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Razing hills

The news item titled "Hill cutting in Khagrachari defying ban" published in The Daily Star's January 12, 2008 issue has drawn my attention. It is mentioned that two hills were razed and trees were axed. The news described the fact in such a fashion that the work was a heinous crime. It was also stated that the hills were erased for making 70 new housing plots. I have been observing with concern for the last couple of years that newspapers and electronic media have been mentioning the razing of hills as detrimental to the environment. But no one has so far explained scientifically the pros and cons of cutting hills and developing plain lands in Bangladesh, at least I have not seen such rational explanation.

We know that Bangladesh is an over-

populated country. It could not produce even enough food for the population mainly owing to too limited farmlands. The government is considering taking farmland in Myanmar on lease to produce food for the country.

Here it may be mentioned that in the adjoining areas of the eastern region of Bangladesh there are hilly & forestlands. The eastern side of Bangladesh has hilly areas and the rest are mostly plain lands. The plain lands are over populated but the hilly region is under populated. Life is very hard in the hilly region. Development work is also very costly there. Bangladesh has very limited resources to develop topographically; it experiences rain from seasonal wind in April to October, when the wind blows

from the sea (that is, from south to north) and carry huge moisture. On the other hand, wind blows from east to south during the rest of the year, which is virtually dry and as a result cannot cause rain. Bangladesh experiences dry weather from November to March.

So, even if all the hills of the CHT and Sylhet are razed there should not be significant change in climatic conditions in Bangladesh. The government should review the situation and repeal the Act which imposes ban on hill-razing and should encourage public & private sector to develop plain land to cater to the need for farmland.

Md. Ashraf Hossain
Central Bashabo
Dhaka

Bangladesh how they should improve is meaningless if they don't participate in the process. For that, we have all the foreign missions whose job is to give advice to the Bangladeshis.

Titu
New York, US

Bangladesh drowning?

Refer to the article Bangladesh drowning: A reality or a myth? By Faruque Hasan

This article highlights several cultural challenges facing the people of Bangladesh.

If Bangladesh were a European country, its engineers would be capturing much of the silt that passes down the rivers of the country and using that silt to gradually build up the elevation of the land, and they would probably have been doing this systematically for the past two hundred years. It is not as though there is insufficient manpower in Bangladesh to carry out such work, and if the people of Holland were able to reclaim vast amounts of land from the sea hundreds of years ago, why are the people of Bangladesh unable to undertake simple civil engineering work today to help solve their problems?

I suspect that the reasons have little to do with economics, although they have much to do with the culture of poverty that the people of Bangladesh appear to embrace.

What a rich and productive country Bangladesh could be, built upon vast amounts of rich silt as it is and with no shortage of water to irrigate the fields, and with endless amounts of sunshine to cause crops to grow in abundance.

You can possibly complain that I do not comprehend the difficulties faced by Bangladesh, or possibly you believe that my comments are racist in promoting what Europeans would do given a similar situation. Any excuse will do. However, if the Egyptians were able to build the world's foremost civilisation in the Sahara desert over 5,000 years ago, there is in reality no valid reason for Bangladesh not being a prosperous and wealthy country, except that its people do not believe that such things are possible and are unwilling to do what is needed to improve their lot.

Areader

One-mail-১৩৩৩৩৩৩৩

Road accidents

Over the last several years our authorities concerned have made one way road traffic, about quarter of a mile long, on a small portion of Gullistan - Jatrabari road, from Jaikali Mandir road corner to south-eastern road corner of Rajdhani market.

On both sides of this one quarter of a mile one way road, millions of people live. Thousands of buses, trucks, cars, taxis, CNG scooters, rickshaws and push-carts ply this road round the clock. But there is not a single zebra crossing, no overhead foot-bridge or underpass for the pedestrians to cross the road.

Hundreds of people men, women and children, young and old, school boys and girls cross this one way road at i) Wari school/Sher-e-Bangla Girls School point and ii) Salahuddin Hospital/Rajdhani market point amidst fast moving vehicles at the grave risk of their lives.

Occasionally, there are road accidents, many pedestrians are injured and killed. Sometimes one or two traffic police sergeants are found patrolling the road on motor cycle or a few police constables standing idle. They do not control and supervise the road traffic.

It would not be irrelevant to mention here that our authorities concerned have taken a development plan for construction of a flyover from Gullistan to Jatrabari. But the construction work has been stopped and we do not know when the flyover would be complete.

