



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.

Nimtoli tragedy and children

It was reported in Amader Shomoy that six children died trapped as they had been kept locked in a bread factory. Areas such as Lalbagh, Hazaribagh, Keraniganj, Sutrapur, Jatrabari, Mirpur, Tongi, Wari, Dhalpur, Nawabpur and Kamrangir Char have a large number of child labourers. They are employed in unhealthy and dangerous work environments with extreme exposure to hazardous chemicals.

In Bangladesh, nearly 4.9 million children between the ages of 5 to 15 years are involved in different types of labour. Forty-eight of these categorized as hazardous work. Most children are engaged in factories such as balloon, plastic, aluminium, tanneries, automobiles, chemicals shop / shoe materials, jewellery, bread, biscuit etc.

The child workers are paid meagre wages, often unpaid and frequently locked during work or even after working hours, playing the role of security guards. In Dhaka, five lakh female children work as domestic help, many of them are locked in every day by working couples, who leave them to tend to their own privileged children.

Keeping children locked is an illegal and highly risky act when it comes to emergency situations such as earthquakes, fires, gas leaks and perhaps even cases of sudden

illness.

It concerns me as to what would happen to thousands of children in our industrial areas such as Lalbagh, Hazaribagh etc, if another incident such as the Nimtoli fire occurs. The locations mentioned have infrastructures which are not work-friendly. The areas have narrow roads, weather beaten and fragile buildings, no water facilities and open illegal electricity and gas lines. Fire alarms, extinguishers or emergency drills are simply not heard of.

As an employee of an organisation working to protect and safeguard Child Rights it upsets and severely concerns me that the highly illegal practice of locking up individuals (children or otherwise) is carried out. The working conditions as mentioned are also highly

unsafe. Also the lack of adequate fire control measures and the practice of storing inflammable materials / chemicals in areas of high population density expose thousands of people, including children to grave risks. Immediate steps need to be taken to ensure better fire safety and implement stringent rules to curb the storage of inflammable chemicals and materials in areas in these areas. Also the practice of locking up children indoors must be stopped.

I would like to request the Honourable Prime Minister and other authorities concerned to see to it that immediate action is taken against such illegal practices.

Anika Rabbani
Communications Manager
Save the Children UK



Traffic jam

It is a very good initiative of the government to open the Ahsanullah Master Flyover to reduce traffic jam.

But it was not planned by this government, it was planned by the previous government.

At the moment, we need some plan from the Digital Government to reduce traffic jam.

Rowshan Ali
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Moral education

Once the moral code or value got the highest priority in our society, but today it is on the verge of extinction! A family teaches morality, standard of decent life but the parents these days are doing nothing in this area.

The parents should assume the role of moral educators.

Firoz Ahmed
Department of English, JNU

Mobile and fatigue

In today's world, many teenagers live in a virtual universe, in which face to face communication rarely occurs, and in which friends are made and kept via social networking websites and via mobile phones. This is definitely not good news on any level - emotional, social or psychological. A very frequent use of mobile phones can cause stress and sleep problems in teens, as well as what is called a 'careless' lifestyle including disrupted sleep, insomnia and frequent energy drink consumption. Teenagers normally have to get a minimum of nine hours of sleep per night, something that doesn't occur when mobile phone usage becomes abusive. In fact, frequently speaking on the phone makes adolescents even more susceptible to things such as stress and fatigue.

Therefore, it is necessary to increase teenagers' awareness of the negative effects of excessive phone use on their sleep-wake patterns, with serious health risks.

In fact, understanding is the first step, while moderation is the next move in solving such problems.

S.M. Rumen
West Firoz Shah
Housing Estate
Chittagong

Nimtoli fire

In the devastating fire at Nimtoli in Old Dhaka, at least 117 people have died and hundreds are injured, many of them are in critical condition. It is like the hell breaking loose, the tragedy is of such magnitude that one has to gasp with horror and agony. We pray for the departed souls and express deep condolence for the affected families.

The government must take this incident as an eye opener as to what might happen in the future, if building codes are not followed and the roads remain too narrow making it difficult for the fire brigade vehicles to move fast.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

The fire incident which took place at Nimtoli of Old Dhaka on 3 June was indeed a terrible disaster.

While expressing her instant reaction in this regard, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, "Fire makes people destitute." She is absolutely right.

We want the survivors to be compensated soon. May Allah keep the departed souls in peace.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Chittagong

University in Kishoreganj

Kishoreganj is one of the most undeveloped and neglected areas of our country, although it has great contributions in the sectors like agriculture, politics and literature. Nobody can deny its great contributions to our economy. The district is surrounded by seven districts and the area has a huge population. In these circumstances, it is necessary to establish a public university in this district town. The government may also select a new place near the town.

Md. Abu Sayed

Dept. of English

University of Dhaka

his article tries to prove that Islam (God forbid) gave orders to beat a woman if she keeps her face open. I surely have knowledge of the Holy book. Islam does not allow a stranger male to put his hands on a female, he is not permitted to touch a woman for not wearing veil, forget about beating!

Mufti Abdussamad
Segunbagicha, Dhaka

Eve teasing

Not only does eve teasing shatters the victim psychologically leading to mental disorders or depression, this humiliation often compels the girl to even commit suicide. Society and the administration also try to cast aspersions on the character of the victim, instead of condemning or nabbing the eve teasers. In this sorry state of affairs, it is hardly surprising that scores of victims do not lodge any complaint.

