

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

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## Technical education for girls

Skills that will ensure employment

A study by Underprivileged Children's Education Programme (UCEP) has found that a considerable number of girls are unaware of the prospects of technical education despite the government's efforts to prioritise this skill-based education. In a country with a population as large as ours, with the majority of citizens being young, providing jobs for them is a huge challenge. This is why it is so important to invest in technical education that will provide young people with skills that will help them get employed. There are various institutes – government and non government – offering such skills training but there seems to be a gender gap in terms of enrolment. This highlights the stereotype in society that girls are not capable of doing technical jobs such as carpentry, appliance service and repair, etc. But schools like UCEP have proved that girls can be equally adept at learning these skills and use them to work at jobs traditionally dominated by males. The survey has also found that family barriers, early marriage, long distance of such schools and general lack of acceptance from society, act as deterrents.

A BBS survey has found that women's participation in the workforce has fallen from 36 percent to 33 percent between 2010 and 2013. This could be attributed to a decline in job opportunities for women. With better vocational skills girls and women will be in a position to apply for jobs they would not have sought otherwise. The government can take initiatives to make this kind of education more popular among girls and educate parents on its merits in terms of better employment possibilities for their daughters.

## Footpath eviction drive

There should be no let up

It is ironic to find that the latest drive by Dhaka City Corporation (North) to free up public space in front of Bashundhara city market and Purnima cinema hall failed to produce any tangible results. The occupiers, mostly small hawkers who ply their trade stored their merchandise in nearby shops during the drive on March 8 and promptly came back to set up shop on the same spot a merely 20 minutes after the drive ended. This is the general picture in most footpath-clearing up drives. We understand that the Mayor has taken a tough stance against such traders in other parts of the city where shops have been closed down and there is talk of legal action against hawkers who illegally occupy footpaths.

The actions of the mayor are totally understandable and we support it. That it is necessary to clean up these illegal squatters so that people on foot may navigate the city in safety are of utmost importance. As for the argument put forth by these small businesses that this is their only means of livelihood, we sympathise with their plight. They too have mouths to feed and it falls within the city corporation's responsibility to make arrangements for hawkers to set up their makeshift shops in designated places in the city. One cannot forget that the city corporation is acting in public interest and the body must get support from all agencies to make these drives successful. Without concerted and coordinated efforts, any attempt to free up public space for the greater good will inevitably fail.

## COMMENTS

**"Need to continue the momentum"**  
(March 7, 2016)

Saif Ahmed

We are with our cricketers and it does not matter that we have lost against India. It's a part of the game. But Bangladesh's overall performance was fantastic in the whole Asia Cup T20. All the best for the future matches.

Mohan MoMu

Bangladesh team played very well. Hope they will continue to perform better. Wish them all the best.



KNOT SO TRUE

RUBANA HUQ

YESTERDAY was the time to tell all our families that our daughters aren't just pretty; they are superbly gifted; our daughters don't "nag", they pursue; our daughters don't "gossip", they discuss; our daughters are not "pushy", they assert; our daughters are not "chatty", they have a lot to say. I have two daughters of my own

who better me everyday and who exceed all targets that I have ever achieved on my own.

I spend 90 percent of my salary on my family, whereas I don't remember the last time my partner bought anything for home. I don't remember being bought anything in the last 10 years and the excuse or the defense is always the same: Everything belongs to you and you can buy anything you want to. That is a standard line that your columnist is defenseless against. True, I earn more than my husband and even truer is that I deserve it. On top of that, if only I billed him for all those unpaid hours when I brought my children up all these years, he would be truly bankrupt.

I wouldn't have had the courage to write all this, had it not been for yesterday, the 8th of March. This one special day when all women gather to celebrate 8th of March in unison, irrespective of the fact that the remaining 364 days of this year will be almost the same, laden with pledges, pregnant with promises and blocked as ever.

When I generally get off planes and walk towards immigration, I walk faster than usual as most of the times, the men beside me outpace me and I can't keep up. In spite of naturally having a faster stride ever since childhood, I lag behind, till today. When I fill immigration forms at airports, I often tempt myself to tick the "M" box instead of the "F". When I am told that I have worked for 19 years and it's time for me to "rest", I react, as for me, life is still beginning.

So amidst all this, defining womanhood and its purpose takes a lot of imagination. There's so much data, so many speeches, so many hash tags, so much inspiration... all around. In the middle of the "so-many" groups, it's not easy to find one's way through. Over-commitment kills aspirations, especially when they are from the most privileged corners, coming from the most privileged communities. Especially when they are from another species, living in the same planet as women, who are the recipient of less than 24 percent of global wealth, sharing two-third of working hours, spending 90 percent of their income in their own

households, being one-third of the global work force.

In 2014, the World Economic Forum predicted that it would take until 2095 to achieve global gender parity. Then one year later in 2015, it was estimated that gender gap wouldn't close entirely until 2133. But thank God for the "Step it Up" campaign in 2016, which targets women to live within the slogan of equality: Planet 50:50 with an aim to attain income parity by 2030.