We would also like to state that we do not find any sign of zebra crossing anywhere on the roads in Dhaka city. The pedestrians cross the roads at random and they are subjected to accidents.

Would the authorities concerned look into the matter and do the needful without further delay in the interest of public service?

OH Kabir
Wari, Dhaka

WASA in Khulna

It is very good news for the people of Khulna that, though belated, the present government has in principle agreed to implement the decision of the immediate past government to establish WASA in Khulna metropolitan city, which is expected to start functioning from March this year.

It has been one of the many long cherished demands of the people of Khulna but successive governments did not pay any heed to the cry of the people and took all those demands to the election manifesto to gain support of the locals.

Therefore, we are very much thankful to the present govern-

Violence in garment factories

I have read the above editorial with interest as business is my specialization.

There is a problem in Bangladesh that whenever such chaos is created, most of the times the actual criminal activities get covered up by bringing in industrial or political issues. In every country there are industrial or political problems. It would be unreasonable to state that there is none in Bangladesh. The problems should be dealt with a holistic approach. But why the importance has been felt immediately after the killing and looting incidents is not clear.

The criminals are much smarter: for example, a student kills another fellow student or a worker kills another fellow worker out of personal jealousy or conflict but then can easily find his or her way out of criminal charges by giving it a sensitive political or industrial colour, because in Bangladesh fellow students or workers or any other group of

people can easily be attracted to stage a demonstration or similar sorts of events concerning the common interests of the group of people drawn upon to cover up criminal activities.

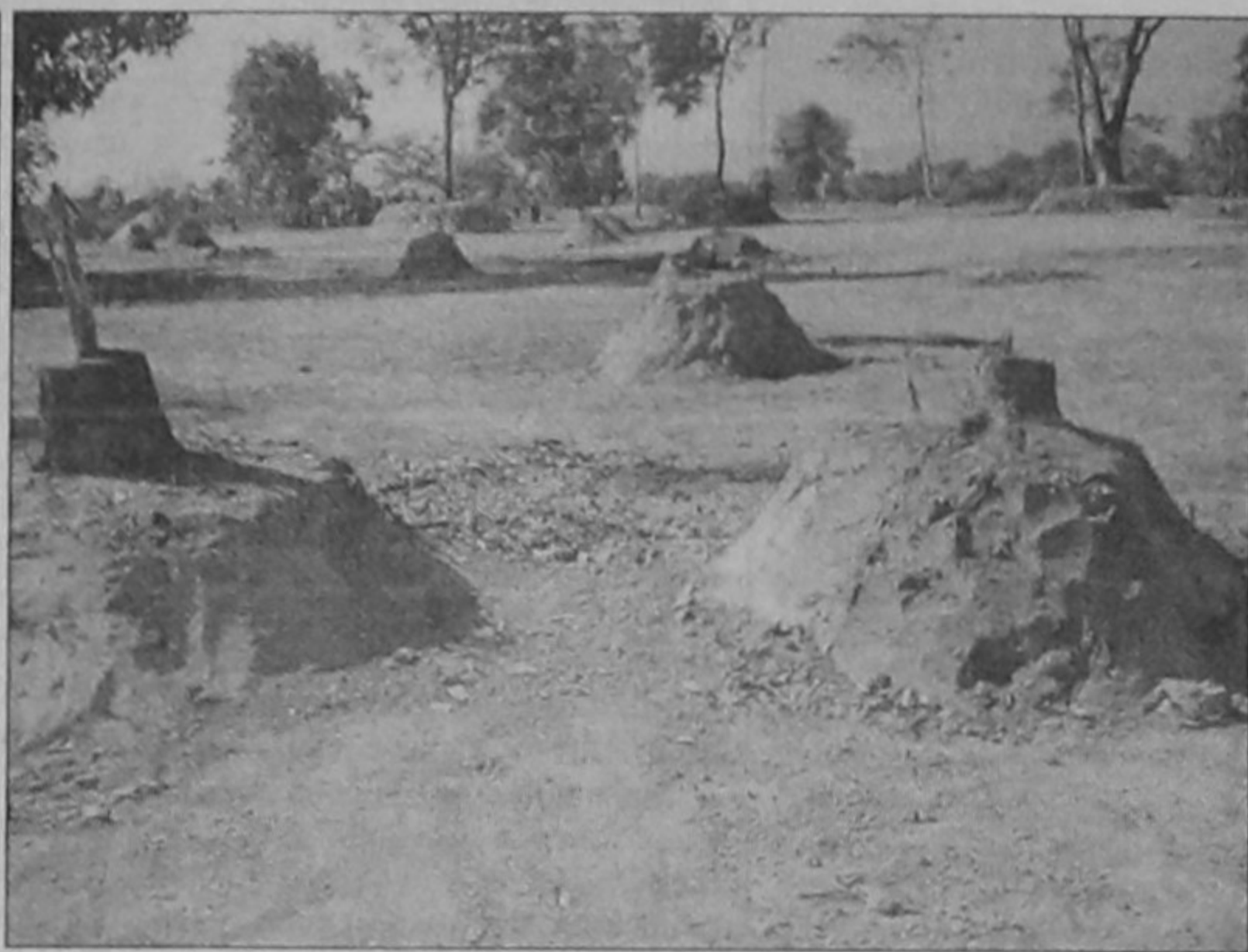
Professionals, detectives, authorities must see through the events and separate criminal activities from sensitive industrial or political issues. Criminals should get their treatment under the respective law separately from general workers who work from morning to night. At least, the present caretaker government should not start listening to all quarters and succumb to old techniques.

