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Dying lifeline

Our country is an agricultural one. The prosperity of agriculture depends on rivers. The rivers, in short, are the sources of our wealth as well. Regrettably, the rivers are presently being grabbed by some unscrupulous and influential encroachers. Water of the rivers is being gradually polluted by

the wastes dumped by mills and factories.

The authorities concerned need to take proper steps soon to save the rivers and punish those responsible for destroying our waterbodies.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Chittagong



AMADULL HUQ / DRINKNEWS

Nuclear power plant

The government is soon going to sign a deal with Russia for setting up a nuclear power plant in Bangladesh. As a matter of fact, we are not against it. However, we urge upon the government to take a technical decision on the matter, rather than a political or bureaucratic decision. Nuclear power plant is a very complex establishment and we have virtually no experience about it. So, before embarking upon the project please do prepare a feasibility report on the project. Nuclear power plant is a water hungry project. Estimate the water requirement for the project and see whether the location, presumably Rooppur, which is in the driest part of Bangladesh may have such huge source of water to cater to the needs of the plant. Globally, nuclear power projects are located far away from human habitation for obvious reasons. In India, all their nuclear projects are in the desert areas. Bangladesh has no desert and it is the most densely populated country in the world. Whether a nuclear project will be feasible in such a populous country that needs to be assessed with the utmost importance. How we are going to dump the radioactive nuclear fuel wastes? What is the source of fuel i.e. enriched uranium? Are we going to be subservient to a particular country for source of fuel which is knowingly available with only Russia, USA, UK, and France? The planning process also demands a feasibility study to be made before undertaking any such a billion dollar project. The study will address all aspects of the project including capacity, source of fuel, reactor building technology, radioactive waste dumping method, investment and operation cost, cost of generation, profitability, comparison with conventional power plants, life of the plant, combating hazards and accident, environmental impact etc.

After the feasibility report is prepared, it will be easier for the decision makers to decide the appropriate course of action. So, we request the

government to move professionally with the project, rather than taking any hasty politically biased decision. Because that may be disastrous and irreversible.

Engr. Abdul Wadud
Head, Deptt. of Mech. Engg., IUBAT

Save agricultural land

At present, real estate business is becoming tremendously popular. Developers destroy cultivable land for making high-rise building. If this situation goes on, what will be happen to our next generation? A statistical report said that Bangladesh would lose all its cultivable land by 2050, if we do not keep things under control.

As a representative of conscious people, I would request the Board of REHAB to think deeply about this point.

Sala Uddin Ahmad
MBA, Marketing
Chittagong University

VoIP and budget

In this era, till to date we have been unable to adopt a most up to date technology --voice over internet protocol (VoIP). The real scenario proves that it has huge demand in market. So, the businessmen are being involved in this illegal business. Unfortunately, successive governments have totally failed to take necessary and timely steps in this regard. Yes, they have taken some steps to confiscate the instruments, arrest some involved people. Besides, they have stopped investment of thousands of crores of taka and banned licence of some companies. Is it a realistic approach? Certainly not.

The very popular and acceptable slogan of this government, from election campaign to the present, is transforming the country to a digital Bangladesh. What are they doing in case of the most up to date digital communication technology like VoIP? One and a half years for a digit-friendly government is not so trivial a time to formulate an acceptable policy and open the services to all.

Moreover, it will be a lucrative source of government

revenue also. To initiate the process, if funds are required, the government should allocate that portion in the upcoming budget. The product has high demand, stakeholders are ready to cooperate but till now our authorities are not that active. It's really frustrating.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Business Administration
Shahjalal University, Sylhet

