

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
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## Violation of female migrants' rights

Take firm and immediate steps

THE plight of female migrant workers, despite their increasing contributions to the country's remittance earnings, is rarely ever highlighted in discussions and policymaking on "manpower" and migrant rights. It is a matter of great concern that a majority of female migrant workers face different forms of violence in the workplace, including physical and sexual abuse, and are exploited either by employers or recruiting agencies.

According to a study published by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) earlier this year, 65% of female migrant workers face violence one way or the other in their host countries. Despite these alarming statistics, there are no support systems for these women, either abroad or at home, and no recourse to justice.

We urge the government to address this issue urgently, and negotiate with the receiving country to ensure migrant women's rights. The embassies must prioritise this issue, initiating legal action against perpetrators and setting up shelter houses where female migrants can obtain immediate assistance.

We cannot celebrate women's empowerment through employment if we fail to provide systematic protection to them in their workplaces, especially in foreign countries where they do not know the language, culture or people.

In addition, we must build the capacities of these women so they can take up high-skilled jobs with better pay, benefits and protections, instead of being relegated to low-paying, exploitative jobs.

The government must also deal with local recruiting agencies exploiting the women with a stern hand. In addition, there has to be strong coordination among government, recruiting agencies and employers to ensure their rights.

## Absence of elected councilors

City residents face denial of services

SINCE the bifurcation of the city corporation into two zones some four years ago, due to an absence of election to these two corporations, government appointed administrators and officials have taken the place of elected representatives. Hence the bulk of Dhaka city residents are unable to avail themselves of the most basic of services within acceptable time spans. Many services like getting a birth certificate which used to be a matter of one working day nowadays may take anywhere between three and ten working days to get. In the past many problems faced by localities were looked after by elected councilors. However, as they have been missing from the scene since 2007, the average resident must go to the respective city corporations to get the job done.

Today's representatives are politically appointed and hence not answerable to residents. This brings up the whole question of accountability, which if we are to go by what has been reported in the press of late, there is little of. And with that comes the question of graft by way of commissions for service that every citizen has an automatic right to get. Whereas the city corporations exist to improve the quality of citizens' lives, they have become conduits of disservice being run by officials who apparently are more inclined to serve themselves rather than the people, which explain the terrible state of city's amenities and road conditions.

# The economy of a handshake



RUBANA HUQ

ONE was walking with his hands extended. The other had hands by his side. One had a slight smile on his face. The other one's expression came close to a grimace. Then they shook hands. And this is how the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, and Japan's prime minister, Shinzo Abe met at the Great Hall of the People, a grand reception hall just by the Tiananmen Square in Beijing at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit's economic leaders' meeting, which lasted for two days packed with power and soothed by a lakeside resort in Beijing's far-northeastern mountains. Did this handshake mark the end of the dispute that soars in the East China Sea? No. But it IS a start. While Abe requested Xi for a hotline, which would prevent future clashes over the claims to the uninhabited islands in the China Sea, called the Diaoyu by China and the Senkakus by Japan, the Chinese government had kept quiet about the meeting. Does that stop a Chinese envoy and a Japanese ambassador from calling each other "Lord Voldemort", the arch-enemy of Harry Potter? Perhaps not but the thawing has begun. Does a single handshake change the history of the brutality of Japan's occupation of China during the Second World War? No, but for the sake of survival and mutuality, they have shaken their hands at the summit. This is how a single handshake perhaps can just begin to change the course of aggression.

Another set of handshakes between President Barack Obama and President Xi Jinping of China in the Great Hall of the People in early November proved to be a pleasant surprise. Both sides addressed the press and aired issues between the two countries and spoke on democracy, human rights and media freedom. Last time President Obama visited China in November 2009, there was silence in the joint appearance of both sides, whereas Mr. Xi's predecessor, Hu Jintao was asked questions about human rights at a news conference in Washington in 2011. The other pleasant surprise from both came in the form of an agreement to release their targets for cutting greenhouse-gas emissions.

