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**Save Osmani Udyan**

Osmani Udyan is facing the greed of some powerful land-grabbers. Since 2001, this group has been trying to grab about three acres land of Osmani Udyan, but they have failed because of the alertness of the Save Osmani Udyan Committee, Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan and other eminent civil society individuals and environmentalists.

The land-grabbers again became active in July 2007. On behalf of Sunder Jiban, BAPA and people of the country, I earnestly request the government to take all necessary steps to protect the land of Osmani Udyan.  
Md. Sirajul Islam Molla  
General Secretary, Sunder Jiban  
Member-Secretary  
Air and Noise Pollution Control Programme  
Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan

**Global warming and America**

Americans are experiencing their worst nightmare of natural catastrophes such as wild forest fire, storms, blizzards, heavy rains etc. Millions of Americans are now rendered homeless in different states having no shelter, food and power due to all these natural calamities. Now the question is, seeing all these miseries of their own people, will the Bush administration become serious enough to go for the resolution to actively participate in lessening global warming? As we all know, global warming is the main cause of all these disasters. We also believe that now it is time that the recently concluded seminar in Bali, Indonesia, on global warming should act as an eye opener for Americans and they must participate and take the leading role to contain global warming.

We all believe America's participation will take the mission to its peak and lessen global warming substantially.

Humayun Hyder  
Zigatola, Dhaka

**Sheikh Hasina's treatment**

The four specialist professors have every right to give opinion as to the medical condition of their patient.

It, however, is pretty odd for physicians to suggest a definite country for the purpose of treatment. As I can gather from the newspapers reports, Sheikh Hasina is suffering from multiple disease processes including hypertension, eye problem (not specified in the news report) and hearing problem. It is also suggested that she might be suffering from kidney problems too.

I am not a specialist professor, but I understand a lot of those medical jargons. Let's look into the problems one by one:

**Hypertension:** Treatment of hypertension, its possible causes (if secondary to other primary process) and complications of hypertension does not require a trip to America. If the good professors cannot treat those issues, they can refer to other doctors who can diagnose and treat appropriately. Bangladesh, currently have a few world-class hospitals with good caring physicians who will be able to manage those problems extremely well.

**Eye and ear Problems:** The learned professor did not clearly talk about the nature of her eye problems. So, I have no comment. And it is obvious that she needs a hearing device and that should be provided by the government along with proper maintenance. I just cannot believe that hospitals like Apollo or Square cannot provide those services. If such service is not really available, it can be obtained from India at a reasonable cost.

**Kidney problem:** Well, they should consult a nephrologist (a kidney specialist) in Dhaka. A number of good kidney doctors with proper ancillary support are there.

The Honourable ex-PM is no longer a free citizen. However, her well-being and appropriate medical care is a responsibility of the government. But the government should be mindful of the fact that medical care in the US is painfully expensive.

At last, I would like to tell the learned professors that sending a patient to the US is no simple task. Are they willing to suggest the same to hundreds of other Bangladeshi patients who are suffering from similar ailments?  
Mohammad Zaman  
North Carolina, USA

