

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.



FRIZO GAZI / DRINKNEWS

## Population boom bogey?

Is Bangladesh 'overcrowded' -- with a birth rate of below two per cent per annum?

Our density of population is very high [nearly 1,000 persons per sq km] with more than 140m crowded in a small deltaic region, with hundreds of rivers and thousands of canals. The country is barely 15ft above the sea level in the South. In the preceding decades the birth rate was above three percent.

How this fertility came about? It is the fertility of the soil in a deltaic region, full of waters. The development of roads, culverts and bridges in the rural areas reduced the transport and communication gaps, and encouraged urban migration. Of course the cities are overcrowded--to seek more opportunities for a higher standard of living.

Our human resources are a priceless asset, plus the arable and fertile lands, high agro output [but marketing is still backward, with poor electric supply and lack of cold storage nets in the rural areas]. The public awareness and visibility have increased--thanks to the extreme popularity of the mobile phones.

Where is the bug? Bad politics. Getting back to routine level of development environment is a difficult task, as we became free only after nine months of struggle. It takes time to grow roots, and it is not easy in a have-not society, exploited by the colonialists for centuries [the divide and rule policy, which did not encourage the majority community in the British India provinces].

The crooked politicians brought about the weak system of neutral non-political interim government for a few months prior to the general elections. This distrust has retarded the smooth development background; as politics became a business for private gains. The election manifestos of the major parties skip this chapter of history, and are blaming the govt for thrusting the cleansing process during the last two years. The winner-takes-all syndrome has been smashed, let us hope!

The old guards have to go -- plain and simple. A new awareness has been created, to shatter the myth that we are overpopulated. Nature is scientific--note the population density in the desert and mountainous regions. Bangladesh is in a much better position than in most of the under-developed countries in Asia, Africa and S America.

Three cheers for our rural folks-- Bengal might regain its old glory.  
A Husnain, Dhaka

## Unguarded remarks

I hope that the newly installed elected AL government ministers have realised by now that unguarded and politically provoking remarks in the media might bring more harm than benefit to the individual and the party. The statements of the finance minister and the commerce minister on market management, especially on breaking the syndicates, were not based on facts. They should gather full information first and then give a policy prescription. This has only encouraged the private policy oversight institutions to come up with explicit comments on the syndicate issue. It is also important to note that the same person of this powerful oversight institutions has also provoked the existing syndicate to determine their course of action in the backdrop of the political note of warning and how they are going to respond negatively. We heard the commerce minister on channel 1 "First Minister" programme. He was informative and adopted a more practical approach to handle the syndicate. The most important thing he mentioned was that the syndicates exist and operate harmfully when political support is extended by the party in power. This is the catch issue. I hope both the ministers would keep this in mind as policy guideline. By the way, we are hearing about the syndicates since the BNP government. Tell us openly who are they or ask the FBCCI to find out who are they, why and how they operate.

It is very unfortunate to see that a politically active home minister can be embarrassed for her unguarded and unchecked political thoughts which might have influenced

her to say only one sentence on law and order situation not liked by many including me and the opposition. She should control her politically biased emotion and stick to facts and figures which would be asked eventually by the oversight institutions, opposition and the neutral media. Now, the party would come to her rescue once, twice or even thrice, but eventually the incumbent would have to pay the price. My advice to the powerful private political oversight institutions and its office bearers is to please maintain political neutrality so that one can depend on what they say and why they say. The reputation of the "civil society" in Bangladesh is not positive.

I have a very humble advice for the electronic media not to disturb the politicians so often in their offices and in the gatherings. The same applies to the politician to bypass the media as long as it is not nationally important. I have no idea what impact it would have on the media coverage of important national events. The media perhaps needs more qualitative improvement, rather than quantitative growth.

A reader  
One-mail

## Mumbai attack: a warning

The financial nerve centre of India (Mumbai) faced the worst terrorist attack at 10 important sites. At least 195 people were killed. Mumbai was paralysed for 62 hours!

Even a country like India could not prevent the attack. What about us? Are we really prepared to face such things?  
Muhammad Salim  
Dept. of Anthropology  
Shahjalal University  
Syhet

## Obama's silence

People across the world became hopeful and happy when Barack Obama was elected US president, thinking that they were going to get rid of the ruthless terms of President Bush. But Obama's silent support to Israel's massacre is making people frustrated and they are losing their trust in him. Just at the moment US is the most powerful country of the world and their support to anything gains the highest weight. Israel is continuing its barbaric attacks upon the innocent Gaza people. Gaza has become the death-trap for thousands of helpless women and children. In the name of weakening Hamas they are carrying out both air strikes and land attacks on the densely populated areas of civilians and killing the innocent.