So, dreams have been advanced; targets have been set and we move on and look forward to the next International Women's Day when further and fresher data will be released in media with newer figures on violence, wage gaps, inequalities et al. But that's how we tick and that's how the world goes, I guess. Even with so

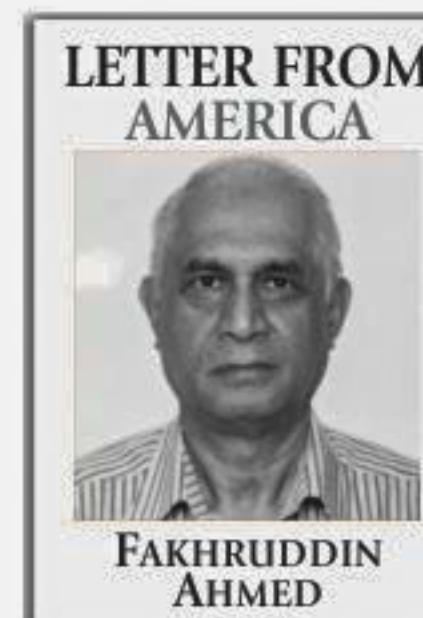


PHOTO: KPFA.ORG

many pledges and platforms, we are where we are and progress is what we perceive through the lens of a "man". In reality, we see through men's eyes, and decide on the benchmark of "propriety" based on men's views. This is not because of men having dictated our lives. This is simply because of all that has happened to our inner psyche as a part of our upbringing, which evolved around how to be a "proper woman."

Simone de Beauvoir once wrote, "One is not born, but rather, becomes a woman." In the 1973 edition of *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir endeavoured to tell us that there was a specific difference between a female and being a woman. A female is a physiological construct, whereas womanhood is a cultural one. Gender

# The chickens have come home to roost for the Republicans



LETTER FROM AMERICA

FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

WHAT a bizarre spectacle is the US presidential primary campaigns are unfolding into! There is a lovefest among Democrats who cannot decide who they love more - Hillary

Clinton or Bernie Sanders. On the Republican side, like three eight-year old schoolyard bullies, Donald Trump, Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio spewed so much hate at the Republican candidates' debate on March 3 that it must have caused a shortage of hate in the rest of the country! It was nauseating to watch Rubio and Cruz hurl incessant imprecations at Trump, and Trump not only return the favour in kind but also boast about the size of his genital!

The final outcome is fairly certain, especially on the Democratic side. After the completion of the 18th primaries/caucuses on March 5 (Hillary: 11; Sanders: 7), Hillary Clinton has 1,121 of the 2,383 pledged delegates necessary to win the nomination; Bernie Sanders has 481. Clinton has a lopsided lead in the Super Delegates (roughly 500 for Clinton, 20 for Sanders), who are elected officials and party honchos. This trajectory is unlikely to change for the remaining 32 states, territories and Washington DC. Sanders is winning the predominantly white, caucus states, while Clinton is raking in delegates from diverse primary states. Hillary needs to win only 40 percent of the remaining delegates to clinch the nomination while Sanders needs 60 percent.

In the 19 Republican

primaries/caucuses held through March 5 (Trump has won 12, Cruz 6, and Rubio 1), Donald Trump has accumulated 382 delegates, Ted Cruz 300, Marco Rubio 128 and John Kasich 35. To win the 1,237 delegates necessary for nomination, Trump needs to win 53 percent of the remaining delegates; Cruz 58 percent, Rubio 69 percent, and Kasich 75 percent. Unfortunately for Cruz, the upcoming delegate-rich northern and western states like New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and California are Trump-friendly states.

Since Bangladesh has recently been in the grip of the T20 mania, a cricket analogy best explains how difficult it will be for Cruz, Rubio or Kasich to overtake Trump. (I should like to congratulate the Bangladesh Tigers for their runners-up finish in the Asia Cup. Some of us watched and cheered their valiant effort on Sunday morning, local time, at a friend's house.) Assume that the team batting second is chasing a target of 200 runs. The required run rate (RRR) is 10 runs per over. If after five overs, the chasing team scores only 25 runs, the RRR increases to 11.7/over. If they score 50 runs in 10 overs, the RRR jumps to 15 runs per over. Even if they score 100 in 15 overs, the RRR shoots up to an impossible 20 runs/over for the last 5 overs. The required delegate rate for the Trump-chasers is increasing state by state.

Assuming that the current trajectory continues, Trump will win the necessary 1,237 delegates, especially if he wins winner-takes-all states like Florida and Ohio. (Thus far, candidates received delegates proportional to the vote received, with a cut-off threshold of 20 percent minimum.) Trump is leading in every primary state. His weakness is in the

caucus states. Caucuses are less democratic and more difficult to poll. If Trump were to lose Rubio's home state, Florida (Trump is currently ahead by 20 points), or John Kasich's home state, Ohio, (Trump is ahead by 5 points currently) on March 15, Trump may not reach 1,237 delegates. But, he will still likely win most delegates.