**Spiralling prices**

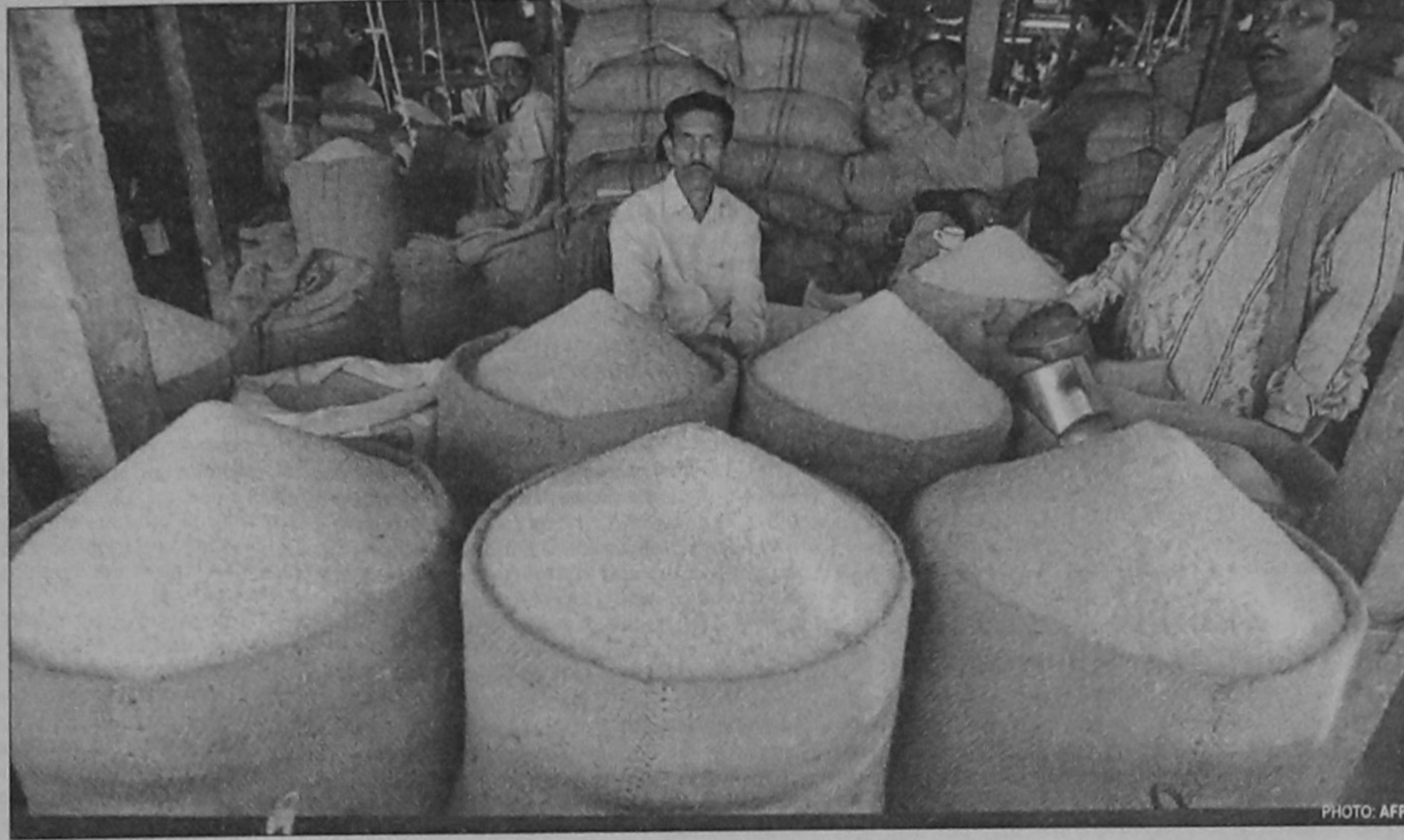


PHOTO: AFP

I want to convey my sincere thanks to Dr. M. Moniruzzaman for his article on price stability published in The Daily Star on 4 January 2008. He has dissected the root cause of volatile market instability and suggested how we can come out of this problem and counter the situation in the coming days. It (scarcity of rice) may worsen due to increasing population and loss of cultivable land due to natural disasters like global warming or floods. While reading the article, I remember that in 1973-74, we used to go weekly to bring rice, wheat, edible oil, butter oil, salt and sugar from nearby ration dealer and it's stamped with date in that card that we took the ration for the said duration. So, no one could have their ration before the next scheduled date. Now, the government should handle the situation strongly and must implement VGD, VGF, TR, RMP and FFW to help the poor and vulnerable groups.

