hospitals being over burdened with too many patients and too few doctors.

The problems are multi-fold. Generally, there are not enough doctors in the country to serve our people, and at the ground level people do not use their facilities properly, rather cramming up secondary and tertiary level facilities. To rectify the problems of the health sector the next government must make a concerted push outward for people to use their nearest facilities while at the same time encouraging more students to enter the medical profession. The World Health Organization's medium term strategic plan for Bangladesh also highlights other areas the government should take action on such as reducing the health, social and economic burden of communicable diseases, reducing the health consequences of emergencies, disasters, crises and conflicts, and minimising their social and economic impact. Policies and programmes have to be initiated to enhance health equity and integrate pro-poor, gender-responsive and human rights-based approaches.

Restructuring the education system has to be top on the list of priorities. While the primary education figures look great, only a tiny number of them actually go on to secondary and tertiary education, thus changing this trend is crucial. Education has to be made accessible and relevant for every child or teenager. Aside from that, Madrassas must also be looked into and reassessed, as the increasing number of Madrassa graduates cannot find places in university. The University Grants Commission should also go through an overhaul, and the list of so-called 'private universities' has to be checked again, throwing out sub-standard institutions. Apart from increasing the literacy rate, computer literacy has to be enhanced and made widespread so that every village can be brought under e-governance. For Bangladesh to move forward we need to become a knowledge-based society, and education is the centre of that proposition.

The next government has to balance development commitments with creating a pro-business atmosphere; it must first take care of its most productive and profitable sector, readymade garments and knitwear. The figures point to a good trend, exports in readymade garments increased by 15 percent in 2007-8 in comparison to the previous year but behind the scenes businessmen are worrying how long they can keep up such figures without concerted government intervention. The absence of a long-term policy for the industrial sector, coupled with political turbulence which results in questionable decisions and a near constant energy problem, it is a wonder that the sector has reached so far on its own. With the global recession looming the fourth quarter for Bangladeshi exporters looks to be the worst yet, as orders have declined and they have had to slash their profit margins merely to keep them. The question of what has to be done for the sector from the government's side is actually easier than one would assume. The first step would be to provide continuous gas flow to the factories dotted around the country. The government has to realise, if they are not



Farmers need more state-support to increase food production and make reasonable profits.

provided with enough gas then as a nation we will be losing our largest export (currently garments accounts for a massive 76 percent of all our exports) which would greatly hurt our already slim foreign exchange reserves. Most business owners would settle for continuous power and an inept government, but often in Bangladesh they are faced with a curious mix of inept power and continuously inept governments.

But all of this is merely looking at the sector from the manufacturers' side, currently over 2.5 million people, mostly women, work in the garments sector and while their employers make all the money, they are paid a pittance for gruelling 10 hour work days. A challenge for the next government will be to fix a reasonable minimum wage for the workers, ensure safe working conditions and stop sexual harassment in the workplace. Already the process has started with better working conditions although wages are still not enough to make ends meet. If the garments workers demands are met then in a small way it would also tackle another area of concern for the next government, law, order and security. 151 Garments factories have been damaged in the past year alone from riots caused by garments workers, this is a habit we cannot afford to fall back into.

Developing Chittagong and Mongla is also