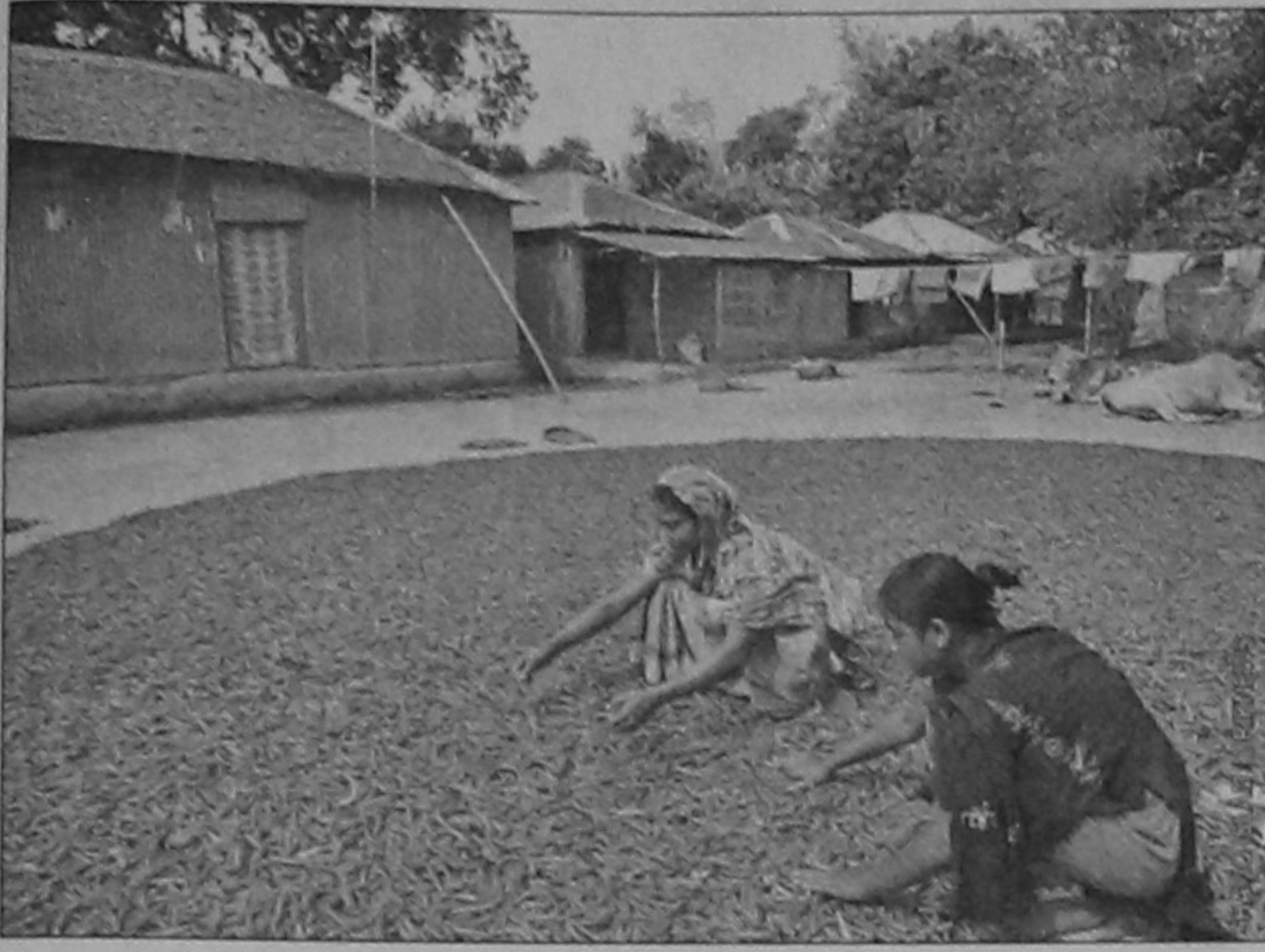


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Rural development and women



Every agro-based country ensures its overall progress based on rural development. Most of the people live in rural areas. Agriculture and other secondary and unrecognised occupations define their income network. Rural development is multidimensional, desirable positive change in rural areas. It will never be possible to achieve in one or two days. It is a continuous process. Normally, rural development concentrates on the rural women, men, children & disadvantaged groups for changing their lifestyle.