Begum Zia on war crimes

The other day Begum Zia again made her position clear that she is dead against the trial of war criminals (local collaborators of Pakistani soldiers) as she said that bringing the criminals to justice would 'divide the nation'. The nation is already divided between pro-BNP and pro-AL, and there is no denying that late Ziaur Rahman did sow the seed of division by forsaking the ideals of our liberation war, by amending the constitution and by rehabilitating the members of the banned religious parties (anti-state elements). He made it possible for the number one war criminal Golan Azam, a Pakistani citizen, to come to Dhaka and gave him all protection. He made Shah Azizur Rahman who led the Pakistani delegation to the UN in 1971 to thwart the birth of this nation as Independent Bangladesh, the Prime Minister, and some Rajakars were made his cabinet ministers. Remember, Begum Zia only followed the suit of her late husband and accorded Golan Azam Bangladeshi citizenship and made the latter's disciples, Nizami and Mojaheed, who worked with the Pakistani soldiers to save their beloved Pakistan, ministers. In Begum Zia's first term of rule one of the most celebrated and venerated ladies of Bangladesh, Jahan Ara Imam formed Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee and in 1994 held a public trial in the Race Course (now Suhrawardy Uddayan) and with endorsement of lakhs of people present she awarded symbolic capital punishment to Golan Azam and gong, Begum Zia, with the

same mindset of her late husband, brought treason charges against Jahanara Imam and other members of the GDNC. To please the collaborators and their master Pakistan, Begum Zia did not withdraw the case as she kept no secret about her prejudice with the anti-state elements and Jahanara Imam died with the treason charge on her person.

The demand for war crimes trial is not a new issue.

A.H. Dewan
Dhaka Cantt., Dhaka

Hard or soft copy!

The 'computerese' language is rather at contradiction with physical realities! Any writing stored in the 'computer disc', known as 'CD' is called 'Soft Copy'. For reading in paper it is usually printed out. However the printed out copy, unexplainably, is called 'Hard Copy'; while the material retained in the computer CD, is called 'Soft Copy'! Funnily enough, the 'Hard Copy', is printed in soft paper; while the original copy in the hard computer disc (CD) is called 'Soft Copy'! What a paradox in computerese vocabulary, in the words chosen to represent these copies, in two places!

In the world of 'computerese'; hard materials like the CD, is called 'soft'; while the print-out on soft paper, is called 'hard'; relating to where the copies are retained, and can later be found!

Can any knowledgeable reader, elucidate the reason or tradition that has gone in this interesting inversion of words? It will be of interest to many, with whom I have discussed the matter, with no satisfactory explanation on it! Is it a clash of 'technology' and 'language'?

Engr. S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Environment Day

This 5 June, World Environment Day will be observed nationwide through various programmes arranged by different organisations. But this day is not significant only for the people related to such associations or clubs, rather for all and sundry. Because we all share the same earth and if the environment continues to get damaged, all will be affected equally.

So, it is our duty to try as much as we can to help save the environment. Indeed, one of the easiest, yet most significant, contribution can be planting a tree.

Let each of us vow to plant at least one tree sapling on 5 June and take care of it till the next 5 June, when we will have the chance to plant another one.

Shahriar Kabir
HSC Examinee 2010
Notre Dame College
Dhaka

Directory of women leaders

This refers to a news item in The Daily Star of the 16th instant.

It is heartening and encouraging to learn from the above news item that a directory named - "Who's Who: Women Leaders at a Glance" has been launched which contains names of the women leaders plus their accomplishments and other details.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Bangladesh Alliance for Women Leadership (BDAWL) for undertaking such an

important project to create the unique women leaders' directory in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute and the Melvin and Bren Simon Foundation.

The first ever directory contains 134 biographies of women leaders of Bangladesh engaged in different sectors. This directory, I am sure, will help our nation to get acquainted with those women leaders who made outstanding contributions in their respective fields.

It is sincerely expected that the government of Bangladesh in particular, and society in general, will utilize the expertise of these top women leaders for ensuring the socio-economic development of our country.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Mobile butcher

More or less everybody residing in Dhaka is familiar with the sight of different kinds of vendors, so am I.

The other day while going through Dhanmondi in the morning, I came across an unfamiliar sight. I saw a man probably a butcher by profession moving around with a rickshaw van displaying his merchandise i.e. meat. In my fifty years I have never come across such a sight-- a vendor displaying different parts of a slaughtered animal hung on ropes all over the rickshaw van.

Bangladeshis are really innovative, can respond well to the requirement of time, whether good or bad. These days it has almost become impossible for a gentleman or a lady to go to a kitchen market for shopping for so many different reasons. And here comes the Bangladeshi innovators meeting the needs of time.

