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## Joy of Christmas

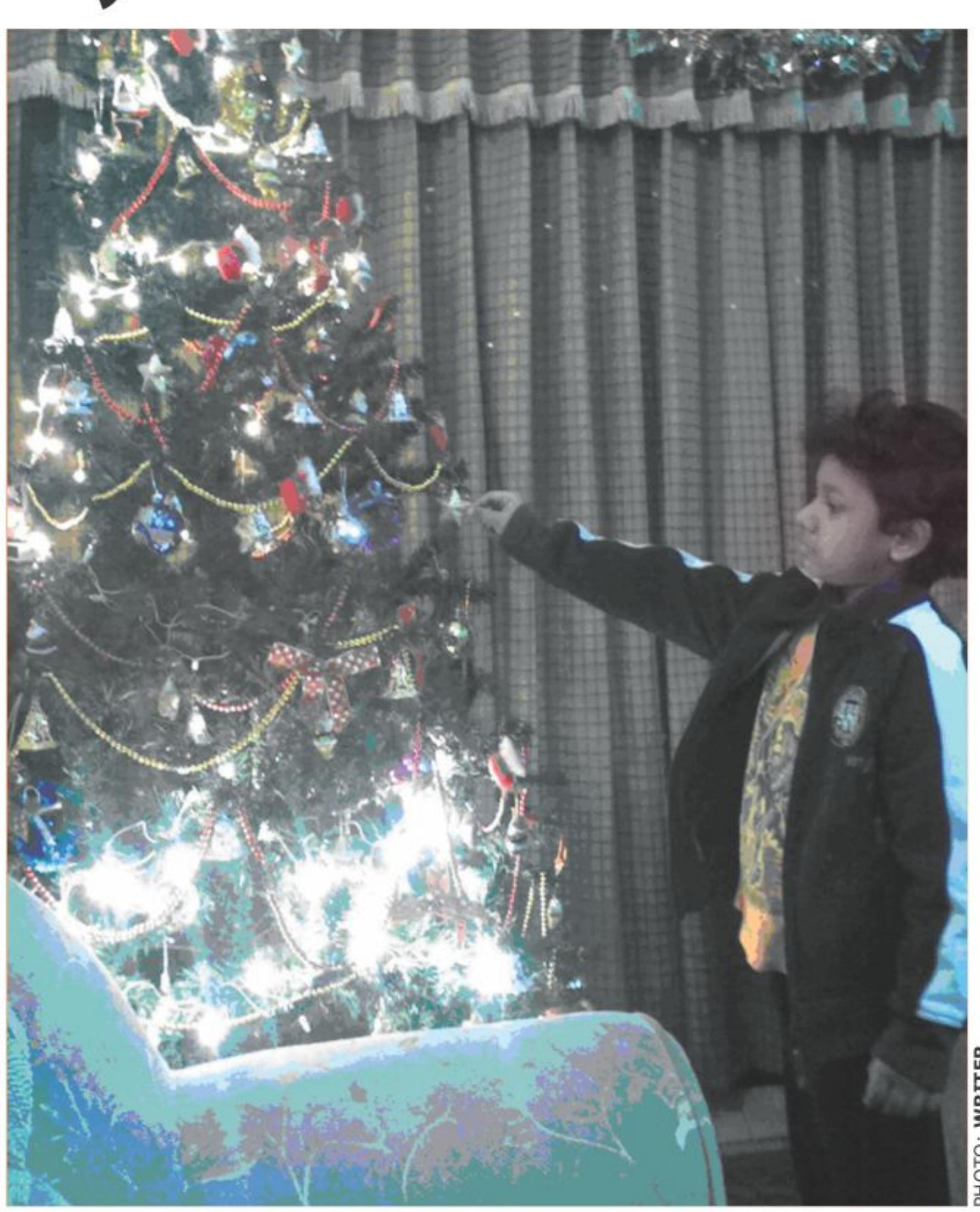


PHOTO: WRITER

What is the real meaning of Christmas? Is it the gifts for children under the tree, the lights on the tree or in the windows, the cards in the mail, grand dinners with family and friends, stockings hanging in the living room, and shouts of "Merry Christmas" to those who pass us on the streets? Is this really Christmas? For many people Christmas is a time of sorrow. They don't have the extra money to buy presents for their children, family, and friends. Many are saddened at Christmas time when they think of their loved ones who will not be able to come home for various reasons.

