

Over half of the major cyclones in the Asia-Pacific region over the last century have affected Bangladesh's coastal districts.

The most recent, Cyclone Roanu, hit the coast of Bangladesh at 11:00 am on 21 May 2016. Winds reached speeds of 102 kilometres per hour and caused massive damage to houses, businesses and agricultural lands. Heavy rainfall inundated the southern coastal regions of the country and caused severe landslides. An estimated 200,000 homes were destroyed.

The cyclone hit during the same week that the national higher secondary certificate (HSC) examinations were scheduled. Thousands of students watched from cyclone shelters as their homes were flattened, and their school books and stationery floated past.

We concentrated on providing support during the disaster, in partnership with many other organisations, but also in providing support to counteract another, more silent killer.

Children and young people are often forgotten in the aftermath of disasters, and quietly become the most vulnerable group during rebuilding. They often cannot attend school, and are often either ignored or hinder the reconstruction efforts of their parents. Their learning is disrupted, and child labour, child marriages and sexual assault often rise. Flooded areas present wondrous new playgrounds, but these are deadly. One child dies from drowning every half an hour in Bangladesh.

Child-friendly spaces keep children safe and let them continue learning while communities rebuild. They are safe havens that ring for miles around with the sound of singing, laughing and acting. Children learn and play, and are kept safe from the dangers that could affect them for the rest of their lives, as they heal from the trauma they have experienced. Trained volunteers monitor them, giving special attention to their psychological wellbeing. Parents themselves have reported that the availability of child-friendly spaces have given them the peace of mind to immerse themselves in recuperating, knowing their children are somewhere safe and happy.

The cost of accommodating a child in a child-friendly space is less than two cents per day. From what we learned from our



A family rebuilds their home. The homes are usually made of planks, bamboo and tin sheets which are cheap and easy to acquire. However, these materials are also the reason homes are non-resilient to storms and are at constant risk from cyclones. Kajir Para in Kutubdia is still in the process of rebuilding itself.

REHABILITATION |

POST-ROANU: THE DEADLY CALM AFTER THE STORM

recent experiences, the positive impacts they could have on children are priceless. Starting our child-friendly spaces in partnership with UNICEF since the severe

floods of Gaibandha in 2015, we are now operating 12 more of such spaces in the districts of Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar. Our 36 cyclone shelters spread across

Bangladesh provide refuge to people every time a disaster strikes.

Courtesy of BRAC PHOTOS: FAISAL AZIM



A woman reads the Quran on top of the wreckage that used to be her home.



200,000 Homes have been destroyed, leaving countless families sleeping under open skies.



The #RealTalk© Annual Fasting Person Awards

In the true spirit of something or the other, instead of getting upset at people who make their fast a reason to really bring to life the jerks that they are, why not celebrate them and give them the recognition they truly deserve! The #RealTalk Annual Fasting Persons Award, the most prestigious awards of its kind, is here to do just that. Sit with your friends and see which person in your circle deserves the following awards.

#RealTalk© Loudmouth of the Month
The #RT Loudmouth of the Month award was instituted back in the year 2014, with this columnist and cartoonist jointly bagging the awards two years running. This special recognition goes to the person who is not only fasting but is very, very concerned why everyone else isn't fasting. This is the same person who is always pondering why other people are eating around him. He makes a rant post on Facebook every time he sees a can of coke or a water bottle lying around the campus and heaven forbid there's an empty glass with a straw dangling on the end because that is probably the worst offense in his or her eyes. The #RT Loudmouth of the month doesn't care about the whole "no compulsion in religion" part because in his eyes, he is no longer God's servant but rather his executioner.

#RealTalk© Eater of the World:
The #RT Eater of the World is the award that we give to the person who clearly likes defeating the purpose of the fast. To the EoW, (Eater of the World), health concerns go out the window come iftar time. A little bit of this, a little bit of that and twenty minutes later the EoW will begin the next minute of the coming 30 minutes describing how bloated they feel and how much they overate. Then they'll go on a tirade against fasting saying how it only adds to their weight, explaining how a juice fast would be much better. The EoW then promises to rid himself or herself of this gluttony and watch themselves spectacularly fail the very next day.

#RealTalk© Roja-Lagse Bhai:
The RT Roja-Lagse Bhai (RLB) is one of the most prestigious and dignified awards that one can receive during this exciting month. The RLB is an especially distinguished honour reserved for those people who justify everything they do by blaming their fast. You can find them in the streets constantly yelling at the traffic, picking fights with everyone who crosses their paths and regularly messing up the most ordinary of tasks due to the sheer

burden of their intense stupidity mingled with hunger. After iftar though, they pretend to be the nice people they were all along but everyone knows they are bluffing. Some people just need a reason to behave like an Ace-troll.

#RealTalk© Logical FASTER:
The RT Logical FASTER is a special recognition reserved for those individuals whose undeniable logic cannot be denied. This award is evidence of the recipient's excellent legal mind which he uses to find loopholes in the divine word. Unsurprisingly, the RT Logical FASTER tends to usually be a smoker, a sure sign of a 100% deviant. The Logical FASTER flummoxes people with his quick wit and sharp mind explaining how they can obviously smoke during their fast as they are clearly not ingesting anything. They also drink water while showering, blaming the coincidence of water going down their throat. The Logical FASTER will also tell you why they don't have to start the fast at a government-designated period as opposed to what is ordained by the

divine. The #RT Logical FASTER is also the one who proudly announce they don't fast and it's between them and their God. It is. We know. Chill out bro, you are very cool.

#RT© LOL-Muslim 4 a Month:
The RT LOL-Muslim 4 a month is the best and most prestigious award handed out this month by this column, period. It is the pinnacle of underachievement this month and looks good on any CV provided it is a joke CV. The RT LOL-Muslim 4 a Month aka The Award Without Abbreviations is given to those who not only fast and pray this month but spend most of their time telling other people how they shouldn't be Muslim for a month. This award can be handed to anyone who loves making a point on how everyone else will go back to their old Satan-worshipping ways the minute the moon is Government-Certified Sighted by the prestigious Moon-Sighting Committee. The #RT LOL-Muslim 4 a Month though will, presumably, fast the rest of his life, never watch TV or listen to music and pass judgment on others and their lives, forever.

So, when you are all sitting watching Bangla channels for the first time and hoping the TV Adhaan comes faster than your local mosque's one, hand out some awards to while the time away! If you do hand them out, do let us know with a picture, so we can have a few cheers as well. Happy Ramadan! ■