Also re-introduction of the rationing system in the urban areas, especially for rice, wheat, edible oil and sugar as well as for upazilla (thana) level has to be considered.  
W. Islam, Uttara, Dhaka

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The businessmen alone could not be blamed for the rice price hike. What we observed during the last few days is that our economists, government high officials, hon'ble advisers, all were in chorus to blame the businessmen as the main culprits for this unbearable price hike. We were more surprised to note that the people in the departments concerned who knew the supply and demand situation and were supposed to notify the government of the ensuing disaster, totally forgot the very simple theory of "demand-and-supply" which regulates the price situation of any essential item anywhere in

the world, not to speak of rice which is our staple food.

So our leaders who are running the administration should have planned food security. Instead of following the economic theory of 'demand-and-supply, our bosses were blaming the businessmen and importers. I can give an example of my own. I buy only one month's ration of rice at a time. I believe many people of my income group do that like me. The common and moderate income group people cannot hoard rice. The very poor ones, who live on daily income, cannot afford to buy 10kg at a time. So the reason for increase in the prices of food items was the imbalance in the demand-supply situation.

Now the government has realised the truth and announced that rice would be imported very soon.

Shafiqul Islam  
One-mail

violence on women would be a lot more cautious because a female police officer would be able to understand better the problems of female victims of domestic torture—being a woman herself. She would be able to implement strict measures to assure unbiased justice to the victims and punish the criminals.

The women who would come for a complaint would be encouraged at the powerful position that a female like herself is acquiring and would feel emotionally strong to fight against her oppressors. She would not feel insecure and physically vulnerable.  
Naome Syed  
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

**Our hopes**

A new year has once again begun with new hopes and dreams. The last year was not a good one for our country as the catastrophic Sidr and floods struck the southern areas, leaving millions homeless. Our achievements and expectations are not so high still we, Bangladeshis, are resilient and invincible and will never give up. The Sidr struck people have once again started building their houses, cultivating paddy and thus getting life started anew. But some of them are still being neglected and are just dreaming of at least some help coming which will enable them to build up life once again. People who are well off can extend a hand towards them. They can donate foods and clothes to those people who have a real need at this moment.

Along with Sidr, the economy of Bangladesh is now standing upon a crutch which may fall any time. The spiralling price of rice is its ultimate example. Looking at the dark side, the pessimists may lose hope but there are a lot of bright sides which have made our country proud. May be our achievements have not been exposed much by the media.

In 2008, we hope for the best.  
Shatabdi Biswas  
Officers Quarter  
Regional Public Administration  
Training Centre  
Rajshahi

**Double standards**

The nation is shocked by the way the learned teachers and the students have been dealt with. We consider it a shame for all of us.

But in contrast to the above during the on-going emergency when 600 government civil servants organised an unlawful meeting against a long awaited but most popular decision of the government to separate the judiciary from the executive, we all expected an instant response from the CTG. The government was expected to show zero tolerance to such audacious behaviour on the part of the civil servants. In the past also civil servants left the secretariat, joined in political activities openly against the political government in power and even erected "Janatar Mancha" (People's Podium).

Why should the rules be different for teachers?  
M.A. Elihan Zakaria  
Middlesex  
UK

**Cry for democracy**

The outcry by the local political leaders for democracy in Bangladesh continues as usual. But if we carefully analyse the interests behind this outcry it becomes very clear that their cries are merely for their own benefits. They merely use democracy as a means to grab power, a ladder to climb on to the top. Unfortunately, very few political leaders in Bangladesh ever practised democracy when they were in any kind of power. That is why we saw whenever they were in power the leaders made their brothers or sisters MPs, brother in laws ministers, nephews and cousins ministers, sons future leaders of the parties, irrespective of their qualifications or experience! They do not like to see democracy within their own parties/institutions, in their ways of business. They are intolerant to any kind of opposition. They like democracy only when the result of an election goes in favour of them. They are not ashamed of rigging the election to get their own candidates elected. They are not ashamed of modifying election rules to influence the election. Even after all these, if the outcome goes against them they start crying foul, start street agitation. They do not care about ordinary people being killed.

