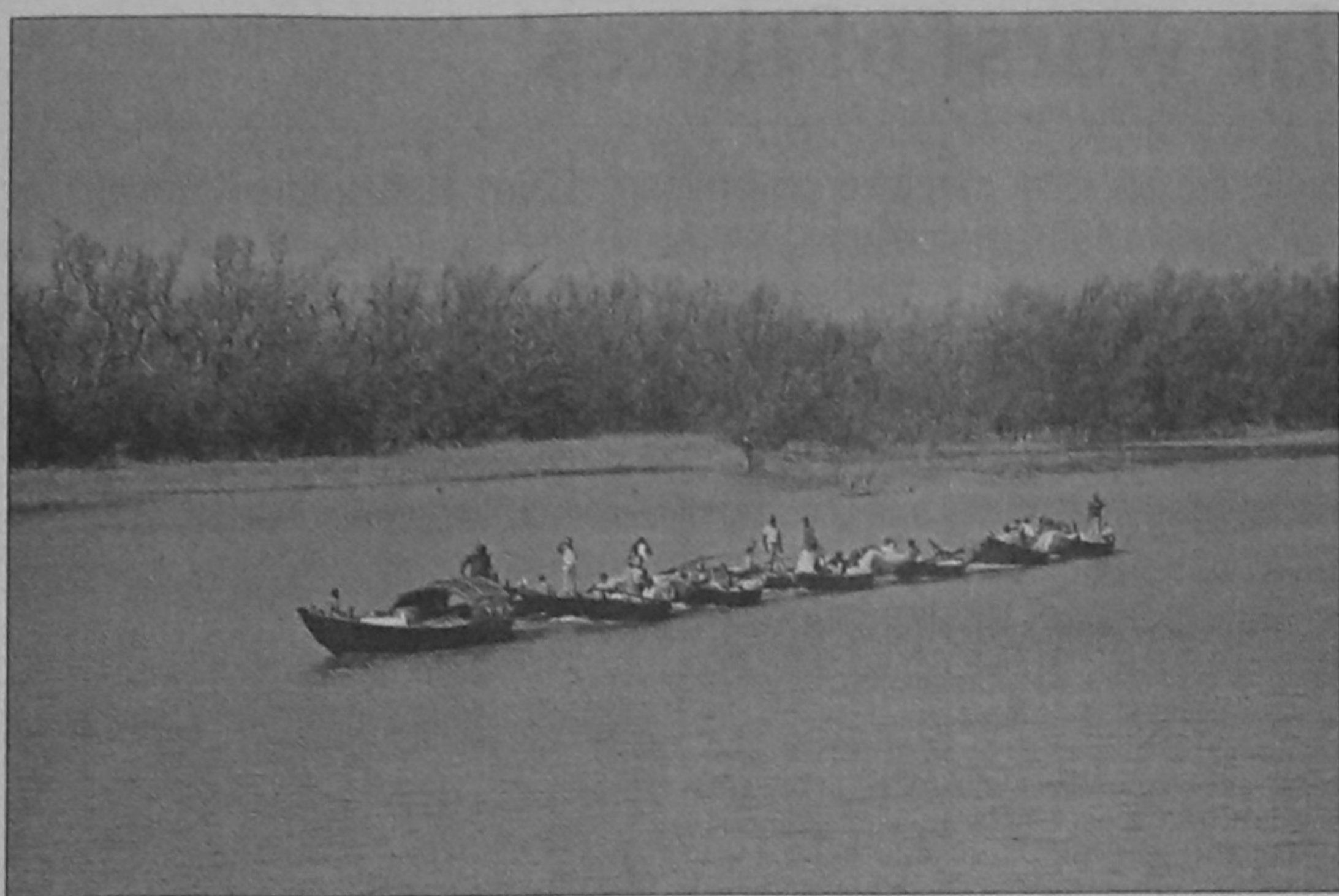


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

## Save the Sundarbans



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

The country and people of all walks of life are busy grappling with the high prices of essentials, traffic congestion and power failure in Dhaka and all over Bangladesh. Since Dhaka is the capital city the topics related to Dhaka get highlighted in all the print and electronic media.