Under that scenario, the Republican establishment hopes for a "brokered convention" with the aim of coalescing around a non-Trump candidate, thus denying Trump the nomination. That is why establishment stalwarts like the 2012 nominee Mitt Romney, has come out guns blazing, calling Trump a "phony," a "fraud" and a "con man."

Not that it matters to Trump supporters, who are anti-establishment anyway. If Trump wins a plurality of delegates, which he most likely will, and the party coalesces around someone who had won fewer delegates than Trump, Trump and his supporters will bolt the Republican party, which will then splinter. That will spell doom for the party's electoral aspirations in November.

The Republicans know that turmoil at the 1968 Democratic Party Convention in Chicago gifted the presidency to Richard Nixon. They would do anything to avoid intra-party strife at this year's convention in Cleveland, Ohio. They also know that nominating an extremist as the party's presidential candidate (like ultra-conservative Barry Goldwater in 1964) will cost them electoral annihilation.

But, what to make of Donald Trump's ideology? He certainly is not an ultra-conservative. In fact, he is all over the place. All that can be said about Donald Trump is that he is an obnoxious demagogue, an anti-immigrant bully, an Islamophobe, and an anti-black

misogynist. That is fine with the base of his supporters who are predominantly less educated, ageing whites. That is why Trump's hesitation to denounce the Ku Klux Klan and its one time Grand Wizard David Duke, the manhandling of Black Lives Matter protesters at all of his rallies, his call for more severe water boarding and killing of the children and families of terrorists (which are war crimes under international laws) finds support among his base.

It will also find support among the Republican establishment eventually. After all, the mouth piece of the Republican Party –rightwing radio talk show hosts such as Rush Limbaugh, and the Fox News television channel - have been advocating such extreme and hateful measures for the last 20-30 years. It is just that President George W. Bush, the 2008 Republican presidential nominee, Senator John McCain and the 2012 nominee Governor Mitt Romney had kept such open bigotry at arm's length. The potential 2016 Republican nominee, Donald Trump has embraced such intolerant bigotry with open arms.

The Republican establishment finds itself in a dilemma similar to that of a family whose daughter had been kidnapped and forcibly married by a bully. With all options closed, the family is finally forced to reconcile with the scandal by inventing "redeeming qualities" in the bully. Donald Trump is the answer to the Republican base's prayer for a candidate who embodies their intolerant "values." Now, the party establishment has to own Trump. Soon they will extol his "virtues." For the Republican Party, the chickens have finally come home to roost.

How do we increase our income? How do we aim towards income parity? Is it by wearing pink as Narendra Modi did last year or as Mamata Banerjee did last year, leading ten thousand women who walked with her from College Square to Esplanade, causing unforgivable traffic jams? Or should men be wearing women's high heels and complete 'Walk a Mile in Her Shoes' like they did in Bulgaria last year? Celebrating the potential of female power has nothing to do with any of this. But it has everything to do with women who have truly burst the bubble and have made it.

A batch of photo sessions on a specific day does not further agenda. A barrage of protests to spell inequality also does not impact who she could be tomorrow. The real test is to locate, encourage and develop who we see from a distance and mentor them ourselves. And in case we spot a gem, let's celebrate them without any reservation or bias.

For me, March 8 is best defined by Captain Nazia Nusrat Hossain and Captain Shahrina Binte Anwar, the first women trainee pilots of Bangladesh Army; March 8 is also best demonstrated by the 190 female officers from Bangladesh working in different peacekeeping missions, helping the United Nations towards its goal of having 20 percent women employees in its recruitment process; March 8 is most worthily represented by the three million female workers employed in readymade garment sector constituting 65 percent of the manufacturing sector; and of course, March 8 is all about our daughters growing up to become who we could have become.

The writer is Managing Director, Mohammadi Group.

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The writer is a Rhodes Scholar.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### A bizarre way of celebration

Bangladesh cricket team has played very well in the Asia Cup. The whole nation has celebrated their victories. But it was sad to notice that many people have celebrated our team's victories in a bizarre way, for example, by playing Hindi songs loudly near the stadium area, which was an utter disrespect to our own culture. This should never happen again.

Sayek Ahmed Sajib  
University of Rajshahi

### We are with you, Tigers

Winning and losing are both part of a game. Though our cricketers couldn't make it in the final match, they played well. Mahmudullah's batting was extraordinary. Taskin has been able to put pressure on Indian batsmen. And the catch taken by Sarkar was amazing. We are always with our team. They should just learn from their mistakes and go ahead.

Md. Noman Hossain Khandker  
Student of BBA  
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology

### Could Mustafiz make a difference?

While we enjoyed the batting depth and determination of the Tigers in the final match of Asia Cup T20 against the Indians, we also observed the helplessness of our bowlers. We were wondering if the presence of Mustafiz could make a different result. Indian batsmen have taken Mustafiz very seriously and he has proved his ability on many occasions. Anyway, Tigers have performed brilliantly throughout the whole tournament. We hope that they will show their might in the next World Cup.

Asadullah  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