Israel is fulfilling its long time wish and at the same time the Arab world is divided on the issue. "The plight of the victims is beyond description. The US should not suppress the UN anymore in taking the initiative for stopping this bloodshed.

Like many other fans of Obama, I expect quick steps from him on this issue.

Md. Faisal Bin Karim  
The ELP Club  
Department of Pharmacy  
Jahangirnagar University  
Savar, Dhaka

## English medium schools

The big advantage of a good English medium school is high standard of education. Students are being admitted to English medium schools from the early stage and they get the opportunity to learn English.

However, such facilities should be extended to Bengali medium schools as well.

Rifat Bin Hossain  
Student  
EastWest International School & College  
Mirpur, Dhaka

## Obama's victory

The people of the whole world found their expectations come true with the election which Barack Hossain Obama won by a big margin. He has acquired a mandate for change. Braving all odds he moved forward to create a new history. His election message 'Change' touched the hearts of the American people which helped him to conquer the White House putting the racial issue in the coffin. It reminds us of the film "The Roots" where we saw the bravery of another great "Kuntakinte" who refused to change his name as suggested by his captors one hundred years ago. People around the world are now looking forward to watching the mettle of this young leader in tackling various issues national and international.

Though the path of peace is not smooth like the path leading to White House, yet the world people expect Obama to achieve it.

MAALIM  
Ex-Banker  
Indira Road, Dhaka

## Discriminatory education policy

We always talk about democracy, but how much democracy is there in the educational system? When we see the educational systems of city schools and village schools, we can realise that there are many differences. Most of the teachers of village schools, who have no experience, are not good enough. They cannot teach the students properly or appropriately.

The present government has approved the creative question method and it has arranged training for teachers in rural areas on this method. But the students are not getting good results.

On the other hand, most of the teachers in the cities have experience and enough training. So they teach the students properly and also these schools have been instructed properly. As a result, the students are obtaining good results and they get admission to good colleges. Clearly, there is discrimination.

The education authorities should look into the matter.  
Shaiful Islam Khaisar  
Dept. of English  
IUC

## Free market economy?

For developed and industrialised countries free market economy is a means to affluence and prosperity. Their mastery over science and technology and industry have enabled them to produce a plethora of agricultural crops, high standard varieties of goods and commodities, equipment and machineries, arms and ammunition, warplanes, motor vehicles, warships, submarines, atom bombs and whatnot.

They export all these items minus atom bomb of billions and billions of dollars to meet the requirements of innumerable underdeveloped and backward countries under the free market economy. The more they export the more they earn.

Are we not 100-300 years behind the developed and industrial countries?

Can we compare our per capita income with that of the USA, the UK, Japan, Switzerland, Denmark, Germany, and France etc?

Due to price hike of our essential goods and commodities and untold sufferings of our people we suggest as follows a balanced, fifty-fifty free market economy for our country.

1. We may import rice, wheat, sugar, soyabean oil, lentils, powdered milk etc. in public sector through the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) for sale on 'no loss and no profit' basis to the domestic traders and shopkeepers for resale in the market to the members of the public at a rate to be fixed by the govt. The govt. may check and supervise the market and bring the dishonest traders/shopkeepers to book and thus mitigate the sufferings of the people.

2. Free market economy may continue in all our domestic products, goods and commodities, agricultural crops, vegetables, fish, mutton, beef, eggs, chicken etc., etc.

3. Trade and commerce, import and export of all items except those mentioned above and other items restricted by the govt may continue in private sector under free market economy.

4. Our Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Finance and Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries may sit together and work out modalities for the 'fifty-fifty' free market economy for our country.

OH KABIR  
Hare Street  
Wari, Dhaka

## Small cabinet

Last Tuesday, the new prime minister and ministers took oath. Through the oath ceremony, Awami League president Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as the country's new prime minister and 32 surprise picks

also were sworn as ministers to run the ministries. The people of Bangladesh were surprised after witnessing a small cabinet. It's also surprising to note that AL president Sheikh Hasina has left most of her senior party colleagues out of the new cabinet and brought some young, competent and talented people. It is also to be noted that, from 32 ministers, 24 are new and young who have no idea about the ministries. Though they are new and inexperienced, they are honest and competent persons. Now, they have to show their ability in future through firm decisions and activities because ability is something different from honesty.

