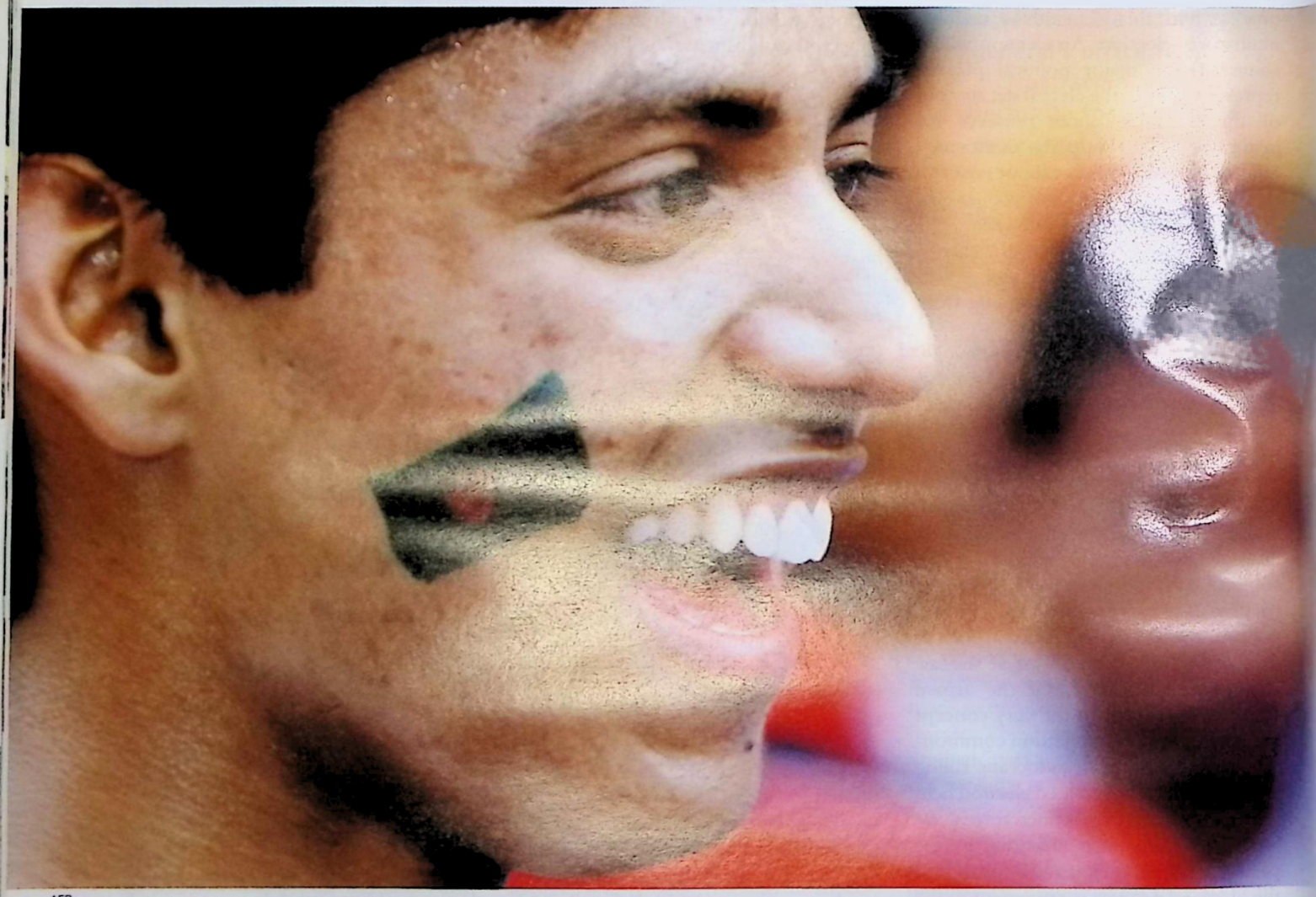
What is democracy? Preliminary findings from a national survey

What does democracy mean to the common man and woman? Imtiaz Ahmed and Munim Kumar Barai poll the country to find out



AFP

SAVE for the fact that the word "democracy" comes from the Greek words demos meaning "people" and kratos meaning "authority" or "power" there has been little agreement amongst scholars, researchers and politicians, indeed, both within and outside countries, regimes and cultures, when it comes to the issue of defining democracy.

In fact, a plethora of definitions ranging from procedural, substantive, Athenian, social, participatory, realist, deliberative, and many more has come to mar, and at times even smear, the meaning of democracy. In Bangladesh, with nearly 140 million people, although not speaking in too many languages, the task of defining and understanding democracy has hardly remained free from complexities.

Yet, over the years the Bangladeshis have come to accept this global ideal with largely, although not quintessentially, alien origins as their own commonsense, and have imbued it with positive meaning. In this process they have, drawing upon the egalitarian tradition within the West, radicalized the idea of democracy and made it carry