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Women's security must get top priority



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

It is a popular notion that peace is absence of war. But is it really the definition of peace? According to the Oxford dictionary, peace means a state of tranquillity, freedom from civil disturbance, observance of law and order, public security and order, etc.

The Delhi gang-rape of a 23-year-old medical student who died 2 weeks later due to multiple organ failures and brain injuries in Singapore on Dec 29 finally brought to light the degrading and inhuman status of the women in India. This applies to Bangladesh as well. Last year at about the same time a 15-year-old girl was gang-raped in Tangail by 4 men and was left by the side of a rail line, from where her brother found her unconscious. Social stigma prevented her family (and many other families in Bangladesh) from disclosing the brutal incident until we read about it on 3rd January's The Daily Star.

In Delhi everything came to a standstill after the gang-rape in a public bus. Nothing will now stop the public until the decision is taken to give capital punishment to the murderers. In Bangladesh too, capital punishment is the only deterrent to prevent recurrence of such crimes. We hope that rule of law will be established by our government and women's security will be given top priority so that women from all walks of life can move about freely with dignity and without fear of insecurity.

May we as women request the prime minister to make Bangladesh a safe place for women?

Nilufer Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Publish LL.B results within February

Our LL.B final examinations were held recently under the national university. We are eagerly waiting to participate in the upcoming Bangladesh Bar Council Advocateship Examination. A possible time for holding the exam is March, 2013. In that event, the candidates will require their LL.B results. Usually, the national university takes 10/11 months to publish the results. We urge the authorities to take necessary steps to publish the LL.B final examination results within February 20, 2013 so that we may get the opportunity to participate in the examination. We hope the National University authorities would be sincere enough in this regard.

Ferdousi Jahan Shilu
Khilgaon

Send efficient diplomats to countries hosting migrant labours

A recent report in this daily says that migrant workers remitted \$14.17 billion back in 2012. This amounts to a 16.43 percent growth over that of previous year. In 2011, too, the remittance registered 10 percent growth over what it was in 2010. And this year's remittance figure is considered by the experts a new benchmark. However, a study of the World Bank reveals that remittance inflow goes up by \$1,000 to up to \$11,000 per year with every new expatriate. So if Bangladesh can uphold the trend of manpower export, certainly the growth in this regard will continue. It is a fact that in last fiscal year, manpower export increased 57 percent and the total number of workers who went abroad was 691,402, the second highest in Bangladesh history. It may be mentioned that in 2007-08, around 981,102 went abroad for job, according to the central bank statistics.

The measures the government have taken for increasing the outflow of workers and ensuring transfers of remittance quickly to the recipients are praiseworthy. Even so, in some areas the government could do better. Bangladesh government failed to solve problem of renewing visas in some countries, if only because of its insufficient diplomatic efforts. They also showed poor performance in exploring new potential manpower markets. It may be mentioned that Saudi Arabia stopped renewing visas to fresh workers in 2008 while Abu Dhabi stopped such renewal in September last year.

We urge the government to appoint efficient and time-tested ambassadors in the countries which have prospects for our workers.

Mobarak Ali
RK Mission Road
Gopibagh, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

Beware of junk food

Addiction to junk food among kids and youngsters of Dhaka city is very common. School kids, in particular, enjoy junk food which is very unhealthy and may cause various diseases. Parents and teachers should make youngsters aware of the harmful effects of junk food.

Ashik R Rahman
Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology
Dhaka

Cheapest?

The Bangladesh government declared a period of national mourning for more than 120 garment workers who died in a fire at a factory that supplied U.S. retail giant Wal-Mart, among others.

Scott Nova, executive director of the Worker Rights Consortium, said, "It really is an extraordinary achievement, in an ironic sense, that the U.S. apparel industry has managed to replicate early 20th century conditions, that were so brutal and cruel to workers, now again here in 2012 in factories in places like Bangladesh. It's a shameful record for the U.S. apparel industry." Meanwhile, a second fire broke out in a separate garment factory in Dhaka, though no deaths were reported. Thousands of garment workers took to the streets on two consecutive days to protest their unsafe conditions and demanded justice. Survivors of the fire were among them.

After China, retailers like Wal-Mart are being offered exactly what they want, which is the cheapest labour costs in the world. And they achieve those low labour costs by paying minimum wages of 18 to 20 cents an hour and by completely ignoring fundamental worker safety protections. The bottom line is that Wal-Mart goods, as they've now admitted, were being produced in this factory, and Wal-Mart is responsible for protecting the rights and the safety of the workers who make its clothing.

Ted Rudow III, MA
Encina Ave
Palo Alto, CA

Don't make women a commodity

Objectification of women in advertisement industry is very common in the present capitalistic world. Objectification means considering a person as an object, a tool for entertainment. These advertisements degrade the moral standard of young people and definitely carry the wrong message. Treating women as mere sex objects is so demeaning and threatening to women. So, this culture of objectification should stop immediately.