Now, why would anyone of the above favor cooperation over conflict? What does it yield in today's world? Does economy prompt these handshake initiatives? A single corporate example of Intel and Microsoft may shed some light on this issue. These two firms are perhaps the best known pair of complementary firms in the world, working the best together as more than 80% of the personal computers have an Intel microprocessor running Microsoft's Windows operating system. And since 1980 when IBM chose both Intel and Microsoft as the core components of the first IBM PC, these two firms, Intel and Microsoft managed to stay married and their combined profit in 2004 soared over \$15 billion in net profits while the largest original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) in the world (Dell, HP, and IBM) made roughly \$2.5 billion in profits from their PC operations.

Even animals cooperate, in spite of their animosity. Many animals fend their predators off better when they stand together as a herd. Strangely even these animals, in the face of their tension between group interests and their

conflicting individual interests choose wisely when given options to either forage and bring food to the offspring, to defend the nest, and to forage for themselves and heighten their own chances of survival. A classic example of the Rhizobia-legume interaction proves increased survivorship, where the soil bacteria Rhizobia supply amino acids to the plant and in exchange receive organic acids as a carbon and energy source. These are both examples of choosing mutual dependence and survival over exclusive warring strategies.

This land of ours too, calls for an end to hostility. The blood soaked university campuses, the terror stricken alleys, the gruesome murders in elite neighborhoods, the anxious lot awaiting justice at the courts and above all, a reconciliation of disagreements at the highest level of national politics require some attention. We live in times, which demand an end to conflict. We live in times where disputants need to work towards a constructive resolution process. In reality, all economies today require the basic principle of cooperation where each goal needs to be linked so that everybody will either sink or swim together. Since the goals of sharing a single pie are all usually interdependent, choices to be made here are clear: one could either compete or accommodate; one could either collaborate or avoid; one could either compromise or champion a cause. One must also remember that each of these choices comes with an appropriate price tag.

Today we stand on a ground that appeals for a handshake. A visit to a friendly factory proved your columnist's point. A worker had just expressed fear of being pressured

to convince his friends to form a trade union in the factory that he works in. When probed, he answered that he was actually in favor of a collective voice, which could also come through a Workers' Participatory Committee. A furor is being raised with regard to the practice of trade unionism in this country. In spite of the

number of trade unions shooting to more than 230 in one year, there are complaints about how difficult it is to form these platforms. Given the fact that the mid-level management maybe shy about allowing them to be formed, given the fact that the top management may or may not be fully invested in the topic, it becomes a challenge for a factory worker to find his/her voice of freedom. Many factories may already have effective Workers' Participatory Committee in the ready-made garment sector where the workers' representatives maybe fully elected by the workers themselves, but many may still be shy of a collective voice surfacing on their factory floors. Point is, for the good of the economy, both sides of the owners and the workers must come together and focus on a handshake. No negotiators need to step in and no translation in transition is required.

In general, one must remember that a single handshake between opposing global leaders does send out a positive message to the rest of the world as much as the news of a ceasefire calms a political inferno. Therefore for the sake of the economy, the landscape of this land also needs a number of handshakes to change its direction. There must be more dialogue on the table, both in economy and in politics. And though sporting events only ensure the win for one and loss for another, one must ensure that games need to be played fairly and on equal ground.

The writer is Managing Director, Mohammadi Group.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### HT Imam's remarks unacceptable

Recently while addressing a BCL programme at DU, PM's political affairs adviser HT Imam said, "We will see how much we can help you with the viva voce." He also said, "Our leader (Sheikh Hasina) has told us to arrange jobs for you by any means."

This is a bolt from the blue for the meritorious BCS aspirants. Such statement made by a person holding an influential position is really unacceptable. A large number of students like me who want to join Bangladesh Civil Services in the future have become frustrated at such comments. The government should stop politicising public services to save the administration from becoming inefficient.

Indrojit Bhowmick  
Dept. of History  
Jahangirnagar University

### Need to improve city's transport service

Due to lack of good transportation service in Dhaka, and lack of monitoring by the authorities, many people die every year in road crashes in the city and the situation has gone from bad to worse.



PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka metropolitan city has a population of over 16 million and the public transports are insufficient for this huge population. So to meet the demand of the residents of Dhaka, unfit vehicles are plying the city streets with unskilled drivers who often violate traffic laws and drive recklessly causing accidents. The BRTA should, therefore, take necessary steps to improve quality of public transport services which will eventually reduce the number of road accidents.

Marina Akther, Md. Kaif Islam, Tasfia Tanzim Oishe, Tazmila Hasin  
East West University, Aftabnagar, Dhaka

### Create campus job for students

Most students studying in public universities come from middle and lower income families. After enrolling in the university, many of them face severe financial problems and can't even afford to pay their tuition fees. Some of them engage in private tutoring to bear the expenses. If the university authority can create scopes for part time jobs on campus, it would be of much help to these students.

Zihad Hawlader  
Dept. of English  
Jahangirnagar University

### Comments on news report, "It didn't stop at shooting," published on November 14, 2014

Nasirullah Mridha, USA  
NHRC chief's remarks on the chain of command in the police department have been proved right.

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### "Providing BCL cadres with jobs by any means!" (Nov. 14, 2014)

Snr Citizen  
If merit is compromised, then the nation has worst times ahead.

Nds  
It is really a shame that such a statement came from this man.

Readul Ahsan Nipu  
55% BCS cadres are recruited on the basis of quota. If that system does not hurt the quality of civil administration, then recruiting BCL activists will not also have any effect!

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### "Another Rana Plaza victim dies" (Nov. 13, 2014)

Dev Saha  
It is a great shame for the nation that we could not save these victims even though they survived the dreadful disaster.

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### "One rally, too much sufferings" (Nov. 16, 2014)

New Generation  
This is the way how our leaders claim that people are now in peace. People will definitely forget the meaning of 'peace' in the future.

## Where even bauls are not safe...



SYED FATTAHUL ALIM

THE hacking of Rajshahi University Sociology professor, AKM Shafiu'l Islam, to death near his house by unidentified assailants is not just another case of homicide that we often read in the newspapers. The area where he lived was a rather quieter part of the city close to the Rajshahi University campus. He left his teachers' apartment provided by the university, for that rented house outside the campus, perhaps because it suited best his temperament as a devotee of the baul philosophy and its way of life. And like any other baul he could not have the usual drive for worldly pursuits of wealth, power, or social position. The single, lonely life he lived learning to play two-stringed *dotara*, sometimes singing mystic songs in communion with his fellow baul devotees in his house, was truly otherworldly. It is beyond comprehension how such a person could create enmity with anyone so that they may think of taking his life? If a baul is a symbol of peace, the Shafiu'l's assailants have killed peace itself with their machete.

Though it defies common sense, some yet believe that it is his baul worldview that brought about his tragic end. These quarters are of the view that a section of bigots consider baulism an aberration that clashes with extreme views of the fanatics. So, he might have drawn their wrath.

The circumstances of the killing do not also show any evidence of mugging, for there was no report of anything of value stolen from the victim. The motor cycle he was riding was also found lying untouched at the scene of tragedy.

So one is baffled why a peaceable person like him should become the target of such violent physical attack and that too in a premeditated manner as is being suspected by the police?

Apart from that, it is also hard to believe why a university teacher, whose mission is to disseminate knowledge to his pupils or to remain engaged in any field of research, should draw someone's deadly ire? But looking at the gashing wounds crisscrossing the victim's head and other parts of the body, one can imagine the savagery he was subjected to. The nature of the wounds makes it clear that the attackers bore very deep hatred towards Shafiu'l. What really motivated his killers to be so revengeful against Shafiu'l?

