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Income generating projects



TANVIR AHMED / DRINKNEWS

People wanted more relief after Sidr hit our coastal areas. Now they are looking for work instead of relief. I have been working with the biggest national NGO in their relief and rehabilitation programme in Sidr affected areas since December 2007.

In Morrelganj of Bagerhat district, Selina (45), a widow, has been living in her father's house for fifteen years. She has a son named Masum (18) and a daughter named Sonia (15). Masum pulls a van and Sonia has passed SSC exams. Selina involved herself with BRAC projects. She deposited some cash money for her daughter's admission in college and also repaired her broken house with her own income. Bakula's (35) husband is in jail. Her four children are now fully dependant on her income. Such is the case of many women.

They want the authorities concerned to set up more projects for poor women and men.

Abbas Uddin Molla

A development worker
Bagerhat

Generate solar power

It is very unfortunate that in spite of having three elected governments and 15 years of democracy in the country, none of the parties who were in power had invested in the power sector. Rather, they have consumed the power from the power generation units to fulfil their individual needs on different occasions. The outcome is - we all get to share the limited power supplies which the country still generates.

The future of power sector seems to be rather dark. According to different news reports published in the dailies, we will not get to see any immediate steps from the government to increase the supply of power. Moreover, some of the power generating units are on the verge of closure due to non-availability of the natural gas. We all know the power sector requires a

lot of funding and these cannot be installed overnight. Since this present government will stay till the December national elections there is nothing much that they can do at the moment to increase the generation of electricity. What they can do is make the equipments used to generate solar power available and cheaper, so that the common people can invest in this eco-friendly electricity generation for personal consumption at homes. The solar power will not help the industrial sector (as to generate 250 megawatt will cost roughly Tk 12 crore) directly but will certainly have an impact as the load sharing will reduce significantly.

The households which are using the air conditioners frequently will have to sacrifice their comforts during the daytime by not using the government supplied electricity, but they can still have the supply of electricity to run the lights and fans

and televisions through the solar system. A new law needs to be enacted that no one will be allowed to use the air conditioners at home during daytime from 08:00am to 11:00PM and can only use the A/C after 11:00pm in the evening till 08:00am next morning.

I believe, if the solar power can be used at homes, especially during daytime, Bangladesh can still overcome the power shortage by a huge amount as far as megawatts are concerned within the next six months. The farming sector and the industries do require uninterrupted power supply as the country's economy is directly linked with them. The solar system requires nominal amount per year as maintenance cost and can be used at homes in the cities as well as in the countryside without any hassle.

Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

No good candidates

The long cherished hope of electing honest and dedicated persons as people's representatives to the national and local bodies/ institutions is going to remain a far cry. This has become evident from the list of the candidates who got nominations and were accepted by the EC for different posts in the upcoming city corporations and pourashava elections. In Khulna City Corporation (KCC) mayoral and ward commissioner candidacy, 13 are facing allegations of corruption and criminal activities. In Sylhet City Corporation mayoral election, three candidates are accused of similar crimes. The scene is not different for the other two city corporations i.e. Barisal and Rajshahi. Mostly incumbent ward commissioners belonging to two major political parties (a few of them were even convicted & now out on bail) are seeking to be elected again. Recently, the CEC even expressed frustration as very few good people came forward to participate in the polls.

Now it depends entirely on the voters who have absolute right to select the best possible candidates out of those contesting ones. The CTG is apparently trying its best to bring about a qualitative change in the process of electing people's representatives. But their effort cannot succeed if the common people do not come forward and show the courage to reject the criminals & corrupt elements whose faces are known to all. The people will get reasonable support & protection of law enforcing agencies while casting their votes in secret. We all must sacrifice and not kneel down to money and muscle power remembering that a completely different situation now prevails in the country. It is the people who must prove that they are the source of all power.

A nation of honest and dedicated people can also expect their leaders to be of the same quality and standard. Forget the slogan "Amar vote ami dibo, jake khushi take dibo." The real slogan should be "Amar vote ami dibo, dekho shune bujhe dibo." This is one of the election posters that I saw recently which definitely indicates some positive change in our behaviour and thinking. Let us also seek the blessings of Allah for salvation of this nation.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

What's going on?

