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## Donate blood

Every year, more than 4 millions lives are saved worldwide, thanks to voluntary blood donation by people. In our country as well, there are many generous people who donate blood regularly. Despite that, many of us do not actually know the importance of donating blood and some even fear that blood donation might be harmful for health. In fact every physically fit 18+ adult can donate blood at least twice a year. At the time of donation, only 350ml of blood is taken. An average person has 5-6 litres of blood in the body. In terms of volume the loss is corrected in 24-48 hours by the body. The red cell count is corrected in about 56 days. So the health of the donor will not suffer because of the blood donation. A few days ago, my friend's sister died because of non-availability of blood. Her blood group was AB- but we were unable to collect enough blood for her despite our sincere efforts. Moreover, the blood



which we got from the blood bank was date expired in most cases. I think the government needs to monitor these unauthorised and authorised blood banks because they do not help people when it is needed most. There is a disease called thalassemia and in some cases this disorder is treated with blood transfusion.

The person who carries an acute form of thalassemia requires periodical blood transfusions and hence the patients who are suffering from this disease know the value of blood donation for saving human lives. I know people of Bangladesh are very sympathetic towards the welfare of fellow citizens because people who are living in this land are like our own brothers and sisters. We should vow not to let our brothers and sisters die for want of blood till we have the last drop of it left in our body!

Our collective efforts, awareness and generous blood donation could save many lives and bring smiles to millions. So, let us donate blood in order to bring smile to a patient and a family as a whole.

**Nazmus Saquib**  
Dept. of English  
Stamford University  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Preferential governance?

Theoretically, we all want democratic general elections. But the reality is different (in Dhaka). The incoming, elected regime is attracted towards some sectors; and neglect many sectors which need BMR of BMRE. This pattern is not changing. The motivation is not public service.

The new super AL+ plus regime is still groping for its long term bearing after the first 100 days. Too many external diversions, at home and abroad. Our public institutions are breaking down. During the current global recession, it is not easy to make things look bright.

And, why this hurry for mega projects? Easily explained: our political culture has no respect for continuity of projects, when a regime changes, don't leave 'it' to others!

Re-tenders and re-tendering are the standard practice, causing delays and systems losses, decade after decade. Too many ten-perent-wallas around? Recognition of loyalty begs for monetary compensation.

This is an entrenched weakness in dynasty rules (anywhere in the world). Dhaka had been under the grips of two political parties for decades. The non-political caretaker government tried for two years to bring about a change in the philosophy of approach. The system has to be cleaned by the politicians themselves.

The reports on BDR tragedy are awaited eagerly by the whole world. It is a sensitive issue. The other issue is also sensitive ('71 war criminals).

Global changes are occurring fast, hence the local regimes have fewer options. When the mighty USA could change, why not micro Bangladesh?

What is happening in Pakistan? Bangladesh is also not immune to the activities of the religious extremist groups. A background point has to be remembered: external cartels could hire and employ such terrorists. Saddam fought for the Americans in Iran several years; then note what happened to him. The Russians in Afghanistan had to withdraw—who were the organisers and the fighters?

Routine political administration is out of date.  
**A Mawaz, Dhaka**

## The godfather issue

The AL government has passed over 100 days in power with some successes and failures. Though 100 days is not enough to evaluate any government's success or failure, it is considered very crucial, as good beginning is half the battle. With a view to bringing about a positive trend in the governance, PM Sheikh Hasina formed a new government with the leaders having a clean image. However, some of them have failed to hold up their image. But the thing that pinches the common people of our country most is the godfather issue. During the last rule of the AL govt, the people experienced large-scale extortion, snatching and robbery, which finally accelerated the defeat of the AL in 2001 election. This time also the AL cadres have appeared before the countrymen. The people have already started feeling the presence of the men like Hazari and Shamim Osman as they have already attracted media cover-

age through their activities. Besides, all sorts of notorious activities of the local cadres, patronised by the influential leaders of the AL, are getting momentum day by day. As a result, the people are getting panicked.

