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Nargis victims

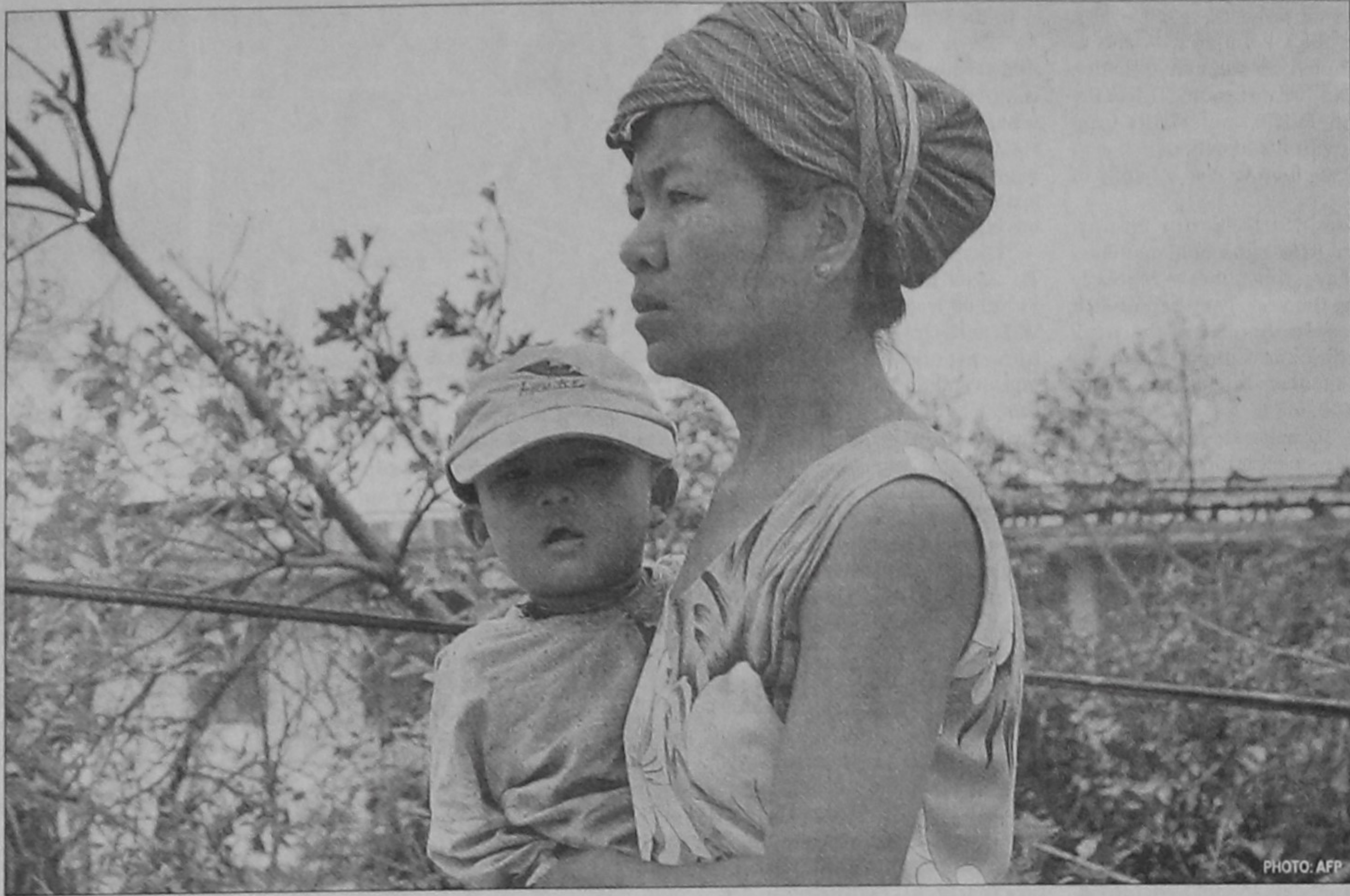


PHOTO: AFP

For a country that has received so much aid and assistance over the years through all the disasters it has face, it is pathetic that the powers that be in the country do not have the wit to immediately offer aid, in whatever capacity, to the disaster struck people of Mynamar. That's what neighbours are for! Nargis could have easily wiped out