What is going on even during the period of interim non-political government? The cabinet is taking decisions transparently but the ministry officials are adamant and that's why most of the projects got stuck, whatever be the situation or public interest & necessity.

Dhaka subway project got clearance on 7 January 2008 in a Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs and the gazette notification was made on February 2008 but it is a matter of great regret that the opening of the project is being delayed (the tender was floated in 2002).

Engr. Shafiqul Alam
Dhaka

Policy shift needed

As high rate of inflation and escalating unemployment have seized the public life in Bangladesh, it is now our grave concern to survive through this crisis. So, considering the changed circumstances and the global context of food crisis, we feel the need for broad scale policy shift by the government that will ensure food, social security and employment in the long run.

It is necessary to boost food production as well as investment of idle money to alleviate poverty.

Sarwar Kamal
Cox's Bazar

Back to square one!

I may sound a little melodramatic but it's so frustrating and disturb-

ing that all our expectations are vanishing into thin air! All our "respected VIP" corrupt people will be free within a few months!

After 37 years of independence, we fail to stand up and say, "Yes, we have a leader courageous enough to be honest, patriotic and determined to change our destiny." May be we expected too much from this government. We expected that this government would punish all the corrupt people. After all the hullabaloo the bottom line is that our intellectuals and civil society members do not have the courage to face any change, but do we realise what will happen after all those VIP and non-VIP corrupt people will be released? What a frightening social disturbance awaits this country! I feel a chilling shiver going down my spine just by imagining the aftermath.

I pray and fervently hope that this is my over concerned exaggeration. I feel nothing but sorry for the people of my country. The silent majority of this country always resign to their fate whenever they fail to change the course of their life.

Asif Khan
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Admission policy

The SSC results 2008 were published recently. The wonderful results will, however, not help many students to get admission in college. Because, the admission process is determined by the students' age along with results. The education ministry decided on 26 June, 2008 that a similar method could be applied in higher education from 2008.

But it may not be a good decision for higher studies.

Md. Ruhul Amin

Department of Political Science

University of Dhaka

Extra-judicial killing

Another murder in the name of crossfire? This man could have been your son, brother, nephew or even father. But he gets no justice because the state has decided to kill him. As long as the victim is not your relative, you might be thinking the act of crossfire is a great way to get rid of criminals? Well, I do not know who are criminals and who are not unless they face the judicial system. Let them have their day in the court and punish them according to the law of the land.

I do not think our police department should have the licence to kill people at their will. That is very uncivil and a grave violation of human rights!

Dev Saha

Boston University, USA

Judges seek justice

Ten aggrieved judges of the HC appealed to uphold their right to get confirmation of their appointment as Judges of the HC. They have won the first round based on the judgment of the HC. Now the 19 sitting Judges of the HC have moved an appeal in the SC to uphold their seniority.

I think it is a matter of great concern for us to see that judges are going to the court to get justice, and to retain seniority. Where will the ordinary citizens go?

A reader

One-mail

Taxpayer's appeal

Please allow me to share the view expressed and appeal made by Mr. Abdullah Syed. I am in a similar situation, and in my case I did not have the opportunity to submit my tax returns from 2003 to 2007 since I was abroad doing my doctorate degree during that period.

It would be highly appreciated if the NBR allows such tax payers to submit their returns for at least five years without any penalty or surcharge.

Dr. Shah Mahmood Murshed
Nikunjo, Dhaka

"Deep in the heart of nowhere"

Zafor Sobhan's post editorial on the charlands up the stream of the mighty river Jamuna gave a vivid description of the land, the people and opportunities to develop those areas and the people (July 25, 2008).

Although Bangladesh is a small country, Sobhan travelled there by a seaplane that landed on the water and he spent a few hours to see how life goes in those remote places not connected with the main roads even from the small towns in greater Rangpur areas, such as Kurigram and Nilphamari.

He has noted the changes recently brought in these chars by the activities of some NGOs in income generation, health and education services. Grameen Shakti has put a few solar panels in these chars to supply electricity to a few homes. It is unfortunate that these areas remained neglected by our politicians and governments so far because of the Dhaka-centric

governance that prevailed in the country since we became independent in 1971. We have a few written accounts from the Liberation War as to how these areas provided sanctuary for the Mukti Bahini to organise and operate within the territory of Bangladesh. But then the Dhaka-centric political system and the ineffective parliament ignored the plight of the people in rural areas, mostly in the northern parts of Bangladesh. Even after the famine of 1974 that caused havoc in these areas and the seasonal mona year after year failed to draw our attention.

