

WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

We can't be passive bystanders while children suffer



SOMETIMES I wonder how the future generations will view our time. For example, what will be their reaction when they come to know of the child labour situation in our society? Many of us recall the history of slavery with horror, but

are we as conscious about the slave-like condition in which children work at homes, shops, factories, etc.?

Around 1.7 million children are engaged in child labour in Bangladesh (Child Labour Survey, 2013). Children work in different sectors which include agriculture, manufacturing, construction, wholesale, retail, transport, and others. According to the Labour Act 2006, the minimum age of employment is 14 years. But children between 12-14 years could be involved in light work if that does not affect their education and development. However, the definition of light work and the conditions of employment are not specified. The government has declared 38 sectors as hazardous for children; nobody under 18 years should be employed in those jobs. But 1.2 million children are still employed in jobs that are hazardous. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) Committee has expressed concerns that children are employed in welding, transportation, auto workshop, tobacco factory and battery recharging.



A child working in a brick factory in Fatullah – one in the 1.7 million children engaged in child labour in Bangladesh.

SOURCE: ALRASSXP.COM

In Bangladesh, weak enforcement of the existing laws makes working children very vulnerable to violence, abuse, and exploitation. Children, in general, usually have to work for long hours (in many cases, in very harsh conditions); they thus face severe economic exploitation. Often times, some child workers are subject to physical, mental, and sexual violence by their employers. Child domestic workers remain particularly vulnerable, as they work inside homes and are not 'visible'. Many of us can recall the killings of two child workers (Rajon and Rakib), and the associated brutalities that shocked the entire nation. Extreme cases of torture faced by working children get reported by the media and legal actions are being initiated. In most cases, families of the concerned children

cannot even continue the cases due to the pressure from the perpetrators (who are usually from higher socio-economic backgrounds). However, the sufferings of thousands of other working children are not reported and remain hidden. Shouldn't we be shamed that we accept this and let children suffer in silence?

Child labour is a complex issue. Familial poverty is one of the root causes. Many children don't just support themselves through their income, their families are also financially dependent on them.

The quality of education is another challenge. When children drop out of schools, parents engage them in some sort of work. I have met many parents who have taken the child to a factory and asked the owner to train

him. It was not due to economic necessity; for them, it was a way to ensure that the child gains skills and finds employment in future. The associated costs of education including uniforms, fees required for additional tuition after school etc. also prevent many children from attending schools, and they end up with a job, mostly in informal settings.

Moreover, there is widespread acceptance of child labour in Bangladesh. Many people do not see any problem in employing children where they work from dawn till midnight! They don't have a problem when a child works in their home while their own children attend school and enjoy childhood. In addition, many parents of working children are also not aware of the negative consequences of child labour and the importance of education.

Sometimes, they also do not find education to be relevant for their children.

Experience from different countries, including Bangladesh, show that children can be gradually removed from hazardous labour by improving the economic condition of the families, improving children's access to education and vocational training, and sensitising the employers on the negative impacts of employing children in hazardous jobs. If children are engaged in jobs that are not hazardous then they should be supported through education, vocational training, and capacity development on business and life skills. They need to be linked with decent job placements. Working with the employers so that they follow code of conduct in treating children is critical.

Bangladesh has a National Child Labour Elimination Policy (2010-2015) as well as a Child Labour National Action Plan (2012-2016). However, progress in implementation has been very limited. In 2015, the government approved the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy, which is an attempt to recognise domestic work as 'work' and specifies conditions that the workers in formal sector take for granted. The government is willing to enact a new law on the protection of domestic workers. The National Child Labour Welfare Council and two divisional level Child Labour Welfare Council have been formed, and they have already started work. There are initiatives to strengthen the labour inspection system which includes compliance on child labour issues. But the number of labour inspectors is insufficient for the size of the Bangladesh workforce. There is hardly any monitoring of child labour in the informal sector where children are most vulnerable.

Can we be proud about our economic progress if our children continue to work in inhumane conditions? Addressing child labour demands a pragmatic approach. There are some recommendations that can be followed to ensure that the kids of our country are not employed in hazardous conditions. First of all, there should be proper enforcement of existing laws and implementation of policies related to child labour. Secondly, the definition of "light work" and associated penalty (in case of violation) has to be clarified in the Labour Act 2006. Moreover, child domestic work should be included in the list of hazardous work and perpetrators of violence against working children should be brought to justice. National and community based child protection mechanisms should also be strengthened. Awareness should be created among parents/caregivers on the negative consequences of child labour and the importance of investing in children's education.

Most importantly, social acceptance of child labour, including child domestic work, should be challenged, and the general public must learn to treat children with respect and dignity. They should not be passive bystanders when children suffer from torture. Instead, ordinary citizens should take actions to prevent and respond to violence faced by working children.