Due to national politics, power failure and traffic congestions we often ignore the danger of the greenhouse effect which could put the millions of lives in Bangladesh at risk.

According to reports, average temperatures on Earth have increased by about 0.76 degree Celsius over the last 100 years, with most of this warming occurring in the past 20 years. This temperature rise appears little but little increase in temperature translates into big changes for the world's climate.

Due to change in climate, increase of saline water level and deforestation we understand that the lives of the humans are at stake, particularly those living in the coastal areas. Our wildlife, especially the Royal Bengal Tigers of the Sundarbans whose habitat is adjacent to the sea are among the most endangered species of the world without any doubt. Since the world is facing the above challenge, as Bangladeshis we do not know if there is any sort of action plan being taken by the Bangladesh govern-

ment or jointly with the Indian government to protect these majestic animals from extinction. Also there is no recent data available regarding the number of the tigers living in the Sundarbans.

The government, big business enterprises and the authorities concerned should immediately take necessary action to save these tigers along with the other endangered animals of Bangladesh by setting up a special zone in the Sundarbans or any island or at the CHT which can be the first wildlife park of the country and also a tourist place from where the government can earn revenues as well. The park will certainly help increase the tiger population and help stop poaching of the animals.

About 15 years ago, there was a census and it was learnt that the number of Royal Bengal Tigers living in the Sundarbans was around 500 which was an alarming figure. We do not know what is their number now, after the devastating Sidr.

To protect the tigers, an anti poaching law needs to be enacted. The government should ensure the safety of these tigers along with the rest of the wild animals we have all over Bangladesh.

Sohel Ahmed, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

### Retirement benefits

Considering the price hike, the Bangladesh government was kind enough to declare 20% D.A. from 1 July 2008, even for those who are enjoying LPR. Pension/gratuity benefits are calculated excluding this D.A. It is a known practice that D.A. is converted into basic pay only when the new pay scale is executed. In fact, those on LPR will be deprived of pension/gratuity benefits out of D.A. as soon as they go on pension.

Under the circumstances, I would request the Ministry of Finance to provide benefits out of D.A. in calculating pension/gratuity for the govt. servants on LPR now.

Md. Abdul Malek  
Agovt servant on LPR

### Overseas studies

There are some limitations in remitting foreign currency for the purpose of studying professional courses like ACCA. As a result, the students who want to pursue the course at home face serious problems. For example, some foreign banks are able to draw a draft only

for the initial registration for the ACCA but cannot remit for other exam-related payments, because there is no permission from the central bank. If this was allowed the students would not have faced such a situation.

So, the government should pay special attention to the matter, so that students can easily get a foreign degree staying at home.

S.M. Rumun  
West Nasirabad  
Pahartoli, Chittagong

### Careless walk on railway track

Thanks for your graphical picture on the subject (29 Oct.). It shows a hearing impaired (as reported) woman walking totally unaware on a railway track, with a passenger train approaching hardly fifty meters behind her, on the same track! The picture possibly confirms her hearing impairment, as she is totally unaware of the life threatening danger right behind her.

One wonders if she is also impaired in feelings in her foot, both of which were on adjacent

railway sleepers. She should have felt the slight vibration of the sleepers, with the train so close behind her. Or was she, by any chance, contemplating to commit suicide, though her expression in the very clear photograph does not suggest it. Such accidents if and when they happen are totally uncalled for, and the locomotive driver cannot be blamed for it. It can only cause irritating delay and sufferings for the train passengers. Finally, there is the totally unnecessary expenditure of taxpayers' time and money needed to be spent for the mandatory enquiry that follows such incidents, where no one but the victim is to be blamed!

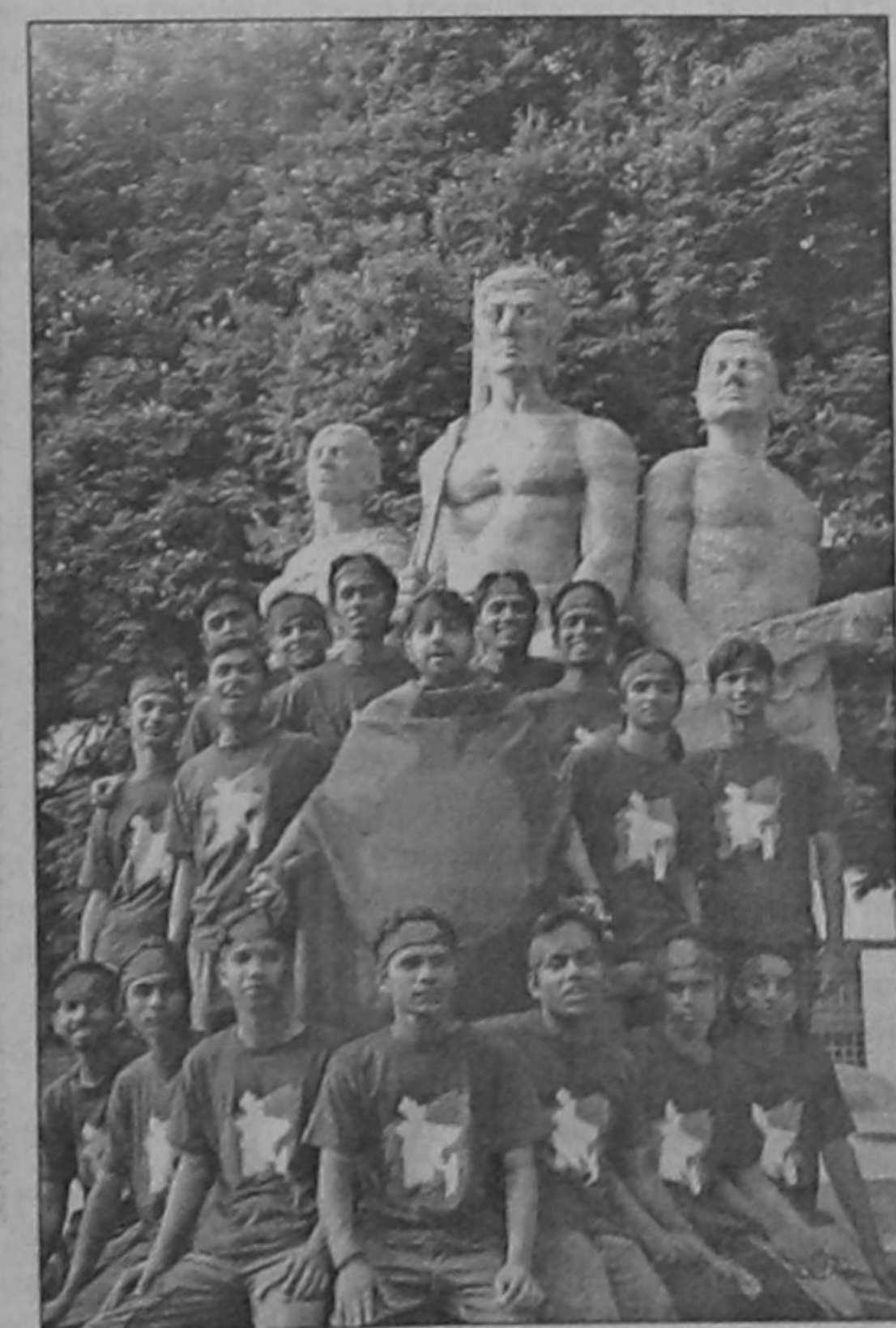
They couldn't care less. The woman is least bothered about the wrongs committed by her. The railway police can however take necessary legal action against her for hampering railway traffic, as provided by the laws.

They can easily identify the culprit by the clear photograph. Further, the time and place of the incident can be made available to them if they want to go for punitive action!

S.A. Mansoor  
Dhaka

## Fading glory of DU

Dhaka University--it could be said (and I suppose most of you will agree) is the soul of the country. Why? Because DU is partly the reason behind our independence. If the students of this university had not raised their voices against the Pakistanis, then probably we



would not have been independent (at least I would not have been sitting here writing this letter). In 1952, it was the students of this very university who made Bengali the state language of this country. Today we can speak in Bengali freely at school or at home because of those martyrs. And it is said that this fight for language finally led the way to our independence.

Though DU was the driving force behind our independence, strange as it might seem (but I do not fear to state), we have yet failed to express our gratitude to this university. The families of the great warriors are now living a precarious life. What else could be said? It is no longer the Oxford of the East. The DU which made the liberation of this country possible is now increasingly criticized by the people. In fact, it is no longer an educational institution. It is now the fertile ground of politics. So parents, even if they are happy that their children are the students of this university, yet again they are worried for the same reason.

The university is increasingly used by our politicians for their own benefits. It is now the centre of regular strikes, clashes between the students and the police and all such evils.

Furthermore, many of the students who had graduated from the DU failed to get good jobs.

What a pity!  
Shifat Nazmee  
Maple-Leaf International School  
Dhaka

### Bangladesh and Asian Highway

Recently many people are writing about the failure of the present Bangladesh government as well as previous regimes to sign as a member of the Asian Highway Network. Bangladesh did not ink the papers because of unfounded fear of allowing transit facilities to India. Bangladesh is insisting on diverting the road network through Myanmar, ultimately connecting with China. The recent lobbying of Bangladesh with the Myanmar government is yet to produce any positive results for our country. Legally, Bangladesh cannot lobby for changes in routes unless it becomes a member. Our position has been demoted to the status of observer from member.

Geographical location plays the most important part in the politico-economic-strategic-cultural aspects of a country. Bangladesh is tucked between South-East Asia and India. It literally connects these two regions. Bangladesh acts as a transit country for various purposes--smuggling, legal trading, travelling etc. We can utilize our transit country status to our advantage through a carefully orchestrated foreign policy. Any gas pipeline, road link etc. will give us more leverage and bargaining power with India, Myanmar, Thailand and other countries in the west and east. Bangladesh can convert a 'make belief disadvantage and fear' into a strong bargaining power.

In our opinion, the sooner Bangladesh ratifies and signs Asian Highway Network treaty, the better for the country. We do not want to be left out and become an outsider in our own vicinity, and be deprived of huge revenues.

SN Mamoon  
One-mail

### Enough is enough!

I am talking about our national cricket team captain. Bangladesh was fighting hard to save the match in Mirpur. The rain was a blessing and respite for us and for our failed captain. One need not mention anything about the performance of the captain as a batsman and team leader.

It was almost like a bombshell to us when the selectors declared the one day squad for SA, and Ashraf as the captain. I do not know why the selectors are retaining him as captain, despite his successive failures. Is there no alternate choice or Ashraf has a very strong backing?

I think the BCB has to share the blame of our failures. They do not seem to know how to run this organisation professionally and improve the standard, including individual performance by providing right and timely guidance. I do not know how much transparency is maintained in our selection procedures. Is the selection unbiased?

Enough is enough. It is time to say openly that please change the captain and try with an alternative. This might give Ashraf time to improve his performance as a batsman. Isn't failure opening the door for an ICL assignment?

A reader  
One-mail

### Child politics!

Some days ago a news report drew my attention. It was about a 15-year old boy who died in a clash between AL and BNP supporters, following a kabadi match in a village. The boy was quoted as an AL worker. How can a 15-year old become a political worker? He was not even mature enough to enter into student politics! But we see many teenagers being drawn into politics. During hartals, strikes or processions they are used as pickets.

We talk about banning child labour, what about 'child politics'?

Juhura Jamin Juha

Dept. of Business Administration  
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology  
Sylhet

### Baul sculptures

It is very unfortunate that the anti-liberation forces are trying to destroy our cultural heritage.

The attack on the Baul sculptures is a case in point.

Md. Foisal Khan  
A reader

### Mashrafe, our choice

The way Mashrafe and Shakib put their heads down and saved Bangladesh from the ignominy of following on in the two-day Test at Mirpur against New Zealand is really commendable. Both of them also showed great maturity in the Chittagong Test.

Shakib will ultimately make a good captain but he is very young now. Let us now make Mashrafe the captain for his guts to lead by example.

Let Ashraf fight for his place in the team. At the moment he seems to think that the country owes him the captaincy, whatever his output or lack of it and however irresponsible his batting is.

ABM Nurul Islam  
Gulshan-2, Dhaka

### Interesting discovery

It was earlier believed that staples like rice, wheat, barley, and legumes were the first domesticated crops. But Archaeobotanists at Harvard University and Bar-Ilan University have recently revealed a startling fact published in the Science Journal that fruit trees are the oldest known domesticated crops. According to their findings, the dawn of agriculture may have come with the domestication of fig trees in the Near East some 11,400 years ago!

Professor M Zahidul Haque  
Chairman  
Department of Agricultural  
Extension & Information System  
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural  
University  
Dhaka

### Nobel laureates and election

It is learnt from an email that 76 Nobel laureates from Science in America were in election campaign for Obama. This was an impressive message. People from every discipline should express their own opinions regarding selection of the leadership. It helps them to cross the barrier between the decision/policy makers and the professionals like scientists. Just because of lack of understanding, the country suffers, particularly the scientists. Nowadays, this problem comes up in almost all scientific events and lots of discussions are held on a regular basis.

We have lots to learn from the example of involvement of Science Nobel Laureates in American election. Where are we in respect of science and technology? Who are the scientists in Bangladesh?

Can we recognize anybody as a scientist in the country? There are some organisations responsible for scientific research. The researchers are designated as scientific officers but not as scientists. Can we call the university professors from science faculties 'Scientists'? We have not a single Nobel Laureate from scientific field. Who will solve these problems? Science is no more simple science which was the case in the past. Science has several dozens of branches now. Lots of conflicts have already started in the country and the opportunists are taking the advantage in the name of great scientists depriving the real ones.

We should remember 'a fool with a costly tool in hand is still a fool'. The reason is that the tool does not work, it is the man (technologist) who works. We will have to find out the real technologists from among us.

Science has its own language. We have to find out someone who understands the language of science and technology and can take the leadership to face the modern scientific world.

Lufor Rahman  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

### Baul statues

I commend Sayed Bayazid for his rational, unbiased views about the Baul statues issue published in a letter on 31 October. Ever since the statues were knocked down for whatever reasons, I have been reading comments, opinions of contributors, readers as well as reports of continuous protests by the cultural activists almost on a daily basis. The reason I appreciate Mr. Bayazid's views is that unlike most of those contributors, readers, protestors who have no hesitation whatsoever to term these 'mullahs' bigots, he has presented an acceptable, accurate account of the issue consistent with our democratic values.

It is noticeable that the word 'bigot' is frequently used to refer to the mullahs. Before we examine the validity of using such an unsavoury word, let me look up the meaning 'a prejudiced person who is intolerant of any opinions differing from his own (WordNet 3.0, © 2006 by Princeton University)'. In the light of this definition, we can conveniently and logically claim that the mullahs who are vehemently opposing the erection of statues are 'bigots'. These mullahs are principally driven by their own core set of values that do not sanction erecting statues, while those opponents of these mullahs, better known as cultural luminaries, are also influenced by some core beliefs that promote art, culture and freedom among other things.

Therefore, a conflict of ideology is inevitable and it has been as such. In a democratic society, to resolve such a conflict will be simply arranging a referendum, any proposal wins, it is resolved fully. However, it is unacceptable, undemocratic, illogical for the so called progressive writers/readers to use the word 'bigots' indiscriminately against the mullahs as, under the definition cited above, the former will also fall under the same category, simply because they are intolerant of the opinions of the mullahs! To conclude, we can comfortably accuse both the mullahs and their opponents as being intolerant, and it is surprising that whenever I see the word 'bigot' in your newspaper the writer almost always alludes to particularly one of the two opposing groups, why not the other one?

Ryan M. Haque  
West Rampura  
Wapda Road, Dhaka

## Snapshots of events

The last 15 days have been immensely significant for Bangladesh's political future. Why am I making this gross comment? Let me bring our attention to some recent events and Bangladesh related activities around the world. Event one: The Election Commission announced that they would not be able to announce election schedule (tafil) within the previously stipulated date. However, they claimed in a low voice that election would be held on 18 December. Event two: Sheikh Hasina meets Richard Boucher in his office. Event three: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arrives in Dhaka. The UN-SG meets the chief of staff of Bangladesh army. After the meeting the chief announces firmly that the

election is going to be held on 18 December without any doubt. Event four: the EC announces the polls fixture. Future direction: the CTG assures the UN chief of credible polls.

Here lie all the events in two different parts of the world. Some say how Sheikh Hasina could spend her days abroad while the country was in dire straits!!

Nevertheless, we hope something positive will happen.

Shuddhasattwa Rafiq  
Assistant Professor, Jahangirnagar University  
PhD Student, Curtin University of Technology, Australia



MUNEM WASIF / DRINKNEWS

### Dhaka Zoo

Eight newly procured animals have died in Dhaka Zoo. The Ministry of Fisheries & Livestock allotted Tk5.5 crore for the purchase of the new inmates. A total of 87 animals were added. Of the total, 27 rare species were bought from South Africa. Death of these eight animals caused the government a loss of Tk 60 lakh so far.

That raises questions about the zoo's management and capability of taking care of such animals. The government should look into the matter seriously.

S.M. Shamim-Ur-Rashid Tushar  
Department of Business  
Administration  
Shahjalal University, Sylhet

### Foreign intervention

I have been observing with keen interest the political developments in Bangladesh over the last 30 years. I was there on Jan 11, 2006 and stayed a whole year. I was extremely disturbed by the blatant interference of the British, Americans, European Union countries in our domestic affairs.

I saw the news about former prime minister Hasina's meeting in Washington with a US Under Secretary. I think Hasina should have advised him to worry about the US election and not our election. There are many allegations of corruption and fixing the election in the US and they are telling us how we should conduct our elections.

People living in glass houses

### Politics and religion

I watched from my home in UK Mr. George Hargrave on Revelation TV channel at 2.30pm on Sunday 02 November 2008. He is the President of Christian Peoples Party which is a registered as a political party in the United Kingdom. The leader was explaining how his political party being a party having faith in Gospel, Trinity and Jesus could still ask for votes from people from all religions and faiths. He also mentioned that as Christianity was based in the belief of God and service of mankind, it should apply to all humanity in UK.

I wonder what is the logic behind banning religious political parties from being registered in Bangladesh. I personally do not endorse the Jamaat's role during the liberation war but if they openly shun their anti-liberation stand and apologise to the nation

and offer their pledge for the security of the nation against any foreign power and also bring their own anti-war criminals to question, I will also support the right of the Jamaat to freely preach their political beliefs and to participate in elections. None should be ridiculed for apologising for mistakes as that hinders the way for reconciliation.

Any ideology, if suppressed, it is human nature to grow more curious about it and that opens up doors for preaching of misconceptions against it and even by it. There are innumerable political parties in the West which are based on their religious beliefs.

Mufassil Islam  
Human Rights Advocate  
President and CEO  
Law Offices of Islam and Associates  
International  
UK

Shining Warriors

Congratulations to Dhaka Warriors for their third win in the ICL! It was a great pleasure to watch and follow a team from Bangladesh. The point is that they are doing well. In a recent picture posted in cricinfo, you can see how happy and exuberant these players look, while our national players always carry a look of fear and intimidation on them.

This is what cricket is all about - fun!

Mohammed Rashed  
One-mail

## Tourism sector



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

The tourism sector in Bangladesh has great potential. In Bangladesh we have many natural beauty spots like the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forests in the world, and Cox's Bazar which is the longest sea beach. Many domestic tourists visit these places but the number of foreign tourists has declined significantly.

For popularising the tourist spots, the govt should develop infrastructure like better communication, international standard hotels, motels and so on. If the govt takes the neces-

sary steps to develop the tourism sector, foreign tourists will come to Bangladesh in much larger numbers.

This sector will help increase our GDP as in Nepal and Thailand.

So, we are very optimistic that the government will take immediate steps to develop this sector and the private sector will also come forward for better development of tourism.

Md. Mahiuddin  
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology  
Sylhet