southern Bangladesh. An offer of airlifting drinking water, shelter material and modicum of funds was expected. Help them now, not a month from now when the world focus will no longer be on the disaster. I am confident that the private sector would respond generously if asked. Yes, I know the junta is not accepting

foreign aid or reluctant to accept foreign intervention. But that is not the point. We make the offer and stand by it, let the details be worked out later. India and Thailand have responded, and we are missing in action. Pathetic indeed! **Shawkat Ali Dhanmondi, Dhaka**

Taxing senior citizens

Soon the National Budget will be announced. Many senior citizens of modest means who are subsisting on their savings or are still forced to work for a living have been waiting for a long time for some relief from taxes that are heavily eroding their savings. While the sky-rocketing prices of essentials are taking a heavy toll of their earnings and savings, there are other direct/indirect taxes constantly chipping away at what remains, VAT on practically everything, this Fee, that Fee etc. Present anomalies in tax are: 1. The individual exemption of Income Tax on salary is the same whether you are 25 years old or like me, 75 years. 2. Medical exemptions are also the same. But as you grow older, these expenses increase sharply for doctors, medicines, medical tests, hospitalization etc. 3. 10% tax is deducted from all savings in banks, financial institutions and government Sanchay Patras. Is this fair for the senior citizens? Even savings in BDT based on foreign currency remittances from children to old parents are not spared. Is this just? I am sure other senior citizens will come up with more such examples. As far as I am concerned, I still have to work 8-10 hours a day for my living, usually walk or take a rickshaw in the morning and at dusk, from/to Banani, if the traffic cops on the rickshaw-mukto Mohakhali Road are absent or lenient to an old man!!! My wife and I (total age 140 years), have 2 very caring children

living abroad with families, we have survived a total of 12 major surgeries (no tax exemption ever received), live in a rented flat, have no car, while I do not have (or need) even a mobile, ATM, Credit/Debit Cards and other modern 'conveniences' let loose on a gullible public to induce even more inflation. I have been paying taxes regularly since 1955 and have lived, I hope, an honest life due to which I have suffered huge financial losses because I refused to compromise with corrupt practices or trusted 'friends' (but that is another long and dismal story). I am fortunate and thank the Almighty, that now, I am at a stage when I do not owe a paisa to anyone and have as clear a conscience as it is possible for a human being to have in the 21st Century! So will the caretaker government cast a favourable eye on those of us who are 60, 65, 70 or more in the next budget? **Sikander Ahmed Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka**

ZIA incident

On 14 April 2008, inside Zia International Airport, a British Bangladeshi (well known community worker Barrister Rizwan Hussein) was brutally tortured by airport officials or security personnel. As a result of this incident, Barrister Rizwan has suffered severely and is now in a wheelchair. I, as a British Bangladeshi, am ashamed of this kind of behaviour from airport officials/ security personnel, and it is unbelievable. How could this happen in an

international airport? And this is not the first time this has happened! I am requesting the Bangladesh government to bring these people to justice and they should be punished for what they have done. **MMiah One-mail**

EC reform

It was great to read that the EC has finalised the new rules for political parties and politicians for Future Elections and everything looks very promising. The rules are to be followed by the parties and politicians --if they don't they MUST be punished for breaking EC rules. I, for one, am totally for this CTG to remain in power for years to come as they have set excellent examples and it does take time to put everything right - Rome was not built in a Day! However, I doubt this will ever happen as a few politicians of the big parties will create chaos in the name of democracy for their own benefits. It is very funny to read that the BNP is demanding release of Sheikh Hasina, but in the last 5 years the two ladies hardly ever spoke to each other! I would also like to add that before this CTG goes, it must make some laws for the sake of the country. 1) Ban hartal - No party or person should be allowed to call hartal - if they do, the party should be banned from politics and the person responsible for calling hartal should face trial.