Who knows what vendors are waiting in the pipeline for meeting our future needs.

Saleh Mohammad Ayub
Kalabagan, Dhaka

State mechanism

Political scientist Rousseau in his 'Social Contract' mentioned that people create state through the common will for emancipating themselves from brutal & unruly life. True enough. People create state for leading a calm & peaceful life. But, in effect, the existing state system conveys a different message. Rape, slaughter, mutilation are very common phenomena in our modern democratic state. State mechanism makes us corrupt, dishonest & unruly. No jobs (in most cases) & licences can be obtained without paying something. For example- motorcycle driving licence is mandatory to get a job in some non-governmental organisations. But it is not easy to get through fair means.

Liton Roy
Development worker
CNRS-Maxwell Stamp Ltd
Association
Sukh-Santir Bazar
Gaibandha

WIEF language

I have checked the official website of the WIEF to find out exactly what the official languages of the organisation are. I am sorry to say that I failed to get the information. I would appreciate if any readers would kindly help me giving the said information. I wonder whether Bangla could be added to the list for us to speak in Bangla more elo-

quently and add necessary extempore beyond the official script written by the speech writer for our leader participating in the conference.

I am also curious to know what kind of translation facilities are available in the WIEF to assist speakers speaking in their national language not covered by the official language/languages of the WIEF.

Faqrul Quadir
California, USA

Foot bridge at Banani

Some buses coming to and from Dhaka stop at zebra crossing, Banani. Besides, people also need to cross the road at that point. But it is very difficult to cross the road because of the heavy movement of the speeding traffic. There is zebra crossing, there are some traffic policemen to help people cross the road, but these are inadequate in absence of a foot bridge. Such bridge has multiple advantages--traffic can move uninterrupted and thereby people can save time. Secondly, people can cross the road safely through such bridge.

Hope the authorities concerned will kindly look into the issue in all seriousness.

Abu Imran
One-mail

Irene Khan

International human rights advocate Irene Khan has joined DS. That's great news for us.

I wish her all the best.

Rahad
JNU

Robbing the poor!

As part of his budget plan, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed eliminating IHSS, the state's fastest-growing social services program, which pays caregivers to help the disabled and the frail elderly. Nearly half a million disabled Californians get subsidized home care.

Without IHSS, many current clients would be forced to move to skilled-nursing centres. Nursing homes cost five times as much per IHSS client. The number of skilled-nursing-centre beds has dwindled through the years as IHSS' success has grown at helping the elderly continue living independently.

I was thinking about California being on the brink and going bankrupt. They can't go on robbing the poor and helping the rich, and get by with it! And that's exactly what this California economy has been doing for years. California kept borrowing money and selling bonds and borrowing more money and all that kind of stuff. Well, people will trust you so long, and then they quit trusting your ability to ever pay it back. So if you keep living on borrowed money, there comes a day when you have to pay it back when those bonds begin to come due. These debts begin to come due with all their big high interest rates and California didn't have the money to pay them back. So we've been robbing the poor. Well that's what happened to California: It's been going on for years.

Ted Rudow III, MA
One-mail

ACC

The cabinet recently decided that laws are going to be amended pertaining to the Anti-Corruption Commission's power to file a case against any government official regarding his/her corruption. The proposed law may weaken the power of the existing commission, as the commission will be required to take permission from the ministry concerned prior to filing a case against government officials. If the cases are proved false, the complainant will face dire consequences, with up to five-year rigorous imprisonment. The idea may not help contain pervasive corruption prevailing in every nook and cranny of society, and the govt's dream of digitalizing the country will remain a dream only.

Without transparency and accountability, no democratic organ can flourish. And without these organs, no democracy and therefore no sustainable development is possible. If the present government makes laws to make the ACC weak and dysfunctional, the future government may utilize it only to serve its own purposes.

So, please think about the future!