Although the system of local government was rightly placed in the constitution in 1972, we could not establish it for lack of interest among our Dhaka based politicians. Now that the Election Commission has taken steps to hold upazila elections in October under the CTG, the main political parties are resisting them unnecessarily on one pretext or the other. People have seen the true faces of

these politicians from the corruption cases so far unearthed by the ACC. This is only the tip of the iceberg. For strengthening national security, as poverty is the greatest threat to a nation, the upazila elections must be held as scheduled and the present government should allocate sufficient funds to the outlying upazilas such as the charlands in the north and bay areas in the south to undertake projects to develop schools and health clinics in association with NGOs already working in these areas. Besides some new crops such as maize and peanuts that are being grown now, these chars can be our source of protein through livestock farming, especially water buffaloes and the Black Bengal goats.

I thank Sobhan for taking the trip to these nowhere places and would like to request him to continue exposing the plight of the people in the char and mona areas of Bangladesh.

Prof. M. Shamsul Haque
Boston, US

India and we

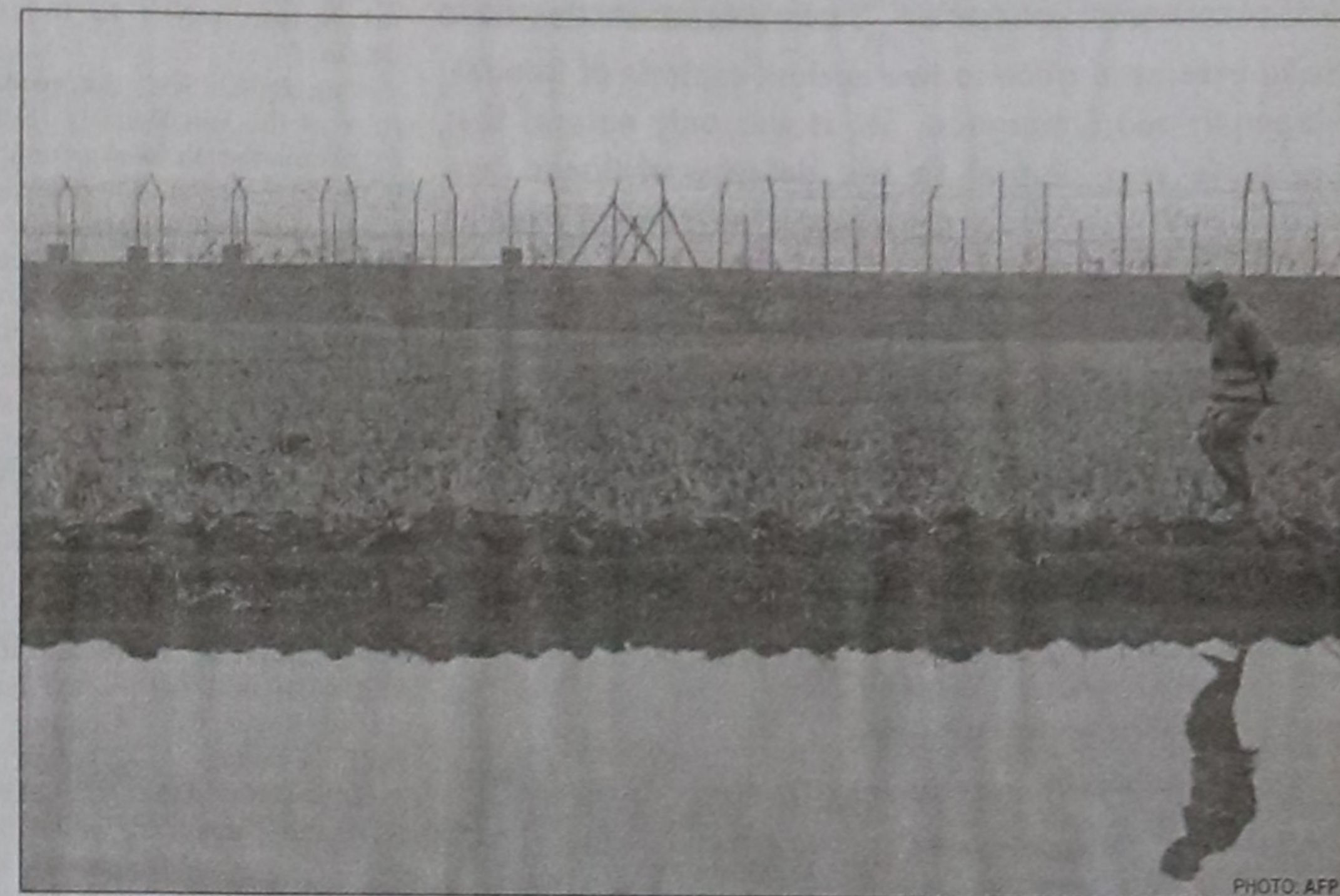


PHOTO: AFP

Relations with India are getting strained these days due to a host of unresolved issues. There is tension in border areas, as BSF often kills innocent Bangladeshis. This is really sending negative signals.

And finally the barbed wires erected by our neighbour do indicate that they want to keep us away.

S I Khan
Mirpur, Dhaka

