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# Award capital punishment to the rapists



PHOTO: AFP

The 23-year-old Delhi rape victim has died from multiple organ failure at a hospital in Singapore. While I wholeheartedly express my condolences, I strongly urge all, who are involved in promoting women rights in South Asia to use her death as a message to reach out. The anger and the frustration felt by the general public should be used to press authorities and law enforcement agencies to take effective actions. Thousands of women are being raped all over the world each year, and many sustain long-standing physical trauma. The death of the Indian girl is not an issue to be confined within the border of one nation; it's a regional and global issue. Something has gone fundamentally wrong in the social fabric and national law enforcement systems of the region.

The spirit of the deceased student should motivate regional NGOs to establish a joint task force to share information, resource and legal supports to help rape victims and prevent violence of any sort against women in South Asia. I wish, purely a wish, though, the culprits were left to the mercy of a mob to decide their fate! But I know civilised society won't, also shouldn't, allow such thing. Yet, I sincerely hope India passes swift judgment of death penalty to those criminals who raped and murdered the girl, and execute them at the earliest possible time.

**Tirtho Mahmud**  
San Antonio  
TX, USA

## Thanks to Ershad

This is in reference to the article published in The Daily Star dated 29 December 2012 in which Mr. Ershad said that "Beautification of Dhaka city is urgently required". I believe he recognised a real problem of our country about which no one else seems to be bothered. I believe he has hit the nail on the head and is thinking about addressing some major problems of our country. If Mr. Ershad is really serious, then he has my vote because I truly believe we finally need a change in leadership that will make a difference.

**Aminur Rahim**  
Mohakhali, Dhaka

## Are we truly a democracy?

Your December 31 editorial congratulating the ruling party's re-elected leaders aptly expressed the disappointment that many of us feel at the utter lack of democratic norms within political parties. The Awami League is hardly unique in this regard since just about every political party of any significance is little more than an extension of personal dynasties. That the law of the land, as enshrined in the Representation of People's Ordinance, is so brazenly flouted by those who have taken oaths to uphold and execute those very laws, says plenty about the state of our 'democracy'. Journalists, civil society leaders, and intellectuals may not like to hear the truth, but facts speak for themselves once we come out of our emotional trappings: political parties in Bangladesh neither understand nor particularly care for the ideal of democracy as it is understood by the civilized world. Of the four major parties in the country, three are little more than personal dynasties: one believes in being the earthly vice-regent of the Almighty, two have been spawned in cantonments, and one has given us a one-party, four-newspaper state that Stalin would have envied. The fact that all these organisations scream themselves hoarse as martyrs for democracy when in the opposition. The irony is they become tyrants. Such shameless hypocrisy goes on before public glare. Personality cult and religious absolutism have no place in democracy, nor in a political party preaching democracy. So the question is if Bangladesh is truly a democracy?

**Esam Sohail**

## Keep entire Ramna Park clean

Usually, I go on a morning stroll at the Ramna Park where a lot of other people of the city also come to walk, jog and do physical exercises. The whole park is very poorly maintained with only the exception of a few spots. These spots are well kept with regular sweeping by cleaners. I wonder who appointed these cleaners. The cemented benches around the park remain dirty with bottles, papers, empty cigarette packets, etc., around them. I asked some of the regular walkers about this and came to know that some group of walkers pay the cleaners to clean those spots regularly. I even saw the cleaners cleaning one of the spots on several occasions while I was sitting on the next bench expecting that they would clean the garbage around my bench. I request the authorities to keep the whole park clean.

**Mashudul Haque, Dhaka**



PHOTO: STAR

## Join the campaign against littering

I cringe at the sight of litter when I go in and out of the streets in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country. Why do we litter? And why can we not as an individual citizen of Bangladesh take care of our own litter? Yes, I mean keeping waste papers in own bags until we reach home and can put it in the waste basket or bin. Why can't we keep our city clean? Littered premises are detrimental to one's mental health and creativity. I cannot function mentally unless my table or room is clean. The same goes for the streets of Dhaka and other cities. A few years back corporate bodies were asked to beautify their surroundings and streets with flowers but that effort seems to have fallen apart. It would be a nice New Year's gift to the country if these corporate bodies renewed their city beautification activities. All eminent personalities who are in the public eye could also come forward and raise awareness about us becoming responsible city residents and not littering! Let us all help some of our youngsters who have started a campaign of anti-litter under the 'green channel' by installing metal bins in many streets of Dhaka. Their success, however, depends on our awareness about anti-littering.

**Zeba I. Seraj (Ph.D.)**  
Professor  
Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology  
University of Dhaka

## Stop showing violence in movies

It is terribly shocking to learn that the 23-year-old Indian woman, a medical student who was a victim of gang rape in New Delhi, had died on Saturday after courageously fighting for her life at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore. There is no word to condemn the barbaric act which finally killed the woman.

The Indian government should take measures to ban violent scenes in the Indian movies and TV serials. These are having a negative impact on the minds of the young generation and provoking some of them to commit daring crimes not only in India but all over the sub-continent as well. It is expected that the Indian authorities will take stern measures so that no such brutal crime can take place in the future.

