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Killing of animals

The killing of big cats and other wild creatures is horribly increasing in the rural areas. It's clear that lack of awareness among the rural people is causing this casualty. Also, there are no proper measures to save these animals or their habitats. Firstly, due to rapid clearing of forests, these animals are losing their homes. On top of that, they are dying at the hands of people when hunger forces them to go beyond their locality. Now, what kind of justice are we doing to these creatures? We destroy

their homes and then we kill them too! The media and other concerned agencies should play an active role here by popularising techniques that would help villagers save themselves as well as the wild animals.

The forest department should seriously look into the matter, and not just wave their hands dismissively.

Md. Sadique Uddin
West Dhanmondi
Rayer Bazar
Dhaka

up at the earliest, with all sincerity and due seriousness. The effected people should realise that many lives were sacrificed in 1971, many families lost their homes and properties for Bangladesh. Compared to this, the losses of the displaced people who will be resettled is very small! They must realise that it is for the overall need of the country for the badly needed fuel for power generation. For this critical national issue, it will be worth even sacrificing some popularity if needed to meet the demand of millions of power starved Bangladeshis; more so in the rural areas.

Frankly, I feel the hue and cry about it which has so long been nurtured, while the past government was busy in lining their personal pockets, is in the overall context; "much ado about nothing" realistically. After all is said and done, like jute which is called "the golden fibre", coal is "Black Gold" for Bangladesh!

The government should move positively for exploiting this valuable resource; decisively and with full determination to make this endeavour a reality. It will be their single and unique achievement which will last for a long time; while other good deeds may be forgotten. On the overall national cost benefit basis; it may be worth far more than losing a few seats in the next election. It is only mature and seasoned politicians who can rise to the occasion to take hard but needed positive decisions and transform them to reality for the nation. We hope and believe that this government will not let us down!

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Reforms

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina rewarded her loyalists and handed favours to certain members of her party.

Downgraded, not purged, were party men who had advocated party reforms and attempted to execute the well-liked minus-two formula of the caretaker administration.

However, the caretaker government suddenly retreated from its grand reform mode. Up came the AL with a landslide victory. The BNP lost badly believing, until the last day, that there would be no elections.

In victory, the AL should have declared itself a government of reforms, but far from it. To cut unbridled powers of the prime minister and the concentration of power in Dhaka should be a priority. Reforms within political organisations are critical for the country. Should Hasina be the prime minister, the leader of the House, and the party chief all at the same time? Should the party secretary general be a cabinet member too? Can the party members use the ballot box to choose committees, or must they become loyalists to survive in politics?

For general peace and stability, the police must have its operational independence to crack down on violence as it sees fitting. Constitutionally, the police, not the government, must guarantee our security no matter which party wins the national polls.

There is also the trial of war crimes that would be a failure as the mass trial of the corrupt recently was. Courts fail to

dispense justice unless investigating institutions are not strong and skilful. In terms of resources and policies, the AL should spell out how to improve these, and how they would liberalise the economy, which alone can slash common corruption.

Hasina's administration has failed to see the cause of price hikes and market unpredictability both within and outside the country. Mainstream economists blame free market and the extravaganza of US derivatives, sub prime mortgaging, speculations, or excessive global demand but these are not correct explanations or the truth.

The recent abnormal price rise in our consumer markets or of oil is a reflection of too much money in circulation nationally and globally. The prime cause is Alan Greenspan's 20-year monetary policies that gave US citizens a false prosperity. Their cars, fridges, holidays, and homes were all on cheap bank credits, and they had no savings or earnings to pay for it. The loose money gave the stock market players a bonanza but ultimately the economic balloon has burst.

Decades back, the Austrian economists had indicated why socialism is impossible to work and how it would destroy freedom and civilisation if it must work. Yet again they have said it clearly, why a government monopoly on the issuance of money would bring total economic collapse by their excessive paper printing.

Instead of following IMF/Fed principles, if Bangladesh can adhere to the Austrian understanding of money, market prices would remain stable and predictable. The people would then enjoy and benefit from a 'multi currency competitive' regime allowing importers, exporters, consumers, savers, and investors to choose their currency. This is market freedom where competition checks the excessive printing and supply of any taka in the market. When money supply is tight, prices stay stable as taka retains its value. It only loses value when there is excess supply. Abnormal high prices of stocks or rice are a reflection of that money syndrome.