All they want is the ladder back!  
Enamul Husein  
Michigan, USA

**Dinajpur mine blast**

This refers to the featured news "Dinajpur 'mine blast tragedy' day today: Hundreds of FFs were killed on this day in 1972" (January 06, 2008). The accidental mine blast on January 06, 1972 at the Dinajpur Maharaja Girizanath High School Mukti Bahini Transit Camp is a tragic episode of the Bangladesh Liberation war. Hundreds of freedom fighters lost their lives and about an equal number of them were seriously injured. This was the highest number of casualties among the FFs in a single incident. Around that time a similar tragic accident happened in the eastern sector. Very sadly, now few people know and remember these unfortunate incidents of Bangladesh Liberation War.

In the late '80s, I had the opportunity of meeting several of the injured freedom fighters (Dinajpur) - listening to their 1971 heroic activities, the neglect and ill-treatment from the government and the ungrateful society. Their conditions have not changed much over the years. The government and non-government organisations should provide full medical facilities and proper rehabilitation to all living injured and crippled freedom fighters and their families.

Also, I urge the respected Sector (and Sub-Sector) and Battalion (and Company)-commanders of 1971 to visit all the old district headquarters, historic battle areas and killing fields to make the young generation aware about liberation war history and the sacrifices of freedom fighters and common people and also to mobilise them against the war criminals.  
M. Emad  
Oxford, UK

