driving away people to secure treatment in neighbouring countries. This should be addressed too. If the patients don't get proper treatments here they will try to get it from other places. You cannot stop that and you cannot blame anyone," he says, "Our health sector has to regulate itself."

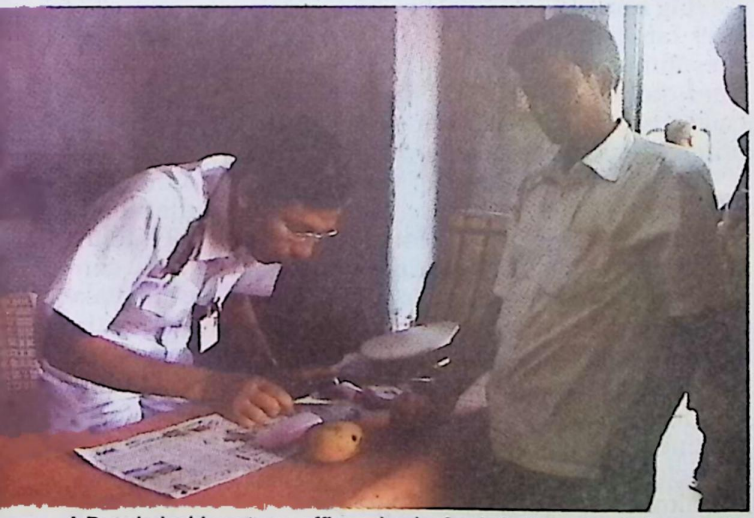
Abrar thinks that it is time the government takes up other outstanding issues with India like widening trade deficit and sharing of water of the common rivers. "Starting a passenger train service is a good beginning, but it should be followed up by forward movements--the governments of both the countries should think of other broader issues that have remained unresolved," he says.

However, everyone agrees that the restoration of the train service between these two historic cities is a good sign that needs to be strengthened further. "This will facilitate the growth of trade. In this context the Saarc secretariat should also take necessary measures to activate land surface and railway service between Bangladesh and Nepal and Bhutan with the active cooperation of India," Zamir, who travelled in the train that used to exist before 1965, says. Abrar also thinks Bangladesh can become South Asia's communication hub with train lines stretching as far away as Singapore through Sitwe (Akyab) of Myanmar and Nepal and Bhutan.

Meanwhile, setting the apprehensions of the decision makers of both the countries aside, Beauty Rani in her Wari home prepares for travelling to her relatives in 24 Paragana in India, a journey that she has made so many times in her mind. She is no longer the little girl of seven that she used to be when her family members bid that fateful farewell to each other. Her hair has turned grey, ageing has taken its toll on her surely, but she is very little worried that her relatives will not be able to recognise her: "How could they not? One's own flesh and blood after all."



Indian and Bangladeshi security guards.



A Bangladeshi customs officer checks fresh fruit coming in from India.



Zero point guard by BDR and BSF.

From sharing of water of the common rivers to changing mindsets, Bangladesh and India have a lot of fixing to do. In the changed situation, China has emerged as an economic powerhouse, so has India. A well-connected South Asia will only usher in a world of economic prosperity and development. Our policy makers should seriously think of making the passenger train service to Kolkata as a starting point to connecting the capital to other South Asian and South East Asian cities like Kathmandu, Thimpu, Sitwe and Bangkok. Our products will become more available to these countries, which in turn, will generate growth. In this global village, connectivity is the key. Besides economic growth, it will translate into more mobility of people that will surely make South Asia a vibrant place in which to live and do business. ■