Freedom fighters' quota

The much talked about topic these days is quota system in government services. As I am a candidate of 28th BCS, the matter haunts me all the while. So I am expressing my personal view here again.

The freedom fighters were ready to sacrifice their lives in 1971. For this we must salute them from our hearts. We also want to let them have some extraordinary privileges

as a reward for their heroic deeds. There are many ways to do that. For example, we can establish factories, schools, universities, hospitals, welfare and trustee funds only for them. Banks and other organisations can be established for our respectable freedom fighters through the ministry of liberation war affairs. The monthly and yearly grants and other facilities for them can be raised to a higher level. We want them to be secure economically and socially. But their wards

should not get quota system facilities in BCS recruitment, compromising merit. We know the number of listed freedom fighters is near about 1 lakh and eighty six thousand. And our total population is over 130 million. If we compare these two numbers, there is no reason to fix 30 per cent quota for them.

We hope the matter will receive due consideration.

Md. Abdul Malik

Pallabi, Mirpur, Dhaka

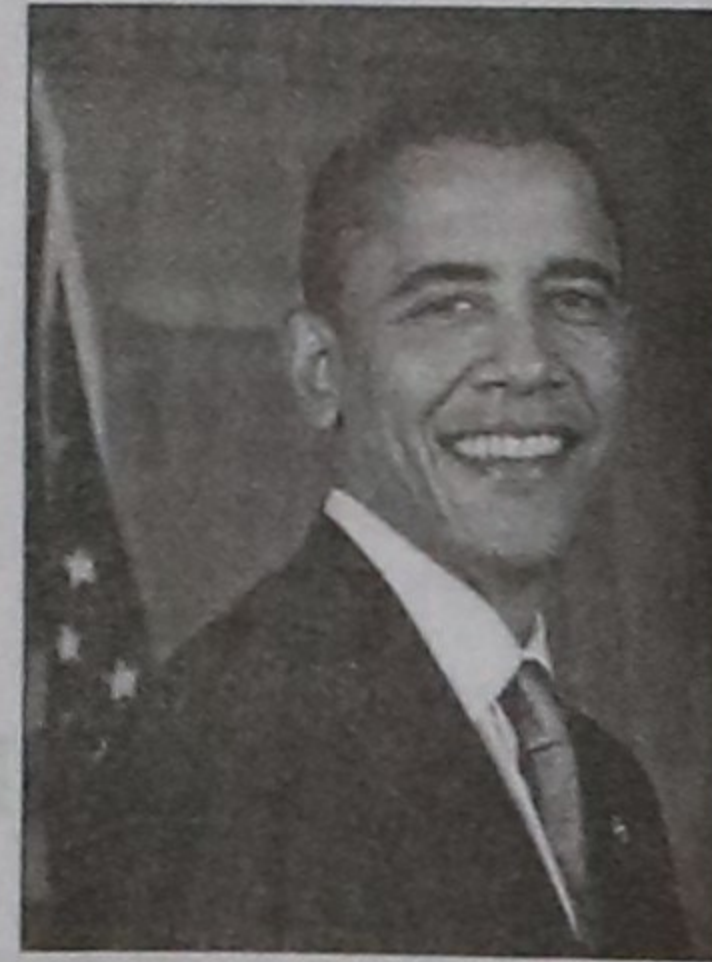
"Change is coming"

Barack Obama is certainly one of the greatest men of our times. To see him speak inspires and gives hope not just to Americans but to people all over the world. And this especially counts for young people like me who are simply amazed at the brilliance of his oratory. In the face of such troubling times the world can do a lot better with Barack Obama as president of the United States.