Reports further have it that a few hours after Shafiu'l

succumbed to his injuries, a website on the internet surfaced where a group calling itself an Islamist one claimed responsibility for the murder. The reason for the murder, according to what was posted on the website, was the victim's particular attitude towards *burqa* (veil)-clad female students. The website says he did not allow female students with *burqa* in his class and so he was eliminated. Worse yet, it also claimed to have inflicted similar death penalty to others for their alleged apostasy. If anything, the reported website further deepens the mystery shrouding Shafiu'l's killing.

The earlier noted theory that his baul way of life might have enraged some fanatics fits well into the type of objective the aforementioned website declares. But it will be too hasty to jump to conclusion based on the claims of the so-called jihadist website, or any speculation or flimsy logic which may unduly bias or misguide the investigation into the murder.

In fact, the popping up of a website preaching extremist slogans in the name of Islam and that too immediately after the murder hardly lends credence to the genuineness of its purpose as well as the claims it makes. The possibility of its being a red herring to distract the attention of the investigators of the case cannot be dismissed out of hand.

Police have arrested some 11 persons, mostly members of the Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Chhatra Shibir, in connection with the murder. But such arrests have not been able to placate the teachers and students of Rajshahi University where academic activities have come to a standstill with protest marches, rallies and human chains being held about everyday.

The murder of Shafiu'l Islam in broad daylight is evidently a lapse of the police in providing due protection to RU teachers, especially after two previous such incidents in which an Economics professor Muhammad Yunus was murdered in 2004, while a Geology teacher Dr. S. Taher Ahmed was killed in 2006. Removal of the Rajshahi metropolitan police commissioner two days after Shafiu'l murder is a clear indication that police have accepted responsibility for their failure in the preventing the tragedy from happening.

We believe the police like they did in the previous two RU teacher murder cases will be able to arrest Shafiu'l's killers quickly. But police's job will not end there. They will have also to get to the bottom of the issue. Why are some RU teachers becoming targets of the extremist terrorists? Who are these terrorists? Why has the administration so far failed to ensure the security for RU teachers? They must find the answers and bust the extremist terrorists' den in Rajshahi.

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## WORLD TOILET DAY Everyone, everywhere by 2030

SHAMIM AHMED

ON World Toilet Day, 19 November, it is important to know that 2.5 billion people globally face a daily health crisis. Over 1,400 children in the developing world are likely to die of diarrhoeal diseases, simply because they and their families do not have access to clean drinking water, a basic toilet or a safe way to deal with human waste-nor do they have sufficient water to wash and to keep their hands and their bodies clean.

As, majority of schools in all the countries of South Asia don't have adequate toilets and hand washing facilities for students, hence a chance to change behavior in next generation is missing out. Under nutrition, linked to chronic diarrhoeal illness, is estimated to have stunted the development of some 162 million of today's children aged under-five.

Health professionals are often expected to deliver quality healthcare in facilities that lack basic sanitation and clean water and that are unhygienic putting patients' lives at risk. One in three women and girls around the world do not have access to basic toilets and risk their health and their safety each time they must find a place to relieve themselves. Girls who attend schools without safe, private, separate toilets are more likely to drop out at puberty, depriving themselves of the education that can help break the cycle of poverty. What is more, the British Medical Journal has identified sanitation as the most important invention in 150 years, more critical than antibiotics and immunisations. Yet of the UN's existing Millennium Development Goals, the target for sanitation remains one of the most off-track. An estimated ten million children have died from diarrhoeal diseases in the years since the goals were launched. We have a moment now to change this. As the UN shapes new Sustainable Development Goals, this needless tragedy can be ended by ensuring the delivering of safe water and sanitation and improved hygiene.

It is high time for the leaders of South Asia to come up with clear and ambitious targets, timeline and cash for sanitation. If South Asia makes progress, world makes progress on sanitation related MDGs. SAARC leaders need to recognize that sanitation is the building block of dignified society in South Asia. They must recognize sanitation crisis in the region and diarrhoea as the biggest child killer.

Thus we call on to the leaders to lead the world to a future of better health, dignity and prosperity for all by championing a dedicated goal to deliver water and sanitation to everyone, everywhere by 2030.

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