Moreover, Bangladesh is now suffering from various crises and problems. In order to recover from the present situation, the new government and cabinet ministers have to face a lot of challenges

# Israel's brutality

It has been a week that Israel has been slaughtering innocent Palestinians indiscriminately in Gaza. About 900 civilians, women and children along with others of all age groups, have been killed, while more than two thousand people are mortally wounded. Reports say, BBC-ALJAZEERA and CNN, wounded people are confronting an acute shortage of medical support and other necessities around.

Israel's point to carry out such deadly attacks is that they need to save their people from Hamas' rocket launching into its territory - Hamas is throwing Sam missiles into its territory that killed two Israelis. However, one does not need to have much wisdom to understand certain facts: i) Israel being an intruder into Arab land has no right to be there at all. ii) Hamas, the Palestinian representative, does not have the right to kill Israelis, but should try to resolve the crisis through a global debate on the issue; moreover, the Sam or the might that the team possesses is as good as a stone in comparison to mighty Israel's destructive powers. And this fact determines the point that Hamas in its bid to show anger with the occupation forces is letting Israel crush innocent Palestinians, which by no means justifies their act --- it is like instigating a deadly hound with stones only to be slaughtered ruthlessly. Hence, Hamas is responsible for the destruction that has taken this brutal humanitarian toll; they have either to obtain equally powerful weapons that Israel possesses or they should try hard to engage the leading countries of the world in a sensible debate to resolve the issue.

However, at such a critical point,

experts are of the view that world's leading countries should come forward to calm down this hound Israel-- to restore peace in that turbulent region.

Rafiqul Islam Rime  
Agrabad, Chittagong

Once again innocent people are being killed in Palestine by the Israeli government. If Hamas were the only target of Israel its army would not have killed so many women and children. This is simply genocide. The Israeli government has chosen innocent Palestinian children and women to test their weapons under the direction of their Godfather (Arms merchants). I do not support Hamas but one thing we must not forget is that during the last six months of ceasefire Israel did not allow any economic activities to take place in Gaza and thus made peace impossible.

I would request the Israeli people to compel their arms merchant and fanatic government to do

something which reduces hatred between Israelis and Palestinians. We must keep in mind that only dialogue can bring peace in the Middle East. More than 50 years of experience clearly indicates that a military solution in the Middle East is impossible, rather it creates more hatred and reduces the chances of peace. To God, the life of a human being is more precious than the whole world and hence much more important than a piece of land for which we are killing each other for decades. The Holy Quran says, "Save one life and save the world."

To bring peace we must get rid of the dirty desire of arms merchants, understand and love each other and also understand religion in the truest sense (be it Islam, Judaism or any other religion).

Dr. Mahboob Hossain  
Associate Professor  
Department of Pharmacy  
The University of Asia Pacific



SHAFIQUL ISLAM KAJOL / DRINKNEWS

## Energy efficient boiler

Your report on the use of energy efficient boilers, published on 6 January, is a generalised logical statement. To make the industrialists interested to convert their boilers (if possible) more cost benefit advantages should have been spelled out. A simple statement that a 10 ton/hour boiler raising saturated steam at 10bar if replaced by an efficient boiler would cost say Tk. 10 lakh, and the fuel saving per annum would be Tk 1 lakh indicates a pay back period of ten years.

However, the statement as reported was (quote): "Factory owners can save 77mmcft of gas daily by converting all boilers" is neither here nor there! It does not give any idea of the cost involved in making an inefficient boiler more efficient, and an idea of the payback period would have been more realistic and more convincing. Far more effective would have been a table giving these data for a number of low-pressure boilers from say 5bar to 15bar operating pressure with capacities ranging in steps from 5 to 20 tons/hour.

Another approach to saving would have been to modify the boiler's fuel firing set-up and change the fuel, i.e. coal, oil or gas to say twigs and wood shavings or rice husk as substituted fuel. This can be done locally, as no modification is involved in the pressure side of the boiler. Changes would be made in fuel feeding system and the combustion chamber. If we can change say a diesel-fired boiler of 5ton/hour capacity to rice husk, producing saturated steam at 10bar, savings of operating costs by 40 to 50 percent can be easily possible, if rice husk is available within 25 miles of the boiler location.

This needs to be tried out in all seriousness and is based on the writer's experience in such modification work at a factory near Rajbari which was run on diesel fuel as gas or coal was not available there.