However, the role of women in rural development is crucial. Therefore considering the engagement and contribution of women in rural development not only the government & NGOs but also people in general should come forward with a positive attitude for empowering women as key players in development of rural Bangladesh.

Niranjan Malakar
Dept. of Public Administration
University of Dhaka

Open letter to Chief Adviser

It was a great pleasure to be present at the NRB conference in Dhaka in December 2007, and listen to your usual thoughtful speech! Sir, I am writing to you in response to your suggestion to the NRBs, to send you emails with our personal views and suggestions.

We closely follow your sincere steps to create the environment for fair elections, for electing honest and devoted leaders to run the country to brighter days. I live and work in Stockholm, Sweden. From my 33 years of experience of living in the East and West Europe, and South East Asia, I believe, today the fight against poverty will be won or lost in rural areas, home to about 70% of the world's poor. The likelihood of achieving the Millennium Development Goals without a strong focus on improving the livelihoods and service accessibility of rural dwellers is low. I travel to Bangladesh 3-4 times a year, and during each visit to Bangladesh, I always work with rural development projects in the villages in the district of Magura. We are teaching at university, college and schools in Bangladesh and working with ICT for rural development project, funded by Swedish organisations like SIDA and SPIDER.

The improvements in the well-being of the poor will only be possible through enhancement of their intellectual, productive, social and environmental assets. We need to focus on research and development to improve the well-being of rural people by building their human capacity, and developing knowledge, and productive, social, and environmental assets. This will increase their income and profit streams and ability to escape poverty. Therefore, in the rural areas, we need honest and devoted people with vision and dynamism to

guide such development work!

Our rural educational institutions must offer education that can critically analyse the information, and effectively prepare students for an exciting, stimulating and challenging entrepreneurial career. We will have to work to develop knowledge for rural development, for a better quality of life and a sustainable and healthy environment for present and future generations in the rural areas. Our research activities need to cover the food science and human health, production in agriculture, rural economics and development, marketing and ecology and the environment, both in Bangladesh and internationally. Our health care centres will have to develop appropriate and affordable health care systems for rural people. We need to set up rural universities to:

a) Bring university resources together to solve rural development problems.

b) Provide a broad range of educational programmes to develop skill for environmental management, agricultural and natural resource management, with human and physical capital.

c) Coordinate and support research that improves our understanding of rural economic and community development issues, problems and opportunities.

In conclusion, we must start to apply ICT for rural development for better education, improved health and agricultural output, business promotion and job creation in the rural areas. And for that, we need to have qualified, honest and devoted leaders at the union level. True leaders at the union level, can also prepare a foundation to elect honest and competent leaders at the national level.

Sir, let us first start the process of creating true leaders at the union level. The true rural leaders will be

able to set true norms and values for the rural people to elect the appropriate lawmakers.

To elect such leaders at the rural level, the government may set necessary criteria, in terms of education, experience, skill, honesty etc. The elected leaders should be continuously trained by the professional institutions to be capable of facing the opportunities and challenges of our rural areas, and learn to manage the local administration and guide the development projects with honesty and efficiency.

Dr. Mannan Mridha
(M.Sc. Eng. M.Ed., Ph.D.)
Professor of Biomedical Engineering
The Royal Institute of Technology
Stockholm, Sweden
Visiting Professor at Gono University, Savar, Dhaka

Hasina's medical treatment

I appreciate Mr. Rashed Suhrawardy for writing a column entitled "Hasina should be allowed medical treatment abroad immediately" in The Daily Star on 18th February, 2008. I do also agree with him on the point that Sheikh Hasina should be allowed medical treatment abroad immediately. This is not because Hasina was the prime minister of Bangladesh that she should be allowed to go abroad for her treatment. But the point is that "a nine member medical team after examining the detained former prime minister at Square Hospital in the city made three recommendations including sending Hasina to the United States for treatment of her hearing problems". Dr. Syed Modasser Ali, Hasina's personal physician and also a member of the medical team that conducted her check-up at the Square Hospital said that she needs treatment of her ears in the United

States. "Her hearing could be permanently impaired if she is not given treatment immediately. She needs treatment in the US where she received ear treatment earlier", said Dr. Modasser.

