

AUTISM IN BANGLADESH

Reducing discrimination through innovation



SAIMA WAZED HOSSAIN

WITHIN the last 5 years, thanks to political support and national education, autism awareness in Bangladesh has grown immensely. Due to a lack of funds and resources, providing full comprehensive evidence based services for those in need is not yet possible, but with a continuation of our current progression, it is certainly an attainable goal. Credit for our tremendous success in providing public awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by families with autism is ultimately, thanks to the dedication and resilience of those very families.

Our mission for families began in the 1990s with the implementation of comprehensive disability policies along with the formation of national forums and disability organisations.

Since 2008, World Autism Awareness Day on April 2nd is recognised and celebrated with a national event in Bangladesh. This event has involved a cultural show performed by PWD's with our Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as the guest of honour. Individuals and organisations were recognised for their work, while getting an opportunity to interact with the Prime Minister to express any concerns.

Despite progression of autism awareness in the population, the real turning point for change in South Asia came with the international conference on autism organised in Dhaka on July 25th 2011. What differentiated this conference from others in the region was the integration of various individuals from scientific, personal, and political backgrounds. The presence of prominent political figures such as, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, as well as many other First Ladies and ministers from the region, allowed our conference to be truly unique.

This event brought about an unprecedented change in the societal attitudes about autism and disability. Since then, previously rejected newspaper articles



The Children's Cultural Programme/Town Hall Meeting at the Shilpakala Academy on December 14, 2015, organised by Parents Forum for the Differently Able.

SOURCE: IPS

by parents and experts began to be regularly published in Bangladesh daily papers. Talk show discussions on health matters included the topic of disability. The word 'autism', which did not exist in our language has now become a household term, and frequently, if unfortunately, used as a synonym for disability — or as we say in Bangla 'protibondhi'.

The conference was followed by the formation of 4 task forces comprised of parents and experts in the field. Additionally, I appeared in numerous television interviews where I described autism and shared a personal message to end discrimination and shame. At the recommendation of the task force, a parents' forum was established

followed by the formation of a national steering committee in 2013, comprised of 8 ministries headed by the highest non-elected government officials, which are supported by senior advisors and technical experts. This multi-faceted approach prioritised the need for early screening and intervention, supportive educational programmes, employment training, and social safety net programmes. This sent an important message to stakeholders and policy makers explaining how there is no easily addressed solution to autism which could be implemented by altering existing medical practices. Instead, a multi sectorial life span approach would be required to create a more cost-effective, sustainable and supportive programme

catering to families' needs. The last four years of multi-sectorial planning by the National Steering Committee has enabled the inclusion of disability in the government's development and economic planning. With significant political support, the primary stakeholders, i.e. individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders (NDD) and their families continue to play a significant role in shaping policies and implementing programmes. This involvement of several ministries ensures significant awareness for autism and all disability matters; however, our unique and comprehensive approach is challenged by a limited growth in human resource development and the lack of a mechanism

for monitoring the efficacy of projects and fund disbursement to ensure sustainable evidence-based programmes particularly in the social sector.

Global awareness and enhanced understanding of autism has resulted in increased diagnosis, demand for treatment and development of innovative approaches; many of which remain isolated to research settings or unpublished in scientific journals. Additionally, due to the high cost and copyright laws many programmes in low resources countries remain similarly isolated and unshared. Moreover, programmes requiring linkages between existing infrastructures with inter and intra-disciplinary collaboration are a particular challenge for developing countries. Hence why we urgently need a mechanism by which the challenges and success stories of these individuals can be shared among both disability organisations and governments so it may provide further knowledge on effective, sustainable programmes and assist in decision making.

The complexity of autism and other NDD's pose a significant challenge when trying to balance the development of medical services while creating socioeconomic opportunities for an individual's unique skillset. The primary task of mitigating the tremendous emotional, social and financial ordeal for families remains a persistent challenge.

This April, Shuchona Foundation with WHO-SEARO is paving the way towards implementation of international resolutions on autism by organising a conference in Bhutan for the ministries of Health and Family Welfare of Bhutan and Bangladesh. Experts, self-advocates, caregivers and policy makers will meet for 3 days in Thimphu (visit www.ANDD2017.org) to discuss identification and interventions methods, issues on education and employment and help develop a collaborative comprehensive plan for low resource settings that all countries can emulate.

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Source: Inter Press Service (IPS).

The Dambulla magic of rains and gains



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE

CRICKET lovers proposed and the rains disposed! Sri Lanka had set a stiff target of 311 for Bangladesh to chase in their second ODI at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium today. The eagerly awaited Bangladesh's reply to the Lankan competitive target was interrupted to the moans and sighs of cricket fans.

The spectacular mountain range overlooking the valley formed a perfect scenic backdrop to the stadium but also a setting prone to downpours. And so came down the rains just past the halfway point of the ODI. By then, Taskin's hat-trick had not only stifled what was shaping up as a run-away total by Sri Lanka but also added confident note to the side preparing for a chase.

It cannot be lost on anyone that both sides had a crucial stake in the Dambulla match. It was a series winner encounter for Bangladesh and for Sri Lanka it was a battle for staying in contention.