Nazma Akhter Ivy
Department of Botany
Carmichael College, Rangpur

Digital Bangladesh and we

Digital Bangladesh is now the dream of all citizens of the country, as it was one of the pledges in the last election announced by the AL-led grand alliance that resulted in landslide victory in the ninth JS election 2009. But the recent news report published in The Daily Star on May 10 regarding digital Bangladesh is really discouraging for the present govt. In fact it has proved that they have not made much headway on this point, but people of the country are very much overwhelmed by the word "digital". Of course, it is a right step taken by our honourable prime minister to make our country digitalised by 2021.

The govt has also taken many initiatives in line with the view and set up equipments in some districts as well as in the secretariat. However, progress is slow due to some barriers that have to be addressed by the authorities concerned.

The govt has to implement the strategies and policies following the road map of Digital Bangladesh. The ministry concerned has to emphasise the implementation of the projects, following the set of rules without

neglecting their duties.

Eng. Md. Meheub Haque
BUET

Fate of NU

The government's plan of abolishing National University (NU) and that of bringing the colleges affiliated with it under public universities, in the wake of widespread instances of its mismanagement, inefficiency and corruption revolving around the autonomous institution, is frustrating. NU, established in 1992, started its mission with the eye to bringing all the University-Colleges under it, so as to make academic activities convenient for the students of these colleges.

But the plan of abolishing, instead of reforming and healing the pains it was suffering from, is simply dumbfounding. Going back to the pre-election campaign, one of the major pledges the present govt. made is to make a corruption-free Bangladesh. So, why should corruption be the main cause of its shutting down? Why hands-up? Can't corruption in all institutions be dealt with an iron hand?

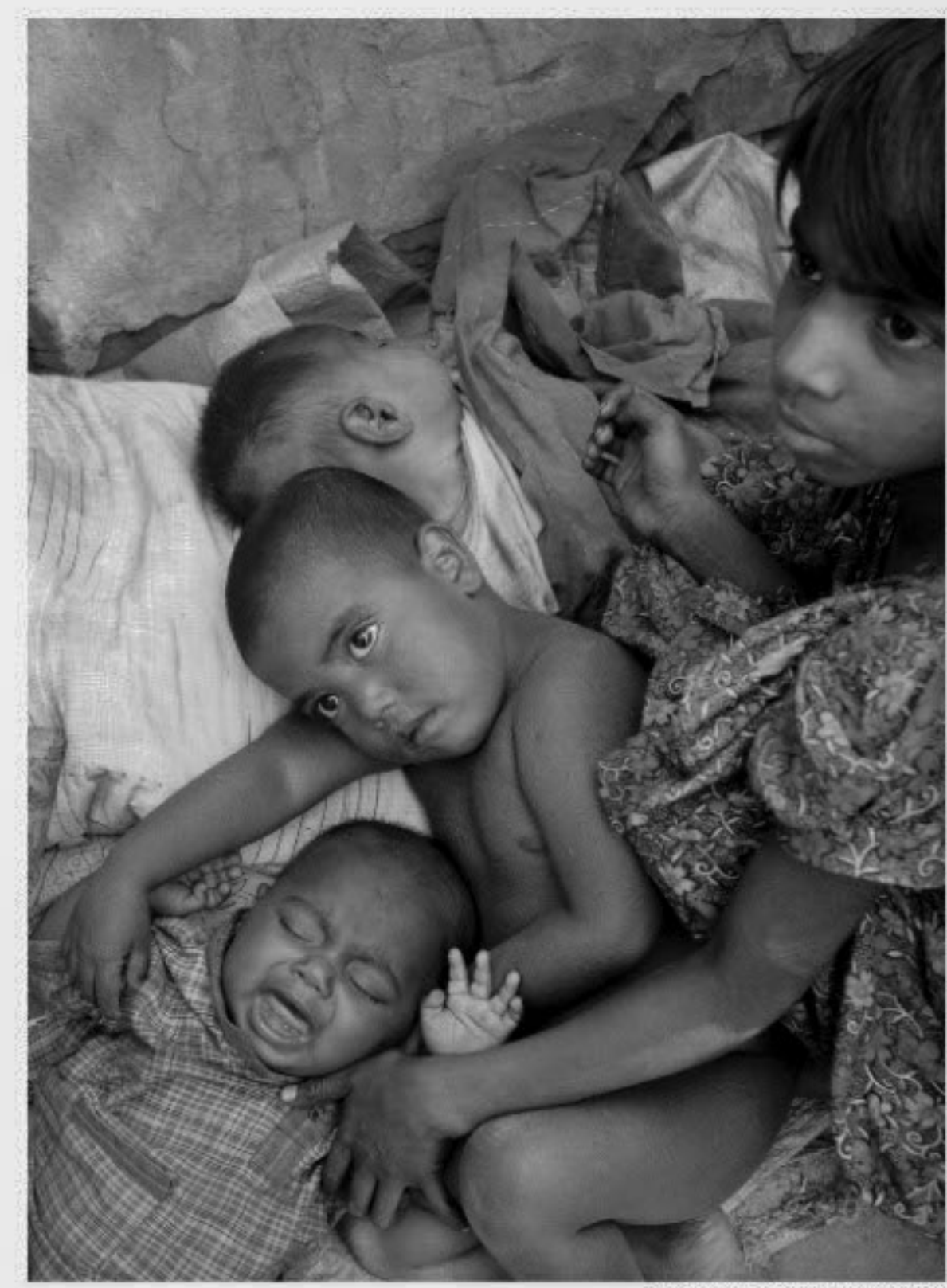
Sarwar Hussain
Dept. of Computer Science & Eng.
University of Chittagong

