Editor's Note

PRICES. As we enter the second month of 2008, only one thing is important in the minds of the average Bangladeshi. Everything else, from the emergency to reforms to the parliamentary elections that are scheduled for the end of this year, pales in comparison to the question of whether the prices of essentials will continue to rise.

Indeed, it is not too much to suggest that many of the other issues will themselves be severely impacted by the situation in our kitchen markets. There is a direct correlation between how the government handles the food situation in the coming quarter and the patience of the general public when it comes to issues such as the election schedule and fundamental freedoms.

This month, we run pieces by Jyoti Rahman, Ahsan Mansur, and Forrest Cookson that focus on the issue of food prices and the Bangladesh economy like a laser beam. It is essential reading for anyone who is looking for informed and provocative discussion of the subject, and that means all of us.

Mindful of the upcoming elections, we also include a penetrating analysis by Badiul Alam Majumdar of the problems we have had in holding truly free and fair elections in the past, and a thought-provoking essay by Asif Saleh on the need to be able to eschew labels and discuss things in an objective and even-handed manner.

Farid Bakht returns to our pages with a thoughtful look at the situation in Pakistan, and asks what lessons there might be for us in the continuing, seemingly intractable, conflict that continues to beset that benighted country.

In addition, we have a wonderful review essay by Marty Chen, offering her observations and thoughts on her return to Mankiganj some three decades after doing pioneering development work there in the 1970s. It is a fascinating glimpse into what has changed and what has stayed the same.

There is much more, as ever. Tazreena Sajjad revisits the issue of 1971 and war crimes, Amer Ahmed beats the drum for social enterprises, and our regular month in review, Science Forum, photo-feature sections, among others, are filled with insight and information. This month's Forum is packed with substantive, serious fare for the substantive, serious reader.

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