

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.

Primary education in poor shape

I have done a survey on both govt. and private primary schools on the basis of total quality and performance of the schools. My survey has the synopsis on the findings derived from schools. Private primary schools are going ahead, whereas govt. primary schools are lagging behind silently. While talking to the govt. schools' senior teachers, I came to learn that the huge number of students was a problem that they could not manage. Most of the govt. schools have an unmanageable ratio of teacher-student. For instance, in Kurmitola govt. primary school located at Khilkhet, the teacher-student ratio is 1:86. So, here this ratio depicts the real picture. As a result, students' overall quality as well as performance goes down. Apart from these reasons, there are other problems like late allocation of textbooks, mistakes in textbooks, poor educational background of teachers, reluctance of teachers to motivate students, and last of all guardians' indifferent supervision over their children etc. On the other hand, private primary schools' senior teachers mentioned that their students were doing very well.

It is known to us that govt. wants to increase the literacy rate by enhancing the rate of enrolment in primary schools. However, a mere increase in the number of students going to school is not enough, the quality of education is an important aspect of the whole scheme that must not be overlooked by the education authorities. Better conditions must be created in government schools which are now in bad shape owing to various reasons.

Hasnat, AIUB
Banani, Dhaka

Iran's stand

Re article: "The Iranian missile test," by Prof. Abdullah A. Dewan, professor of economics at Michigan Eastern University (July 17).

In the context of recent Iranian missile test, it may be germane to ask: Why did Iranian President Ahmadinejad threaten, as he did recently, to wipe out Israel from the face of the earth?

Iran and Israel don't share a common border and chances of war between them are negligible at most. As such, the answer is that Iran's sabre-rattling is directed as much against its own people as against Israel. Iranian scholar Mehrzad Boroujerdi, director of Middle Eastern Studies at Syracuse University in New York, recently wrote: "There is an amazing mismatch between what the government preaches and what goes on in the privacy of people's homes that is mind-boggling." This has been going on ever since the Shia mullahs captured power in Iran.

It is clear that Iranian mullahs believe literally in 19th century German Gen. Clauswitz who said: "War is only politics by other means." With Iranians suffering from high unemployment (as much as 30% of Iranians are unemployed) despite the windfall gains due to high oil prices, the mullahs need perpetual tension and threat of war to divert public attention from their inept economic management and silence the dissidents as enemies of Islam.

Shiite mullahs also know that having an atomic bomb will infinitely bolster their position to further intimidate Iranian dissidents. The bomb and anti-Israel rhetoric will help mobilise the people behind the mullahs. But for

how long will the Iranians allow them to continue to do so?
Mahmood Elahi
Iris Street, Ottawa, Canada

BSF atrocities

In light of recent BSF intrusion into Bangladesh and killing of BDR personnel, I have to draw a parallel to what China is accused of doing in Tibet. It seems like the bigger powers in our region have no shame and no regard for international laws. I would suggest that the CTG take this case along with numerous other such cases to International Court of Justice and pursue this case until it brings some justice. We should not take the injustice sitting down in our chairs doing nothing.

In the meantime, our borders should be heavily protected. No matter how big the opponent is, justice prevails in the long run.

Mustafa Sadeq
Doha, Qatar

Morning walkers in trouble

Thousands of people visit Dhanmondi Lake every morning. Among them some take exercise in groups or individually, some play different games but most of them walk along the lakeside path. But it is a matter of regret that when the people do their walking, the sweepers start cleaning the place. Many people tried in the past to draw the attention of the authorities concerned to the matter but nothing has been done so far.

So, I again urge the authorities to look into the matter.
Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Corruption in medical sector

Unbridled corruption, shameless nepotism and rampant politicisation of administration totally destroyed the medical system in the country during the previous 'golden era' of the infamous jote regime. Professionals with blessings from the DAB and/or BMA were unduly awarded 'abnormal' promotions. Medical officers became 'Professors' and 'Directors' overnight flouting all norms and regulations. Surprisingly, most of them have managed to 'manage' so far. It is a known fact that BMA leaders minted crores through appointments and transfers. Doctors of the ruling party manipulated admission in the medical colleges, post graduate institutes, subsequent graduation and post graduation, appointments and transfers, study tours, Hajj and employment in the govt./private institutes.