The godfathers bring good neither to the party, nor the government. Rather, they distance the common people from the party and the government.

Though this govt has just assumed power, it will be in trouble if it fails to control the rogue elements.  
**Golam Mostofa**  
Dept. of Mathematics  
JU, Savar, Dhaka

## Look into it

The office of the Registrar of Joint Stock is an important place. But here people have to remain standing in a queue for submitting their papers and documents for hours together. If a person has to deposit money, he has to go to a certain branch of a bank which is located in another building. But sometimes the counter official disappears, although there is always a big queue of people before the counter.

As per instructions of the office, people have to submit their papers before 1:00pm. But how can they do it?  
**Harun-or-Rashid**  
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

## Accidents

Nowadays mishaps in the roads and highways are taking place on a regular basis.

The government should initiate some effective steps to bring the situation under control.  
**Nur Alam**  
Rangpur

## Digital Bangladesh

There are many meanings attached to this phrase by various people trying to further their own motives and ideas. As a disinterested person, I feel that this phrase has only one core meaning and that is to provide cheap, reliable and the fastest available (according to international standards) wireless broadband service throughout the land along with the assurance of 24 hours non-falling supply of electricity. If these two simple steps are guaranteed, many businesses and well-to-do people will relocate from the crowded city areas and move to the countryside enriching the land as a whole. The government can also then carry out de-centralisation of most of its work.

The details of various software programme development and what activities of the companies or government need to be computerised are of secondary importance and have very little to do with this concept of 'digital Bangladesh' except to confuse and muddle the issue.

So, I urge the authorities to concentrate on these two concrete goals to achieve the dream of 'digital Bangladesh', as is often repeated by politicians and media.  
**Engineer Shafi Ahmed**  
London, UK

## "Crossfire"

We express our grave concern over the killing of two students of polytechnic in a so-called "Rab encounter". As reported, they were picked up by Rab personnel from their college hostel and held incommunicado somewhere. It has made headline once again, and a wave of fresh criticism of the latest killing in "crossfire" is coming from all sections of society.

It's beyond the comprehension of common people that after being arrested, how they countered the law enforcers, or were going to be such a threat that Rab had to resort to a measure like "firing back to protect themselves". Believe me or not, this excuse is not as believable to us as lullabies to the children. In a democracy, it cannot continue year after year.

It is true we should give applause to Rab for some heroic operations, especially those storming of militant hideouts. But now it is cause for concern of any conscious citizen that it might persist and be allowed in the name of "encounter" and "crossfire".

Certainly, when in the opposition the AL was critical of these types of extra judicial killings by law enforcement agencies and putting an end to such killings was in their election manifesto. Look the gamekeeper is now the poacher!

To put it mildly, we smell a rat in those so-called "crossfire" or "encounters". Monosyllabic description of the actions is too preposterous and does not care for a grain of credibility. Speculation has reached such a pitch, that it needs a clarification from the government.

The culture of impunity for any law enforcement agency is incompatible with the idea of democracy.

**Roney**  
One-mail

## Secularism

According to Oxford dictionary the term "secularism" means the belief that religion should not be involved in the organisation of society, education, etc.

In our country, most of the common people usually consider secularism as being "Anti-Islam" which is nothing but the result of their ignorance.

From the socio-political history of England, we come to know about the supremacy of orthodox Anglican Church over the common people. Moreover, the Church of England was the all in all in those days. But during the time of renaissance, and the times that followed, a new movement called "secularism" arose to curtail the powers of the church. At that time the people demanded that the church refrain from interfering in political and other affairs of the state. Again, there would not be any influence of religion in case of the administration of the state.

Well, let's see how Islam played its role in favour of good governance. The Charter of Medina is the living example of the liberal views of our Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). In this charter, he ensured equal rights, participation and judgment of all the people.