We all know how Sheikh Hasina got her hearing problem and how she narrowly escaped from the 21st August bomb blast in 2004. Yes, Mr. Rashed Suhrawardy correctly pointed out "I am asking this government to look into her personal condition. She had to suffer the mental and physical torture of being in solitary confinement since last July" (The Daily Star, February 18, 2008).

The way Sheikh Hasina is being treated is not decent at all. She did not commit any crime for which she won't be allowed to get her treatment abroad. I'll appeal to the caretaker government not to do anything that can harm their image to the posterity.

Abdur Razaque Khan
PhD Candidate
Journalism and Media Studies Centre
The University of Hong Kong
Hong Kong

Bangladeshis abroad

Bangladeshis students are studying in many countries in the world including developed countries like the USA, UK, Australia, France and some Middle Eastern countries. We are proud that our boys and girls living abroad are doing well in their studies, which have been reflected in their results. I feel that Bangladeshi students are very serious in their studies, they have to do well because of the fact that they are from a poor and underdeveloped country like Bangladesh. I have got two granddaughters living in Sydney, Australia who were born and brought up there. They are studying in standards XII and VI and by the grace of the Almighty both of them are doing well in their studies. Apart from schooling they are also equally good in cultural activities and received a good number of trophies. This has become possible mainly due to proper supervision of their parents, that is, my daughter and son-in-law, a Senior Engineer working in RTANSW.

I am very happy to note that my ground daughters have got love for Bangladesh and for relatives living in our country.
Oli Ahmed Chowdhury
Retd DGM, Janata Bank
Dhaka

International Mother Language Day

From the Holy Koran we come to know that the most merciful Allah has bestowed a mother tongue upon each and every caste, creed and colour. Mother tongue is so important that the people of a country express their ideas, thoughts, feelings, emotions etc. clearly through mother tongue. But it is an irony of fate that the then rulers tried to impose Urdu as mother tongue upon us, instead of Bangla. But the valiant sons of our country laid down their lives for our mother tongue, Bangla. Since then, the day is observed as Shaheed Day commemorating the sacrifice of the language martyrs. But since 2000, this day has been recognised by the UNO as "The International Mother Language Day."

21st February is now observed all over the world. We are proud of the day.
Md. Abul Kalam Azad
On behalf of the people of Bangladesh

Soul searching

I want to discuss here the philosophical idea, "know thyself." Because it is an important subject and related with perfect lifestyle. Have you ever thought about?
Shahidur Rahman Khan
Chowdhury
Chief Executive
Ruhullah Foundation
Kalaroa, Satkhira

Overbridge needed

Although many of the overbridges at different points in Dhaka city are not always used, indispensability of the same at certain places needs no emphasis. Such a bridge is badly needed near the country's biggest Heart Hospital (NICVD) alongside the Suhrawardy Hospital, before which run two divides of Mirpur Road and through which run speedy vehicles, from dawn to dusk, causing risks and hazards to hundreds of patients and their relatives.

Would the authorities concerned consider building an overbridge there?
Nusrat Jabeen
Shekhertek, Mohammadpur
Dhaka

Discrepancies!

What a great nation we are! We leave all the expensive granite and marble stones for our bathrooms, hotel floors and staircases and use only bricks, mortar, concrete or unglazed terracotta blocks for building our national monuments such as the Liberation War Memorial or the Shaheed Minar!! We celebrate Bhasa Shaheed Dibash on a day of the year with lots of pomp and grandeur, and send our children to English medium schools for the remaining days. Are we afraid that a granite monument may last forever outliving the life of this nation? Are we afraid that our children when they grow up may remain unemployed if they go to Bangladeshi schools?

Humayun Hye
Dhaka

Cricket and tourism

Growing popularity of cricket in Bangladesh can reshape its tourism and hospitality industry. Cricket and style go together, so should the cricket fans and their tours. That cricket boosts tourism can be seen from the instances of the West Indies, Dubai, Sharjah and India. The West Indies is the archetype for tourism development through cricket. They have been marketing tourism through cricket since the first World Cup held in 1975. Sharjah, India, Australia, South Africa and Sri Lanka, all attract more tourists since they emerged as well known cricket venues.