Yet, Christmas can be a season of great joy. It is a time of God showing His great love for us. It can be a time of healing and renewed strength. You see, Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of the Christ child. God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to be born. His birth brought great joy to the world. Shepherds, wise men, and angels all shared the excitement of knowing this great event.

They knew this was not an ordinary baby. The prophets had told of His coming hundreds of years before. The star stopped over Bethlehem just to mark the way for those who were looking for this special child. Luke 2: 4-19 says: "While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

Peter Rebeiro  
Indira road, Dhaka

### Thai PM's visit to Bangladesh

Thailand's Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra came to Bangladesh on a two-day official visit recently. Prime minister Sheikh Hasina received her and introduced her with the cabinet members.

Two memorandums of understanding (MoU) have been signed between the two countries during the visit. We hope through this visit the relation between the two states will improve further.

S.M. Imranul Islam Rajon  
Mohammadpur

## Reduce costs of applying for a job

A good job is rarer than a golden deer in our country. Many people of our country are unemployed. Nearly 1000 candidates apply against a single government post and bank job. So the probability of getting a good job is very little. A jobseeker has to drop a lot of applications for getting a job. Most of the jobseekers are from financially insolvent families, but they have to spend a big amount for each application (pay-order, etc.). It is a matter of great sorrow that many talented applicants can not apply for jobs due to poverty. On behalf of all jobseekers, I politely request the employers to reduce these fees.

Md. Tanvir Mahmud  
Baradi Uttor Para, Kushtia



PHOTO: STAR

### PM's peace model: Let charity begin at home

We are very much encouraged by the news published in The Daily Star of December 19, 2012 that a peace model placed by our prime minister Sheikh Hasina has been approved by the UN General Assembly. We hope that her government itself would care to follow these proposals. Her peace model underlines the removal of injustices including repression; absence of rule of law; inequality and economic disparity; deprivation and poverty; lack of transparency and accountability in governance; denial of secularism and multi-ethnicity; negligence in equal rights for women and the marginalised, etc.

But if we look at what has been happening in the field level, we will find that her government has not made any significant headway in solving problems pointed out in her model. For example, the law is only aimed at and used for suppressing the opposition.

Very few of her parliamentarians or ministers bother about transparency and accountability. Many of the nationally and internationally known corrupt ministers have not been put to any trial. Abul Hossain has even been branded by the prime minister as "patriot". So, it is evident that Sheikh Hasina does not practice what she preaches.

Dr. S. A. Miah  
Quebec, Canada

### Bishwajit killing: Both AL and BNP must accept responsibility

The gruesome murder of the poor tailor Bishwajit during BNP-led 18 party alliances-enforced blockade on 9 December, 2012 was heartbreaking. Everyone watched on TV and read in newspapers how he was mercilessly beaten up and hacked to death by Chhatra League cadres. Why had the hardworking youth Bishwajit Das (24) to die? It is said the murderers mistook him for a Shibir cadre. But even if he was Shibir cadre, would such killing in broad daylight by some political cadres be justified? Who gave the so-called political party cadres the right to take law into their hands and kill people? Bishwajit died even after he was taken to government hospital. Reports say he did not get proper treatment at the hospital. The death of innocent Bishwajit shocked us all. Both Awami League and BNP have to bear the responsibility of Bishwajit killing. It is high time we created congenial democratic culture among all the political parties by uprooting the politics of criminalisation.

Md. Yamin Khan  
Department of English  
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Faridpur

## US should control gun

I fully agree with American citizens that there should be a gun control law, especially for psychologically challenged people. As much as I have seen, the psychologically challenged people usually do such things. James Holmes, the 'Batman Shooter' was mentally ill, but had easy access to firearms which allowed him to go on a crazy massacre. In the Connecticut incident, Adam Lanza was also mentally ill. These acts were strictly condemned by the US government and the whole world. The USA really needs to control the spread of firearms. Also, a child took a gun with him to school to protect himself. And anti-Islam extremists fired at a Sikh temple thinking that they were Muslims. The USA now needs to ponder these tragedies and take due action. Perhaps each person who owns firearms should go through a mental test. Or perhaps firearms should be banned for civilians. We can only hope that they take a decision which would prevent this kind of tragedy.