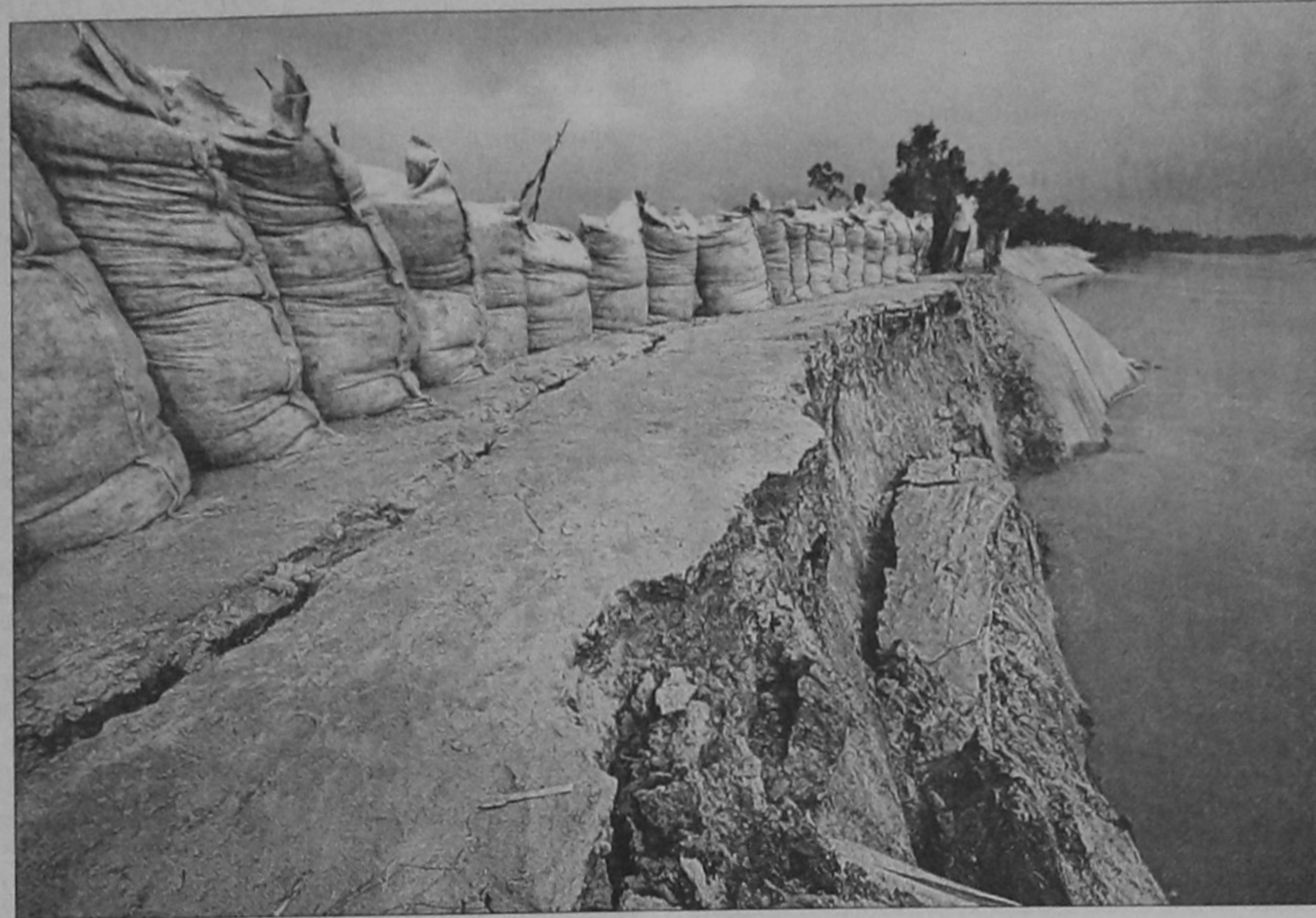
The result has been serious deterioration in the quality of medical service over the last few years. No attempt has been made so far to probe into these widespread allegations. It is expected that the government would seriously look into these allegations.

S Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

Report on dialogue

If I remember correctly, the team of Election Commissioners met the President and handed over a well bounded red cover report to him. They said this was the report based on the EC's discussions with the political parties. We have not seen the contents of this report in the media. My question is: whether all political parties have been supplied with a draft copy report for their verification, as to what they have discussed, and what has been printed in the report. If not, why?

River erosion victims



SHAFIQ ISLAM / DRINKNEWS

As the monsoon sets in, the problem of river erosion takes a turn for the worse. The mighty rivers-- the Padma, the Jamuna and the Meghna--devour huge chunks of land as they meander through the alluvial plain. On an average, every year 2400 km of riverbanks experience major erosion. Needless to say, millions of people of are affected by erosion. Many people lose

their homesteads, farmland and other valuable property because of erosion.

Again, the victims of erosion, having lost their homes, flock to the city-slums. Upon their arrival in the cities they take hazardous jobs like pulling rickshaws, working as day-labourers and so on. The sad part of the story is that they are metamorphosed into un-accommodated beings within a

very short span of time.

Although many rivers are in death throes, the menace of erosion still poses a danger to a huge number of people. Some towns--for example, Chandpur and Sirajganj-- are still vulnerable to river erosion. The situation calls for urgent action on the part of the government.

Zabed Wali, Pahartali, Chittagong

They are supposed to get a draft and respond with their comments.

I only hope that the EC will clarify the above queries and make us feel confident that the EC is really "independent" and not controversial and the nation can trust them with the task of proceeding with the entire election process.

A reader
One e-mail

Failing states?

The US Congressional committee has published a list of failing states. Bangladesh has been put in the tail of a dirty dozen. In the inglorious list of 12, eight countries are from Africa and the rest four from Asia. Seven of such countries have a Muslim majority and three are from Saarc region.

Eminent personalities and think tanks have already raised question on the veracity of the list. Inclusion of Bangladesh will definitely be protested by the government and other organisations.

Our people will not like to see their dear motherland bracketed with countries marred by civil war and other conflicts. But the underlying fact remains that our failings have blurred our image abroad.

Fifteen crore people of this country are patriots. Only four decades back, three million people sacrificed their lives and many other suffered a lot to liberate this country. We are not ready to see our country being included in such a list even by mistake. Our politicians and government functionaries concerned should realise the sentiment of the general people. Otherwise, they may find themselves in the darkest corner of history.

M. Sanaul Haq
Uttara, Dhaka

Mockery of humanity?

I am replying to a letter that was published in The Daily Star on July 21, entitled "Mockery of Humanity", written by Rafiqul Islam of Chittagong. In the letter, Mr. Islam talks about CNN's coverage of the recovery of an Iraqi boy, named Yousif, from burns he acquired in January of 2007 when masked men doused him in gasoline. Mr. Islam contends that CNN's coverage of a single act of kindness by the "American authorities" is an "imperialistic hoax". He goes on to say that CNN's recurrent coverage of isolated acts of humanity raise questions as to whether American "media are the mere tools of the ever burgeoning imperialism".

There are a couple of facts that Mr. Islam got wrong in his letter. Although I understand his frustration and anger at the unauthorised and unwarranted war in Iraq, I do feel one must not distort facts in order to promote one's agenda. Yousif's care is being provided by Children's Burn Foundation (http://www.childburn.org), a non-profit organisation based out of California, and is being funded by private citizens who were moved by his story when it first aired on CNN. "American authorities" or the American government were not and are not involved in care giving.

I also wanted to point out that

95% of American media are privately owned and, hence, viewer-ship or subscriber-ship is their bottom line. Each news media has a certain audience that they target and provide news and opinions that this target audience wants to hear or read. Now, I am not affiliated with CNN or claim to have any knowledge as to why CNN provided such extensive coverage of Yousif's story, but whatever the reason was, I can assure you it was not part of any imperialistic agenda of the Bush administration. I suspect CNN followed the old journalistic adage: if the story bleeds, then it leads. And Yousif's story certainly did bleed.

