

**Editor (The Daily Star)**

Mahfuz Anam

**Editor (Star Weekend)**

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Ananta Yusuf  
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**Regular Contributors**

Farah Ghuznavi  
Sharbari Ahmed  
Nadia Kabir Barb  
Andrew Eagle

**Staff Photographers**

Prabir Das  
Kazi Tahsin Agaz Apurbo

**Graphics & Illustrations**

Manan Morshed

**Make-up**

Md Saiful Islam

**General Manager, Production**

Selim S H Chowdhury

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PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

**"It is not how much we have, but how much we enjoy, that makes happiness."**

— Charles Spurgeon, British Particular Baptist preacher.

**SNAPSHOT**

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

The *Star Weekend* would like to inform you that our issue for July 24, 2015 will be dropped on account of Eid-ul-Fitr Holidays. We wish everyone a happy and joyous Eid. Stay safe and stay tuned for the next issue of the *Star Weekend*. Eid Mubarak!

**"No VAT on Education"**

The photo-feature published on July 10, 2015 in the *Star Weekend* portraying students' movement to withdraw the absurd VAT on higher education in private universities was really an appreciable step. VAT is applicable in buying and selling commodities. By imposing this tax, does our government want to imply that from now on education has become a commodity, not one of the basic rights confirmed by our constitution? I would like to request the concerned authority to call off such bizarre ordinance. The government should not only withdraw this draconian tax but also it should take steps to make higher education in private universities more accessible and affordable for the students from all parts of our society.

Bappy Sadhu  
Islamic University of Kushtia  
Kushtia

**Preserve Our Heritage Sites**

I really like the *Star Weekend*'s regular column on Bangladeshi heritage sites. Through these articles I have learned a lot about our rich history and cultural heritage. These articles also show how forgetful we are as a nation, that instead of preserving these relics we are accelerating their destruction perhaps without even knowing what we are losing by destroying these artefacts. I would like to thank the *Star Weekend* for publishing such a resourceful regular column and I hope they will come up with stories on more heritage sites every week from all over the country.

Sarah Farhana  
Niketan, Dhaka



PHOTO: RIPON KAWAL

The opinions expressed in these letters do not necessarily represent the views of the *Star Weekend*.

**| ANIMAL RIGHTS |**

On July 7, 2015, a historic act took place that can change the way people in Bangladesh treat animals forever. On the Tuesday before last, the police arrested three youths for abusing a street dog brutally last month, in the capital's Rampura area.

This simple act shows the massive and tremendous change brought to the nation by Rubaiya Ahmad and Obhoyaronno Animal Welfare Foundation. Since it's inception in 2009, Obhoyaronno and its founder, Rubaiya, have been making

immediate help to be given. Ashik also had to face threats from the criminals in question. Saima Feyruz, an animal rights activist, contacted three boys named Tanim, Zahid and Sourav, two of whom set out from Agargaon the moment they heard of the incident. They found the dog in Rampura, fighting for his life, and they rescued him from the spot, took him to the vet, Dr Siamak, and later to Obhoyaronno Clinic for treatment. The boys named him Whitey and took him under their care.

pursuing the case persistently. "We had filed an FIR under section 4 of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1920 and had a witness to support the case who also had the names of the offenders. The arrests were made after the police had completed their investigation in line with the information our witness had provided," says Nadia. The maximum punishment for this offence is 3 months but the exact punishment these culprits will receive is at the discretion of the Court after hearing arguments from both sides. Nadia

the seriousness of the crime of animal abuse means better recognition of the value of animals and their rights, and can work as a deterrent towards future abuse, creating a more compassionate society."

The arrest of the youths shined the much needed light of hope for animal lovers and animal rights activists across the nation. It was a big step towards a change that we desperately need. But only jailing was never a good enough solution. "There are hundreds of incidents of animal cruelty taking place all over

**A HISTORIC LIGHT OF HOPE**

**NAZIBA BASHER**

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO



immense strides in animal welfare. In January 2012, Rubaiya successfully persuaded the government to end dog culling in Dhaka. Since then, the government has declared the city as the country's first no-cull city. Obhoyaronno has also been running the country's first CNVR programme in Dhaka with support from Dhaka City Corporation, Humane Society International and FAO.

Rubaiya came to know about the incident through people who rescued the dog, took down the names of the perpetrators and testified against them. The criminals, namely Johnny, Sobhan alias Shuvo and Imran, were caught beating Whitey (the dog) brutally, on June 16th. The incident was brought to animal lover, Noshin Nur's attention, by a boy named Ashik, who called for help around 8 pm at night, which was really late for

Three days later, despite the fact that it took almost 3 hours, Rubaiya finally managed to file a full fledged criminal case against the boys who abused Whitey. "The OC prompted to take action, except he wasn't sure how such an unprecedented case should be filed," says Rubaiya. "After much deliberation, they decided to file a GD, followed by court ordered prosecution. Just as we were ready to leave the police station, the OC came running and had us change the GD into an FIR. By that time, he had made a number of phone calls and had a better understanding of how to proceed," she says.

Lawyer Nadia Choudhury, who has fought for animal rights before, had been

**"IN ORDER TO PREVENT ANIMAL CRUELTY EFFECTIVELY, WE MUST SHOW PEOPLE THE SAME COMPASSION, KINDNESS AND UNDERSTANDING THAT WE WANT PEOPLE TO SHOW TO ANIMALS. OUR POLICY IS REHABILITATION NOT REVENGE."**

continues, "This first arrest means that people can no longer get away with abusing animals without facing the consequences. An official recognition of

Bangladesh and simply putting people behind bars is neither feasible nor is it going to solve the problem," says Rubaiya.

"In order to prevent animal cruelty effectively, we must show people the same compassion, kindness and understanding that we want people to show to animals. Our policy is rehabilitation not revenge," she ends.

Thanks to Rubaiya Ahmad, Nadia Choudhury and all the animal lovers involved in rescuing and rehabilitating Whitey, we can finally see a glimpse of an animal-friendly Bangladesh. For if we aspire to be recognised as a great nation, we must remember that Gandhi once said, "The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated."



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

**"A Break from the Capital"**

Thanks a lot *Star Weekend* for publishing such a timely spotlight (published on July 10, 2015) on the holiday destinations near Dhaka. In fact, for the last couple of days I had been thinking of going on a vacation. I then found that my favourite supplement *Star Weekend* has just appeared with the solutions in the form a very insightful article. Besides the article, I really like the cover photo of this week's *Star Weekend*. The photo has brilliantly captured the peaceful and tranquil milieu of the forest. However, regarding the historic Bhawal Safari park, I found it quite expensive for tourists who want to spend a couple of nights in the forest rest houses.

Sartaz Islam  
Gandaria, Dhaka

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