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“And once the storm is over, you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.” — Haruki Murakami

SNAPSHOT

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Journey of a Change Maker

I was a little shaken while reading the article by Nilma Jahan, titled “Journey of a Change Maker” (published on May 13, 2016) and thought for a while about how easily one could solve the problem of unemployment. A 29-year-old educated person, Likhon, who is supposed to do a job in an MNC, is peddling through the street willingly. Certainly he is worthy of being an icon for those educated young people, who are still chasing a job like chasing the moon. They can step forward like Likhon with innovative ideas and groundbreaking initiatives. I would like to thank Nilima Jahan and the *Star Weekend* family for writing and publishing such an inspirational article which can give us an example to solve our country’s impending unemployment problem. *Fareed Uddin Keraniganj, Dhaka*

No Eviction without Rehabilitation

Both mayors of Dhaka north and south city corporations have taken stern action against the roads encroachers especially floating peddlers, which is definitely a commendable job. Due to these peddlers’ encroachment of footpaths, full capacity of the streets become impossible to utilize which sometimes lead to traffic congestion. Dhaka city is considered as the 12th mega city in the world. Day by day its population is increasing whereas numbers of roads in the city remain the same and those roads are occupied by many elements. I am thankful to the mayors for this timely step to make the city more livable. However, I would like to suggest to them that instead of evicting these peddlers; authorities should take the step to rehabilitate them. Eviction just by the muscle power of the administration cannot bring a sustainable solution because we must remember that these street shops are the only source of livelihood for these peddlers. *Mohammad Zonae Emran Banasree, Dhaka*

CORRIGENDUM
In last week’s Cover Story it was mentioned otherwise, but Begum Sufia Kamal was not the founder-editor of Begum magazine, she was the first editor, while the founder was Mohammad Nasiruddin.
Scholar Abul Karim Sahitya Bisarad was not involved in editing Sougat magazine.



PHOTO: SAYAM U CHOWDHURY

Destroying Our Lifeline

When I read the article titled “Destroying Our Lifeline” published in the *Star Weekend* on May 20, 2016, I felt a bit ashamed that how ungrateful we have been to the nature. I remembered clearly that night when the destructive cyclone Sidr hit Bangladesh in 2007. We could not sleep in fear of stormy winds at that night. Bangladesh would have suffered more, if the

Sundarbans had not saved our densely populated cities from the raging wind rushing at 260 miles per hour. I think the writer is absolutely correct in his opinion. We really are only interested to exploit, not to give back and preserve. We are very interested to tap into all our resources but not a bit concerned about saving the Sundarbans. We must correct ourselves before something even worse happens to us. *Enam Hasan Madaninagar, Narayanganj*

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

GOVERNANCE

Almost a kilometre long queue of people of different ages, sweating relentlessly under the blazing sun, is an everyday sight in Agargaon. A number of curiously busy men are seen running back and forth with papers near the queue of hundreds of extremely displeased people. Sometimes, these groups of ‘busy’ men are seen talking to the patrolling members of the law enforcing agencies and entering into one of the messiest and busiest public offices of Bangladesh which is the Department of Immigration and Passport.

These kilometre long queue, unrestrained activities of the illegal agents who extort money from the beleaguered applicants by promising them of quick service and corrupt men of law enforcing agencies who allow these agents to run their illegal activities in exchange of a good share of their daily income, are very regular scenes at this office. Anisul Islam, a passport applicant says, “Due to these agents, we, the normal applicants, have to suffer a lot. We have to wait in the queue hours after hours as these agents get their tasks quickly breaking the serial thanks to the passport officials.”

Just a few metres away from the passport office we can see similar pictures in front of the Election Commission Office where hundreds of people are standing in queue to solve their problems with the national ID cards. However, in between these two over-crowded, over-committed offices, there is another public office whose officials pass their whole working day almost doing nothing. This office is Sher-e-Bangla Nagar sub post office, a branch of The Bangladesh Post Office which is one of the most widespread government organisations of the country. There are eight thousand and five hundred post offices all over the country reaching the remotest part of the state where very few organisations can operate.

However, in this age of cellular phone network and email services, much of the functionalities of the post offices have become obsolete. Regardless of this fact, the government has to allocate a huge amount of budget (Tk 520 crore in 2014-15) for it whereas revenue earned from the postal services is quite negligible (only 253 crore in 2014-15). In a bid to revive its capacity, the government decided to equip the office with electronic

BANGLADESH’S UNTAPPED TREASURE

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSSIN AGAZ APURBO



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

money transfer service. However, the advent of easier cell phone based money transaction services such as Bkash and Mobicash have presumably destroyed the market of this service too. Recently, the post office took an initiative to provide e-commerce services which has not been implemented yet.

There is no doubt that despite the current sluggish performance of this department; Bangladesh’s postal service has the immense potential to serve its people thanks to its amazing infrastructural resources. Post offices can be the one-stop service centres for many public services such as passport, national ID cards, submission of utility bills etc. In the United Kingdom, during the Postal Services reform from 2010-2015, UK’s postal service introduced 170 new products to its citizens such as bill pay services, issuing citizen cards, telephony services etc.

Tarun Kanti Sikder, Director (Mails) of Bangladesh Postal Service said, “We are also planning to utilise the infrastructural resources of the post offices by establishing e-centre. In one of the two rooms of the post office, some computers with internet connection will be provided and the citizens will be able to get services from this facility such as taking photos, accessing emergency information etc.”

“These centres will be operated by a young entrepreneur who will share a percentage of his revenue with the postal department. Thus, this initiative will also help to eradicate the unemployment problem in the rural area,” adds a hopeful Tarun. Although government owned Upazila Resource Centres are already providing these kinds of services, it is certainly an appreciable step.

Recently, the Prime Minister has inaugurated 10 new passport centres in different districts to make this essential citizen service more accessible. However, by utilising the huge network of Bangladesh Postal Service, these services such as issuance and delivery of passport, national ID cards can be made more accessible, hassle free and also cost effective. If the government can ensure sustainable reformation in the postal service by increasing its capacity to provide these essential services, there is no doubt that this important sector of the state can earn a huge amount of revenue for the nation. ■

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