Jewel Rana
Agriculture Extension Officer

Keep Hatirjheel project area clean



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Hatirjheel project is a new addition to the beauty of Dhaka city which would help check the traffic jam of the city. There are a few places in the city where people can go to have some fresh air. Hatirjheel project can be looked upon as a gift to the city dwellers. From the pictures published in several newspapers it seems that it is a little heaven in Dhaka city. Now, as city dwellers it is our duty to keep this place beautiful. We should not throw garbage anywhere near the place but in the dustbins. The place should also be declared a no-smoking zone. The government should take appropriate measures for maintaining its beauty.

Moazzem Hossain
Shahjahanpur, Dhaka

Society needs to be cured

I am glad that finally five perpetrators of Tangail gang rape are now behind bars. The question is, were there only these five perpetrators who have been behind the girl's abysmal physical and psychological condition? The victim's condition wouldn't have gone this worse if she had been given proper medical care the moment she was rescued. Her family was afraid to give her medical care and emotional support she needed because of social stigma. We have created a society that is way more hostile to the rape victim than to the rapist. We make rules, traditions and decide the standard of right and wrong for society which teaches us to develop a negative attitude towards the rape victim. So it is not just those rapists who are to blame, we all are liable for every rape case. Traditional social norms instil the concept into us that there is no coming back from rape. Even if the victim wants to come back to her regular life, even if the schoolgirl recovers from the physical trauma, her circumstance might not let her recover from the psychological trauma. This society will never let her forget those gnawing memories. I learned from the news update that the girl's condition is improving and like all other rational human beings, I too hope that she will recover completely. But I think it is society which needs to be cured of its illness in the first place.

Kohinur Khyum Tithila
East West University, Dhaka

Why I supported Jan 6's hartal

I may not support the hartal programme itself on January 6, but I definitely support the issue behind it. I am one of the thousands of nobodies of this country who are struggling to keep their body and soul together with the monthly salary they get. I have no social life. I have run out of decent excuses to skip invitations to marriage ceremonies, birthday parties, etc., of my relatives. Moreover, I cannot afford the 'proper' kind of dress for my family to 'fit in' with those programmes. I hardly invite friends and relatives to my house. The shabby house I have rented does not help much to glorify my position.

It is very difficult for me to live a decent, let alone respectable, life. In a country where taka 300 crore is a trivial matter and crores of taka can be found in ministers' minibuses, I desperately try to save even 5 or 10 taka whenever I get the opportunity and degrade myself. I do not really know what is in store for me after the latest hike in fuel price.

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Tuesday's The Daily Star news report headlined "River commission to have little power"

Roni Rahman

It would be another commission of the government without any efficacy. This commission will be a way for some corrupt government officials to make money. Why can't the government officials take care of it?

Nasirullah Mridha, USA

This kind of commission will recommend a lot of measures but the result will be zero. Those who are involved in the movement to protect rivers from dying are not in the commission. How come they are not there when their role is being acclaimed by all sections of people? The environment activists, civil society members who are firm in their convictions to protect the rivers should reject this commission. I think this move of the government will bring little result.

Dr. Quazi M M Zaman, Scotland

We will not see any progress in reducing the risk of encroachment and therefore, we will be witnessing a quick intervention from developers into those reclamation areas by faster real estate development. Government should not be too relaxed about the river commission and making this a cosmetic institution having new pseudo-employees will result in the loss of public resources.

Misbah Uddin Sumon

Once upon a time Bangladesh was a land of rivers but now it is the country of some polluted narrow canals. The main reasons behind this are river grabbing by some unscrupulous people and building of dams at different points of different international rivers by India. We have 57 international rivers which can play an important role in promoting water-based transportation as well as developing water tourism. Now we are losing these natural resources because of some greedy river grabbers. In this situation, government as well as conscious people have to take some steps to protect our rivers from grabbers.

Mahboob Hossain

Unity of the people against these looters is a must.

Here are some comments that came in response to Tuesday's The Daily Star news report headlined "JS body trashes BGMEA probe"

Neutral

The best and effective way to find out the truth of the matter is to follow the money transfer from one bank account to another bank account between the alleged offender and the defenders. I was curious to see a front page exclusive interview published in a well circulated English daily immediately after the Tazreen Fashions incident in Ashulia which caused deaths of 111 innocent poor garment workers who were trapped inside the building with no escape door to come out. But artificial tears would not console the survivors or the victims' families. A proper probe into the incident is a must to avoid the recurrence of such fire incidents.

Dr. Ahsan Habib

It will be unfortunate if Delwar Hossain is not punished for his negligence.

Robin

BGMEA did the probe into the fire incident? Investigation into fire incident is carried out by the fire service department. Criminal probe is carried out by the law enforcement agencies. What skills does BGMEA have to investigate the fire incident? Everything in Bangladesh is becoming a laughing stock.

Md Shahjahan

Take drastic action against these blood-