Malnutrition

In Bangladesh, malnutrition is caused by multiple factors. The immediate causes are diseases and inadequate intake of food. The underlying causes of malnutrition include the inability of households to grow and/or purchase sufficient foods for meeting their needs; poor maternal and child-care practices, including inadequate breastfeeding and complementary feeding for infants and young children and inadequate provision of food for adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women.

Anyhow, rates of malnutrition in Bangladesh are among the highest in the world.

S. M. Rumon
West Firoz Shah Housing Estate
Pahartali, Chittagong



LITON RAHMAN / DRINKNEWS

Communicative English!

From class III to class XII the course title of English is "English For Today". It is also known as Communicative English. The main purpose of this course is to communicate with others smartly in English. The textbooks are designed very richly which contain an adequate commonly used vocabulary along with many effective instructions. For example work in pair, make a dialogue, use your own sentence etc. But not to speak of English teachers in rural areas, the urban teachers do not communicate in English with the learners in class. They have little special training regarding this course and they are very indifferent to communication with students. Because they come from traditional syllabus. For these reasons, enthusiastic students are running after spoken English courses.

So, I eagerly request the honourable teachers to be careful considering this matter and lay due emphasis on Communicative English.

M. Fayed Uddin
BBA, Finance
Jagannath University

House rent

The High Court asked the government to enforce the Law of House Rent on 17 May and you ran an editorial on the issue, which is undoubtedly thankworthy. But the com-

mon dialect of the old Dhaka is "Magar, Sarkar kisui karbar parbonaikka" the government cannot do anything.

The house owners of Lalbag, Bangshal, Narinda, Sutrapur and Jatrabari are very rude and arbitrary. They are reluctant to have a written agreement after taking a large amount of money as advance.

Akter Hossain
Dept. of English
Jagannath University, Dhaka

Student politics

The students & teachers of Bengal were conscious from the pre-partition days. Bengal took the lead in the struggle for political emancipation & self-determination.

It is unlikely that the leaders of the treasury & the opposition bench of parliament would sever links with the student fronts, because it is the least expensive group for conducting election campaigns countrywide.