**Professor M Zahidul Haque**  
Dean  
Faculty of Agriculture

## Donate clothes to victims of cold in North Bengal



MUNEM WASIF / DRINKNEWS

Biting cold wave is sweeping across the whole of North Bengal, affecting especially the poverty-stricken people of Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Kurigram, Dinajpur, etc., as usual. Daily activities have almost stopped in this region due to severe cold. Stray dogs and homeless people have accepted the lot of coexisting together on the roadsides and at the railway stations. The steps being taken by the government apart, the rich may come forward and extend humanitarian service to poor victims of cold, donate warm clothes and arrange for distributing those among them.

**Rojmin Ahmed, Obaidullah**  
**Raju Ahmed, Dihan Islam**  
Ahsan Ahmed Road  
Khulna

## Education should teach to think

In 1999, in a brief week of learning Bengali before going to Haluaghat to teach English (for I had only come for a year, hadn't I?) I checked the Bengali for expressions I needed, like "Think for yourself!" but, when I used it, in front of Class 7, their blank expressions told me this was a concept unknown to them. This need for THINKING was echoed in William Westgate's article concerning English-medium education - and also, indirectly, in Md Nurul Huda's article on "Towards an apathetic electorate" in which he feared that the state was 'dwarfing its citizens to make them docile instruments' - the very opposite of what education should do! Oxford's motto - 'Dominus illuminatio mea' - 'The Lord is my light' - indicates that education should be a light turned on in the mind and heart, an Arab's (and everyone else's) spring, the realisation that 'I am worth it' - and can have an opinion worth expressing - thoughtfully and fearlessly. We see signs of this happening everywhere, in the teeth of the pressures for it not to happen. The disadvantaged - including women - refusing to feel powerless; people asking, "Why?" "Why not?" and "I do not agree" and "I love you BUT..." - and people working for less than they deserve, because they have a calling to do something important. It is the very spirit of hope and liberation...Of course, the uncontrolled idiots, the pathetically greedy and the brain-washed are all around - along with victims who, even if the light has come on for them also, await their liberation.

Education should involve learning how to think, inspiration to give the little we can - and the recommendation to offer it up to be blessed by God and so be increased a hundredfold.

**Angela Robinson**  
Baridhara DOHS  
Dhaka

## READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Tuesday's The Daily Star news report headlined "BRAVO Bangladesh eyes \$20b in New Year"

### Noman

We achieved it by the hard work of our RMG workers. But it is a matter of sorrow that they are deprived of their basic rights. We should pay attention to this matter.

### Iftikhar-ul-Awwal

Not only that this industry is bringing foreign currency but also providing employment to 3.5 million workers, 80 percent of whom are women. It is very important to maintain political stability and uninterrupted supply of utility services to fetch these 20 billions. Factory owners must adjust labour wages and create congenial working atmosphere so that the workers are safe at their workplace and contented with their living conditions.

### Commenter

Feels good! Would have felt better if the workforce that brought us here today, had been well-treated and provided with good working conditions and better salary.

### Al-Amin Rehman

Congratulations, Bangladesh.

### Tirtho Mahmud

It is certainly admirable, but in the light of Ashulia fire incident of 2012, we hope the large exporters will spread their fortune to the lower levels of the workforce too. Happy employees are always most productive.

### Neutral

Despite scary political uncertainties, deadly hartals, road blockades and fire in garment factories, our success is amazing in this sector. The owners must guarantee safety and security of the hapless workers.

### Nuton

Bravo Bangladesh and bravo The Daily Star. You're doing an excellent job keeping us up-to-date with your news. Thank you and Happy New Year!

### Rch

Little sympathy towards the workers with increase in pay and benefits will immensely help our position.

### Syed Imtiaz Ali

Good news indeed! All this is due to the private sector's entrepreneurship. A lot more remains to be done as we are manufacturing only 4.8% of world RMG volume. This is a very important sector for Bangladesh and the government must chalk out a supporting policy and add facilities to do business and export in RMG. RMG village away from city, decent minimum salary, technical institutions and/or courses on RMG/apparel merchandising with universities and so much more can be initiated. Most of the technical and management heads are either Indian or Sri Lankan. With the huge number of under-employed we must have our own people managing matters and taking decisions. This sector must grow internally and externally. The workers (rather crafts people) must lead a decent life. They are doing a very good job; but are they getting any benefit from \$20b export earnings?

### HAQ

Is it worth it to be a big exporter or even huge foreign exchange earner if it is at the cost of killing hundreds of workers in the process? This will be an achievement only if we see smiling, happy and moderately fed and clad workers enter and leave the premises before and after work.

### Mohammad Nurul Hoque

Bravo Bangladesh!

### Nazmul

It is not the political leaders who are accelerating the country's economy. The most vulnerable garment workers are boosting up our economy. Hats off to them. The New Year brings new hope.

### Sazzad, DU

Fantastic news in New Year. Thanks to The Daily Star for this promising news. We want to