In my opinion, the overwhelmingly generous response of the American people to Yousif's story when it was first aired on CNN goes to show the deep regret that the American people feel on giving the authority to President Bush to go to war in Iraq. Living in US, I do know that the majority of American people feel a great responsibility to ensure that Iraq becomes a functioning society.

I must point out that Mr. Islam left out a whole aspect of this story, which does not get covered enough in the media. Yousif's burns were caused by fellow Iraqis and put the spotlight on the deep hatred and divisions that exist amongst the Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq. Rather than trying to reconcile the two groups, the neighbouring countries have added fuel to the fire through providing money and arms to various extremist parties in the two groups. Muslims around the world seem to be more concerned about protesting the illegal war purported by the imperialistic

government of America, rather than calling for an end to the heinous acts of violence committed by their Muslim brethren on one another.

Arbab Hassan
New York City
USA

Overcoming disability

Disability is not a burden in the modern age of technology and science, because if physically challenged people get ICT training, they will move ahead. The purpose of ICT is accessibility to information technologies for persons with disabilities and to face the challenge of the modern world as participants to all activities.

Azmal Hosen Mamun
Assistant Coordinator (Resource & Documentation Section)
Bangladesh Protibandhi Kallyan Somity (BPKS)
BPKS Complex, Uttara, Dhaka

Erratic power supply

A couple of days ago, I was having online conversation with one of my friends in Sweden and he told me, "Does it really take 37 years to solve the problem of power crisis?" All I could tell him is that due to inefficient governance we always lag behind. We never had someone who could aggressively work for the betterment of the country. Today, even after 37 years of independence, when we look at our nation all we can see is that all kinds of infrastructures are falling apart.

We have now severe problems with water, security, gas and electricity. Many experts once said that Bangladesh was floating on gas. And now the country is thinking of importing it!

It is being predicted that there will be even more power shortage in near future because there is shortage of gas and coal to generate electricity and it is too difficult for a developing country like us to import diesel at high prices to generate power.

Has any government taken any worthwhile steps to reduce power failure?

Minhaj Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka

Stop population boom

It is time for Bangladesh to take a strong decision to stop the population growth. The government and citizens should come forward and take this decision to stop population growth for at least the next five years. A law should be enacted to ensure no more new births in the next five years. What is our present population? 140/150 million? Our space is very limited. The land is not growing, resources are not growing but hungry mouths are growing geometrically, not adding anything to our GDP.

All concerned should think and cross check this subject. Stop this boom.

Mohammad Nazakat Ali
Pallabi
Mirpur, Dhaka

Endangered "Tigers"

Both the Team Bangladesh and the Royal Bengal Tigers are endangered.

Team Bangladesh is leaving Dhaka on 10 of August for Canada where they will be playing a T20 series against Canada, Pakistan & the West Indies and from Canada they will be going to Australia for a 03 ODI series starting from August 31. The 1st task of the cricketers will be to play as a team, perform and win a T20 match against Pakistan or the West Indies.

What we have seen in the recent past is that the Pakistan cricket team is too strong for Bangladesh in any competition. But again I will not be surprised to see Bangladesh pull an upset in the triangular tournament as the game is a 20 over match and it could swing either way as none of the cricketing nation is yet to master this format. This is a brand new concept and no team has yet shown consistency in the micro version.

Whenever the team is out of the country for more than 03 weeks, they fail to focus on the game. I feel that after the team's participation in the T20 event, they should come back home, take rest for a few days and go for the tough series against Australia.

The big question will be how the team plays on the bouncy tracks against the mighty Aussies? If they can play the full quota of 50 overs one will have to admit Bangladesh cricket is heading in the right direction. But looking at the records it is unlikely that they will be able to do so. Then where do we stand? Our cricketers are not capable of playing 300 balls on a regular basis at home or in the batting friendly subcontinent pitches. Sending them to Australia is like sending a battalion of soldiers with sticks to a war zone to fight against an army equipped with guns & cannons.