If our society wants to be recognised as a civilized one, then it should urgently and sincerely adopt concrete measures to put an end to the ghastly menace of eve teasing. Since the eve teasers are devoid of all norms of humanity, they should be handed harsh punishment and in cases where the victim commits suicide, the culprits need to be awarded capital punishment.

These types of strict action will surely force such barbaric elements to think twice before committing such a crime. Perhaps it would not be entirely out of context if we take a glimpse of the attitude of the media and advertisers as well. Right from shoe to hair-oil, advertising campaigns for almost each and every product or service generously exploit the female anatomy to attract the consumers. Many of the newspapers and magazines publish obscene, scantily-clad pictures of women to boost up their sales. And the less said about commercial films, the better as it glorifies eve teasing and exposure of female bodies, all in the name of art!

Thus it is natural that if this gross commercialisation of women get socially recognised, feminine bodies will get treated merely as a "sex object", leading to eve teasing and molestation, even rape.

Perhaps in the name of "modernity" and being "liberal", we are losing all norms of decency and sanity. If we want to eradicate this disease of eve teasing from the root of society, not only should the strictest action be taken against those who dare to denigrate women in such a humiliating light, the upcoming generation certainly need to be taught to revere and respect women as men's equal in every way.

Kajal Chatterjee
Peerless Nagar
Kolkata, India

Development and natural gas

A scholarly and rather abstract, short essay on the subject was published on May 29, in a local daily, but it did not suggest any solution. However, an alternative solution does exist. I believe that an NGO has already installed such a plant in a village, as published in a daily, a few days back. The speedy implementation of this alternative solution rather needs to be discussed in parliament; and not our gas shortage today, which is another issue altogether!

Tanha is presently receiving chemotherapy. Her physicians are hopeful about Tanha's recovery if the costly treatment could be continued. Tanha's father is also sick and her parents and uncle (who is taking care of Tanha at the moment) are facing serious hardship to continue Tanha's costly treatment. Ms. Runa Laila who learned about Tanha's illness from a friend's blog on the Facebook called Tanha and her guardians to her house and talked about her treatment. Runa Laila made the above appeal to all to come forward in aid of little Tanha. I appreciate her gesture of goodwill and endorse the appeal, so that more people can learn about Tanha's illness and come forward to help her.

Anyone who wishes to help Tanha can contribute to the following bank account: Nahid Jabed SB/ACN-56997 UCBL Bank Karwanbazar Branch (Online bank account holders can send money from any UCBL bank of Bangladesh), or from any other bank, in any currency from anywhere in the world)

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

World Cup fever

I couldn't fully agree with Zafar Sobhan's write-up: "World Cup fever, Bangladesh-style" published in The Daily Star on May 28, 2010.

So far I know, no survey was ever made as to whether people in other countries, particularly in those countries which didn't have the opportunity to participate in the World Cup, react to the world cup football in a similar manner. May we not forget that unlike many other games, competitive football is seen almost like a battle between two clubs or two countries, albeit for an hour and a half or so. It's for this reason that we sometimes hear of street-fights among the supporters of different football clubs even in western capitals like London and Berlin. It rarely happens in case of cricket or other games. No wonder, people of such countries who are not involved in the World Cup football fray would try to identify themselves with the one or the other. It's a very common human nature.

Now the million dollar question is why our people should support Argentina or Brazil and why not Iran or Saudi Arabia or even Britain or Germany? Here again, it's not much difficult to find the answer. Once more

politics and war comes into play. Please don't take our people as so gullible. No matter what our successive governments did, our people and the media vented strong anti-American slogans during US-Vietnam War; they expressed their anguish when Britain attacked Argentina over Falkland Islands and very lately they vehemently rejected Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. All these signify that in general our people are for the oppressed and the exploited. Although the common people are not expected to be vividly conversant with the history of Argentina or Brazil, they have sketchy idea that once these countries were also colonized and exploited by the Europeans, particularly Spain and Britain. Therefore, it's not correct that our people do everything out of sheer emotion. It's not the emotion but the expression of fellow feeling of downtrodden peoples of countries which may be geographically far apart, but psychologically very close!

Hafeejul Alam
A former civil servant
Mohammadpur
Dhaka



Killer driver

Your staff correspondent's front-page report of May 29 indicates very clearly that there is a criminal nexus, based on corruption and malpractices between the police and the owners of the transport company! If not so, then as reported why till May 28 police did not contact the owners of the bus to find out all particulars of the driver and helper concerned.

They should be rather held responsible to trace and hand the culprits over for punishment. This was not an accident, but deliberate murder of a knocked down and totally stunned student, trying to recover from an agonising incident, and not physically and mentally fit enough, to move out

from there!

Will the government urgently look into this potentially dangerous situation, and get third parties to deeply investigate the matter; in the overall interest of law, order and justice; to contain the dangerous situation from getting further worse.

By the way, who said that we are short of police personnel? I read something regarding it in the dailies a few days ago, that the police are short of personnel! The photograph alongside the report of the correspondent showed in colour; no less than ten 'very busy' policemen, possibly doing 'important police' duties for protecting law and order etc!

A reader, Dhaka



PHOTOS: STAR



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