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World Cup

Pawar-led rebels pay the price

NEW DELHI, May 20: India's main opposition Congress party today expelled three senior leaders who had labelled Italian-born party president Sonia Gandhi a liability because of her foreign origins, reported AFP.

Congress spokesman Pranab Mukherjee told reporters after a more than hour-long meeting of the party think-tank, the Congress Working Committee (CWC), that the dissidents had been booted out for six years.

"The Working Committee resolved to expel all three members," he said, adding that they had been stripped of their primary membership of the Congress party for a period of six years.

The expulsions could result in a damaging split within Congress, with general elections only four months away, analysts said.

Mukherjee said an overwhelming majority of Congress activists were of the view that Sonia, the widow of assassinated prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, was a dyed-in-the-wool Indian.

He said that since the three took a different stand on "this major policy matter ... we had no option but to expel them."

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Remove class system

PARC recommends an end to colonial hangover

By Shehab Ahmed

The Public Administration Reforms Commission (PARC) sent two more recommendations to the Prime Minister last week for her approval, raising the total to 20 since 1997, to make the administration dynamic and people oriented.

One of the two recommendations aims at removing the 'class system' for public servants, PARC sources said.

The class system determining the rank and status of government officials and employees is a hangover from the colonial era, having a 'detrimental effect' on their performance.

Now the status of government officials and employees will be determined by grades and whether they are gazetted or non-gazetted officials, sources said.

Another recommendation is for putting up stickers and signs at offices with the slogan 'Administration for the service to People' to remind the public servants their obligations with the people.

PARC Chairman ATM Shamsul Huq told The Daily Star yesterday that the Cabinet on Monday approved two other recommendations the PARC had sent earlier.

One of the two says, letters for creation of an office of Om-

budsman is lying with the Law ministry.

Another proposal is on voluntary retirement by government officials and employees.

The PARC recommended that a public servant could go on voluntary retirement with all pension benefits after 20 years of service and with 50 per cent of the benefits after 15 years.

Other recommendations like 'one stop depository system' for payment of all utility bills and of travel tax while buying air ticket are going to be implemented soon, Shamsul Huq said.

The next budget will have provisions for payment of travel tax while purchasing air ticket, he added.

Another proposal for increasing highway patrol and making their presence more visible is also under consideration of the Home Ministry, the PARC Chairman said.

Respective ministries have been directed to gear up implementation of other proposals, he said.

The PARC is also working on a faster pace to complete its final report on administrative reforms, the draft of which would be made public for consultations, he added.

One of the major proposals is for putting up stickers and signs at offices with the slogan 'Administration for the service to People' to remind the public servants their obligations with the people.

The PARC chairman said that the government has also decided to step up the process of 'clearance' of other recommendations by different ministries concerned.

He said the road march might influence the leaders to go ahead with such mass con-

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Alternative to hartal found

BNP discovers road march as an effective campaign tool

By Rezaul Karim, back from Panchagarh

Elated by the grand success of the just-concluded Dhaka-Panchagarh 'road march', the BNP is planning to take up more such mass campaign programmes to mobilise public support in its favour, instead of hartals.

"Undoubtedly, the road march has been a grand success. I have been moved by the unprecedented response of the people. There were spontaneous gatherings everywhere. Lakhs

of people all around gave the look of the Bishwa Jatra," said Khaleda Zia while giving her instant reaction to the reporters.

"People in their thousands expressed no-confidence in the government as they welcomed us wherever we went in the northern Bangladesh which had never seen such public gatherings before," she said just before she started her trip back to the capital.

A large number of policy-makers, senior leaders, MPs and field-level workers of the party who accompanied the BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament during the three-day march (May 16 to 18) were of the opinion that the road march had a greater impact than hartal or blockade.

"In my observation, the impact of the three-day road march can be compared to that

of various types of agitation programmes, including hartal over a period of three months. Because spontaneity of the common people was thousand times greater than other political programmes," a top BNP leader told The Daily Star on Monday, after seeing the massive gatherings at Bogra.

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SKOP threatens strike

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) on Wednesday told the government that they would go for a strike on May 26 if their demands were not immediately met.

The warning came at a press conference at the SKOP's temporary office at Topkhana road in the city.

"Workers and employees are passing their days in miseries in the wake of the reckless price hike and shut down of numerous mills and industries across the country," said Dr Wajedul Islam Khan, Convenor of SKOP, while addressing the press conference.