The government's challenge is reform in all spheres. Only less government and more freedom, but firm Rule of Law, can unleash ideas and enterprise to overcome our woes. Let us hope Hasina wins the test, and with it another term to fulfil her father's dream for a country that could be rich as gold.

Nizam Ahmad
Director, Liberal Bangla
UK

A sincere campaigner

Recently, I was reading an article on agriculture written by eminent media personality Mr. Shaikh Siraj in a national daily while my four and a half years old toddler was playing beside me. A photograph of Mr Siraj was attached in the inset of the article. When I asked my son to name the man, he instantly recognized him. Mr. Siraj has emerged as an icon of Agricultural Information after decades of persistent service for creating awareness in the agriculture arena. This story asserts that if some one dedicatedly and devotedly serves the nation for a good cause he can reach so deep in people's minds, even in the minds of kids.

I take this opportunity to salute this man's unrelenting effort to create a difference and lead a silent revolution in the neglected agricultural sector.

Md. Abdus Salam
Relationship Manager
ONE Bank Ltd
Motijheel Branch
Dhaka

Jute sector

While giving the inaugural speech in an international seminar on jute, the jute minister aptly remarked that the collaborators of the soil along with World Bank and IMF policy caused the golden sector's demise. World Bank and IMF's dubious policy has greatly undermined our jute sector.

But the Indian jute sector is flourishing due to the right policy adopted by the Indian government.

Md Zonae Emran
Dept. of Political Science
University of Dhaka

Parliamentary issues

After nearly two years the caretaker government on 6 January 2009 handed over power to the grand alliance. From the beginning it was apparent that the government & the opposition were at loggerheads over several issues like election of the deputy speaker from the opposition, seat arrangements in the House, slide in law & order & lately the withdrawal of the Special Security Forces (SSF) escort for the Leader of the Opposition.

The Speaker is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Secretary is the Chief Operating Officer (COO) & the Sergeant-at-Arms is the Chief Security Officer (CSO) in the precincts of the Jatiya Sangsad. Each aforesaid public & government official of the Republic has specific jobs in parliament. The seat arrangements must be undertaken by the Secretary of the Parliament Secretariat on the basis of the universal seat arrangements for the Treasury & the Opposition bench members including the alliances.

The parliamentary democracy remains functional when the Leader of the House & the Leader of the Opposition are being treated fairly and at par. Out of parliamentary sessions & committee meetings the Leader of the Opposition attends the state functions and also joins in the policy making process of the government with the rank & status as set in the Order of Precedence by the Cabinet Division of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Golam Ashraf
Gulshan, Dhaka

English In Schools

Recently, the education minister inaugurated the 'English In Schools' (EIS), a programme jointly launched by The Daily Star and Aktel to promote English language teaching at secondary schools across the country. The programme includes, publication of teaching materials on English language, social and health issues, distribution of complementary copies of DS to selected schools, etc.

Appreciating the initiative the education minister assured all-out support to EIS programme and said- 'This programme will greatly help the students in learning English'. Meanwhile the minister suggested involving local educated people in the project-cycle for better results.

We heartily congratulate the initiators of EIS and wish it grand success.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural
Extension & Information
System, SAU, Dhaka

Good thinking

Our finance minister has backed away from his contemplation to devalue taka against the dollar because of a very reasonable argument by Bangladesh Bank that it would be punishing for fifteen crore people to pay higher prices for essentials. We have to import the major part of such essentials from abroad and people are already groaning under pressure of high prices of basic necessities!

Meanwhile, a news item published in a daily on 4 February 2009 said that our remitters from New York were sending money through Hundi via India to get nearly Tk 10 more than the government exchange rate.

Many years back, at a certain time, when the exchange rate of the government was Tk 20, the remitters were paid Tk 30 by the then government which totally stopped the Hundi remittances!