Sports tourists now choose these destinations for recreation and entertainment. In Bangladesh too cricket is becoming more popular. Now playing in the World Cup we are seen as the giant killers. Not known for following a well planned path for tourist development, Bangladesh could exploit cricket to promote it.

Cricket and tourism may go hand in hand in Bangladesh. We can, one day, expect to clinch the World Cup! We are not far from our dream of developed tourism. Nature gave us a diversity. Except deserts, we possess its entire gift. Our tourist potential could be better exploited using cricket.

The cricket commentators and media partners play a significant role in lifting a country's image. Say, how is the venue, its importance, what the people or the players of the country do, what they shop and where they go -- everything catches up the imagination of the millions of cricket fans across the world. The commentators bring the country and the venue into spotlight. Dhaka is now known among cricket fans the world over. Our resort city, Cox's Bazaar, can be a venue for international cricket. Cricket can make Cox's Bazaar more known across the world. We should think of developing Cox's Bazaar as a cricket venue. Cricket spectators from all over the world would then visit Cox's Bazaar to support their teams. They would love to spend their spare time in the resort city, washed by the bay.

Cricket is becoming a passion among our youth. The zeal and sense of competition with which the game is played is worth watching. Cricket is to Bangladesh what soccer is to Brazil. Sports remain the harbinger of friendship and peace. We are optimistic about developing tourism through cricket. From the existing trends we can anticipate that Bangladesh would always have a busy cricketing calendar. With the cricket teams the fans also move from one country to another, from one part of a country to another. Thousands of foreign fans will pour in from time to time from different parts of the world to support their teams. The hotels will remain booked for a couple of days, before and after the events.

Hotels and motels in Bangladesh will have to gear up for new business. Bangladesh will host World Cup 2011 with India and Pakistan. We shall stage the opening ceremony as well. So we need to concentrate urgently on establishing an international cricket venue in idyllic Cox's Bazaar. Potential investors want to set up big and quality hotels in Cox's Bazaar.

Cox's Bazaar can emerge as a centre for package tourism linking the Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and Nepal.
Mohammad Shahidul Islam
Faculty Member of National Hotel and Tourism Training Institute
Dhaka



Dead tigers

I read with interest the article 'Death of two tigers: Immature science in immature hands?' in your newspaper on Friday February 22nd.

As the producer of the BBC film 'Ganges' which is referred to in the article I would like to correct several inaccuracies.

1. In the film we do not comment that both of the tigers that have been radio-collared in the Sundarbans showed abnormal behaviour that may have been caused by darting or radio-collaring. We refer to only one tiger and repeat the often-quoted speculation that one reason why Sundarbans tigers may be less fearful of people than other tigers is that their behaviour is altered by occasionally drinking brackish water.

2. The photograph which you reproduced from the film does not show a wild boar preying on a tiger. I have talked to a number of tiger scientists about this and there are abso-

lutely no reports of any such behaviour ever having been reported anywhere. Wild boars have very poor eyesight and they walk very close by the sleeping tiger without noticing it. When it did notice the tiger the boar was initially startled and then ran away. I know this to be true as this account was told to me firsthand by the cameraman who filmed this footage - the only person to have witnessed this event.

3. We are not 'showing worldwide the last scenes of that pathetic tigress'. We filmed an old tigress lying down and resting. It is not apparently dying or in distress and these shots are not used in a context in any way related to the issue of radio-collaring.

Dan Rees
BBC Natural History Unit
Bristol
UK

Leaders of the past

The present nation-state era was preceded by Imperialism and before that Feudalism etc. There is no point in maligning the national leaders of the past. Each of the nationalist movement was based on existing socio-economic issues of a particular place or a region.

The Bengal was inhabited for more than five thousand years by the Dravidians. For little more than two thousand years the Aryans became our rulers. This was a predominantly Hindu nation until the arrival of the Sultan (Governor) from Delhi. The Sultans of Delhi and the Shah Shahebs (Private Adjudicator, Employing Agent and Re-conciliator) from the Arabian Peninsula and upper India spread the message of Islam.

In the modern era, the predominantly Muslim population first rejected feudalism under the leadership of Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Haq. The Muslim peasants and workers rallied around

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani for his kind advice, cooperation, directives and guidance.