The results of the T20 and the Aussie series are already known to us and like the other tournaments these two series will again be another one sided affair. So the pundits need to answer, is there

any reason that we should send the senior team to Australia, England or South Africa at all? Since the Australian schedule has been fixed by ICC as part of the E.T.P., I guess there is nothing much the BCB can do at this moment but what they can do for the future is request ICC to reschedule the future tour programme (FTP) for Bangladesh seniors in all formats of the game and replace it with the A teams' itinerary instead.

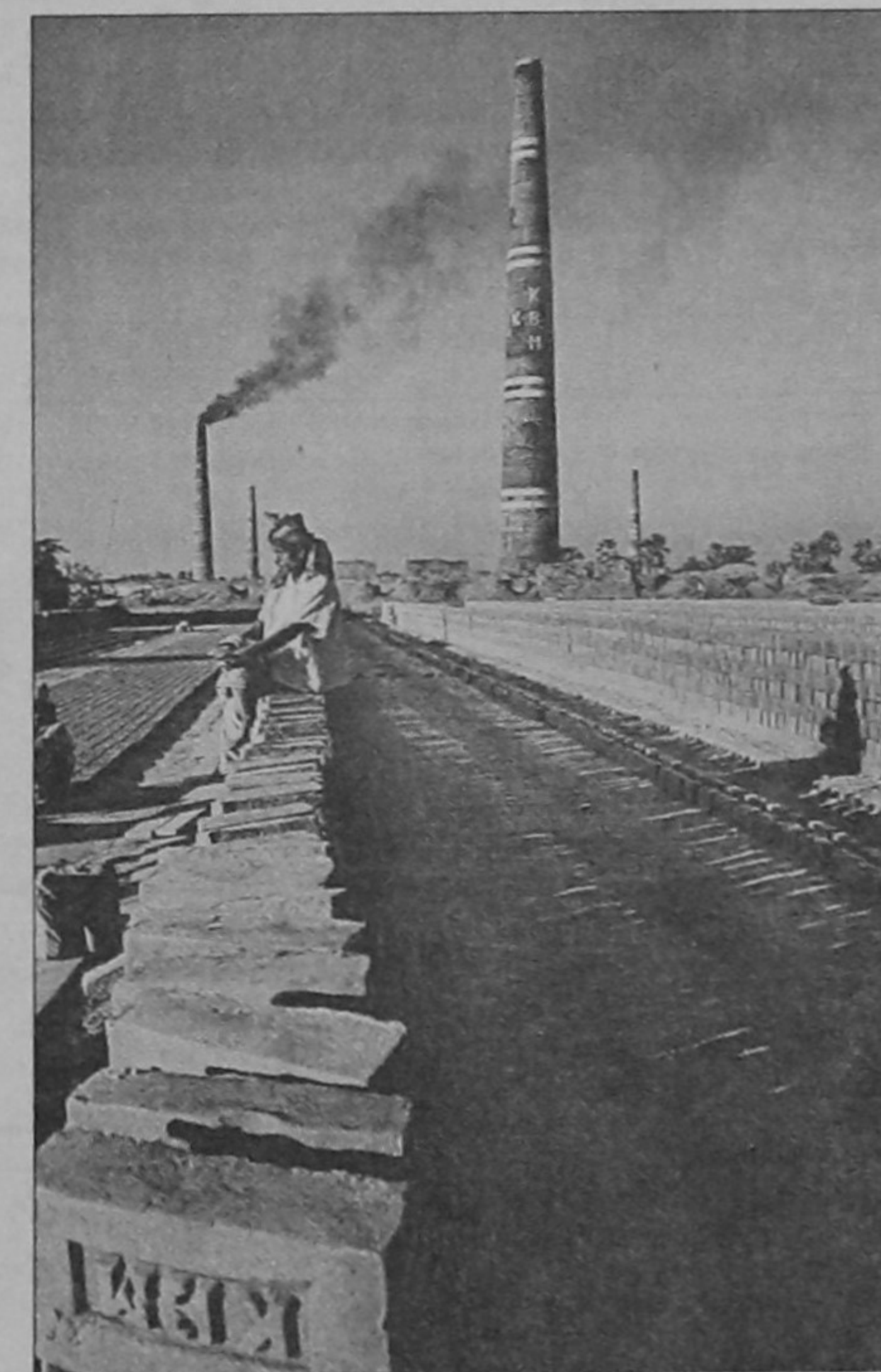
For the improvement of cricket we should concentrate more and more on the school & junior levels and make sure that the playing conditions, especially the pitch is even. For the evenness of the pitch we can make our young cricketers play on the artificial turf where the bounce, pace, cuts and turns are even and the young players can play the ball according to its merit.