Golam Ashraf
Gulshan, Dhaka

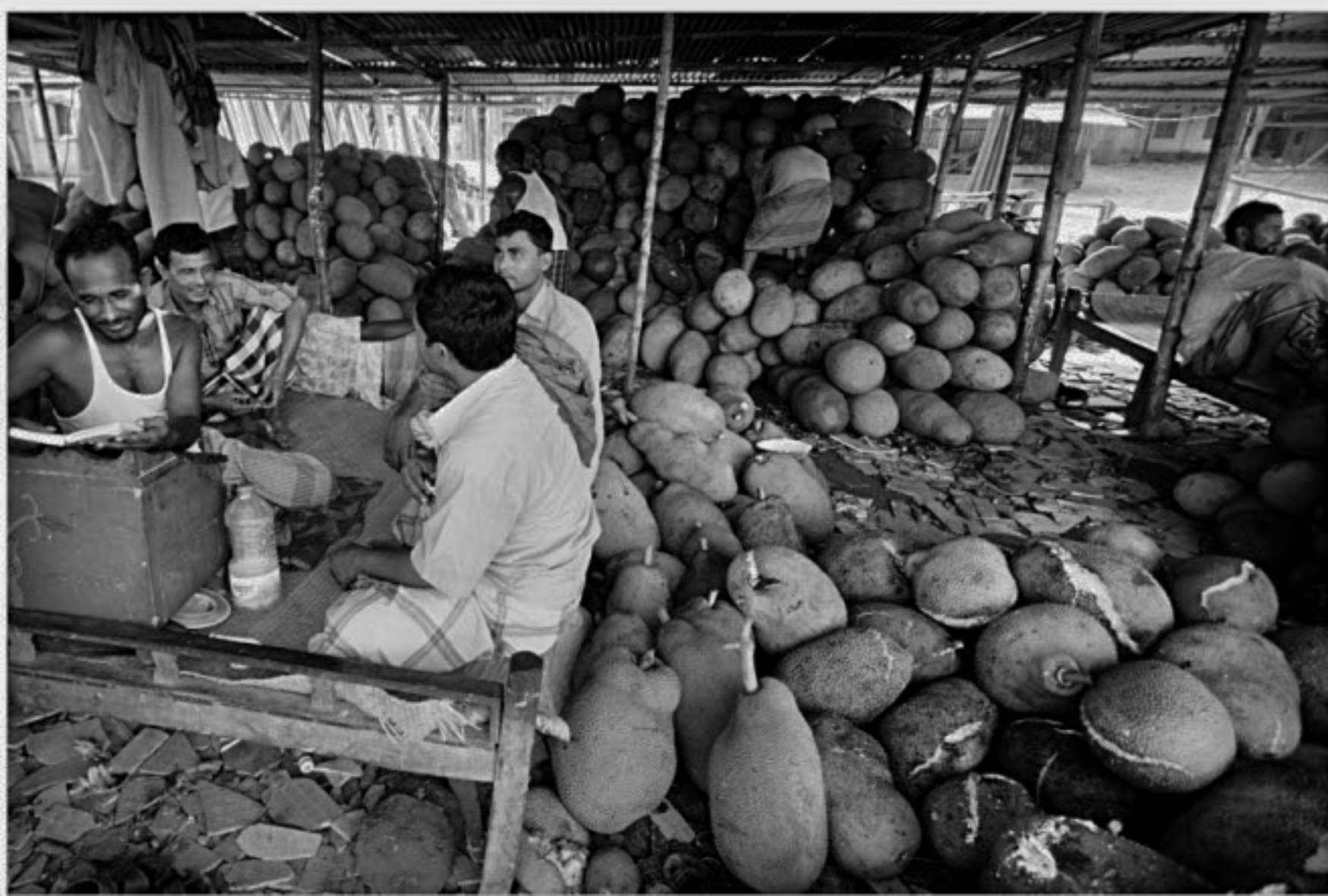
Rushanara Ali

Rushanara Ali has been elected to House of Commons from the Labour Party. She retakes the seat for her party.

She is not only the first ever Bangladeshi, but also the first Muslim woman elected to British Parliament.

Rahad Jannatul Islam
Dept. of Marketing
Jagannath University

Artificial ripening of fruits



A. MAHAO / DRINKNEWS

The season of summer comes with a plate of different delicious fruits. As the season has already set in, different types of fruits are now available in our markets.

But it is a depressing matter that some fruits, especially mangoes and bananas, are being ripened through an artificial process using various toxic things like Ethylene, Ethane, Acetylene etc. According to the health experts, such kind of fruits is a source of health hazards. We might fall sick consuming such fruits. We should therefore avoid such fruits.

Furthermore, while purchasing any colourful fruit, we ought to detect whether the fruit got ripened artificially or not.

M Faisal Saleh
Chunati Hakima Kamil (MA) Madrasa, Lohagara
Chittagong