The SKOP demands include announcement of lower wage board for workers and employees, cancellation of different 'intentional' transfer order, move to reactivate sick and closed mills and factories, formation of a high level committee to recommend and implementation of wage board for workers and employees within six months, a stop to massive privatisation process and formation of a high level committee to introduce a timely labour act.

Audit unmasks corruption in education establishments

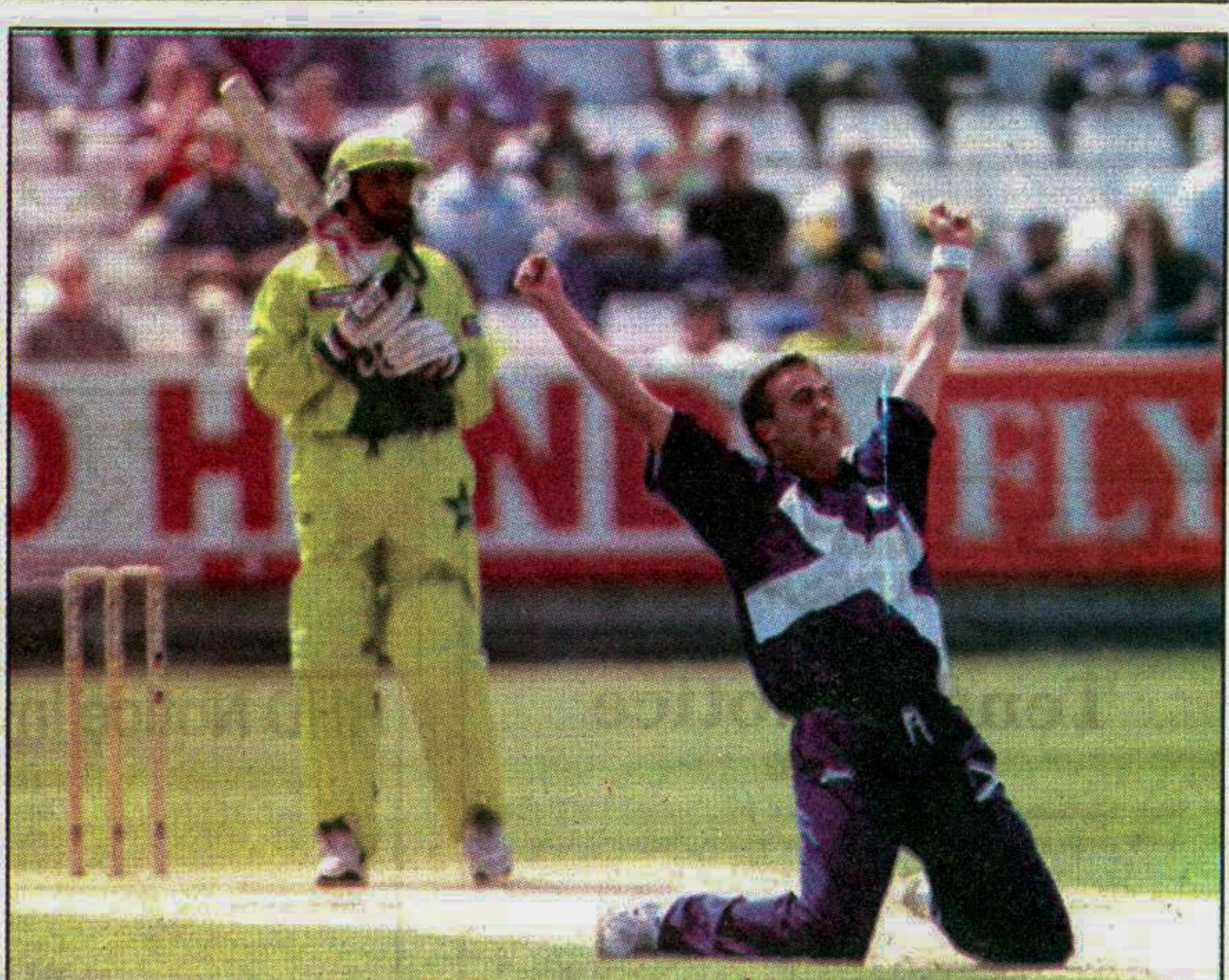
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Reciprocity remains the key, Tofail tells Indian industry leaders

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No stretcher, no wheelchair at Bangabandhu University hospital

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Scotland's premier paceman Gavin Hamilton is elated on getting veteran Pakistan batsman Salim Malik lbw yesterday.