The artificial turf is in use in countries like Australia, South Africa, New Zealand & England where the juniors play regularly on these turfs, instead of the traditional clay pitch which are difficult to maintain, especially in a country like ours where the playing conditions are tough and the playgrounds are limited. The number of four and five day matches need to be reintroduced at all levels so that the batsman gets enough time and develops the habit of occupying the crease.

Once this habit develops, it will be much easier for our players to play international matches as they will know at the back of their minds which ball to play and which one to leave. The longer version is the ultimate solution for developing techniques. It is simply like the classical music, if one knows the sargam of the music one can sing any song at any place irrespective of the instrument. So getting the basics right is the first priority for saving the tigers of the future. If this can be done, the future will be brighter for both the players and the millions of fans of Bangladesh cricket.

Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Save cultivable land



AZZUR RAHIM PEU / DRINKNEWS

It is high time to strongly enforce a law to protect our cultivable land. Our existing cultivable land should not be used for housing business; this has become a resourceful commodity in the quick money making business. Only the government can arrange land for housing and industrial purposes as deemed justified by top level decision makers. Again we need to give importance to acquiring of land for making industries like power generation plants, fertiliser factories etc. At the same time, opportunities need to be created and business people must be encouraged to construct high rise buildings to combat the rising demand for housing. The cost of an apartment will be proportionately less in a high-rise building. Such practices are well established in many developed countries.

Our cultivable land is very fertile and every inch of the land can be cultivated round the year if we truly intend to do so. The rising demand for food grains must be met by best possible utilization of our land and resources. New technology in producing high yielding crops, availability of fertilisers, power supply and ensuring irrigation facility through water canals can greatly boost production of food grains. The government machinery should be vigilant at grassroots to motivate and support farmers. We must understand that cultivation of every inch of our land is mandatory.

Nabila Samad Chowdhury
Housing Estate, Sylhet

Burning issues

At present the world's leading industrialised countries are reeling under three serious economic problems namely food, fuel and USA's financial turmoil. The chain-effects of these happenings have encompassed the entire world. Unprecedented inflationary pressure on all consumer commodities has made common

peoples' lives miserable. The very edifice of global economy nay human civilisation so painstakingly built through ages has come near collapse. This world wide catastrophe is chiefly for the following reasons:

- Shortage of supply of food grains to feed the billions of world population.
- Shortage of supply of fuel to run

the wheels of world economy.