To sum up, I would request people to define the term secularism rightly.

**Aiman Bin Shaofiqul Hamid**  
Dept. of English  
International Islamic University Chittagong

## Move forward

With the democratic process starting from the 1990's, have we really achieved what we dreamt of? Probably those involved in politics have. The general people's lifestyle has not changed, apart from the rich and the upper middle class people who have learned to spend money on luxury. The common people, especially the ones living in the rural areas and the poor living in the cities, can hardly say they are better off now.

Bangladesh is a country with great potential. But hope is quickly fading away into the mist of mismanagement and corruption for the investors (local as well as foreign) and the poor people.

Electricity which is the essential ingredient of development has let the country down in the past 38 years. Poles have been erected, wires have been installed but unfortunately the electricity did not make it to the wires, leaving millions of people and their future in the dark. None of the past governments cared about meeting the existing demand of power. Today we know how badly placed the power sector is, (apart from the powerful people in the government and the administration). But it should have been at the top of the government's priority list. Unfortunately, the priority has been diverted to something else!

The education standard of the country has also taken a nose dive, though we see more and more students getting GPA-5, but unfortunately they are bypassing the details of learning due to the grading system. The standard of colleges and universities is

## Water logging



Every year we hear the news of water logging in the major cities. The rainy season is just a few days away and rain will start to pour again, but what is our preparation regarding water logging?

The question is: whether we are prepared enough to tackle this water logging problem in Dhaka and other major cities. Every year heavy rainfall brings untold sufferings to Dhaka city dwellers. Busy roads and residential

areas are filled with water and people can't move easily from one place to another because of the faulty drainage systems. And the DCC never takes timely action in order to solve this problem.

The problem should be addressed in right earnest.

**Md. Anisuzzaman Sarker**  
MBA, Finance  
University of Chittagong

no better than the SSC and HSC levels, as the same bypassing system exists there.

The agriculture sector is also in bad shape. More and more lands are being converted into industrial plots and residential houses. Moreover, the pesticides used for killing the insects have reduced the capability of the soil for producing more crops in a natural way. The boom in population has made the situation worse.

The natural reserves we had are either at the twilight of production or are not at all exploited for the development of the country. Gas is about to dry up by 2011 and the coal is yet to see the light of bulk production due to the absence of a coal mining policy. It could be a non-stop source for the next 50-60 years for producing electricity.

The rivers of Bangladesh are also dying, as none of the past governments took any serious plan/project for keeping the depth as well as the width of the rivers for smooth flow of sweet water during the monsoon and the dry season.

Like the above few points which I have mentioned, there are so many other areas which should have been developed/installed/ made operational in the last 38 years, but unfortunately we have failed to utilize ourselves as well as our natural resources for the country's development. Let's reverse what has happened in the past and instead of going one step behind, let's try to go one step forward, if we are to live in this country for generations.

**Sohel Ahmed**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Workers abroad

Most of the Middle Eastern countries are authoritarian societies where the rights of their own citizens are not adequately protected. The absence of democracy in those countries leaves their citizens vulnerable to abuse by the authorities.

Foreign workers cannot expect any generosity in such countries where their own citizens don't enjoy basic human rights. As such, Bangladesh must take elaborate steps to protect its citizens in these countries. Firstly, all workers in the Middle East must be registered with Bangladesh missions and the missions must let the authorities know if these workers are facing any problem. Secondly, the companies which employ must also be notified if there is any mistreatment of the workers. In any authoritarian society, human beings who are poor are being treated with contempt. This is why poor and helpless need to be protected. Finally, a fund should be created to help the workers if they are laid off or fired without any justification.

**Mahmood Elahi**  
Ottawa, Canada

## Save rivers, save Dhaka!

It seems the massive awareness creating campaign launched jointly by The Daily Star and the Channel I to save the rivers around Dhaka and adjoining areas has started yielding a positive result. The government agencies have started drives to clean the rivers and riverbanks.

