 50 at least to have that.

Last year I travelled to Egypt, and this year I have been to Europe. I saw everywhere, that essentials are kept within the reach of the commoners through state subsidies, why are we to be subjected to this horror?

It is now time to try to go back to Pre-1/11 AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. Those were our golden days!! **M. Hussain (Dr) One-mail**

Election

The decision makers are frequently telling us that the election will be held in December, 2008. But people in general are not that sure.

My question is, why aren't the people feeling confident about the election being held as per the announcement of the government?

Md. Abdul Hamid Assistant professor Dept. of Business Administration Shah Jalal University, Sylhet

Fuel price hike

No doubt the inflation has assumed unmanageable proportions. Against the backdrop of global fuel hike, the government

has taken the ruthless decision for the second time and increased the prices of fuel. This will have a negative impact on the economy as a whole. Prices of farm inputs will also increase.

The government has to ensure that farmers are benefited by diesel subsidy.

Bidan Kumar Paul Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University Dhaka

Teachers and elections

Some teachers have raised their voices against EC's step to bar them from joining local government election. I have something to say about the subtle, crucial matter.

I got my academic education from a rural high school and downtown college. From the very beginning of my academic life to the end, I experienced something bitter. Some teachers were indifferent to their duties to the institution; rather they were very busy to please the affiliated local and political leaders in the guise of social activities. Consequently, the respected teachers were divided in groups in supporting local or national parties, least caring for their main job. They did it in a way as if the educational institution was a political ground for them.

And the victims of politics among the teachers were the students. These odds, as far I experienced, go from the primary level to the university level. So, I think what the EC has done is quite right. **Mamun Abdul Malak Pallabi, Mirpur, Dhaka**

Agri. varsity in the city

This refers to Prof. SAM's letter (4/7/08) on the above subject. Disapproving the existence of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University (SAU) inside the capital city, Dhaka, Prof. SAM has suggested to correct the mistake of setting up SAU at the present location. Well, for his information I would like to say that it took nearly 20 years for the charismatic leader, Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haq, to make this costly mistake of establishing the SAU, the then Bengal Agricultural Institute in the heart of Dhaka. It was in 1938 that Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haq,

being the Chief Minister of Bengal, succeeded in convincing the then British Govt. to set up this historical agricultural institution (now SAU) in Dhaka so that students from remotest parts of Bengal (particularly East Bengal) could come here to get advanced and modern education in the field of agricultural science. Since then this institution has been performing a pioneering role in the promotion of agricultural education, research and extension. Isn't it logical to have an agricultural varsity in the capital city of the agro-based Bangladesh where students from different parts of Bangladesh come to pursue higher agricultural education?

Of course, with acquiring of land by the govt. at present, the SAU is left with nearly 85 acres of land out of its 300 acres acquired by the then British govt. In order to make farm-based education and research run smoothly, the govt. has already created provision in the latest development project for setting up farms and new faculties like fisheries and animal science outside the Dhaka campus through acquisition of land near Dhaka.

Prof. SAM who didn't mention the name of the university/college he is serving also pleaded for SAU's merger with Bangabandhu Agricultural University. The question is whether it is possible to merge one university with another. Would Prof. SAM appreciate merging his college/university with another one?

Prof. SAM has only mentioned about the existence of three public universities situated within the same agro-ecological zone. But there is at least one private agricultural university, namely, International University of Business Agriculture & Technology (IUBAT), located in the same zone (Uttara). As far as I know, some reputed private universities in the city are contemplating opening of agriculture school/faculty for offering up-to-date agricultural education with a view to ensuring food security and development of the country.

So, instead of asking to shift the university to some other place, everyone should suggest as to how we can improve our course curriculum. **Professor M Zahidul Haque Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University Dhaka**

City, municipality polls

It is needless to mention that the Election Commission (EC) is free to hold election anytime, anywhere if it is due and necessary for the country. It can be during any govt., either elected or interim.

People should not say whether it is right or wrong. **M.S. Farazi Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**

Upazila election

No election was held at upazila level since the system was disbanded during the early the nineties by the then BNP government. It was one of the root causes of BNP's defeat in the parliamentary elec-

tion in 1996. The Awami League also faced a debacle for not reintroducing the upazila system during their tenure. The upazila system was popular and accepted by the local people as their government within the people's reach. It is not understood why the major political parties were apprehensive of the move taken by the caretaker government to hold the local government election in October or earlier. By and large, people are supporting the present government's initiatives in holding the election.

This is more so because people's perception is that such election will be free from any political or administrative influence now. **Prof. Shamsul Alam Mohan One-mail**

Women workers in Saudi Arabia

Women workers in Saudi are forcibly confined, exploited and abused by their employers. There are at least one million expatriate women working legally in some of the lowest-paid jobs in Saudi Arabia. The overwhelming majority of them are domestic workers in private households. Others are employed as hairdressers, beauticians and maintenance staff in gender-segregated public and private facilities. In case of women workers, exploitative labour conditions such as workdays stretching to twelve hours or longer, unpaid salaries, denied benefits, and threats and intimidation from employers are common. Employers demanded their passports when they arrived in the kingdom, and in most cases did not provide them with an official residency permit, the only document valid in Saudi Arabia for identification purposes. The evidence also demonstrates that many exploited women workers in Saudi Arabia suffer one gender-specific abuse: forced confinement.

