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Remembering Begum Rokeya

December 9, 2016 was Begum Rokeya's 136th birthday. She was the pioneer of women's education in the Indian subcontinent during the time of the British rule. Brought up in a restricted society, Rokeya was self-educated. From early childhood, she was an enthusiastic learner of Bengali literature. Most of her writings were on the importance of education for women and women empowerment. She dreamed of an open society for women when women were not allowed to go outside without a male guardian. Her contribution to the emancipation of women of the Indian subcontinent especially of Bengali society was immense. She was centuries ahead of her time. If we want to establish a developed and prosperous society, we need a lot of progressive and dynamic leaders like Begum Rokeya.

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Songs of Victory

It is needless to say that songs have an immense power to influence the human soul. Sometimes they make us happy, sometimes they make us sad. Songs can bring a revolutionary change in the human mind and also in the society. This is what happened during our struggle for independence. We all know more or less about the contributions of songs at the time of the liberation war. Many songs of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra such as *Purbo Digante Surjo Utheche*, *Ekti Phoolke Bachabo Bole*, *Salam Salam Hajar Salam* became immensely popular and inspired the freedom fighters to fight for our motherland. These patriotic songs still have the power to thrill us whenever we listen to them. Thanks to Elita Karim as well as the *Star Weekend* team for a precious write up, published in the *Star Weekend* on December 16, 2016, that featured some of the classic songs from our independence movement.

Md. Sayedur Rahman
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PHOTO: AVIPSU ARKO

"The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate."

– Oprah Winfrey, American media proprietor, talk show host, actress, producer, and philanthropist.

SNAPSHOT

Broken Rides, Broken Promises

The article titled "Shishu Park: Hoping for a Better Future" published in *Star Weekend* on December 2, 2016 described the problems of our one and only Shishu Park. At present, Shishu Park is the only place inside Dhaka where children can recreate themselves with various types of rides such as merry-go-round, wonder wheel, battery car etc. As it is run and maintained by the government's tourism department and City Corporation, the rides are affordable for the middle class and urban poor. However, the condition of this amusement park is quite appalling as the writer depicted. Age old rides, broken boundary walls and poor maintenance have already made this park quite unappealing. On the other hand, the government has recently shut down another popular amusement park called Shishu Mela in the capital. Instead of destroying parks, playgrounds and gardens, we should preserve these sites which are very necessary for the city dwellers. We should remember that a city cannot be a city without adequate recreational facilities.

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

| CRISIS |

GAS CRISIS HITS DHAKA DWELLERS!

NILIMA JAHAN

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

"Coming back from the office at 8 at night, it's really intolerable to prepare the next day's breakfast and lunch, even my child's tiffin, along with dinner", says 35-year-old Rabeya Moudud, who works at a private company, and lives in Agargaon area of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. "Though my working hours start at 2 in the afternoon, I sometimes cannot even turn on the stove in the morning", she adds.

On the other hand, Helena Mredha (50), a hostel owner of Basabo area is very anxious due to the ongoing gas crisis that has hit the city. "My staff members are waking up long before sunrise in this winter, to prepare the lunch and dinner for the students, while the breakfast is prepared the night before," says Helena. Not only does she fail to provide a large number of students with food on time, but also the quality of food has been fallen greatly due to this crisis. And, it can become an alarming cause of different health complications.

Like Rabeya and Helena, dwellers from different areas in the city, for example- Agargaon, Taltola, Shewrapara, Kazipara, Senpara, Pallabi, Adabor, Nakhla Para, Tejkuni Para, Badda, Dakkhin Khan, Ashkona, Rayer Bazar, and many areas of old part of the town are facing serious trouble due to the recent gas crisis. Though the supply of gas usually falls in winter, compared to the previous years, this time the problem has slapped the city-dwellers hard to a great extent. Currently, people are suffering from severe problems which begin from 7am, and normalises at 4pm, in some cases at night.

In this moment of crisis, people have already started to depend on alternative methods, for instance— kerosene stoves, cylinders, earthen stoves, electric cookers or sometimes take-away foods to meet the daily demands. Though cylinders have eased the hassles of the upper classes, the extra cost has become an added burden to the people of middle and lower income. On the other hand, there is a fear of rise in the electricity bills, for continuously using electronic means to prepare daily food for



the family.

"Since winter set in, as a very old person, my father truly needs some hot water everyday for bathing", says 40-year-old Shah Jahan, a day labourer from Ashkona Area of the airport. "Again, as we have financial limitations for using alternative methods, such as-water heaters, my 5-year-old boy has to suffer from the same problem, which is indefinable", he states.

Meanwhile, the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd, the organisation that is responsible for supplying gas to the capital is already tired of receiving complaints from the consumers from the entire city. But, what is the actual reason behind this?

"Actually, the domestic use of gas

increases 20 percent in winter, for which such problems occur", says H M Ali Ashraf, Director (operations), at the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd.

Besides, according to the Titas source, the supply-demand issue is another quite important factor for such crises. Currently, the total demand of Titas gas is 2050 million cubic feet per day (mmcf), while they are being able to supply only 1750 mmcf. So, a shortage of 300 mmcf is already here, which is a very crucial reason for the ongoing crisis. But there is a hope that, within the beginning of the next year, there is a possibility of an increase in the total production, which may solve this problem to an extent.

On the other hand, the government's

long term plan to deal with this problem is implementing Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project, which is supposed to start in the beginning of the 2018.

In the meantime, experts believe that implementing the expensive LNG project is not the fruitful solution at all for such crises. Rather, the illegal connections should be identified immediately and with pressure, so that the legal consumers need not face such difficulties in the winter.

Although, the recent gas crisis has become the talks of the town today, city people claim that no significant initiatives are taken yet to solve their problems. As always, they are still expecting the government to understand their plight, and eventually, do something feasible, as soon as possible. ■