Ahmed As Sami  
Anandiketan School, Sylhet



PHOTO: DAVID GOLDMAN/AP

### Mark the edge of steps in buildings

As I face the prospect of Christmas in hospital with a knee in plaster, may I appeal to architects and builders - and to the managers of apartments and offices, clubs and schools - to pay attention to the hazard of unmarked steps? I have had sessions with the managers of hotels in various parts of Asia where I have gone on holiday and, like most people, they have all professed ignorance of this aspect of 'health and safety' which, in many such countries, is not much of a priority anyway...

Many elderly people have bi-focal glasses, that is, glasses in which the top part is to correct long-sight and the bottom part is for reading. Thus, when you look down at your feet to check where you are walking, you do not see them very clearly as you are looking through your 'reading glasses'.

Hence the importance of marking steps clearly and the hazards of walking on pavements etc. when the surface is rough. May I remind your readers, sir, that the days are gone in which elderly people are few because they are expected to die earlier, or not to go out very much as they should be at home, sitting in a corner in the sitting room and, in the case of women, doing domestic work.

May I appeal to everyone to be more aware of this issue? A tin of white (or in some cases black) paint to mark the edge of the step can be effective or, for a longer term solution, an 'edge' (maybe of some plastic material) can be screwed in. Designers of buildings can signal changes of level by using different materials.

In more developed countries, I could sue the club where my accident happened for a great deal of money. This threat looms over developing countries also, which could increase awareness wonderfully - not least that of elderly people who are waking up to their 'human right' to live an active life without such dangers.

Angela Robinson  
Baridhara DOHS  
Dhaka

## READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Tuesday's The Daily Star news report headlined "Abuse of law"

### QF Ahmed

Dear S Liton and C C Halder, I am sorry to say that it is not abuse of law; rather you should have called it common law as all the parties do the same thing in their own term. Everyone talks about good governance but no one implements it.

### Jumana Sarwar

These are clear examples of abusing power. Interestingly, the so-called intellectuals are refraining from making any comments on this issue.

### Reaz Hassan

Everyone understands that this is a false case similar to many cases that BNP filed during its tenure. In such cases, judges do not decide cases as per law but judgement is dictated from above. The hardened nature of AL politics in recent times may create more unrest and agitation by throwing the opposition politicians into prisons.

### A Bangladeshi

I think if the hartal supporters were involved in any violence and vandalism, it is very logical to prosecute the party leaders who called the hartal.

### Barkat

AL is forgetting one thing. When they will be in opposition they will call hartal too. The AL leaders may face the same fate.

### Jahan Ara

Hubris always invites nemesis. And it comes unannounced. The thought is frightful.

### An observer

Setting vehicles on fire during the opposition demonstration can't be called exercise of democratic rights because it hampers people's right to free movement guaranteed in our constitution. Another thing is - if any political party fail to discipline their party workers, then is it not the responsibility of the leaders to discipline them? Mr Fakhrul may not have been present at the place during the incident but as a political leader, he can't escape the responsibility of such destructive activities.

### Mf Islam

The government may pass a law prohibiting any kind of procession -- political or not -- so that none dares to violate the law.

### Shafiq Ahmad

Surely, it is abuse of law. But under what law people are forced to face hartal and road blockade? Under what law the buses are burned and private vehicles are vandalised? Even people are killed in pre-hartal violence.

### Hafeezul Alam

No political party or individual has the right to destroy lives and properties in the name of political agitation or so-called hartal. We all know that the party activists or junior leaders are doing nothing on their own.

### Anowar Hossain

The case-friendly government has sued and arrested again Mirza Fakhrul in a baseless case only to stop the movement for restoring caretaker government system. The autocratic character of the government has been unveiled by the politically motivated case. No government can remain in power suppressing political rivals illegally. The government

## Ludicrous instruction!

We have come to know that the information ministry issued an internal order and circulated it throughout the country, asking all ministries, departments, semi-government organizations, autonomous bodies and directorates to subscribe only five national dailies. These five selected newspapers are Janakantha, Sangbad, Ittefaq, The Daily Sun and The Independent. The officials entitled to newspapers at government expense must choose from the above five. Officials of these offices can buy other newspapers at their own expense.

Interestingly, we do not see the top circulated newspapers in this list. We can not even understand on what basis the list was made. What we guess is the government is reluctant to read those dailies that criticise its activities. But this silly action of the government is a clear indication of its poor democratic practice.

Ultimately, this sort of action of the government will damage their own image and alienate them from people. In fact, some leaders of the ruling party fail to learn from criticism. We urge them to learn from the mistakes and consider the sincere critics as well-wishers.

### Mobarak Ali

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