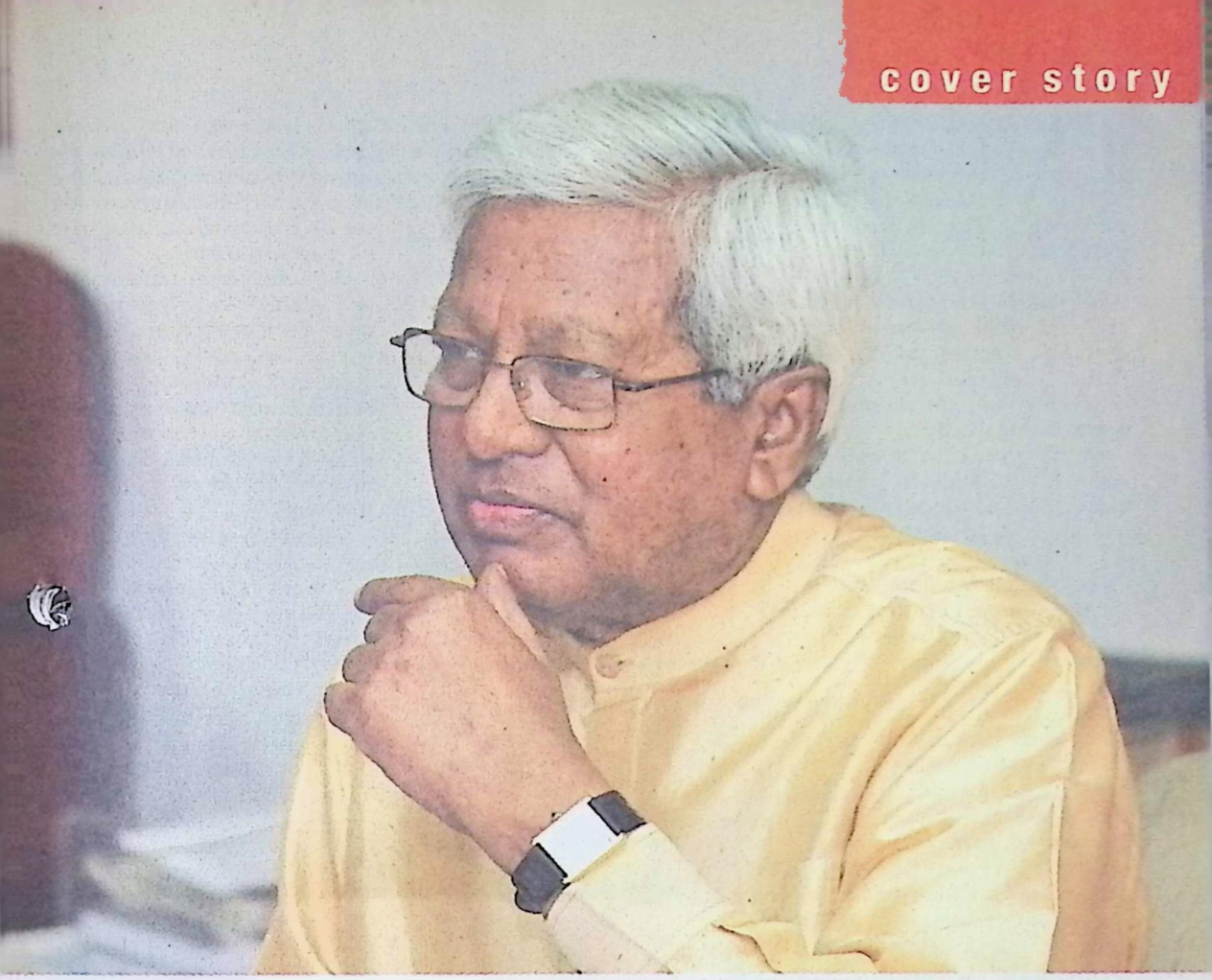


Sir Fazle Hasan Abed

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Top marketing experts in the world are unanimous in their opinion that Bangladesh needs a brand name. How can BRAC contribute toward promoting Bangladesh and Bangladeshi products as a brand?

A lot of people think our brand image is bad because we do not advertise enough. A brand image cannot be created by launching an ad campaign alone. We have to address the root problems. Accidents like building collapse and industry fire have done a lot of damage to the image of Bangladesh. Even tourism has declined. Good governance is a must for the positive image of a country.

Various studies have found that about 40 percent of the food products in our market are adulterated. Can BRAC do something to fight this menace? Aarong is already producing milk and butter for the domestic market...

Mismanagement, inefficiency, corruption and lack of implementation of law are at the root of this problem. When you break the law and you do not face the consequences, you go on doing it over and over.

A law was enacted which made the mixing of iodine mandatory to all salt factories in Bangladesh. The government and Unicef started distributing iodine and iodine mixing equipment. But factories were not complying. So I built an iodized salt factory. Seeing our commercial success, other companies followed suit. But it took us five years.

Excessive use of pesticides on vegetables is a big problem. I thought about producing EurepGAP certified vegetables and selling in the Bangladeshi market. If we do it, we will have to do it on a large scale. Otherwise, ordinary people won't be able to afford it.

How can we create jobs in the rural area?

The number of jobs in the rural areas will decrease eventually. Seventy percent of the population used to work in the agriculture sector. Now it's only 30 percent. Agriculture used to contribute more than 60 percent to the GDP —now it's less than 25 percent. Eventually, more than 50 percent of the population will live in cities. That's the future. There's nothing you can do about changing it. All over the country we will have to build at least 30 more cities with the same amenities as Dhaka. And in cities, government must allocate land for low cost housing for workers who provide services to the middle class and the rich. ■