Our heartfelt congratulations to The Daily Star and Channel I and the environment conscious 'Janata' who took this bold initiative.

I wish you a total success.  
**Professor M Zahidul Haque**  
Chairman  
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University Dhaka

I have been following your special reports on, and photographic expositions of, the encroachment of Buriganga and other rivers surrounding Dhaka. The possible remedies suggested (May 1 issue) seem practical and appropriate. However, in my view, one important point is missing here the population boom. This is one of the root causes of many of the problems we are facing today because an increase in the number of population means a simultaneous increase in the demands of all the basic human needs.

An increased demand, in turn, means that you will have to produce more hence we need more houses, more vehicles, more roads, more foods, more clothes, more industries and the list goes on. Therefore, I think, the growth of population at an alarming rate is one of the major problems for all the ills in our society, including environmental degradation.

In the last 38 years since independence, the country's population has doubled. In the next 12-15 years the existing number will be doubled again causing enormous pressure on land and other basic needs. We have already

gobbled up all the marshlands around the Dhaka city, and we have all forgotten about them. I am quite sure once we finish grabbing all the rivers, we will forget them as well. There is no end to our appetite for land! But I wonder where we shall turn to when we will have eaten up all the rivers!

The authorities must pay due attention to the root cause of the problem.  
**Rafiq Ahmed**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

I would like to extend my sincere thanks for your publishing the special issues on "Dhaka Rivers". I also thank the Channel I authorities for participation in the initiative. It is a timely campaign for saving the rivers.

Your initiative to awaken the government, the authorities and conscious citizens of Bangladesh is really a powerful instrument. The journalists are the "conscience of the nation". So, they have to play a positive role in all noble missions.

I, with many other citizens, do agree that there will be a civil unrest or similar disturbance in our society over the drinking water crisis, and those days are not far away.

I am more than sure that if we want to form a human chain during any weekend on the "Save rivers, save Dhaka programme" in my locality, thousands of citizens will participate in it.  
**M. Mahabub Alam**  
Baridhara  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Polluted lake, vitiated life