S.A. Mansoor  
Dhaka

## BNP leader's assertion

Emergence of SQ Chowdhury as seen on local TV coverage also heard on BBC (Bangla service) for two days with his usual arrogance apparently confirms his position as the

new leader in the helm of BNP. He claims his party still with three crore voters behind should be a force to reckon with; which certainly is a matter of fact.

Mr. Chowdhury's defiant statement of no war criminals being there in this country is obviously in line with his comrade Mujahed's but the people everywhere surely knows the truth with background of the roles that the Jamaat and he himself played during the war of liberation.

The BNP high command, if they have any touch with the people, must realise that unless they change their attitude and discard the Jamaat they will soon meet the same fate as the erstwhile Muslim League. As for the AL high command, they must not underestimate the evil designs of the never-compromising war-criminals/collaborators or whatever term may be used for the purpose and deal with them appropriately. Failure to stop the spread of the venom which the war criminals are capable of doing will not be in the interest of this nation.

Z. Rahman  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Stop them!

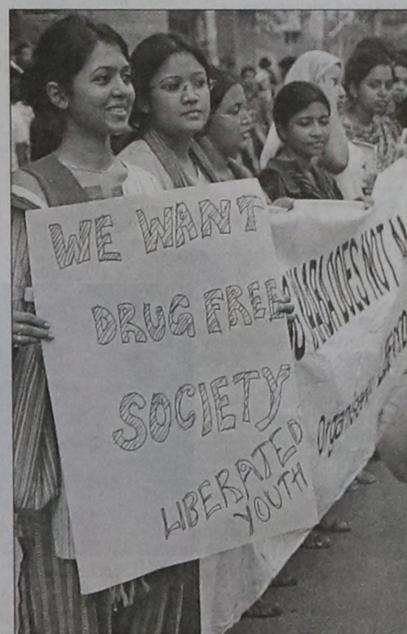
A group of people, and their media partners, have been playing havoc in the country in the last two years. We have been along with sane media units insistently protesting against the nefarious activities of the "worms of hell". These are some so-called members of "Shushil Shomaj" and some print media units and a TV channel. They had been praying and hoping against hope that "elections will not be held and the Army will continue to rule the country by proxy." They conducted all sorts of evil and malicious propaganda against the leaders of this country, dead and alive.

The good people of Bangladesh have spoken clearly and loudly and they have given unprecedented mandate to the Mohajote in general and the Awami League & Sheikh Hasina in particular.

Those Shushil Shomaj members and their media units are beyond doubt the paid agents of the anti-people vested interests.

They will endanger democracy once again! We are afraid.  
Dr. M. Hussain  
FFof1971

## Drug addiction



ZAD AMIR ISLAM / DRINKNEWS

The number of addicted people is increasing day by day. I know a boy, who is my neighbour belonging to an educated family, badly addicted by drug. In his early stage he was a good student and had a sound personality also. Several times, I tried to pursue him and tried to rescue him from this world, but he did not pay heed to my words.

We must save our young generation from fatal drug addiction.  
Shovon Chowdhury  
Department of Accounting  
Govt. Edward College, Pabna

in future. But the people are now become optimistic and hopeful about this small and fresh cabinet. We don't want to behold again and again the repetitions of ugliness and disasters like the BNP government and cabinet members invited earlier. As a Bangladeshi, I would like to congratulate the new Prime minister Sheikh Hasina for bringing about a great change. And we are waiting to see more changes like this in future too.

Md. Shehabul Anwar  
Dept. of English  
International Islamic University Chittagong

## Learn from your mistakes

The 9th parliamentary election has worked like a mirror which has reflected the results of the activities of political parties and significance of people's might. Results of mistakes committed by the political parties have also been reflected in this election. It seems that it has issued a warning to the political parties "Learn from your mistakes and do not repeat them."

The Awami League has secured a tremendous victory, thanks to people's strong desire for change, and presence of new voters. But if they do not learn from their previous mistakes and do not respect the people's verdict they might have to pay dearly that might even be higher than the price paid by the BNP as day by day people are becoming more concerned about their rights. There might be some wicked politicians inside the party who would try to get some undue advantage by abusing power. Be cautious about them and make them accountable for their activities. Leading policy makers should be courageous enough in taking actions against the corrupt.

In October 2001, people elected the BNP with a lot of hope. But they failed to keep the promise and might have ignored the power of general people. The price they paid for it is known to all.

So, if the political parties become aware of their mistakes, our country will have a bright future.  
Muhammad Majidul Haq  
Patwary  
Senior Officer- Call Centre  
Operation  
Customer Care Division  
Pacific Bangladesh Telecom  
Limited  
Mohakhali, Dhaka