

Teen central

# Mouth zipped shut



**D**ESPITE all the sugar coated write-ups we give our schools at the time of graduation, the years spent there are not all honey and sugar. We all have complaints. Naturally, some complaints are so silly you'd think I'm stupid to be writing about it. But there are some problems faced by a surprisingly huge amount of kids whose schools make sure that their mouths are zipped shut.

A few years back, I used to be in one of the best schools we have in this country. It was renowned for its discipline and academics. Every single student had to make sure that they always, *always*, looked their absolute worst with greasy hair pulled tight in two braids, and for the guys, non-gelled mamma's boy hair neatly brushed from the side. *Obviously* we didn't always listen! I know that we were breaking the rules when our braids were 0.005% less tight than it should have been, but does that justify a teacher to pull a student's hair, calling her names in front of everybody? Students are always asked to respect their teachers. What about teachers respecting the students in return? Nobody ever seems to think about that.

Recently, there's been a lot of hype about corporal punishment in schools, mostly Bengali

medium. All English medium parents can thus proudly say that at least their kids don't get beaten up! The eye boggling amount of money that the schools rob from them are *totally* worth it. The problem lies in the fact that although kids in English mediums don't get beaten up, they are verbally abused to the point of self-destruction. A friend of mine, in that oh-so-great school I used to go to, had failed in her finals twice. Instead of trying to find out the problem, or encouraging her to do better, or simply helping her, she was humiliated beyond reason by every single teacher in that institution. That even in front of her juniors and every time they saw her.

The extreme shame that built on the frustration of failing shattered the little self-esteem and patience she had left. At the age of only 13, she tried to commit suicide. Who is to blame?

The biggest problem for many teens is that their parents never believe a single word they say. I could come home and tell my parents I got a C in Bio because my teacher has mental issues; they'd never buy it. The problem is, I could just as well come home and tell them somebody threatened to throw acid on my face, and they

probably won't buy that either. I could say it to my teachers who would, very logically, think I'm some sort of drama queen who'd say anything to be in the spotlight. Finally, if I can show them the threat mail that the guy had sent to me, they'd turn the whole thing on me because obviously, the guy is an angel! He is a teacher's son; he couldn't possibly send it! What's the point of your mum being a teacher in your school if you can't even get away with stuff like that, right?!

Logic is a very distasteful matter when it comes to schools. Because logically, every child is a free citizen with full freedom to wear what they want and do what they want to do. Certain schools even take the extra measure of making sure that even out of school their students look their absolute worst! "No western, short clothes anywhere or we throw you out!" The meaning of co-education has become a joke! Schools can be co-ed but if a guy and a girl sit together, they're up to something. Because words like 'just friends' obviously don't exist in their dictionary. Some schools are caring enough to even call up the students' parents and tell them how many guys and girls their child has been 'sitting close' with!

Truth is, I could go on and on about this, but it would make no difference. My point in writing this is that when teachers in your respective schools humiliate you in any way, you shouldn't shut up and think of yourself as worthless or something.

I'm not saying you should be just as rude with your teachers, but you have the right to let yourself be heard. And when incidents like these happen, you should make sure everybody knows about it. When the parents are aware of these problems, that's when the schools will change, because in every business, who wants to lose customers, right?

*If you have any suggestions or complaints against this article, you can mail them to [desert.rain87@yahoo.com](mailto:desert.rain87@yahoo.com)*

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By Fahmina Rahman

Campus news

## The children of tomorrow

**B**RIGHT, talented and adorable are just a few terms which could be used to describe the children of Uthsho Bangladesh Shishta Shabi Dol, an organization aimed at educating, grooming, and raising underprivileged and orphaned children. North South University, Earth Club was thus honored to be able to go work with the children and give them tips on how to be more environment and health savvy.

As a student organization, Earth Club goes by its motto "small steps toward a better environment", taking initiatives, however small they may be, to create environmental awareness. As part of its awareness campaign, Earth Club also reaches out to school children all over the country, to help them appreciate the bounties of nature.

"Our main goal of the visit was to enlighten the boys and girls of Utsho of the current environmental issues, such as overpopulation, global warming, deforestation etc. in a fun and practical manner, that can help them retain the information", said President of Earth Club, Reema Islam. In the end, however, it was the children who invariably taught us.