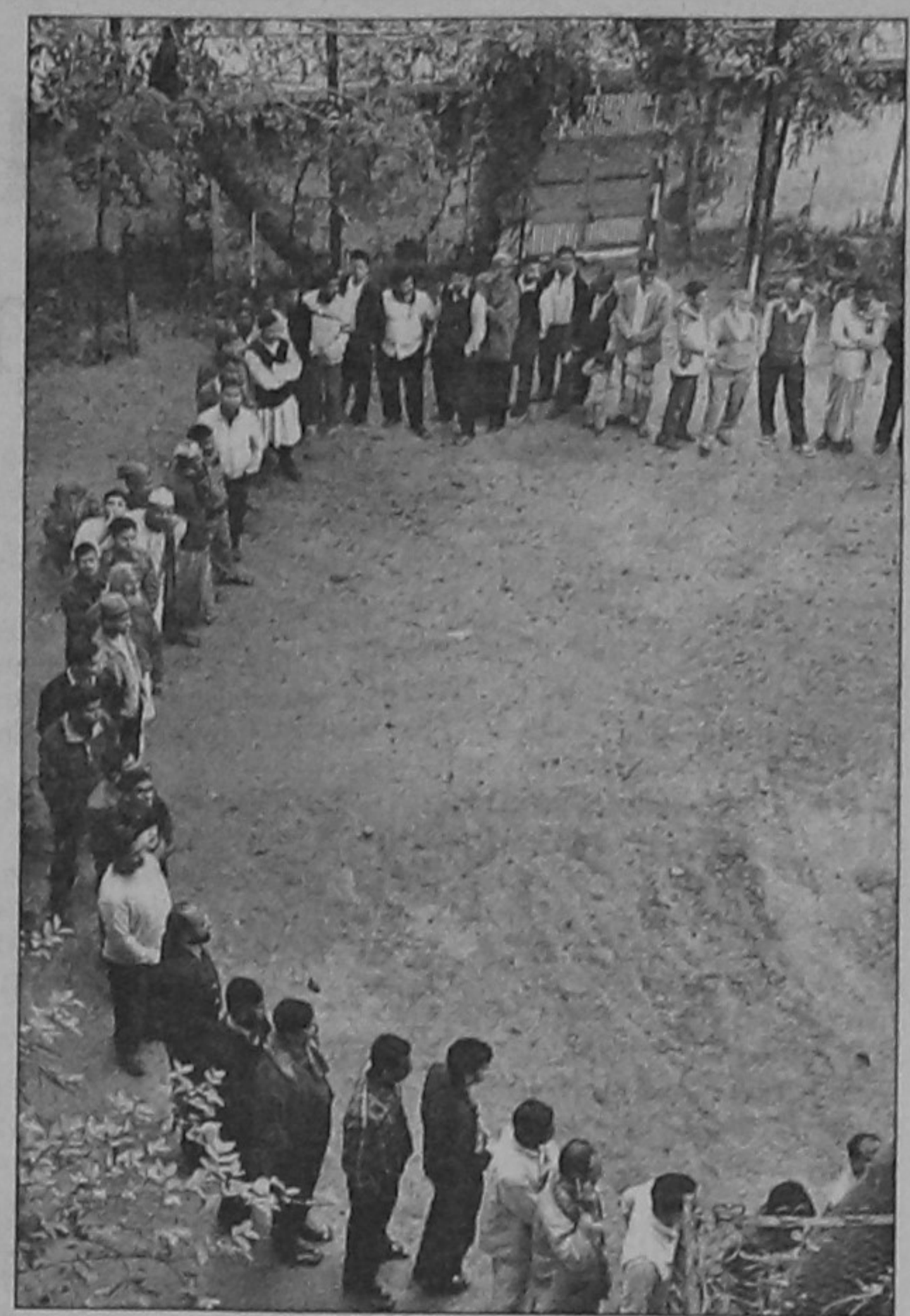
Rumi Ahmed
Playpen School
Bashundhara, Dhaka

Rickshaws

I read with interest the letter under the above heading published in your issue of 4th February written by Prof. Zahedul Haq.

I am personally not in favour of having the rickshaws in its present form to crowd our already overcrowded streets. This ugly looking unstable mode of transport is a road hazard. I am however not opposed to having rickshaws in our roads after upgrading the vehicle.

Rickshaw is the shorter version of the Japanese word Jin rick sha meaning man powered vehicle. Rickshaw in its original form was pulled by human beings, now the form that we see is cycle rickshaw.



AMADUL HUQ / DRINKNEWS

True democracy

Albeit having some flaws, "democracy" is the best among the different doctrines in politics. So, a democratically elected government will run the country in a better way, it is hoped. But all elected governments finally do not remain good. Hitler of Germany and Marcos of the Philippines were chosen by the people but we know about them.

Our politicians talk about democracy day and night but they do not believe in it and they do not exercise it even in their own party.