—AFP photo

Two BCL leaders Murdered in Bogra

From Our Correspondent

BOGRA, May 20: Tension gripped northern Bogra townships tonight following killings of two student leaders within an hour this afternoon.

Tanvir Hasan Samar, president of BCL town unit, was first stabbed to death by miscreants at 4 pm. Just an hour later, Farhad, another BCL activist, met the same fate inside the hospital, where he had gone to see Samar's body.

Widespread violence followed as a sequel to the twin murders. Activists brandishing weapons unleashed a reign of terror in the entire neighbor-

In a mess

One of the better-known NGOs faces charges of irregularities

By Nurul Kabir

other.

In November last year, a special audit conducted by the donors concerned found many problems with the organisation's accounting system.

Finally, an NGO Bureau investigation last month found almost all these allegations valid. In addition, the NGO Bureau investigation has come up with some fresh accusations against the GSS management, especially its Executive Director Mahmood Hassan. The findings include running of the organisation by a body not legally approved, influencing level administrations in his favour by unfairly using the image of the Prime Minister's

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Bumper boro begets blight

By Reaz Ahmad

The price of paddy has fallen to Tk 230-240 per maund from about Tk 300 at Ashuganj, the biggest rice trade centre in the country.

Traders attributed the price fall to a bumper boro harvest this season.

Usually paddy worth over Tk one crore is transacted at Ashuganj market daily. This season the volume of trade is showing an upward trend.

Every morning scores of engine boats loaded with sacks full of paddy come to this market on the bank of the mighty Meghna.

Meanwhile, the government has fixed the procurement price of paddy at Tk 309 per maund, about Tk 26 up from that last season.

From field level experience, Novartis, a life science multinational, said in the current issue of its monthly bulletin, 'Bumper means a glut in supply and that dragged paddy prices down.' Paddy prices now ranged between Tk 230 and Tk 270 per maund, it said.

During a day-long visit to the major rice market recently, this correspondent saw that boats carrying 200 to 1,000 maunds of paddy were reaching it from different areas of the country including greater Mymensingh and Sylhet.

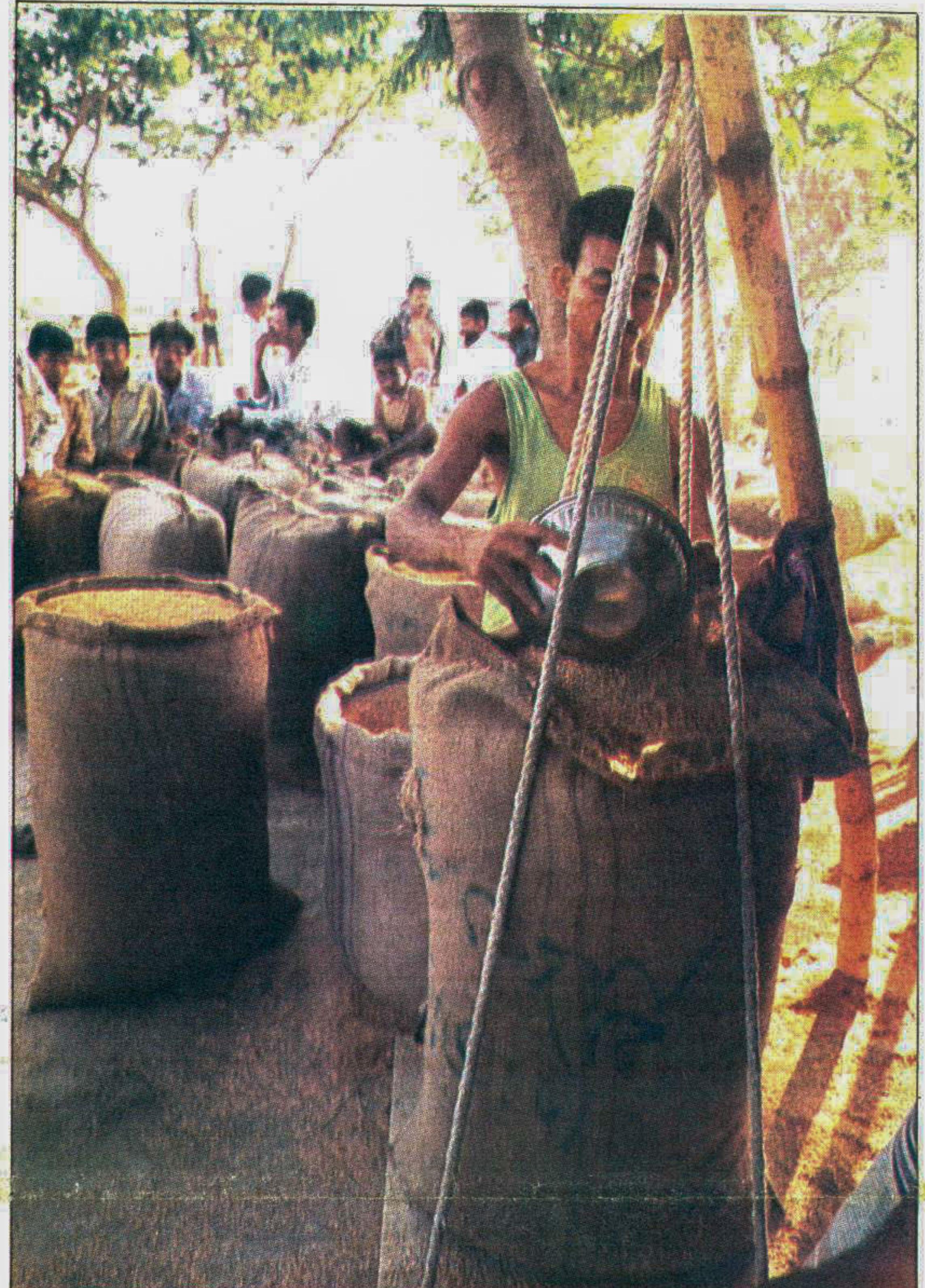
There were allegations that a section of law enforcing agency personnel were also having their 'share' in the trade. Policemen boarding boats wait in the middle of Meghna to collect toll from paddy-carrying boats, traders and brokers complained.