**Batting debacle**

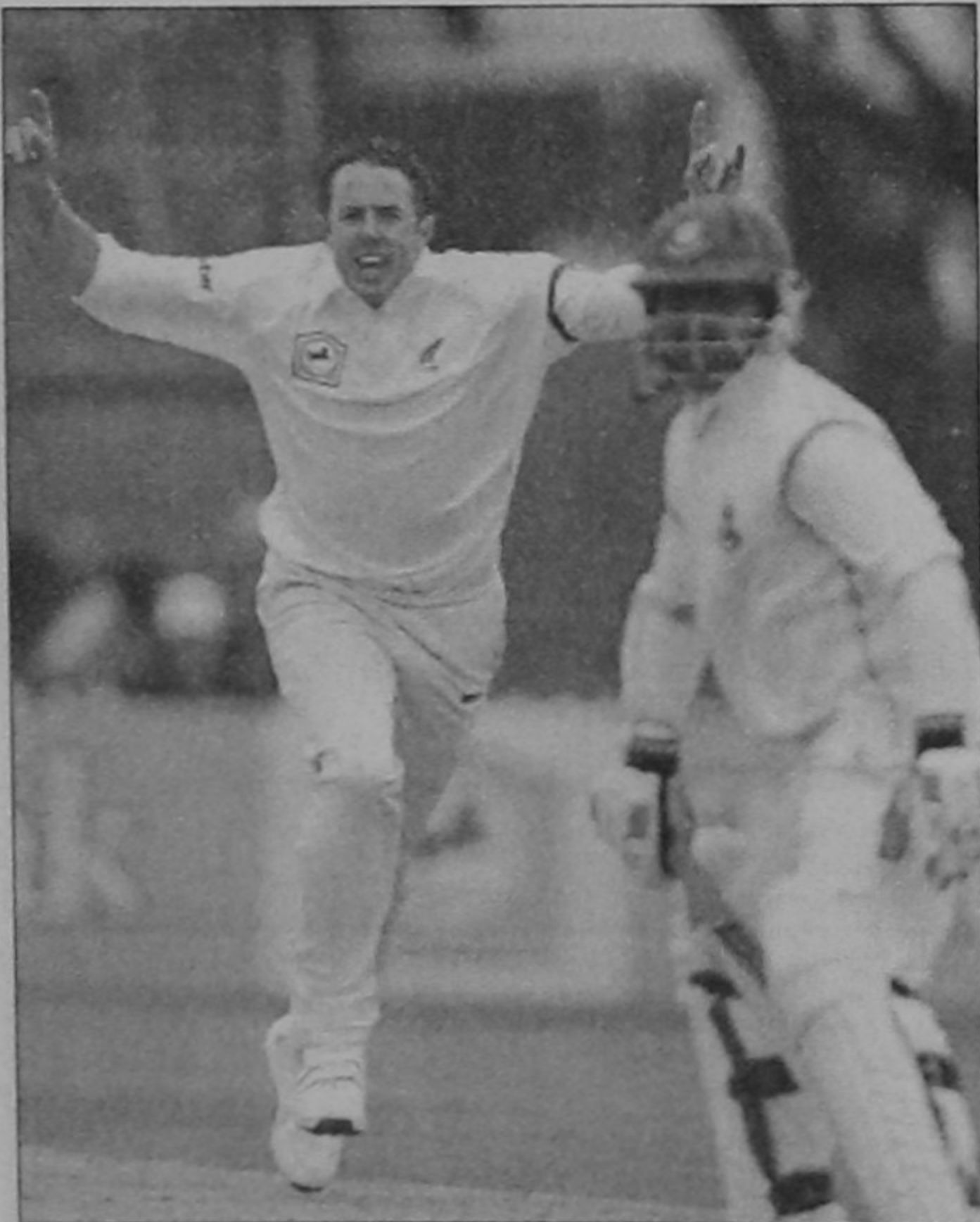


PHOTO: AFP

I am always amazed to see how Bangladesh cricket team's batting collapses on a regular basis.

Despite a superb performance of 161 for no loss, the innings wrapped up into a paltry 254 all out.

The batsmen should be counselled by a psychiatrist if needed to discipline themselves, particularly while batting against a stronger opposition in a precarious condition. No doubt, our cricketers have the talent to beat stronger teams, but they need to have the temperament too!

Nasimul Ghani  
On e-mail

**Wake up!**

In my opinion the learned society of Bangladesh does not do enough to pressurize the government into making some significant decisions. I draw on the example of the internet tariff set by BTB. In an article published by The Daily Star on 31/12/2007 we, the general people, got to know about the BTB's myopic vision. It seems we have left it for India to earn easy cash! Does it not strike them that with reduced rates there will be a huge number of people taking their services which in turn will be a win-win situation for the govt., BTB and the people. The private sector can then groom the unemployed youths and provide an avenue for

'significant employment'. We are already lagging behind and still our authorities don't take effective decisions which could benefit the nation.

It's such kind of policies that creates corruption, frustration and backwardness. When will we wake up?  
MEB  
Jhikatala, Dhaka

**PPP in post-Benazir era**

Keeping in line with the politics of dynasty, Pakistan and the PPP has again proved it could not rise above the petty ideals of short-term political gains. They had to elect Benazir Bhutto's son and father to

lead the party! The latter is already smeared with an aura of corruption and the former is an untested adolescent with no political experience whatsoever. Unfortunately, the same goes for current Bangladesh. Even after the massive changes of 1/11, the political dynasties seem to enjoy significant control over the national politics. It is still quite difficult to imagine a political landscape without Sheikh Hasina or Khaleda Zia.

This just demonstrates that in the subcontinent, either the current political system and environment is bankrupt where a leadership unrelated to any family clan is not allowed to develop or the grassroots level political activists with mass-oriented agenda have become irrelevant.  
Javed Iqbal  
USA

**Phensidyl menace**

Quite frequently we come across news reports on TV and newspaper that a huge number of Indian Phensidyl bottles have been seized or destroyed by the law enforcing agencies.

Phensidyl, as we know, is a cough syrup containing codeine phosphate as its active ingredient. Codeine or methylmorphine is an alkaloid extracted from opium or synthesized from morphine. Due to the presence of codeine, phensidyl is frequently abused as a narcotic.

In Bangladesh, production of Phensidyl cough linctus was prohibited long ago but it is not understood why some pharmaceutical companies are still producing Phensidyl? Isn't phensidyl causing any harm to the Indian people, particularly the young generation?