Earth Club members were introduced warmly to the neatly dressed, students of Utsho by Mahbooba Mahmood Leena, the chairperson of Utsho. A beautiful recital by the Uthsho pupils followed. Mahbooba, then gave a moving speech about how it was small initiatives that can change people's perspective



of the world. Starting off with only 3 students in 1993, Utsho now proudly boasts a population of 85.

Sharing knowledge with the children was one of the most rewarding experiences for all concerned. The students were asked to take part in a variety of activities that included pointing out Bangladesh from a globe. Also, the members went about outlining basic environmental issues with the help of colourful posters. Some talked about the importance of clean drinking water while others explained the ozone layer.

The children seemed well aware of their responsibilities and were given candies and stationary as gifts.

Unfortunately, all good things have to come to an end. This was an incredible journey which members of Earth Club got to encounter. It is through activities such as the visit to Utsho that is one of the greatest legacy of Earth Club; and indeed shall remain in the hearts of the children of tomorrow.

By Zhishan Bader Harahsheh

Photo: Monir Hussain

## Stupid school ganjams Keeping It real!

**A**LMOST every one of you should be familiar with the word 'ganjam' now. Ganjam in bangla means 'trouble' but everyone now looks at it as stupid meaningless quarrels over no particular issue at all. All you cool people out there you have of course seen and participated in ganjam somewhere or somehow, but ganjams do take a very stupid twists when they happen in school. For example, let us look at this hypothetical 'fictional' ganjam in a school between two different classes:

Nice, simple kid walks towards the cafeteria, minding his own business...

Nice simple kid bumps against an older kid who has just been promoted to class 11 and has temper issues and also happens to be not very intellectually enlightened.

Older kid gets mad at a little kid bumping at him and so older kid shouts and starts punching.

The nice, mild mannered kid all of a sudden finds hidden treasure troves of strength and vitality and begins to fight back.

Now, a few kids notice it and start shouting in glee. Very soon the whole school starts shouting and rushing towards the fight. The older kids' friends join in and so does the mild-mannered kids' friends. In typically Bengali police style, the teachers come after the fight is over and both sides have bruises and scratches all over the body. But none of them is ready to forgive each other. The younger kids claim it was unfair and that the should stand up to this injustice while the older kids still want to express their dominance.

Another stupid school ganjam, was held in another part of the Dhaka. It involves the classic story of "I am poached and so I will fight..." Or as is said in classic literary tests- the rise of the oppressed. It involves this guy who wasn't the most popular or the smartest person in the world. He was lonely and everyone specially this guy (lets call him X) from whom he had to face constant verbal torture. One day the oppressed guy decides he had enough and so starts fighting against X. Eye-witness account differs but by the time the words reached my ears in an economics class I heard that the oppressed guy had completely cleaned up X. Infact X ended up crying for mercy from the O. The outcome was that the unpopular guy's popularity surged to extreme levels and everyone start giving him the revered title of bhai'.

"Whenever you are being pushed back...go for ganjams...they give you respect"

Me: "But...hey its risky right?...what if he comes back for you" "look at me...man...look at me muscles...and strength...I will beat him up again"

"What if he brings more people with him?"

"Who cares? I have me muscles!"

"So...why in the world were you kicked and knocked about for the last 10 years"

"see...man...that's the beauty of ganjams...they give you hidden powers"

Of course I never took his advice.

Hearing this absurd tale, I am tempted to tell you another one. This is about a wanna-be gangsta' called "the Tiger" Hey I am not kidding, he was really called the TIGER!! Its because he had flaming red hair, and used to wear a ring on his left fore-finger which was supposed to be the source of his 'powers' some of which were even rumoured to be magical!!! One day some guys who hadn't heard about the reputation of "The Tiger" decided to mess with him. So "The tiger", called them up and told them to meet him for a confrontation at Abahani Sports Ground. There, the Tiger as a sign of his rage bought about fifty other kids under his 'protection' and made the guys say sorry and taped it on a camcorder. The two guys never bothered 'the tiger' again- leaving no questions at who rules the land. Of course 'the tiger' very soon met a worse adversary from which even he couldn't fight against- the principal and his 'rule' came to a torrid but quick end. INSPIRING.....right?

Disclaimer: The events in these stories are fully.....ok...ok partially fictional and any resemblance to anyone in real life is uh...well "coincidental".

By Reggie