Two or three companies owned by non-Bangladeshis have managed to grow enormously in size and span solely from the capital earned and made within Bangladesh, while local big ones become the target of violence!

Abdullah Al Mahmud, HK



PHOTO: STAR



It's a shame, it's a disgrace

Traffic was brought to a standstill at the busy Airport Road-Kamal Ataturk Avenue intersection for twenty minutes on the night of 02 January 2008, causing immense misery to the public. This was done to ensure 'safe' movement of a VIP (or VVIP?) who was (most probably) going to attend a private reception at Gulshan.

It is a shame that common people are treated like trash and it is a disgrace that people in power remain totally oblivious of such actions.

Hasan Mashhurd Chowdhury
Lt. Gen. (Retd)
Dhaka

Dhaka metro

I am an expatriate leaving in the UK and read about the metro plan in your paper. This is really great news. I hope this plan will come to fruition as this will help a mega-city like Dhaka to improve economically. I am sure the plans will be inclusive of thinking for future expansion, safety and cover as much area of Dhaka as is practically possible in the most efficient and least costly way. This project will considerably ease the sufferings of Dhaka commuters.

Within East London, we have a low cost 'Docklands Light Railway' (DLR) transport. It has been pretty impressive (as I use it daily to commute to work), and very low cost in terms of the number of people it transports. I hope the government will look at this project and how it is run.

In addition with the added

infrastructure more and more people will migrate to Dhaka, thus consideration needs to be given to improving the infrastructure in other cities also. I also hope these mega-projects will consider technology transfer, employing local people and purchasing local materials and resources in building the metro.

May Allah make this a good start.

Fazle Karim Chowdhury
Barrister at Law
Member of Lincoln's Inn
London, UK

Role of CTG

The CTG should remain for five years as the situation demands. The CTG should carry out massive reforms and wipe out corruption. Thanks are also due to Gen HM Chowdhury for his pioneering steps at BAC. If the CTG can't carry out reforms, the corrupt politicians along with the clerical cadres will take advantage of the situation and will make the same mess again which will increase the sufferings of the needy and the disadvantaged.

The international community should understand the country-specific situation and show a flexible attitude towards the CTG.

Ruhul A Chowdhury
Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Former member
Royal Economic Society, UK

Unnecessary dialogue

Rafique, Jabbar, Salam, Barkat and others sacrificed their lives to attain linguistic freedom. We are lucky enough that for their great sacrifice we are speaking in our

mother language. But the question is, should we abuse it? In our society, speaking efficiently is considered as a special quality. On the other hand, 'talkative' persons are measured negatively. Unfortunately, under the influence of the 'media' some 'respectable bosses' are being considered as talkative people by us. This is not good at all for the nation.

We know that most of our political leaders speak carelessly in different forums. So, the people attach less value to those speeches. But the important bureaucrats/policymakers like...

chairmen/members of different commissions, secretaries, directors, DGs, and the ministers/advisers of important ministries should like to work silently. In most of the cases, the maximum we would know is their names. But recently, the media (print and electronic) has made them heroes! They have started to feel that they have become superstars or celebrities! After carrying out their routine work, when they leave the office, crowds attack them more or less regularly. They enjoy this sweet pain! How strange! Why is it important to speak in front of the press? Are they film-stars or idols?

