

AT THE ROOT OF THE MATTER

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PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

Sexual harassment, thankfully enough, has now become a topic of discussion amongst peers. Of course, we need to look deeper into the roots. Any woman in Bangladesh will have experienced sexual harassment at some point, if not many points, throughout her life. The trauma remains deeper still in this area because now we are fully aware of the reluctance and blatant denial of our law enforcement agencies and higher authorities. Victims are never heard of speaking out, and those who do, reportedly go through more traumatic experiences from not only the 'security' forces but also the society and even the court. What we must establish is that, to get rid of this dent in the dignity of our nation, or at least attempt to, we need to start speaking out, victim or not, about the issue. It is our job now, to enable each other to do so. Before we get into a more public sphere, we have to recognise that sexual harassment can also take place in our most personal environments—offices, schools, universities, even homes, and the authority figures in such places should be aware of this and take punitive action against anyone who expresses traits of imposing harassment on others.

When Sophia Chowdhury (not her real name) was 11 years old, her music teacher took advantage of her. "I didn't even know what he was doing. But I remember being so scared, I would freeze. When I told my sister, she didn't believe it. So I didn't bother telling my mother either," she

says. "The last time I had faced him alone, I threw a remote control at his face, ran away and locked myself into my room," she elaborates. Years later, Sophia told her mother who broke down the minute she was done. "I realised then that if I had told her earlier, she could have saved me."

Alisha Rahman (not her real name) is currently facing harassment that involves threats to her and her family. She recently ended a relationship with an abusive man, which he didn't take very well. Since then, he has been mentally abusing her. "The man used to call her and use slang, demeaning words. When she blocked his number, he began calling her from different phones. Then, he started calling her siblings," says Mashroof Hasan (not his real name), a close friend of the victim. The perpetrator has reportedly given her brothers compromising photographs and is constantly harassing her whole family. "After the brothers tried to negotiate with him, the man demanded that the girl face him and his friends, alone, which we all knew could be dangerous to her sanity, security and life," he says. "We don't know what he'll do next!" Because of societal pressure and knowing the consequences of disclosing the issue to the authorities, the family hasn't been able to take stronger measures against the man.

This mental pressure that the society puts on women is what needs to be changed, first and foremost. It needs to be addressed, over and over again, that when a woman is going through harassment or abuse, it is an issue

of major importance. The state's biggest responsibility is to provide security to all its citizens. If one woman's security is breached without consequence, all of our security is breached.



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

HEART AND BONES

ANIKA HOSSAIN

On April 25, 2015 a healthcare awareness programme was organised by the Dhaka Club, where two renowned doctors from Malaysia, cardiologist Dr Balachandran Kandasamy and orthopaedic and spine surgeon Dr Abdul Hadi Husin were invited to speak about their areas of expertise and the facilities available at their respective institutions to treat these illnesses.

Dr Balachandran Kandasamy, who is a Consultant Cardiologist at the National Heart Institute of Malaysia (IJN), spoke about the various causes of heart diseases and what precautions we should take if certain symptoms surface. "Heart disease involves a cardiovascular system which controls the circulation of blood to all organs of our body from the brain to other extremities," he said. "If you have an organ that is not receiving proper blood

flow, you can have a heart attack. If you have hypertension you can get kidney problems. If there are problems in the cerebral (brain) circulation, you can get a stroke," he informed us. "Heart disease is the number one killer, it can cause sudden death or disability and affects people between 40 to 60 years of age. Treatment for heart diseases is lifelong and costly but these are preventable."

Dr Kandasamy informed us that some people show no symptoms, of heart disease, especially diabetics. "This is why one must go for a check up atleast once," he said. "Symptoms of heart diseases include chest pains, angina, palpitations (heart beating fast) and breathing problems. Women mostly complain of shortness in breath," he explained. "The stress test (ECG) is a good test to get done; a stress eco and an MRI are also options."

The symptoms of a heart attack include heaviness, nausea, loss of breath and chest pains. "Women do not have chest pains but

they feel fatigue and they sweat profusely," said Dr Kandasamy. He also spoke of the different types of stents that can be inserted into our arteries if there are blockages such as bare and drug-coated stents. The main causes of heart diseases include smoking, diabetes, high cholesterol, a sedentary lifestyle and stress. "Prevention is the best way to deal with these illnesses," said Dr Kandasamy. "Diet, exercise and good lifestyle habits are the best way to keep these diseases at bay."

Dr Abdul Hadi Husin, who is a Consultant Orthopaedic and Spine Surgeon at KPJ Healthcare Berhad, works on shoulders, joints and knees, but his specialty is the spine. "Everyone has back pain a few times in life," he said. Dr Husain tells us that there are various causes of back pain, injury of course being one of them. "However, sometimes diseases like cancer presents itself as back pain, but a majority of it happens due to degeneration," he told us. "Those who lift

heavy things regularly have earlier degeneration (labourers etc). Posture, smoking, alcohol abuse, stress, awkward sleep are other reasons back pain surfaces," he said. "We usually use questionnaires to categorise your pain and determine treatment for you. Exercises and massages can help. Thai massages however are not recommended. A gentle massage to reduce the pain to tone the muscles so the pain does not recur is recommended. Acupuncture, physiotherapy, posture modification and medication are of course effective. If all else fails, we go for epidural steroid injections, for temporary relief. Sometimes we put in metal plates to stabilise the spine," he informed us.

Oftentimes, Bangladeshis will go to Singapore, Thailand or India for treatment.

The purpose of this programme was to make us aware of our treatment options in Malaysia where the facilities are just as advanced and perhaps more affordable. ■



PHOTO: AFP

NUMBERS

81

The April 25 quake measured 7.8 on the moment magnitude scale, the largest since the 1934 Bihar quake, which measured 8.2 and killed around 10,000 people. Another quake in Kashmir in 2005, measuring 7.6, killed around 80,000 people.

These quakes are a dramatic manifestation of the ongoing convergence between the Indo-Australian and Asian tectonic plates that has progressively built the Himalayas over the last 50 million years.

Nepal, one of the world's poorest and least developed countries, will not recover from the disaster quickly, which will take a toll on its

infrastructure, tourism, and overall economic picture

The country attracts about 1 million foreigners annually, ranging from mountaineers scaling the icy peaks to tourists who want to visit the World Heritage sites. Tourism, which contributes about 5 percent to GDP, will be largely affected. It was the worst seismic activity to hit the country in 81 years.

SOURCE: WWW.RT.COM, WWW.BBC.COM