True democracy has to be established at all levels, if we want to get the best results.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Relocate the control room

Occupying a big chunk of land of immense value, the police control room at Shahbagh, Dhaka serves no purpose. There is no reason to have a separate police control room in the heart of the city and depriving the city dwellers of a breathing space. Moreover, the police control room is not situated centrally either. The city has expanded far and wide. With modernization and expansion and increase in the number of the police stations in the city, each of these police stations should be developed separately to serve as control room. In case, the police authorities feel the necessity of having a central control room, it should be located elsewhere. Possible sites could be Sher-e-Bangla Nagar or Nilkhet. The entire area presently occupied by the police control room should be vacated and the area developed and beautified under the overall development of Suhrawardy Uddyan.

Outside the police control room premises are few shops and billboards. These should be removed immediately to give the landscape a cleaner and greener look. As of now, the entire area looks chaotic and clumsy and needs refurbishing.

The police department would have to be magnanimous in vacating the area, keeping in mind public interest.

Shamim Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

Ombudsman

As we see for transparency of government actions in various disciplines, an instrument or institution for check and balance is necessary as a watchdog. I offer my humble opinion here as follows:

We have by now, as far as I

find, one such watchdog, called Ombudsman, to watch and report on Income Tax only under NBR, in place already. In respect of other disciplines, however, I do not know whether there are many or anymore. If so, it is okay then, if not, the necessity of creating or manning the posts of Ombudsman in every field by passing a bill, is felt. Whereas these are already in existence, their presence need to be brought to prominence by making them fully operational.

Introduction of the office of the Ombudsman in fact was included in the 2001-2006 general election manifestoes by the political parties. In the last election manifestoes of the major political parties, the inclusion of the same however was not there perhaps.

Therefore it is our expectation that the present government will look into this matter seriously, so that the functions of offices of the Ombudsmen in all possible areas of the ministries and/or divisions are fully made operational without any loss of time. We have seen the transparent ballot boxes in the last election conducted by the EC under the CTG.

Now, we want to see our government functioning with its reflection clearly visible on the face of Ombudsman.

Engr. Shaheedul Islam
Gulshan-1
Dhaka

Bishwa Ijtema

Thank you for publishing pictures taken from the recently concluded Bishwa Ijtema in your daily (February 3, 2009). It really helps readers to understand the magnitude of participation of Muslims in this congregation. However, I differ (though I am not a

scholar in the field of Islam) from the way you described the Ijtema in the page. The Bishwa Ijtema has been referred to as 'the second largest Islamic congregation in the world'. Obviously, the reference was made in comparison with the Hajj, a compulsory congregation of 'financially and physically capable' Muslims. My view is that Hajj is a congregation where it is compulsory to participate only for a 'capable' Muslim, whereas necessity to participate in Bishwa Ijtema is voluntary ('nafal'). I think it is not proper to compare a voluntary Islamic event ('nafal') with a compulsory Islamic event like Hajj ('farz'). I would appreciate if you verify this view of mine with qualified Islamic scholars. If my view is valid, then I would recommend everyone to refer 'Bishwa Ijtema' using the phrase 'the largest voluntary Islamic congregation'.

Chowdhury Golam Kibria
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Chowdhury Golam Kibria
On e-mail

Open pit mining

Since this new government took office, this is the best news for the power starved and fuel import dependent country as reported in most dailies on February 3. Congratulations to the government for a pragmatic policy decision, taken in the overall interest of the country.

The government should and must go ahead about this important programme with all seriousness and mobilise its large political capital to create the necessary public opinion; convincing the people of its importance and the need for Bangladesh to explore this available coal; a vital energy resource lying below.

The initial steps needed for rehabilitation of the displaced people is appreciated; and I wish the authorities to take it

Rafa!

Australian Open '09 men's singles was a historic event for many reasons. It was the defining time for both the players engaged in the battle on the court world's number one seed Rafael Nadal from Spain, and the number two seed Roger Federer of Switzerland. It was a test of nerves, skills for both the players on court that evening in Melbourne. Federer was ready before the game to take himself to the elite group of maximum number of grand slam winners Pit Sampras was alone before him only. On the other hand, Nadal had to make a mark there in Australia winning that trophy --- it was his maiden Australian grand slam.