They have to take many 'off the record' decisions in their office which affect the whole nation. But their 'verbosity' may leak vital clues which may facilitate devising a 'counter policy'. Their contradictory statements make us confused also. We feel humiliated or mystified very often. So it should be stopped without further delay.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Dept. of Business Administration
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NRBs

This is in response to Fuad Mallick's letter titled NRBs. He states "...Off you go to some other country and serve that society for years and then come back here, hold a high profile conference and tell us to be Bangladeshis! If you really want to do something, come back and show us that you really care, otherwise go back to your adopted countries and stay there and don't bother us with your advice!"

Myself being an NRB, I to some extent agree with his remark. He is however classifying all NRBs with the same brush. In my opinion there are three kinds of NRBs. The first group of people are happy with where they are, and have decided to settle in their adopted land. The second group always dreams about going back home but is afraid to take the plunge. The third group decides to take the risk and does go back, regardless of any help from the authorities. We see some of the third group people in Dhaka these days. The first group might do some 'altruistic' work in Bangladesh like 'opening schools in their villages' etc. However, to really effect any change, the NRBs have to bring their expertise, their experience, their outlook, as shaped by living abroad, to the Bangladeshi society by participating in the day to day affairs there. To do that we have to encourage the second group of NRBs to return to Bangladesh.

Therefore, in my opinion the main theme of the conference should be how the authorities can help the NRBs who want to return home. Giving advice to

Unsporting cricket!

The recent controversy which occurred surrounding the second Test between India and Australia (played at SCG), was indeed very unfortunate. The world was shocked to see a revered umpire like Steve Bucknor making such terrible decisions. In addition, Mark Benson was also guilty since he should never have relied on fielders for making a decision when he could have easily taken help from the third umpire.

It is true that the Australians do not play the game with the "right" spirit; they cross the limit quite too often (too much sledging and unnecessary aggression). They are too proud of themselves and feel that since they are the best team in the world, they can dominate and pressurize everyone; even the umpires. But the Indian team and BCCI, taught them a lesson. The Indians made them realize that not everyone is vulnerable to the "biased" treatment of the match referee and umpires. The Indian team (particularly the senior players such as Sachin and Kumble) and their board took the right steps as they even threatened to boycott the series. That is the attitude that is required to deal with the Australian team and inefficient match referees like Mike Procter. I agree that what Harbhajan said was not right but the Australians had a chance to resolve the situation but they instead opted for more trouble.

That even their own people feel that Ponting and his men do not play with the right attitude made things much clearer. I personally feel that the ICC itself also requires more transparency because in 2005 they preposterously gave the "Spirit of Cricket" award to the most undeserving candidate England. From now on, the Australian team must realize that their antics will only dent their country's reputation further.

Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS, Dhaka

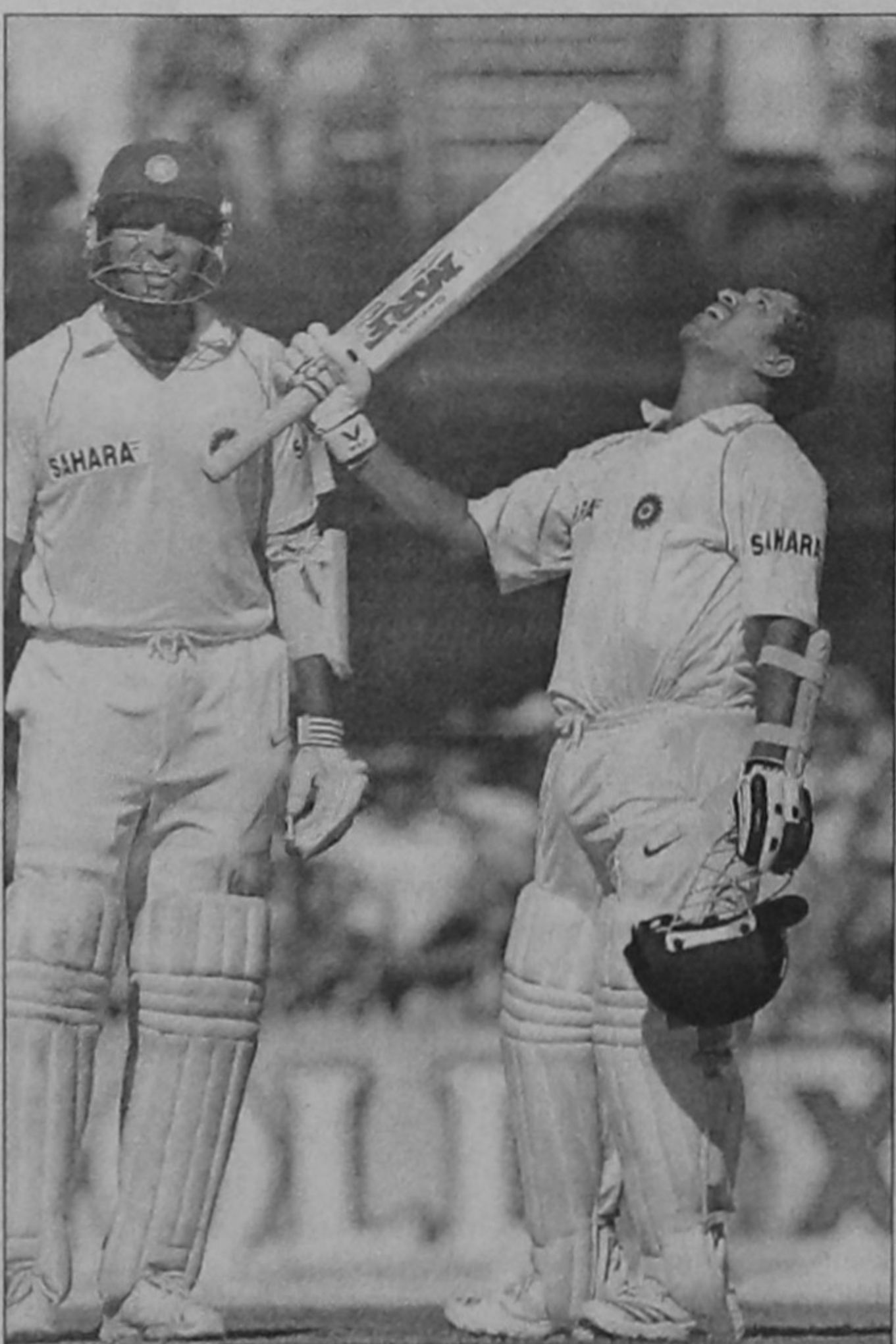


PHOTO: AFP

Dighapatia Rajbari



Uttara Ganobhaban, known as the Dighapatia Rajbari and situated in Natore District, is an important source of tourist attraction.

I decided to visit the place. Dighapatia Rajbari was inaugurated as 'Dighapatia Governor House' on 24 July, 1967. Later, after independence, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared the Dighapatia Governor House as Uttara Ganobhaban on 9 February, 1972. Here the kings ruled up to their 7th generation but afterwards the abolishment of Zamindari system forced them to leave the Rajbari. This enormous building with lakes and trees was built upon 125 (one hundred and twenty five) bighas of land. I saw a huge clock attached to the top of the gate and it seemed just like a replica of Big Ben in London. But the most amazing matter is that the clock is still working and I came to know that the clock operates upon balance. Finally, getting down from rickshaw, I rushed to touch those red brick walls of the front gate. My senses seemed to smell the fragrance of old civilization!

After a bit of walking, I came upon my dreamland, that is, the palace. On each side of the palace, there are two beautiful statues featuring a woman. Entering the castle, I saw two armoured knights on each side, I forgot that they were just inanimate and moved away from them thinking that they might fight with me! The armour was covered with awesome designs engraved in brass. At first, I moved on to the hall room where the feudal lords relaxed. The room has a lot of furniture made of wood. There is a four-sided chair which enables people to sit on the four sides and most importantly, the false roof made of wood and brass with complicated designs left me speechless.

The eye-catching thing was the upside down fan, the inverse form of today's table fan, that is, the wings are situated on the downward side. This machine was operated with kerosene oil. After a last look at the big palace, I went to the surrounding trees. They are said to be 120 years old but are still living in this modern age!

The Rajbari fascinates and amazes the commoners like us. Its charm has not yet faded away.

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