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Published by the Editor from
Transcraft Ltd, 229, Tejgaon
Industrial Area, Dhaka on behalf
of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel
C.A., Dhaka-1000.



PHOTO: SHAHNAZ PARVIN

"Rivers, ponds, lakes and streams – they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do – they all contain truths." – Muhammad Ali, boxer

SNAPSHOT

MUSINGS

NOT ANOTHER HASHTAG

FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA

PHOTOS: COURTESY

Women in Bangladesh have always been warned not to go out late at night, because it is unsafe. They have always been taught that women staying late outside perpetuates rape culture as men apparently go berserk at night. If that was not enough, after the Pahela Baishakh incident, we have also been asked to avoid going to crowded public gatherings, to safeguard ourselves, of course.

But last week, after what happened to 23-year-old Khadiza Begum Nargis, a student of Sylhet Government Women's College, we were left shocked, one more time. Khadiza, now struggling to survive at the Neuro Intensive care unit of a hospital in Dhaka, was hacked by Badrul Alam, a fourth-year student of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) and also senior assistant secretary of Chhatra League unit at SUST. This brutal incident makes many of us wonder - will we now be asked to avoid going to schools and universities as well?

Sounds absurd? In a country where a girl is attacked with a machete in public, in broad daylight, where a girl has to pay with her life for daring to stand up against a romantic proposition, nothing seems absurd anymore.

What is the most disturbing element about this incident is the fact that it was carried out on the campus of Murari Chand College (MC College) where the victim had gone to take an examination; a place where she deserves to feel safe. What makes us nauseated is the fact that it happened in front of many other people who watched in horror, but did not come forward to save her.

This incident bombarded me with so many questions. Why cannot men take rejection as an answer? When do we start deeming stalking as a more serious crime in Bangladesh? Where are we safe? Are we safe anywhere at all?

It is worth thinking about how these incidents of stalking, of which many are unreported, have become a day to day experience for us, making us curtail our everyday access to public space. How these cases of everyday street harassment, through gawking to stalking, make women alter our plans and decisions regarding education and work choices- going home

early, avoiding going anywhere alone, taking a different route or changing the way we dress.

We know of many parents, who after the Risha incident, are having a hard time overcoming their personal fears regarding their daughter's access in public spaces, so they accompany them wherever they go. After the Tonu incident, we know of many women who could not ignore the dangers that are involved in going alone to work, so they depend on their male counterparts for safety. It is very unfortunate, but very real at the same time.

Because no matter how much feminism has helped us gain equality with men in the workplace and at home, we still have to come up with a number of tactics to cope with the patriarchy around us on the streets, and protect us from getting scarred- emotionally and physically. It does not make us any less strong. It does not shake our belief in becoming independent and conquering the world.

So today, as we, the students, teachers, rights activists and common citizen, are waiting for justice for Khadiza, we need to understand that justice means not just punishing the perpetrators; it also means abandoning our cavalier attitude towards stalking and harassment against women.



Khadiza



MAILBOX

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Woes of Garments Workers

It is really praiseworthy that *Star Weekend* published an article named "Woes of Garments Workers" on September 30, 2016. I believe that the article will undoubtedly inspire the garment factory owners to do something for the betterment of garment workers. They will start to think that doing something for the betterment of the workers is also an investment. It will also encourage foreign buyers to ensure workers' rights in the factories they investing their money in. The owners should keep in mind that the workers are the backbone of their factories. If the workers are not paid well, how can the owners want to get better production? However, most of the owners are blind to the workers' needs. And, wholesale exploitation on the garment workers is very common in Bangladesh. Newspapers like *The Daily Star* should publish more news and articles on garments workers' rights.

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PHOTO: COURTESY

From a Workaholic to a Hard Worker

The Article titled "From a workaholic to a hard worker" dated September 23, 2016 drew my attention. In this modern time, the professionals are so much appreciated everywhere, especially those who are always busy with work. They have no free time for family, friends or society. This nature is of a workaholic. In most cases, workaholics feel proud of themselves. But, they don't realise what they are losing day by day. If your passion for work keeps you from performing duties and responsibilities towards your family, that is not a passion, rather an addiction to success. To be successful in life, someone has to be hard worker definitely, but must not be a workaholic. I would like to thank Naziba Basher for her great initiative to find the distinction between a workaholic and a hard worker, after which she described the ways to recognise workaholism.

Arif Billah
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Caring for Special Children

I liked the photo feature by Joya Korem titled "Caring for Special Children" published in the *Star Weekend* on September 23, 2016. The photo feature makes it very clear that children with special needs can improve their communication competency through proper training and special care. Their need for medication and necessary occupation therapies should also be addressed properly. And these cares should come from not only their parents but also everyone living around them such as friends, neighbours, teachers, relatives etc. In our country, social awareness on these issues is very unsatisfactory. These children with special needs are often treated with negligence and/or are abandoned. We must change our attitude. Only our positive look can change the life of these children into a productive one.

Tarek Aziz Bappi
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Badrul Alam

Because not only does it lead to more heinous crimes like those witnessed in the case of Tonu, Risha and now Khadiza, it also makes us feel unsafe in public spaces – whether it is too late at night, or not, whether we are alone, or not, whether we wear head scarves or not.

Because we, the Bangladeshi women, don't know how to put our trust on a system that limits rickshaw movements in places to control terrorism but fails to control men, backed up (or not) by powerful authorities, who commit crimes against us in broad daylight. Is this also not a form of terrorism? Because we do feel terrorised.

This morning as I opened my Facebook, I found Facebook wishing me safety and health for the International Day of the Girl Child, celebrated on October 11 every year. As I scroll down a little further, Khadiza's news pops up, as I find someone wishing Khadiza a speedy recovery on the video which showed her being hacked mercilessly.

Oh, the irony!



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