Yes, the New Year ushered in a fresh beginning for the irresistible world number one Rafael Nadal who fought another historic semis against his compatriot Fernando Verdssco the longest match in the history of that event! Rafa with his indefatigable spirit and incredible resilience turned his about-to-lose match into a historic win! Then he went for the final against Roger --- awesome stamina, fitness and determination!

Federer set to make a record started the tournament well, with his renewed spirit, skills and an urge to take him beyond all; before falling a sad prey to the new-coming Rafa. Roger and Rafa showed all that they have in their playing armour backhand, forehand, volley, half volley, service and what not!

Congrats, Rafa! Congrats, Roger!
Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

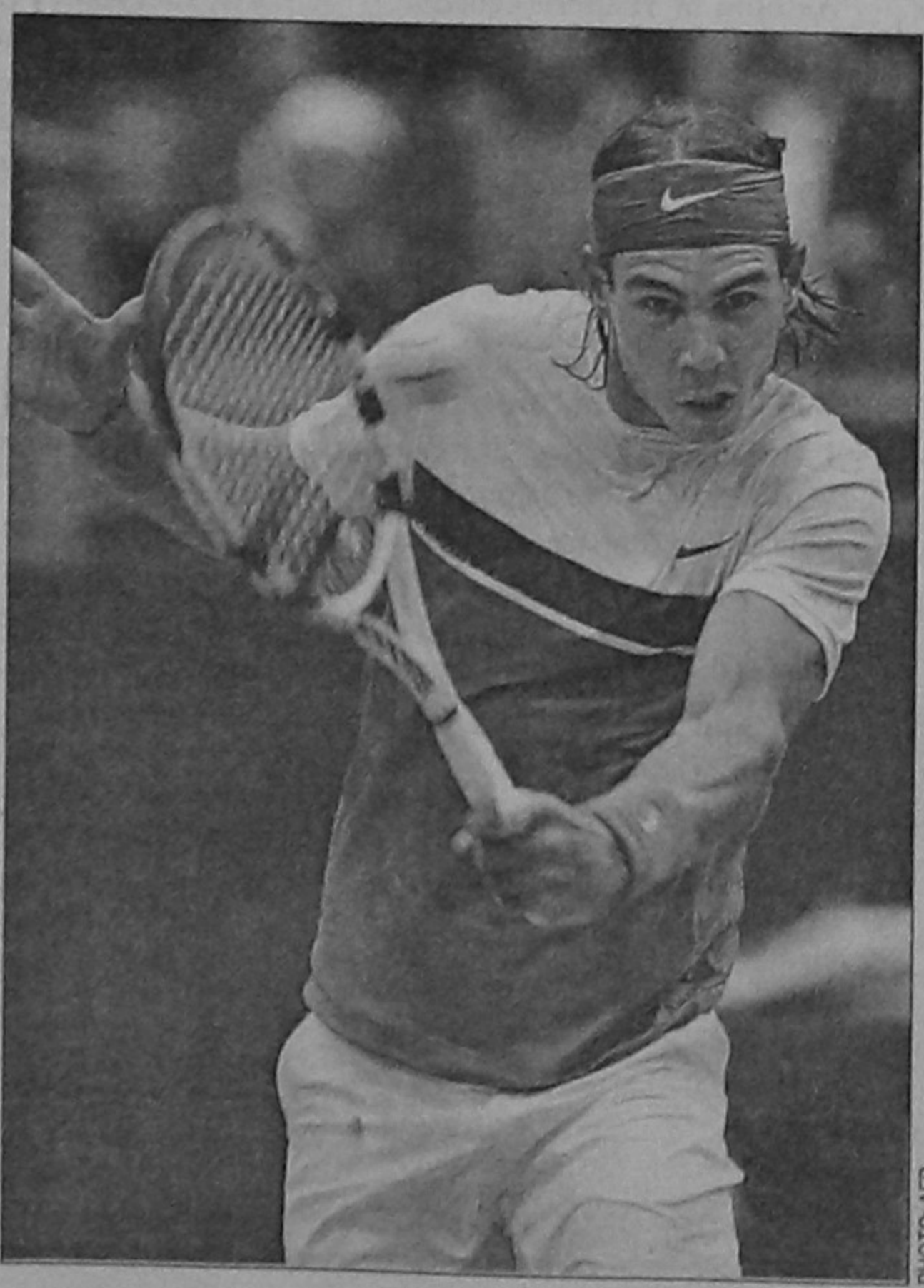


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