A simplistic 'raindrops falling on the head' musicality is heard by way of a skin deep sense of relief drawn by some from a 'providential' stoppage of the game. They argue that no team chasing a target of 300 has ever defeated Sri Lanka at the Dambulla stadium. Even Duckworth-Lewis Method came in on a chat conjuring up a scary optical vision of a steep target having to be chased in rain-curtailed overs. This puts a chasing side at a

relative disadvantage. Yet this is considered the best out of a set of worse options.

The funniest example of a dilemma faced in a multiple rain-delayed match had to do with the 1992 Cricket World Cup. At the

humility, that the rain has taken away a historic opportunity from Bangladesh to chase Sri Lanka's challenging total successfully.

There are plenty of high points to be

lapses which better not be repeated?

On the flipside, in the 12th over, Bangladesh missed a chance off Mendis when he was on seven. He edged off the bowling of Mustafizur, the chance going abegging

Bowling was below par for long stretches. Even Mustafizur had a bad day by his standards, bowling on both sides of the wicket, and the spinners were faulted for bowling on middle and leg. Mendis milked 74 of his 102 runs on the leg side.

What definitely stood out was Bangladesh's all-round brilliant fielding. Mushfiq was outstandingly sharp behind the stumps. Opening batsman Danushka Gunathilaka top-edging an in-swinging from Mashrafe, the ball went high. Mushfiq ran to short fine leg to grab the catch.

The stumpings were electrifying with Mushfiq's wonderful reflexes. Twice did the Test skipper take off his gloves to grab the ball tight and throw it at stumps with a marksman's precision. He stumped both Thisara Perera and Dilruwan Perera in similar fashion.

Taskin's hat-trick in the last over indicative of his prowess as a death bowler (in addition to Mustafizur) gave a delightful leap of the mind for all viewers. His hat-trick ball was 'the best of the lot' — Nuwan Pradeep was stupefied as his wicket lay in ruins by the sheer power of a yorker!

Although pacer Mustafizur Rahman could not perform to form, with Chandimal's wicket falling to him, he has the record of having taken 34 wickets in 13 ODI matches. He surpasses Sri Lanka's Ajanta Mendis.

His almost eye-catching presence on Sri Lanka's scorecard for having taken a wicket, two catches, if I am not wrong, and the run-outs off his bowling attests to his usefulness as a cricketer. But his uniqueness as a bowler needs a greater nurture.

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Mustafizur Rahman celebrates the fall of a wicket with his teammates. PHOTO: AFP

I would like to however argue, with all humility, that the rain has taken away a historic opportunity from Bangladesh to chase Sri Lanka's challenging total successfully.

game between England and South Africa, according to the then prevailing formulation, South Africa in the end found itself left with an absurd task of having to score 21 runs in one ball!

I would like to however argue, with all

derived from the inconclusive ODI in Dambulla to be confident about the third and final ODI in Colombo today. This is a decider — either we win the series or draw it.

What are the strong points we take from Dambulla to Colombo, not forgetting the

between Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah Riyad. Had it been taken Mendis' long partnerships with Tharanga and Dinesh Chandimal could have been obviated. He went on to make his maiden century which basically helped build Sri Lanka's big total.

QUOTABLE Quote

JOHN ELIOT
PURITAN MISSIONARY

History shows us that the people who end up changing the world — the great political, social, scientific, technological, artistic, even sports revolutionaries — are always nuts, until they are right, and then they are geniuses.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	38 Remain	10 Worry
1 Fishhook features	39 Suspect's story	16 Game official
6 Do taxidermy	41 Was bold	18 Deep voice
11 Separate	45 Prelude	19 Not fooled by
12 Moon-based	46 Seething	20 Stench
13 Wish granter	47 Synthetic fiber	21 Cattle site
14 Radiate	48 Don Draper, for one	24 Dossier
15 Fresh-water fish		25 Manipulative sort
17 Got together		26 Some July babies
18 Brochures		28 Twisting
22 Artist Warhol	DOWN	31 Funny fellow
2 Like a bad night's sleep	1 Sack	34 Gymnast
27 Brown ermine	2 Gorilla, for example	Comaneci
29 Racket	3 Sprinted	35 Twosome
30 Sad state	4 Indy Speedway	36 Arm bone
32 "Pinocchio"	5 Real bargain	37 Feel sorry for
33 Bar patrons	6 Didn't get up early	40 Sis' sib
35 Baby beagle	7 Groom's wear	42 Lamb's father
	8 "E Pluribus"	43 Greek vowel
	9 Grow dim	44 Cub's cave

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

L	A	R	K	S	T	A	C	I	T
I	N	A	N	E	A	L	O	N	E
M	O	R	E	L	D	A	N	C	E
B	R	I	E	F	S	M	O	N	
O	A	T	A	L	C	H	E	M	
S	K	Y	W	A	L	C	H	E	
V	A	L	I	D					
S	H	A	R	O	N	W	A	R	
I	P	A	N	E	M	A	A	T	E
R	I	G	S	W	A	N	E	E	
A	N	G	S	T	A	R	I	A	L
T	A	L	I	A	R	I	N	S	E
E	L	E	C	T	E	A	G	E	R

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

WHY DO I NEED ALL OF THIS STUFF JUST TO PLAY FOOTBALL?

FOR YOUR PROTECTION, BESIDES, IT MAKES YOU LOOK BIG AND TOUGH

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

WELL, I GUESS WE SHOULD GET STARTED.

DO YOU THINK WE COULD GET A LITTLE LESS HELP?