Traders told The Daily Star that over 50,000 maunds of paddy were now being brought to Ashuganj market every day.

"This is just the beginning of the peak season. You will see larger quantities by next week," said Haji Abdul Kuddus, one of the traders.

Brokers buy paddy in bulk from growers in far flung areas in the country and bring that to Ashuganj by hired boats.

Sometimes they (merchants) even lend money to farmers and 'book the future yield' in advance at cheaper rates, some sources concerned said.



Boon or bane

There's plenty this time, which is also the problem. So the government has begun procuring as much of boro as possible. The picture shows a public purchase centre at Dinajpur yesterday.

A view from the Gully

By Tawfiq Aziz Khan

It was a day of sensational cricket. Top favorites South Africa knocked down Champions Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe pulled the rug under former champions India. Two African nations, uncrowned so far, triumphed over two Asian nations, interesting – isn't it?

Both India and Sri Lanka have now lost two matches each and are in dire straits. From here on they must win rest of the matches if their chances for a 'Super Six' berth to be booked. Both matches had such dramatic finish that they would be remembered and talked about for a long time to come.

Strike bowler Glenn McGrath tempted Twose into a top-edged hook which was caught at fine leg. McGrath's joy, however, turned to frustration as he realised he had been no-balled.

The stocky Twose and tall Cairns, a perfect contrast both physically and in playing styles, never looked back.

When Steve Waugh brought

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Pakistan's predictable win



For Long Lasting Fresh Breath and Sparkling White Teeth

for a place in the Super Six second round.

Akhtar showed why he has been labelled 'the 100-miles-an-hour man' and the 'Rawalpindi Express' as he tore into the bewildered Scots in his first four

overs.

After skipper Wasim Akram had removed Bruce Patterson, Akhtar clean bowled Michael Smith with a superb inswinger that smashed the off-bail in line

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during their 148-run partnership.

The key moment of the group B game came in the 23rd over of New Zealand's reply, with the score on 79.

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Beyond the boundary Of mice and men

By Shakil Kasem

What does a Scot do when he feels cold? He sits before a candle. What does a Scot do when he feels very, very cold? He lights the candle.

It was incomprehensible therefore to picture them gifting sundries so willy-nilly, that the Scots managed to enter the record books of one day cricket. The truth of the matter was, had it not been for the innumerable number of wides, no-balls and byes, Pakistan may have had to look more than a trifle embarrassed at the halfway mark of

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