I would sincerely call upon the Indian government to impose restrictions on the production and marketing of Phensidyl.  
Professor M Zahidul Haque  
Chairman  
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System  
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka

**Comments**

Mohammad Badrul Ahsan's write-up "Curse or Coincidence" explains the tragedy that has befallen the Bhutto family. But he misses out two very important points—

—That Z. A. Bhutto was responsible for the millions killed during our liberation war in 1971

—That B. Bhutto had to leave her country into exile mainly due to the corruption charges brought against her and her husband.

Could these be the reasons of the curse? Would somebody kindly explain?

Hassan Nabi  
Truro  
Nova Scotia  
Canada

**Rice shortage and solution**

There was an article about recent food shortage in Bangladesh on the 4 January issue of The Daily Star.

The article says,  
Total food grain (rice and wheat) demand: 3.09 crore metric ton  
Total food grain production: 2.79 crore metric ton  
Shortage: 29.6 lakh metric ton  
Let's say if total population is 16 crore,

demand/person/day = 530 grams  
available/person/day = 478 grams

So, if we reduce our intake by 53 grams (10%), we should be able to meet our demand with what is available.

Is that too difficult? On an average 530 grams/person/day is a lot of rice we are talking about.

I know if I were the Chief Adviser and I had suggested people to reduce rice consumption, my head would be rolling...

Khairul Hasan  
Surrey, UK

**Wanted: new leaders**

We have burning examples in front of us of our "leaders" having corrupt sons. How can some people seek again their leadership knowing very well that if they cannot control their children at home they cannot control/govern a country?

Now is the time to find honest, fresh and young leaders with new ideas. Where are they?  
N.G. Chaudhury  
Luxembourg

**Can we try constitutional monarchy?**

It seems that the present government has been trying to get the country's two politically dominant families Zia family and Bangabandhu family off politics since the interim administration came to power a year back. They have so far tried a number of options that include keeping

Hasina and Khaleda out of the country and replacing them as heads of their respective political parties the AL and the BNP. I think these efforts will not succeed, as these steps by nature go against human rights and are unacceptable to all democracy-loving people both inside and outside the country or, at least, these would look odd in such an emerging democracy, unlike Pakistan. Besides, even though these are done, they will merely be temporary, as we have observed in the cases of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan. Under the circumstances, the present government can try an option of setting up constitutional monarchy that will replace the current position of the President of Bangladesh with Queen or King. Under this formula, the Bangabandhu family will be made the royal family with no political powers while the Zia family will be put on the 'free market politics' (real competition in elections) where the 'market forces' (quality of competing parties and leaders) will determine the value of the BNP with Zia family at the party helm. If the present government organises a referendum before introduction of such a monarchy, the whole thing will be democratic as well as legitimate.

Kalam Azad  
Auckland  
New Zealand

**Women bashing**

Women in our country are always the target of violence and oppression. They are to be dominated by men—the stronger sex. This is a common scene in Bangladesh—a country where the independent thinking of a woman is very much subjected to social criticism. In our country women cannot get the recognition that they deserve because their credibility is suppressed by the conservative mentality of society. A woman working alone on her own would often have to endure ugly remarks thrown at her if her job is considered "disrespectful" when it is not. For instance, a woman working as a garments worker whose wage is poor may fall victim to insulting comments which she may or may not be able to wash off her hands. Sometimes, working overtime especially in late hours may cause an unfortunate female worker to become susceptible to sexual assaults. A housewife would often have to pay a comparatively higher price for the same kilogram of



PHOTO: BEAR

**Vote for Bangladesh!**

Two of our most beautiful tourist spots are at the top of the list of Seven Wonders of Nature.

We need more votes from all Bangladeshis living in Bangladesh and abroad. Through The Daily Star, I would request all of you to visit

www.new7wonders.com/nature, and vote for Cox's Bazar and Sundarbans.

These two places are at the top two positions now. We need more votes to maintain these positions.

Minhaj Ahmed  
One-mail