The irony is the President of the Bengal Muslim League and champion of democracy Shaheed Suhrawardy lost the leadership of the Bengal Legislative Assembly to Khwaja Nazimuddin.
Golam Ashraf
Gulshan, Dhaka

Precision in use of language

The correct use of one's mother tongue is one of the small pleasures of life. I agree in principle with the musing of Syed Badrul Ahsan (DS, Feb 6). It is like a good cup of tea. [note the rise of our Tommy Miah] prepared the way you like it.

Our political leaders are so carried away with the charisma of self-importance, that the use of proper Bangla in daily life is left orphaned (like leaving the baby in the bathroom, unattended). But I like the way one of our experts on

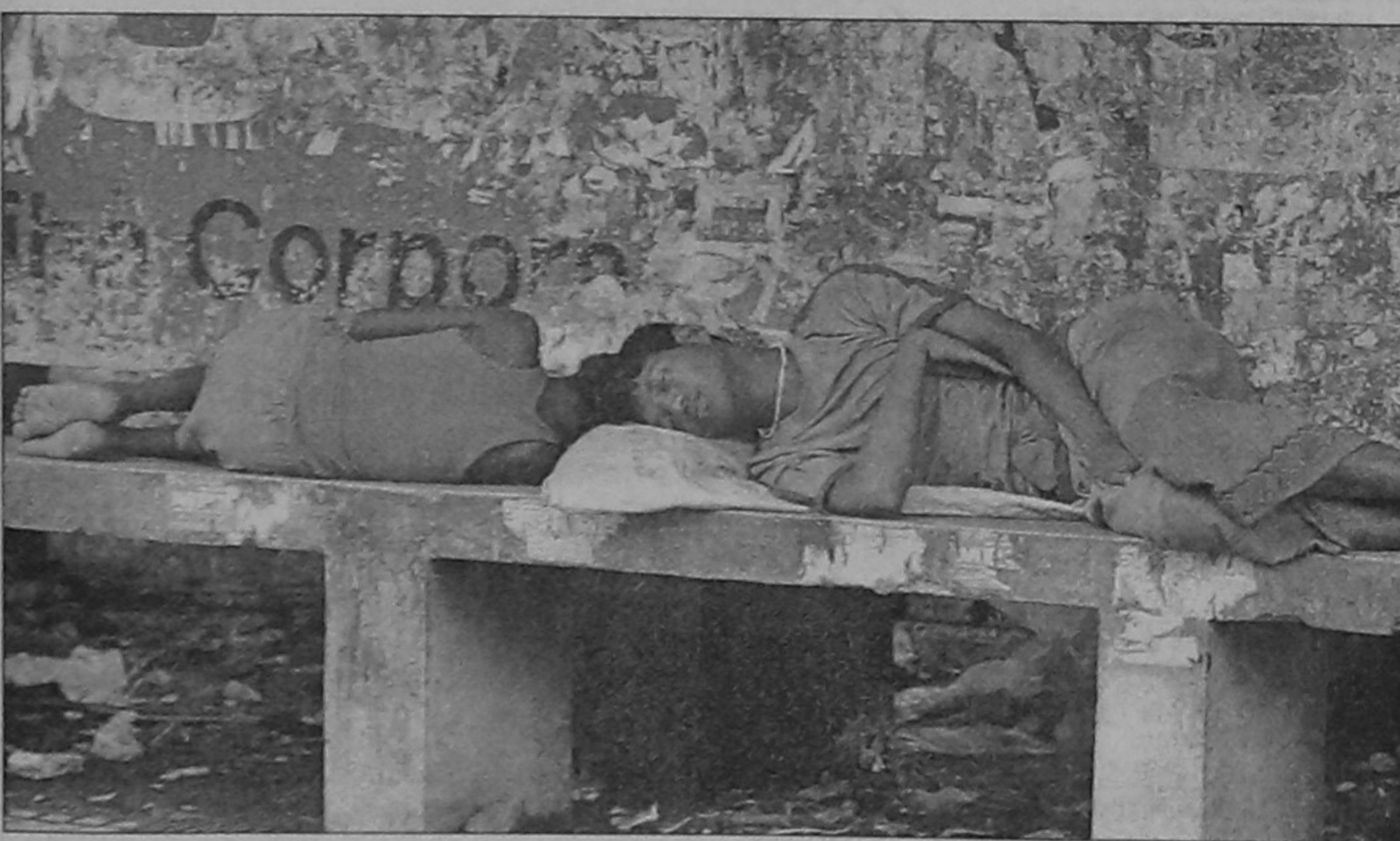
the drafting of the Constitution speaks Bengali (I am confused about the use of 'Bangla', 'Bengali' and 'Bengalee' while writing in English), with a purity and precision not observed in daily local life. Today's Bangla (of Bangladesh) needs not only first aid but nursing under development projects, for sustainability, preservation and development.

