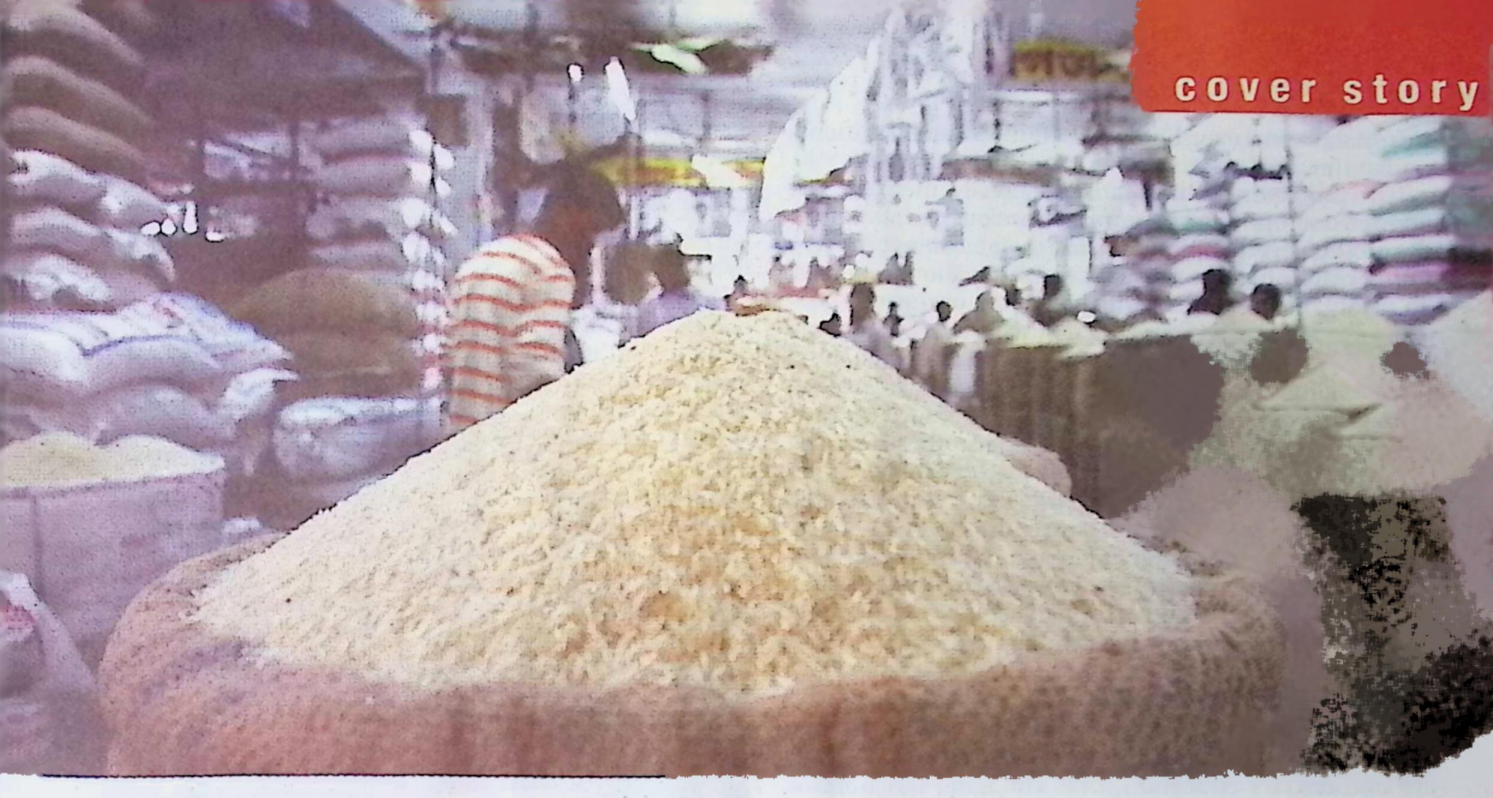


makes them poorer. Their incomes haven't changed, but the main item they buy with their money costs more, meaning that they have to cut back their consumption of something to stay within their budget. As a result many people consume less than the 1800 kilocalories they should a day. This, along with the rising costs of almost every other staple item, has led to a situation where millions go without proper nourishment and just as many struggle to make ends meet. The caretaker government set up fair price shops which were very helpful to the poor, but the real issue that needs to tackled by the next government is to stop the hoarding of essential items, thereby artificially pushing up prices and also they should enact greater reform in the agricultural sector, so that farmers can increase their output while still making a decent profit of their produce.

Another peripheral issue linked to food security and poverty but from a completely different side of the spectrum is climate change. It is essential that the next government takes the issue of climate change head on and realises that it has a ripple down effect on many other sectors of Bangladeshi life. Some estimates say that up to 50 percent of the population live in disaster prone areas. Most rural Bangladeshis are farmers by profession and most of them account for the 50 percent of the population that live in disaster prone areas, that means when a disaster affects people's livelihoods and the price of essentials around the country. When a farmer loses his crop, his house and essentially his livelihood to natural disasters, the spillover effect is huge. Firstly, when the total output of rice decreases the price shoots up, which immediately sends people further into poverty (as we have seen earlier), as well as the farmers who just lost homes and livelihoods. The government will need to immediately devise comprehensive disaster management plan and then slowly build a section dealing with adaptation into it.

Ministries that monitor development projects to help vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and the disabled have to be strengthened. Important development indicators such as maternal and child mortality rates have to be significantly reduced and life expectancy increased to 75 years.

As for mitigation all Bangladesh can really do is to add its voice to the global call to reduce greenhouse gases and it must push developed countries to pay for the effects of climate change on our country. Worst-case scenarios put Bangladesh at losing 17% of its landmass within the century and displacing more than 30 million people. All of this, along with more frequent and severe floods and cyclones, puts Bangladesh in a very precarious position. Climate change can no longer be after dinner conversation material. It has to be acted on decisively or else the whole country stands to lose irrevocably.

Health and Education go hand in hand in the development in the process. Currently the public healthcare service is organised around the Upazila Health Complex (UHC) which works at a sub-district level as a health-care hub and at a lower level there are Union Health and Family Welfare Centres (UHFWC). The public sector field-level personnel better known as Health Assistants (HAs) are supposed to make home visits every two months for preventive healthcare services. The system seems fine, but more often than not the HAs do not make their rounds every two months and often the Centres are understaffed and underused. What happens is that all patient traffic is directed to district hospitals because they are larger and better staffed, this leads to those