2) Police reform- The CTG must reform the police before they depart. Police, as we all know, have been in the past AGENTS of the party in power - without police reform there will be no democracy as there will be no justice! 3) Police complaints commission - A powerful commission must be set up to keep an eye on the police. 4) No student politics - Students go to college or varsities to study and should carry pen and paper not Guns and Knives those goons of political parties are the main cause of damage and destruction in our educational institutions. I hope for the sake of Bangladesh and its future, the CTG will take the above points into consideration and pass laws to enforce them. **M.A. Malique Lincoln - UK**

Tata's investment proposal

It is good that efforts are on to restart talks with Tata, as reported by Jasim Uddin Khan in your business pages on April 30. Some of the reasons behind the 2008 statements are summarised below for the guidance of our negotiators. 1. Tata's proposal was to bring in iron ore from India, and process it into blooms for exporting back to India; using our natural gas as the processing fuel. We, in turn, proposed that they also roll around three hundred thousand tons per annum to billets for further rod rolling in Bangladesh. 2. Regarding their fertiliser proposal, they would manufacture semi finished chemicals and export back to India for finishing it as fertiliser for their use. Our proposal was to manufacture finished urea for use both locally and for export.

I think if these issues are clarified and resolved, and coal fired power is generated by them for our grid, we should go ahead and sign a deal on a win-win basis. However, we should have products from Tata's projects which can be used both in Bangladesh and India, and not use our gas at a low price for processing products which can be used in India only. An important issue is the price of natural gas, as its local price is on the basis of a subsidy for local users primarily, and not for users in India. This important principle in gas pricing needs to be upheld. **S.A. Mansoor Dhaka**

Development

The UN and the developed world are trying their best to have a hunger free world and to ensure a sustainable socio-economic progress in the third world. Billions of dollars is being spent for the purpose. But a few questions always remain unanswered. Where is the weakness in programme setting? How should we move forward? **Kazi Jahurul Islam Loan officer Rupali Bank Ltd. Dhaka**

Mother's Day

May 11 was the International Mother's Day! Education has become an integral force for accomplishing success in an individual's life as well as for attaining national development. A mother plays a key role in educating her children and subsequently in building up an educated nation. No doubt, ignoring all the pains and difficulties, our mothers have been playing their due role in this field and I take this happy occasion to heartily congratulate our respectable mothers. May the mothers living in both rural and urban areas of our country get proper treatment and due respect from their wards. We should always look after the welfare of our mothers while they are alive to extend their heartfelt love and affection to us. And when they leave us forever, we should always pray for the salvation of their departed souls. Happy Mother's Day to all! **Professor M Zahidul Haque Chairman Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University Dhaka**

Rickshaws

Much has already been written on the topic-- namely, the banning of rickshaws from the streets of the capital city. Yes, rickshaws--slow moving as they are-- contribute to traffic jam. The pullers often turn a blind eye to the traffic rules. Sometimes they violate the lanes while driving-- a dangerous practice. They park the rickshaws haphazardly and block the movement of other vehicles. However, the abolition of rickshaws involves a human factor as a large number of people earn their living by pulling rickshaws. Mostly, it is the new comers to the city who take up this back breaking job just to survive. As the government is unable to provide employment opportunities to these people, it does not have the moral right to deprive them of their living. As an environment friendly mode of transport, rickshaws deserve due appreciation. We think that the authorities may restrict the number of rickshaws. But it will be unwise to ban them overnight as it will throw many people out of their jobs. **Zabed Wali Pahartali, Chittagong**

Rejoinder

This letter is in response to the article by Mr. Inam Ahmed published on the 4th of May, 2008 titled "Blast blown out of proportion" I was quoted as saying, "The explosions were so mild and brief that it hardly mattered." I did say the explosions were relatively mild, but I did not say it hardly mattered. I further said that this was the nesting season of many rare species of birds such as the Pittas that fly all the way from South-east Asia to breed in this forest. The timing of these explosions could not have been worse! Hundreds of people running about laying wires through out the forest were bad enough, let alone setting off explosions. Chevron being a US company, what it has done here, could never have done this in their own country's national parks, but ultimately it is our government's failure that it does not see any value in safeguarding our natural treasures. **Ronald Halder Gulshan 2, Dhaka**

English language

I agree with Mr. Andaz regarding "Babu" English (Letters, 29/04/08). The success of a language depends on the accessibility and adaptability which explains the success of the English language today. It certainly goes beyond her colonial past. It is about to reach its billionth word with the global usage of IT, science, media and communication. English must be used in aircraft and spaceship manuals, air traffic control, naval instructions and communications as an international standard. One of the main reasons our mighty neighbour India is fiercely emerging as a global power is the usage of English, despite having 22 official languages, whereas Hindi is not far behind mostly due to Bollywood, which has a global audience and releases more films annually than Hollywood. The word 'Hinglish' (Hindi-English) is now a recognised word in the UK and is soon going to be included in the Oxford Dictionary. Bollywood film awards now regularly take place in the UK and Thames Valley University in London has started a new course to train future

Election in Nepal



PHOTO: AFP

The victory of the Maoists in Nepal shouldn't be dismissed lightly. It shows that a socialist order still has appeal to the people in a third world country. How is the US going to respond to it? And what will be India's reaction in the days ahead? **Md Shaheen Alam Dept. of Political Science University of Dhaka**

Bollywood actors, directors and technicians.

We, as a nation need to wake up to the reality, focus and reflect globally beyond our boundary if we want to take our treasured Bangla language forward. Unless we stop dwelling in the past and look forward to the future with the rest of the global community, we will have no choice but be left behind as a nation! **MM Rahman London, UK**

Pahela Baishakh & Hindi songs

This is once again in response to the letter of Mr. Ahmad Ferdous Bin Alam published in DS under the above title on 7th May. I don't understand why he is trying to make an unnecessary argument over a simple matter. I made my point very clear by saying that James didn't commit any mistake by singing Hindi songs on a Pahela Baishakh concert, simply because his intention was not to hurt the sentiments of the audience, rather the audience

present on that concert were requesting him consistently to sing Hindi songs. Being a born and professional singer, he just obliged to the request of the audience. As songs have neither religion nor any language, so we shouldn't take a parochial view of the matter.

Moreover, if we stop listening to Hindi songs on Pahela Baishakh, then why not on 21 February, 16 December and 26 March? It doesn't make any sense to me why people are always eager to show off even a serious thing like patriotism. Patriotism is something which should come naturally, showing our true Bengalee identity by stopping Hindi songs on one particular day or some particular occasions will not make us great to the rest of the world. We all love our country and love our language and therefore we know how to value others' language and culture as well. The bottom line is that respect to our mother tongue should come from within ourselves. **Nazmus Saquib Dept. of English Stamford University Dhanmondi**

Global warming

Global warming means increase in the average temperature of the earth. The average temperature of the earth is about 15-22C. But in recent times, the average temperature is increasing due to various reasons which may include-Greenhouse effects, extensive deforestation, burning of fossil fuels, changes in climatic pattern, atmospheric changes etc.

The activities that are responsible for global warming include burning of fossil fuels which contain different gases that are acting in Greenhouse effects, cutting or clearing of forest areas that have significant role in the regulation of global temperature.

The effects of global warming will be very dangerous to all living organisms. The effects are- melting of ice and glaciers, sea level rise, ecological balance disruption, affecting world food and agricultural production, decrease in biological productivity, increase in breeding of pests and diseases, severe and intensive tropical storms etc. Scientists believe that if we cannot stop global warming, we will have to face many problems which may lead to the extinction of different flora and fauna. Human beings will also suffer badly.

So, we must stop global warming by all means for the survival of human being as well as other living beings in the planet earth. The steps and programmes that must be taken immediately are- Conservation of forests, extensive afforestation, encouraging community forestry, reduction in burning of fossil fuels, development of environmentally compatible technologies, effective check on the growth of population and imparting formal and non-formal environmental education.

Thus we can ensure a better planet and environment for the present generation as well as for the posterity. **Manir Hossain Dept. of Environmental Science and Resource Management Maulana Bhashani Science and Technology University Tangail**

Billboard hazard

Billboards (hoardings) placed on roadside & rooftops in Bangladesh injured several and even claimed lives when they collapsed during heavy gusts of Kalboishakhi (Norwesters). A man was killed at the Chandrima Supermarket in March 2006 when a billboard fell on him. A guard at a gas filling station was killed in a similar accident in June the same year & a boy died last year when a billboard fell on him in front of Shishu (Children's) Park. It appears that no step has been taken to check recurrence of such accidents & at the same time no action has been taken to find a solution to the issue. With a little application of knowledge of physics it may be possible to find a solution to the issue. The over 100km per hour heavy gusts of Kalboishakhi

produce such large amount of thrusts which pull down large billboards causing serious fatalities. The billboard should have a sufficient number of holes of adequate size to let wind pass through & thus sufficiently reduce the thrust on it in order to lessen the hazard. It will be helpful if such provision is included in the Bangladesh Building Code as well as in the Guidelines of the Dhaka City Corporation. **Dr. Abdus Sattar Syed Proprietor Ace Data Products Dhaka & Ex-Scientist-in-Charge Industrial Physics Division BCSIR Laboratories, Dhaka**

Employment problem

We are Bangladeshi physicians working at various levels of Rijal

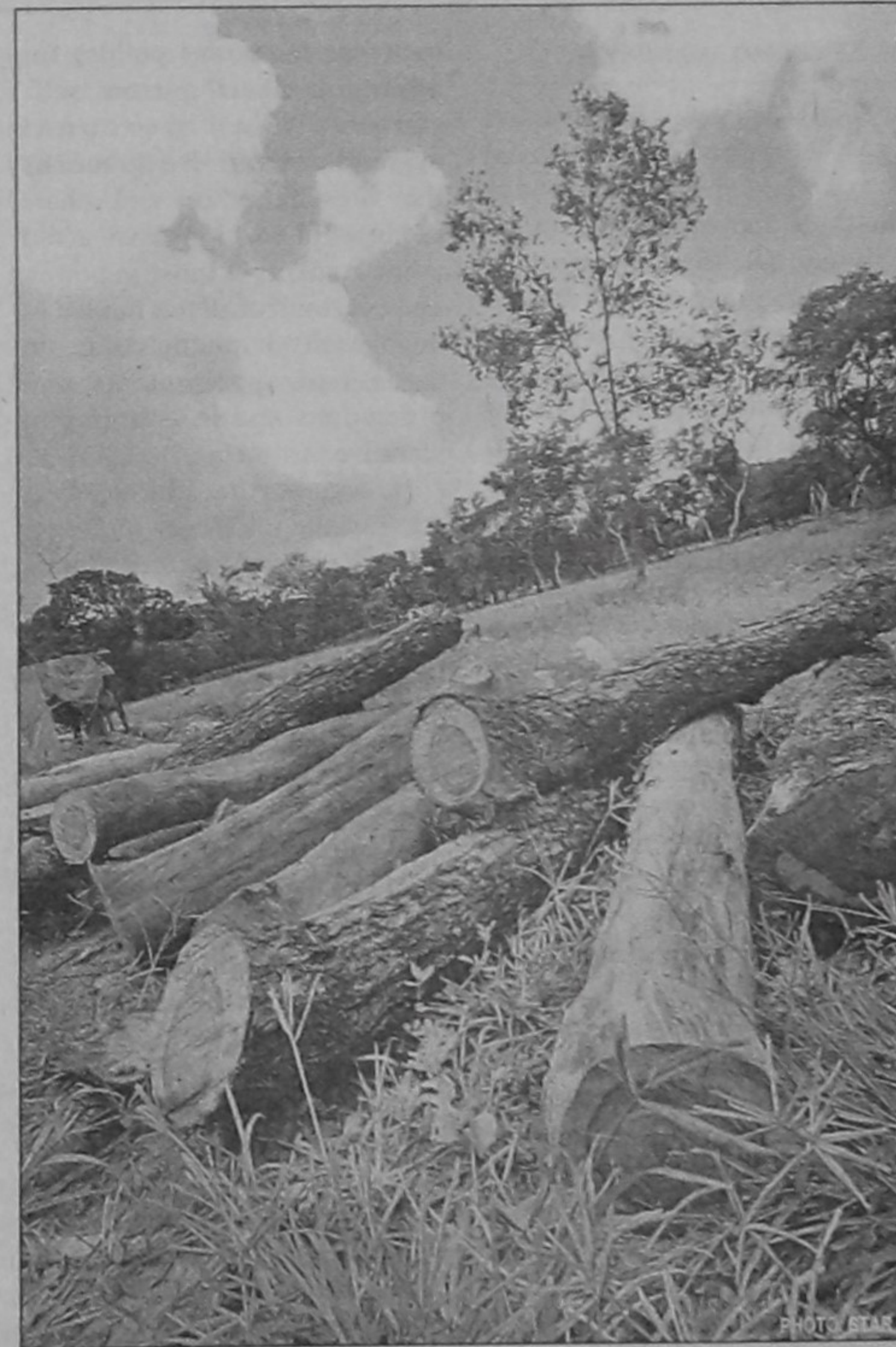


PHOTO: AFP

Almaa Hospital located in Assir region of KSA for a variable period of time under some Saudi companies. On successful completion of our working contract with the recruiting companies, most of us have been selected to work as physicians under the Ministry of Health (MOH) of Saudi Arabia. Those who have not been selected by MOH, have already managed jobs at some other private hospitals. Not only physicians but also nursing staffs, paramedics and technicians of this hospital are under the same process. This unique opportunity is appropriate not only for the medical staffs of Assir region but also for five other regions of this country. But due to some unwanted incidents involving some Bangladeshis that happened several weeks ago, the whole process of transfer of these

staffs from the company to the ministry or other private hospitals has been stopped by the Ministry of Immigration of KSA. Near about 1500 Bangladeshi medical staffs including physicians, nursing staffs and paramedics from different regions of Saudi Arabia along with thousands of other professionals are going to be affected by the problem of transfer of ownership which is known as 'kafala transfer' locally and are in fear of forced exit from this country. We already have informed the Bangladesh Embassy about it and so far got no reply from them.

We will be much benefited if you cover the issue in your newspaper. **Dr. Mohammad Fazle Rabbi On behalf of physicians of Rijal Almaa Hospital**



SHAFIQ ISLAM/DIKREWS

Ban on rice export

My attention has been drawn to your front-page news entitled "Export of rice, except for aromatic varieties, banned till Nov 7". More interesting is the sub-caption "Shoot at sight order to check rice smuggling". Though late, undoubtedly this is a good decision. Here I would like to suggest something more, which may be considered by the caretaker government.

1) Ban unauthorized food grain movement in border areas. Otherwise, the shoot at sight order may not be properly implemented to check smuggling. 2) Reintroduce the Licensing System for the food grain traders. 3) Procure rice in surplus areas. **Md. Habib Mansur Mymensingh**