As a reader in English, I find Johnson too leisurely in the classical age of the hackney carriages (our palki and giora garri); Oscar Wilde stimulating; and Edward Weekees (Atlantic) makes you watch the yellow light.

I am not surprised at the Obamaism peeping out in today's Presidential election campaign in the United States of Amerika (Vankeeism for short). Be resistant like a sapling!

Enough for today - let us read the views of other lovers of Bangla Bhasha.
AMahasen
Dhaka

Price hike and people



I was travelling by bus on 24.2.08. The bus was overcrowded. After coping with the initial hassle I started minding to the talks around me. I heard a loud voice, some time choked, of seemingly an old man. His voice overpowered all the sounds and noises around us. He was speaking as if the people, whom he holds responsible for his suffering are just in front of him. His main grievance was against the price hike of essential commodities due to which it was difficult for him to survive with his family. He was straight in saying "set aside the future goods, what we do with future goods if we do not survive at present."

As the bus was swaying so was my mind thinking over the prevailing situation. While my full sympathy went with the old man, the face of our veteran intellectual, Dr Akbar Ali Khan flashed through my mind. Many intellectuals, among them prominent is Dr Akbar Ali Khan, have been telling us that a non-elected government cannot solve this problem.

My mind was bogged in reconciling between the prevailing price hike in the

country, world-wide economic recession, and capacity of an elected government ridden with corruption to solve the problem, the inability of caretaker government to solve the problem. By this time my turn came to get down.

After alighting from the bus, thought it to be appropriate to bring this story to the attention of the people at the helm of affairs so that they can understand what people on the street have to say. In other words, the writing on the wall needs to be read by the people in power. A question in this regard hovers around my mind that why should the government not spend some money from the national exchequer for a few essential commodities? Why these poor people should not get some protection from the government against unprecedented price hike. What benefit they would draw if the figure of dollars bulges in the Bangladesh Bank and the people do not survive?
Md Shah Jahan
Dhaka

Crop biotechnology

Agriculture is the largest contributor of the economies of many developing countries, generating more than half of the annual GDP. Fifty percent of the world's poorest people are small and resource-poor farmers, and another 20% are the rural landless dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. It is unfortunate but true that we live in such a world where one amongst every six persons, in the developing world, has no access to food and 2.8 billion people live on less than US\$2 per day. At the World Food Summit, 186 countries pledged a reduction by half in the number of undernourished people by 2015. Combating poverty involves actions to increase food security and per capita income. Increasing income of small and poor farmers contributes directly to the poverty alleviation of a large majority of the world's poorest people. Science and technology are globally recognised as the drivers of increased wealth and continuously improving standard of living. Agribiotech comprises a wide range of biological discipline, offers enormous potential to speed up the development of plant varieties with pro-poor traits such as drought tolerance, higher yields, increased nutritional value among others. Biotech/GM crops can

play a great role to alleviate global poverty. In the USA, farm income gain from biotech crops (HT soybean, Bt potato, Bt maize etc.) is \$15.9 billion. Biotech cotton has already made a significant contribution to the income of poor farmers in the first decade (1996-2005), and this can be enhanced significantly in the second decade. India has already adopted biotech crops and is benefited a lot. India's cotton areas represents 25% of the global area of cotton but the indigenous cotton yields were some of the lowest in the world. It was in 2002 when India adopted Bt cotton (a biotech crop) for the first time and became the leading cotton growing country of the world in 2007. Approximately 3.8 million small and resource-poor farmers planted Bt cotton. China has been also benefited hugely by producing biotech crops like Bt cotton, biotech rice.

A transparent and science based debate is essential for maximising the potential of crop biotechnology.

Jewel Rana
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Dept. of Biotechnology
Bangladesh Agricultural University
Mymensingh