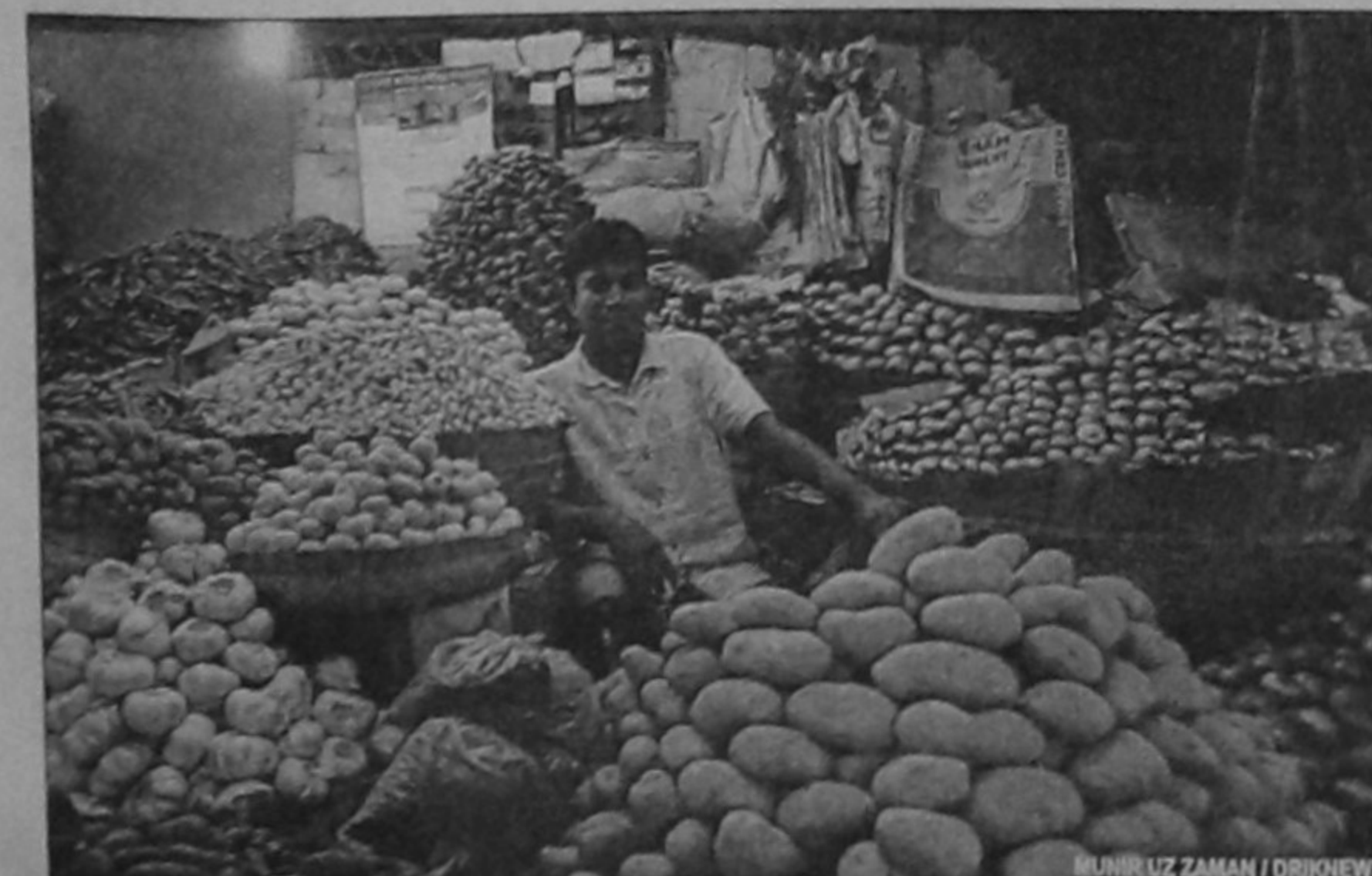
- Inequitable global trade regime.
- Protectionist policy by some emerging and developed economies.
- Bio-fuel production for which massive quantity of grains is used. One World Bank report indicates 75% of price hike of food grain is caused by bio-fuel production, it also pointed an accusing finger towards USA, some European countries and Brazil.
- Acute greenhouse carbon gas emission causing irreparable damage to ecological balance triggering natural calamities like cyclone, flood, earthquake, Sunami, Sidr etc in which a huge number of human lives, plants, animals and habitats perished, the perpetrators of this event are some developed and semi-developed countries.
- Geo-political jitters in different world regions mainly in the Middle East and recently Iran.

In this global situation, its effect on us is simply appalling. We fall an easy victim to this situation which is not of our making. Inflationary pressure on essential food items is affecting

us most, like any other country. We know that cereal is not an easily available commodity nowadays for the above mentioned reasons anywhere in the world, even if some quantity is available for importation its price is highly prohibitive. So, we have no other alternative but to attain food autarky. Traditional farming method in our limited farming area vis-à-vis ever growing population will not do that. We have to adopt knowledge based farming, apply HYV seed, drought/flood resistant plant-seeds, high-tech farming implements, ensure timely supply of fertilisers, diesel, pesticides to augment per acre yield by at least 3/4 times etc.

I have firm conviction that we do not have any lack of resources, be it human, financial or otherwise to achieve this top-priority national goal within a very short period of time. We can not afford to wait for tomorrow to let it happen.

S A Samad
General Mahager (Retd.)
Janata Bank, Bara Moghbazar
Dhaka



KURRUL ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS