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## The mangrove forests

The Sundarbans is one of the most beautiful and largest mangrove forests in Bangladesh and it is the largest remaining tract of mangrove forests in the world. The forest covers 10,000km of which about 6,000 are in Bangladesh. It became inscribed as a UNESCO world heritage site in 1997. Royal Bengal Tiger as well as numerous fauna including different species of birds, spotted deer, crocodiles and snakes etc are found here. But the bad news is that the Sundarbans has a population of over 4 million and they are spoiling its beauty. The population pressure resulted in half of this eco-region's mangrove forests cut down to supply the fuel wood. Other natural resources are also extracted from these forests by this large population. The Sundarbans play an important role in the economy of the south-western region of Bangladesh as well as in the national economy. Now it is contesting to be a part of the Seven Wonders of the World.



KALIM SHANTU / DRINKNEWS

Therefore, it is high time for the govt to take proper steps to save the beautiful mangrove forests and ensure all kinds of facilities for the tourists and it is up to us to vote for the Sundarbans to keep it in the contest of the Seven Wonders of the world.

**Mohammed Jamal Uddin**  
Dept. of English  
International Islamic University  
Chittagong

When the whole world is fighting on the most hyper sensitive issue of climate change and speaks out to preserve forests properly, India has declared that it will construct another dam on a river in the Sundarbans.

Bangladesh as well as the whole world should stand firmly against it.

**Mahmud Ali Kabir**  
Ex-BSS correspondent  
Social worker  
Gopalganj

## Between chaos and confusion!

Failure of the traffic light based automated system of traffic management was reported in the front page of most dailies on November 23. This is nothing but the natural result of most drivers' normal response to usual traffic management system, where hand signals by traffic policemen supersedes traffic lights! Drivers are used to manual traffic control, so even with the red light they will go on driving! They naturally wait for the whistle and hand signal before stopping! This is what they have been used to at all times.

It will take time, for the drivers to come to terms with the automated version of controlling traffic by signal lights only. This habit has been created by our traffic policemen on duty at road crossings! Blaming drivers for not stopping when the red light is on will not do; as they are used to police signals before stopping! This is the result of our manned traffic management by hand signals, because more often than not, traffic policemen give signals contrary to what the lights indicate, allowing cars to pass when the signal is red, and stopping when it is green! That is, the fact of life, of our traffic management, whether we like it or not!

Another important aspect is that what will happen when there is no policeman for traffic control, and traffic lights are not operating because there is no power? In effect, given our poor power situation, we have to go along with the present management-- policemen plus traffic lights. Before going for automatic light based traffic management, we must ensure that traffic lights have power, on a 24x7 hour basis. This is the first priority. Unfortunately, as usual, we have put the cart before the horse!

Now we are between the devil and the deep blue sea. In our case between the hand traffic signal and the signal light! Which one to follow, is anyone's guess. I believe that the uniform will overrule all signals- red, yellow or green! Traffic confusion will now be compounded! May be we will need a digital solution for it, with traffic lights controlling vehicle brakes! But where is the electric power which is the root of all things digital? Hopefully, the Hon. PM is aware of this, another bitter fact of life in Bangladesh!

**S.A. Mansoor**  
Dhaka

## Mugging on the rise

A mugging story on a busy road of the Dhaka city is basically a glaring evidence of poor law and order situation in our country, especially in Dhaka.

At 8:00am 24.11.09, I with my friend Mamun and two of his colleagues went to Rifles Square at Philkhana Gate for shopping. With a plan in mind to go inside Rifles Square, we were having tea near Philkhana Gate. At that time

one of my friend's colleagues said that he had to meet with a client of his company on the other side of the road in front of the Ibne Sina Hospital. My friend and two of his colleagues went to meet that client. They kept me waiting in front of the tea-stall. They were supposed to come back within five minutes. After waiting for fifteen minutes, I entered a fashion house nearby still waiting for them to come back. After five minutes when I came back, I saw that my friend was sitting on a rickshaw and was waiting for me. When I came nearer to him I noticed there was something wrong. His face was gloomy. There was blood in his lips. One of his legs was severely injured which was probably deliberately done by muggers so that he would not be able to follow them. When he and his colleagues crossed the road, a man running from the opposite direction sprayed something like smoke in his eyes and other man hit him from the behind with something hard and he fell down on the road. A total 7-8 persons began to beat him and started to snatch all his possessions. They snatched his mobile, moneybag etc. They did the whole thing at such speed that he could not see anyone's face. The muggers took less than one minute to accomplish the whole task and ran away from the scene.

Afterwards, we tried to call my friend's colleagues over mobile but those were switched off. Later, we came to know that they were also snatched and beaten up severely at the same time the same way.

I think it is the high time for the government to address these kinds of public grievances.

**Sheikh Habibur Rahman**  
Adabar, Dhaka

## Climate change and we

One of the UK's best known scientists, Professor James Lovelock, says only a catastrophe will prompt the world to tackle the threat of climate change seriously. He also said: In late 1930 when I was a student we knew that war was imminent, but there was no clear idea of what to do about it. We think that something unpleasant may soon happen but we are as confused over what to do about it as we were in 1938. Our response so far is just an attempt to appease.

Until a few years ago, the words Tsunami, Sidr, Aila etc were virtually unknown in our country, but there can be few who do not know what awesome consequences can result from such natural disasters. In addition, seawater would penetrate the country's fertile land and ruin thousands of hectares of cultivable land in the coastal areas. Our land will no longer be able to produce any crop, as it will be repeatedly washed away by salty water. There will be no existence of the Sundarbans (The world's largest mangrove forest & a recognized site of world heritage) which would

bring a great ecological imbalance; the most crucial problem that is likely to appear is food and habitat crisis in our country.

So, corrective measures need to be adopted on a top priority basis.

**Mohammad Mizanur Rahman**  
Botanist and researcher

## Rich are always right

I am not at all religious, but even I was flabbergasted seeing the distorted mentality of people. The other day I was coming back home from Dhanmondi when I saw a bus sporting a nice advertisement on its back. The advertisement informed consumers about the chance to get a free butcher for the upcoming Eid if they answered a very clever question.

My point is, have we completely lost our mind that marketers would think a gimmick like this based on a holy day would work? I mean, is it not bad enough that we try to enhance our social position by buying cows worth thousands? Eid is no longer the sacred occasion it once used to be. We go to the mosque in the morning, but do we really pray?

I hate the way the people are silent on the total mockery made at every step of our social ladder.

**Asifur Rahman Khan**  
One-mail

## Cox's Bazar

We can and we build the mega sea beach from Cox's Bazar to Teknaf as Asia's greatest tourist attraction. If Tajmahal is Asia's most beautiful monument and people from all over the world flock to Agra, why does the most panoramic and longest sea beach of Cox's Bazar of Bangladesh fail to quench the thirst of the people all over the globe?

We need an international airport in Cox's Bazar, a broad gauge railway line from Chittagong to Cox's Bazar, the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar must be widened and modernised. Behind Cox's Bazar-Teknaf hills range, which stand like a Berlin wall between Bay of Bengal and Cox's Bazar hotels, motels and restaurants may be constructed, a 100 feet side road for beach drive from Cox's Bazar to Teknaf may also be constructed. There should not be any hill cutting, cutting of trees and removal of rocks on the beach side.

St. Martin Island, Moheshkhali island and Sonadia island may be linked with mainland with ships, speed boats and house boats.

All that glitters is not gold. How and where from would money come for construction, renovation and beautification of Cox's Bazar?

Where there is a will there is a way. Rome was not built in a day. Thousands of tourists visit Cox's Bazar every year. If we improve facilities and amenities millions of domestic and foreign tourists will visit Cox's Bazar in the future.

**O.H. Kabir**  
Wari, Dhaka

## Corporate governance

Corporate governance has become a buzzword in the corporate world, especially when the latest global financial crisis originated in the U.S.A. due to poor governance of financial institutions. Therefore, recently corporate governance which replicates a mechanism to mitigate the conflict of interests among the stakeholders of a corporation, has also received increased attention from our regulatory bodies.

In spite of some progress being made in the area of corporate governance, most of the companies' entrepreneurs and top management have misconceptions about corporate governance. Due to the poor implementation of corporate governance, Bangladesh is quite below the mark of the standard of corporate governance maintained by the neighbouring countries as well as global economy.

One of the reasons for slow progress in adopting corporate governance is that still now most of the companies are family oriented. Such concentration of ownership hinders effective implementation of corporate governance. Rights of the shareholders are of paramount importance in corporate governance. Shareholders' rights are reflected in the AGMs where shareholders can participate in decision making concerning fundamental corporate changes through their votes. The voting rights of the minority shareholders should be protected.

Board members and management should disclose material information and there should be a scope for disclosing the same. Non-executive or independent directors should be appointed by the companies so that the board and the management will have specialist experience as well as independent appraisal.

Corporate governance is gradually being implemented by the corporate houses and regulators should have a strong role in implementing the same.

**Md. Abu Sufian**  
Department of Finance  
University of Dhaka

## Historic verdict

After the historic Supreme Court verdict on the killing of Sheikh Mujib many people have claimed that it's a glorious triumph of the rule of law in Bangladesh. However, we must not forget that this verdict was made possible because its facilitation was one of the foremost priorities of the ruling party. The family members of the incumbent prime minister were the direct victims of the brutal massacre of 1975. Obviously, no one can possibly condone the killers of

his/her family members and as the most powerful person of the nation she was firmly determined to bring the killers to justice.

I think it won't be wise to regard this verdict as the ultimate triumph of 'the rule of law' because I have strong doubts whether this verdict would have been made possible so promptly, if the Awami League had not been in the state power. We observed that previously several ruling governments delayed justice and created obstacles in the way of unfettered proceedings of the case. I think today this verdict was made possible not because of the supremacy of the rule of law, but because of the fact that the relatives of the victims of this gruesome killing hold the supreme political power in the country. And it's apparent that in Bangladesh in order to ensure fair justice everyone needs (no matter how renowned he/she might be) political power and influence. Factually speaking, we can't claim that our 'rule of law' is strong enough to ensure justice for every ordinary citizen of the country, unless the victims possess significant political authority.

Sheikh Hasina, despite being one of the most notable personalities of the country, could only ensure justice for herself after she had secured the supreme political power. It clearly proves that in this country only those who are politically influential can generally get fair justice.

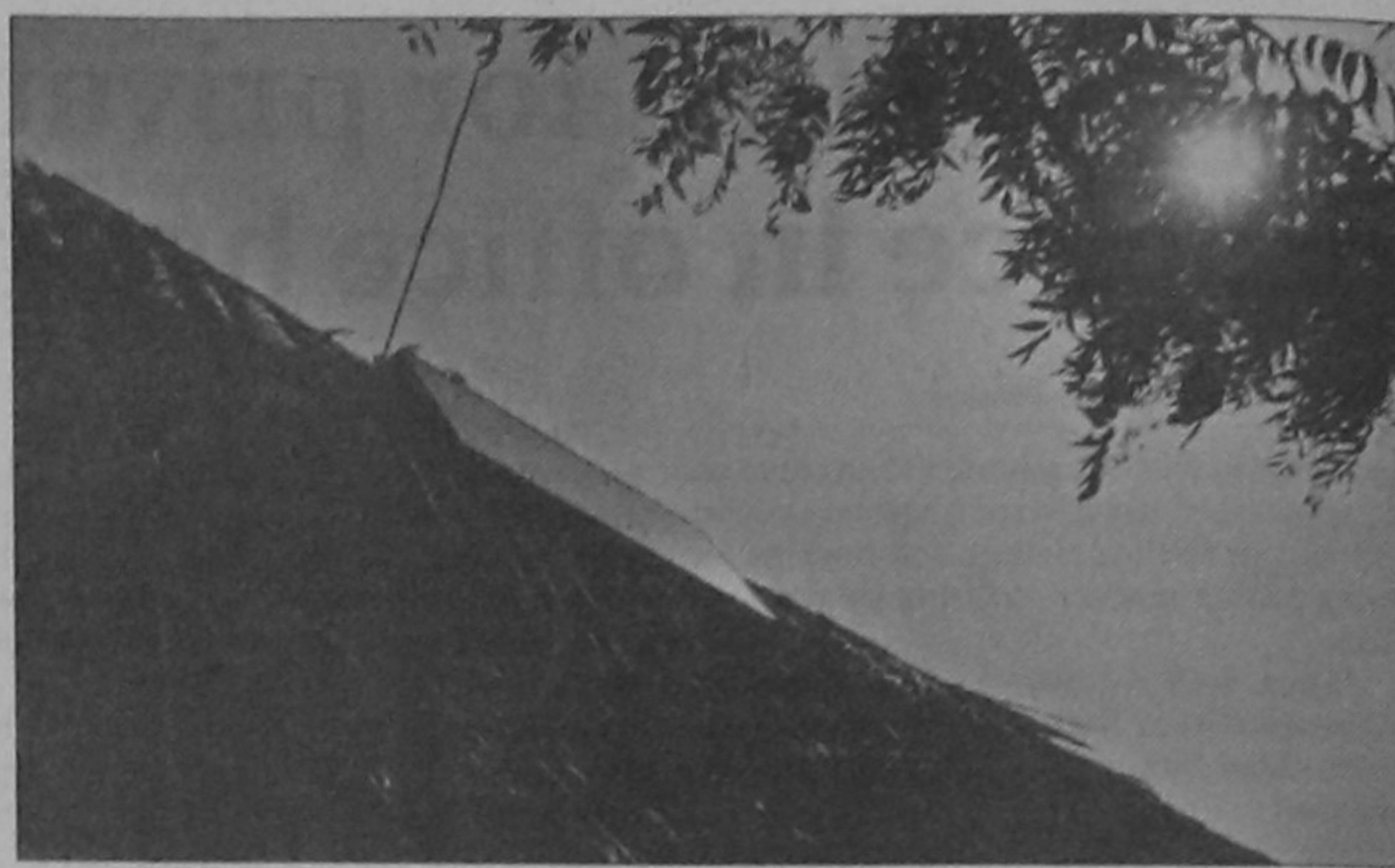
I have strong doubts whether Sheikh Hasina would have been able to get justice after so many years, if she had been an ordinary citizen. We surely can't be certain about that. If ever such a day comes when we'll be absolutely certain that every ordinary Bangladeshi will get fair justice, only on that day it will be wise for us to glorify the ultimate triumph of our judiciary and the rule of law.

**Kh. Asef Safa Kabir**  
Muhammadpur, Dhaka

## Poisoning of the PM?

Well, in the careless utterances (or mutterings) of many of our great leaders vagaries abound. I would have given the whole episode a rather farcical pass. But the fact that the question was raised by the personal physician (I suppose he is competent and more of a doctor than a politician) of a sitting PM, it becomes an issue of national importance and of national security. This needs to be delved further, and if true, proper medical and legal intervention is in order.

I am privy only to the information percolated through the media. There was a lot of hue and cry as to the serious nature of Sheikh Hasina's hearing. At the same time, it was also reported that she was suffering from skin allergies



AZIZUR RAHIM PEU / DRINKNEWS

## Wind and solar power

I am writing with reference to the piece "Nuclear generator" by Engineer Shafi Ahmed (Dec. 1).

Engineer Shafi Ahmed is absolutely right when he says: "Bangladesh is prone to earthquakes and other natural phenomena like storms, floods, cyclones, tsunamis, sudden erosion by rivers, landslides etc, in addition to its lack of properly trained and motivated manpower to run and maintain a nuclear power station. So the danger of a failure in such a densely populated country or its risk assessment is beyond thinking."

In fact, nuclear power is a highly controversial source of energy even in a country as advanced as Canada. Although the province of Ontario, where I live, derives most of its power from nuclear reactors built decades ago, it is facing growing public opposition due to environmental and security

concerns. Contrary to the nuclear lobby, nuclear energy is not a clean energy. Uranium mining is highly carbon intensive and leaves behind highly toxic trails. Nuclear reactors are also a target of terrorist attacks and even a minor accident in a reactor may cause panic and huge economic dislocation.

Moreover, a tropical country like Bangladesh is sitting on a gold mine of solar and wind energy. With mostly sunny days, Bangladesh should harness solar energy on a mass scale. Bangladesh should seek Chinese help to harness solar energy. China is the biggest producer of solar panels in the world. And it will help both Bangladesh and China to develop solar energy on a mass scale. The same applies to wind energy.

**Mahmood Elahi**  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

(described as "swellings" in newspapers). Well, the causes of such skin lesions are myriad. Only a good history (by a competent physician) and few laboratory tests often can reveal the real etiology. Even a year later, history and laboratory evaluation can be obtained with a reasonable accuracy for diagnosis. However, it is a medical fact that in a large number of patients, the exact cause of such skin problems remains elusive forever.

It is true that the patient was allowed to travel to the United States after the alleged poisoning. If there was an iota of question in the mind of the honourable advisor cum personal physician, it was his professional duty to communicate the issue, at least, privately to the patient, who in turn could have discussed that with her physicians in the United States. And evaluation of chronic poisoning would have been thorough and unfettered in the United States.

I am an allergist-immunologist. I can talk volumes about her skin swellings, but it is not my forte to

opine about possible chronic poisoning. But given the fact that the patient herself is doing great and has not uttered a single word vis-à-vis "poisoning", I am inclined to believe that the whole "poisoning saga" is nothing more than another sorry political twist.

But, if this is true, the Prime Minister should definitely check in with a competent physician for the country needs her service until her term expires.

**Mohammad Zaman**  
Ellisville, Missouri

## Gender equality

Women have basically achieved parity in participation in most areas of undergraduate and coursework postgraduate study. However, there are still some areas such as engineering and architecture where women are under-represented. Again, there are fewer women these days undertaking post graduate study. This is partly due to financial restraints and less funding options to undertake

this level of study. We feel more emphasis is required to make all careers at all levels of education more accessible to women. Girls in general have excellent completion rates and results at junior and senior high school level.

One of the main legislative advances made in the past decade is making it illegal to dismiss an employee because of pregnancy. Legislation also attempts to ensure her entitlement to return to employment after a period of paid or unpaid maternity leave, but there has been little attempt to review the practical efficacy of this legislation. Moreover, the positive effect of this development is probably outweighed by the failure to introduce universal paid maternity leave. We support the government's idea of combining gender mainstreaming and gender specific measures to accelerate equality for women.

**Mohammad Rajja**  
Member  
Nepal Student Society  
Dhaka

## Launch disasters



I refer to various letters, articles, comments etc., on this tragic matter from home and abroad. This and practically all other ills of our hapless society can be traced to the relentless force of 'Population Pressure' on our resources and psyche. In our country human life seems to the cheapest commodity and this accords with the laws of economics that the value of any commodity is dependent on its 'relative scarcity'. Successive governments in Bangladesh have failed to curb the explosion of population as a priority, often misguidedly believing that a large population is a source of economic strength. So people are what we now have in utmost abundance on every square foot of soil or water surface of Bangladesh, and that is why according to the economic principle it is now the cheapest commodity. It is no wonder people are dying on the roads, the rivers, of

malnutrition and ill health, and as victims of criminal gangs, unbridled corruption, extortion, etc.

The firm lead for population control, and ease from population pressure must come from the government and the intelligentsia, and all political parties must support this programme wholeheartedly for the sake of the nation whether they are in power or not. A much larger part of the national budget and more intensive and accountable efforts must be taken up to achieve a negative growth of population and better health of people, so that human life becomes the most precious commodity rather than the cheapest. There is no time for hand wringing or procrastination. The government and other political parties must combine their sorrow to start now!

**Engineer Shafi Ahmed**  
London, UK

Launch disasters have become common during any major festival. Due to the negligence of some corrupt and insensible people so many lives are lost every year. The authorities are turning a blind eye to the problem and no action has been taken against those criminals.

We can never say that these disasters occur naturally, there are a number of reasons behind these including the irresponsibility of the authorities and unreliable behaviours of launch owners in a captive market. The government should take immediate measures for establishing a risk free riverine transport system and eradicate the irregularities and corruption.

It is a pathetic sight to see people waiting for the dead bodies of their loved ones, or children, rescued sans parents, wailing on the dead bodies. One such incident can ruin one's entire life.

Can't we deploy additional magistrates and police forces to oversee operation of river vessels during major festivals and also during nor'wester seasons?

**Badal Hasib**  
SIBT, Sylhet

To be homebound during vacation is the natural urge of people and on these days people want to spend their time with their near and dear ones. And sometimes for coming home, they risk their lives boarding overloaded vessels and vehicles.

If we become a little bit conscious regarding the matter, we can escape such situations.

**Bipra Kanungo**  
Momin road, Chittagong