Obama's stances on global issues are also highly praiseworthy. His willingness to negotiate and engage in a full diplomatic process with Iran shows his maturity in dealing with such issues as was done by other great American presidents such as Kennedy who met the Soviet leader Khrushchev and Reagan who

met Gorbachev to avert crisis. His pre-war judgment that things would not go fine in Iraq proves his level of sophisticated understanding of the world.

But what strikes me most is his reference to Bangladesh and poverty in a foreign policy speech in Berlin recently. He said "the world can only be happy when the child is out of poverty in Bangladesh" and continued to stress on other issues such as genocide in reference to Darfur. The mention of Bangladesh in his speech confirms how much he is committed to eliminating poverty and I am sure that once he is elected president Bangladesh will come into a much greater sphere of importance to the United States.



When he says "change is coming", there is enough reason to believe that certainly change is coming not just to America but to the world at large.

Md. Ayman Bin Kamran
Chowdhury
Gulshan 2, Dhaka

Homeless people

Homeless people living on footpaths was a common sight in Dhaka. We saw them at Kamalapur Railway Station and in many places at night. But after the caretaker government took charge of the country, the scene radically changed. The number of homeless people increased manifold. Now I see them everywhere in Dhaka. The other day when I was crossing the street in Mirpur at about 12:00pm, a middle-aged woman was sleeping there on the island. Any time I pass through Karwan Bazar, in front of Prothom Alo office I see people sleeping or lying on the footpaths. If I make a list of the places where every day I see these floating

people, it won't end. We all know what happened, these people were evicted from slums where they had been living illegally! They can't manage their two meals daily and this eviction added to their sufferings.

We praised this govt for demolishing illegal structures, but what's the use? The poor families who were living in some illegally built slums are now living under the open sky.

We want the government to rehabilitate them. We don't want to see homeless people roaming around. They are human beings too. A resident of Dhaka
On e-mail



AZIZUR RAHIM PEU / DRINKNEWS

Decentralisation

The regime of autocrat President Ershad was a dark chapter of our political history, no doubt, but his initiative to introduce 'decentralisation' was a praise-worthy move. Everything is in Dhaka, but that cannot bring about optimum benefits for the country. Everyone is rushing towards Dhaka for job, education, business, marketing etc. And so, Dhaka is now on the verge of death. Other regions of the country are underdeveloped to a great extent. Now it is high time to rethink the matter seriously for the country's benefit.

Habibur Rashid
Sobhanbag
Dhaka

Why so many parties?

Politics is growing like business. It is a matter of regret that there are

62 political parties, including 22 religion-based ones in our country, but these parties are not functioning smoothly. Why should we have so many political parties?

Politicians should look into the matter.

Habibur Rashid Ismail

Jamea Rahmania Fadi Madrasah

Chittagong

Vehicle tax and post office hassle

Your article under the above heading (DS July 23, 2008) deserves thanks from those who go through untold sufferings in the post offices every year while depositing vehicle related taxes. Perhaps, you will now consider doing an investigative report on what goes on at BRTA where owners have to produce their vehicles for the final report - that is, the Fitness Certificate.

However, your reporter failed to

mention one very important issue: the post office authorities are cheating the taxpayers by collecting Tk.45.00 per car per year for the last several years in the name of issuing Tax Token (a sticker to be pasted on the front window for easy verification) but not issuing it. Instead, they issue a flimsy slip of paper with a rubber stamp saying that "label shorboraho kora hoi nai" (Label not supplied). If asked, the explanation is that their head office did not supply the label. Then why charge the fees? They have no answer. This is going on for years!!

Now, Tk.45 multiplied by number of tax paying vehicles plying in Bangladesh should give an idea how vehicle tax payers are being fleeced by the post office authorities every year for the services not rendered!

A citizen
One-mail