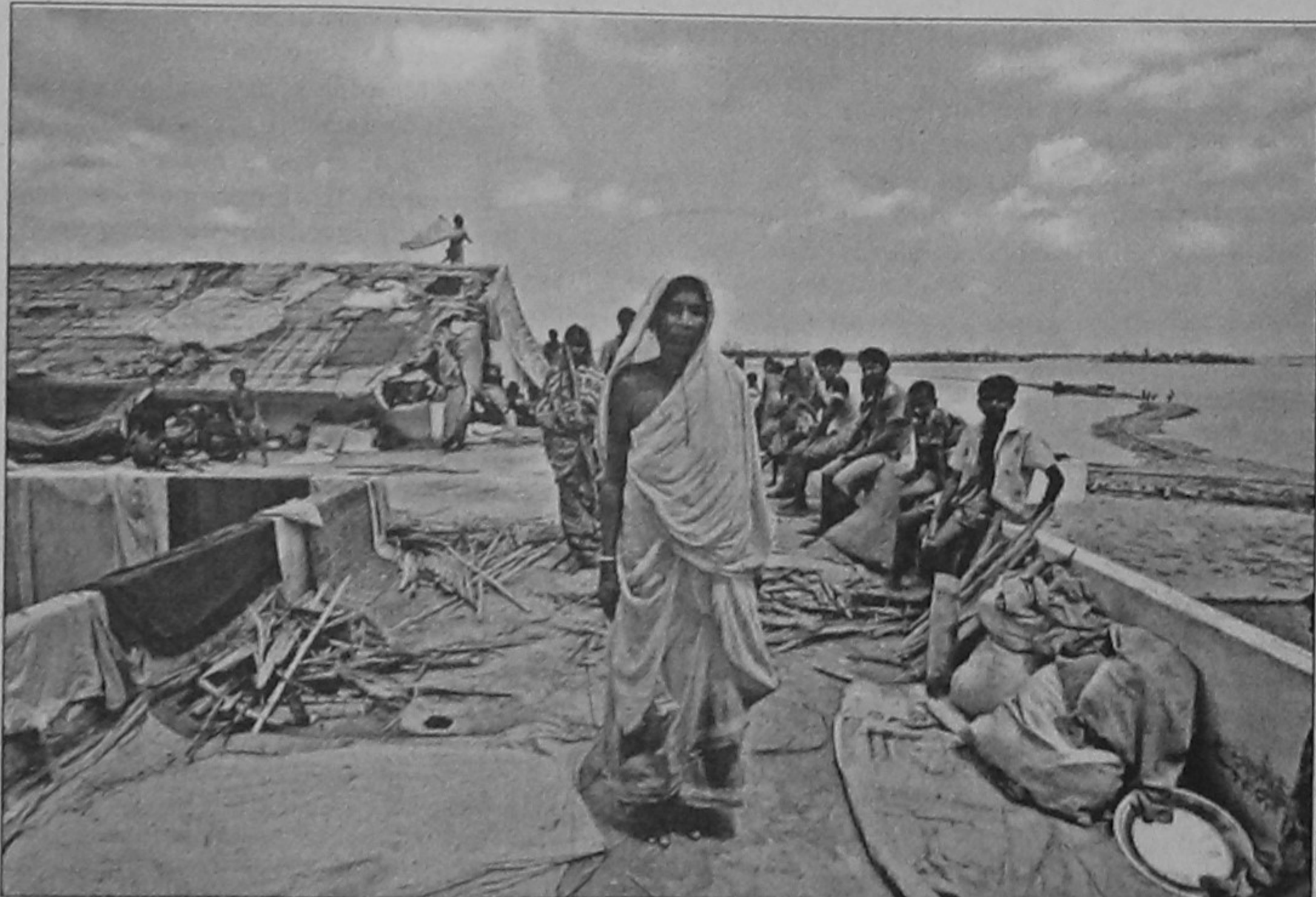
I am a resident of Niketon area and my residence is near the Gulshan-Niketon-Banani Lake. The lake gradually became polluted because of the negligence of the authorities concerned. During the dry season, it has become almost impossible to live here, as the odour coming from the lake water is unbearable. Not only the residents of these areas but also the users of the walkways are affected by it. One of the main causes of the pollution is sewers from the houses dumped into the lake. In addition, a lot of hanging latrines have been built around the banks of the lake, especially near the newly built Gulshan-Banani Bridge.

Given that the level of water pollution is very high, making it difficult for the fish to get oxygen, we often find dead fish floating on the lake. However, the locals randomly sell those grimy fish to the wholesalers which ultimately go to the city retail markets, including super shops! A strict ban on fish farming should be maintained until the water and soil of the lake are made clean.

It is necessary to take immediate steps to tackle this environmental hazard.

Will anyone do anything about it?  
**Mujib Rahman**  
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

## Global warming



The Maldives, an archipelago, faces the bleak prospect of gradual inundation. As the world's climate is getting warmer the sea levels are on the rise. Since most of the islets of this cluster of islands are about 3 feet above the ocean, an increase of the sea level will inundate those areas. As a result the inhabitants of this archipelago may be forced to leave their ancestral land and take refuge in other countries. It is estimated that the sea level will rise two feet this century.

It is likely that climate change will affect other low-lying countries, including

Bangladesh. Many parts of this land, especially the coastal areas are in danger of being inundated by the swelling sea. Already the country is burdened with a huge population. So any loss of land because of the rise of sea level will surely aggravate the situation.

It is the industrially developed countries that are mainly responsible for the emission of greenhouse gases. It is imperative that they assist those countries that stand on the frontiers of climate change.

**Zabed Wali**  
Pahartali, Chittagong