They are literally locked in their workplaces and residences for the full term of their employment, with little or no ability to interact with the outside world. Women subjected to forced confinement which private employers unilaterally impose and government authorities tolerate are particularly vulnerable to abuse because of their extreme isolation.

In cases that the Human Rights Watch documented, these women had no effective means to complain to their embassies or Saudi authorities about contract violations, gross mistreatment, and in some cases sexual abuse and rape, unless they manage to escape. The denial of the right to freedom of movement, combined with oppressive working conditions, leave many of these migrant women in situations that arguably constitute servitude or forced labour under international law. According to the Human rights watch, women are facing intolerable working conditions in Saudi Arabia.

Bangladeshi women workers are also abused by the Saudi employers. So many victimized women are coming back after they were harassed in Saudi Arabia.

The governments of the two countries should look into the matter and find a solution to the problem.

Lutfur Rahman Seoul National University Korea

Ever changing world

I was reading the write up Anation for sale. I don't get it how the British East India Company and a modern corporation could be compared? It's not even apple and orange comparison.

The write-up sounds like everything about private sector is bad, but to me it's great that those things

are happening. Corporate raiders are coming-- that's wonderful, that means competition. Competition means only the strong can survive in the jungle of the corporate world-- that's healthy. Sick industries are consuming our hard earned money which can be invested in healthy industries. Private sector enterprises take risk and invest private equity into a company. If they lose, they close down the shop and that is the end of it. But in the public sector, it is a different story.

We should change our mindset and always look for a model. ASEAN is a good model to follow. They are not big like China, India and Russia but they are better economically. Being small also has advantage, it's easy to steer a smaller ship than a large Titanic. Free economy is the only economy for prosperity that does not negate the government's responsibility to safeguard its people and ensure social well-being. **Ekram Belal One-mail**

Being a politician...

I am an ordinary citizen of this country. The 'am janata'. I pay tax. I am told that taxes should be paid so that the government can provide us different services. Yet, every time I need something from the government I have to pay for it. Call it bribe, ghash, the oil that keeps the wheels of the government moving or whatever. I don't claim to be exceptional in any way. I lie, I cheat, I get into fights over trivial issues, but no way can I be held responsible for bringing the country to the brink of the abyss that we find ourselves in.

I know that if I go and rob a bank, murder somebody or coerce people to give me money, and I am caught, I'll be put in jail and tried. If I hire a top-ranking lawyer, I could get away unscathed. But, no one will come forward to say that I should not be tried, that the lawsuit is motivated.

While in jail, if I should fall ill, I'll be allowed to die. Saving the taxpayers' money. God's will has been served, so the wise men will say. So, why then do I see taxpayers' money (my hard-earned money) being spent to get cheats and thugs in comfort? Would I be allowed to fly out to the USA on some flimsy pretext, so that I could hobnob with the mighty?

I think the message that comes out is pretty loud and clear. Do you want to get away with murder, with an occasional slap on the wrist? Become a politician!

Worried Aga Masih Lane Dhaka

Plant more trees

Every year Bangladesh is losing a lot of trees. But nobody is thinking about this problem.

According to the environmental scientists, 25% of a country must remain covered with trees. The picture of Bangladesh in this regard is dismal. It is said that only 12% of the total land area is now covered with plants. So we should plant more and more trees.

Mohammad Sazzad Hossain Ex-Lecturer of Agricultural Education Louhajang College Munshiganj

Shattered dreams Just when we began to envisage a new Bangladesh after 1/11, our dreams have been shattered.

Sky rocketing price hike and corruption, especially in public sectors, depict a sad picture, whilst our advisers are busy arranging local election before national election.

Nimo Alipur, Faridpur

Attaining food security

The Food Adviser had reportedly ruled out the possibility of increase in fuel prices which could upset the move towards attaining food security as reported by UNB and published in the dailies on July 2.

The statement is based on the reasoning behind the expression "food security". If it is only related to the production of food grains, and its purchase locally or importing it as needed; then he could be right, in terms of availability, as it relates only to the quantum of food in the country, not its price.

However if we relate "food security" to having food grains available within every one's purchasing power; then it is a totally different matter. As a national objective, I feel that real security of food means that it should be available at prices within the affordable capability of most, if not all. This is an important national objective and has

unfortunately not been addressed at all.

Severe malnutrition of the underprivileged because of the increase in the retail price of food grain is the cruel reality. The high fuel costs will increase the cost of food transportation to the retail end. This in turn will be directly reflected in the higher retail price of food grains and all other food items. The have-nots will be worse off, with lesser quantity of food that they can buy day by day.

Starvation is staring in the face of he poor, since most, if not all their income goes for food. There is no income subsidy for them! All this is the result of the wheelers and dealers in the West and the oil producers in the Middle East who will become richer and richer! They least care and bother about the poor!

S.A. Mansoor, Dhaka



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

Natural disasters

On an average about six natural calamities of great magnitude visit this land every year. These include floods, cyclones, earthquakes, landslides and so on. These disasters cause heavy loss of life and property. In most instances, these calamities catch the people unawares. Again, in many cases, the people are helpless in the face of a severe natural disaster. Just think of the damage wrecked by the cyclone "Sidr". This year we breathed a sigh of relief when cyclone Nargis swerved its course.

Because of global warming and continuous degradation of the environment, natural disasters have become more frequent and severe. All we can do is get ready for the worst possible damage caused by a natural calamity. Disaster management is an area that requires more attention. In this regard, the media can play a vital role. **Zabedwali, Pahartali, Chittagong**



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