The writer is Director of Child Protection, Save the Children.

Why should cricket teams be allowed only one review?

SHAHED SADULLAH

BANGLADESH'S stunning victory over New Zealand, coming back from an almost impossible position, was the most magnificent batting performance I have ever seen and the greatest fightback in one day cricket ever. Shakib and Mahmudullah are both genuine international calibre batsmen but this took something more than just that. It took courage and skill and determination and self-belief - all those things that once in a rare while, lift a sporting encounter to something that is so moving that perhaps one can say it is almost ennobling, bringing out our best emotions.



The indomitable duo.

PHOTO: REUTERS

There was never any panic. There was never an instance in which it even remotely appeared as if either Shakib or Mahmudullah were in trouble, or gave any indication to suggest that they thought they would not be able to perform the mammoth task at hand. Each batsman scored at the same rate so that neither would feel the pressure of a scoring rate getting too high. If I had one small regret it was that Shakib did not stay till the end with Mahmudullah so that the two would walk off the field together, the flamboyant cavalier alongside the measured professional, both hand in hand after putting up one of the most remarkable displays ever seen on a cricket field. I was privileged to watch it.

allowed under the ICC's current rules governing the use of UDRS (Umpire Decision Review System). It begs the question, why are teams allowed only one review? After all, an umpiring review adds to the drama and makes a cricket match that much more exciting for the fans. Let's not forget that the broad genre under which international cricket comes is entertainment, and this certainly adds to the entertainment value for which many people have paid good money. The phrase 'through the nose' certainly comes to mind. Also, one would like to have the result of a sporting encounter decided, as far as possible, on correct decisions, and limiting the number of referrals does not serve that end.

without referral to a TV replay when he could have resorted to such a confirmation, will never stand in international cricket again. Such a provision would never pass muster, I assure you, because 'it would take too much time'.

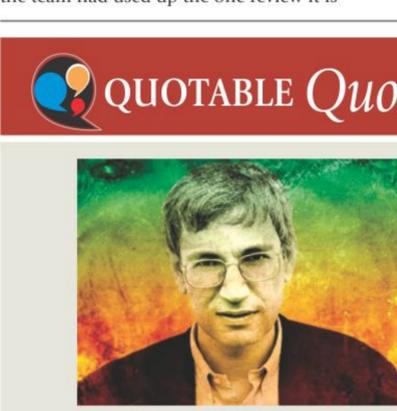
It is that same desire to limit the duration of an ODI in terms of time that prompts the completely screwed up rule whereby the captain of a bowling side is suspended for as many as two games over slow rates. It is not unusual for the captain to be one of the best players in the side and therefore, this affects adversely the entertainment value of the next two games which he is not allowed to play. I cannot see how that is fair for the many people who may have bought tickets - again, very expensive ones - for these games. The quality of the entertainment they are given is severely reduced and why? Because cricket officials do not want cricket matches to go on too long as it is working overtime for them without any recompense. It is not a decision made for the fans, for I am yet to come across a fan who complains when a cricket match 'has gone on

too long.' Indeed, if the argument is that without such rules a match could go one till midnight, then let us have a system whereby after a particular cut-out time, a certain number of runs will be added to the score of the batting side on the basis of an agreed formula. Quite apart from anything else, it will be infinitely more effective in serving the desired end.

It is time for cricket to seriously rethink its priorities. Brilliant performers like Tamim Iqbal and Shakibul Hasan will always pull in crowds but the authorities, who claim to be so worried about falling attendance at cricket matches, have to work with the players, not against them.

The writer is the former editor of the Pakistani daily The News in London.

QUOTABLE Quote



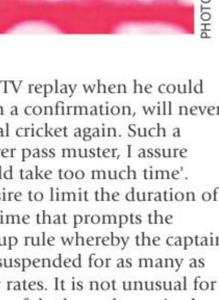
ORHAN PAMUK

Turkish novelist, screenwriter, academic and recipient of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature

Mankind's greatest error, the biggest deception of the past thousand years is this: to confuse poverty with stupidity.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Beanbearing tree
 - 6 Betrayded nervousness
 - 11 On -- (succeeding)
 - 12 Skater Ohno
 - 13 Identified
 - 14 Mideast nation
 - 15 History bit
 - 16 Capitol Bldg. figure
 - 18 Mendes of movies
 - 19 Twice uno
 - 20 Low digit
 - 21 Ready to go
 - 22 Designate
 - 24 Script unit
 - 25 Incited
 - 27 Play makeup
 - 29 Finds another purpose for
 - 32 Meadow cry
 - 33 Dict. entry
 - 34 Yale rooter
 - 35 Bat material
 - 36 Poet's product
 - 37 Jazz fan
 - 38 Teakettle output
 - 40 Take as one's own
 - 42 Wipe clear
 - 43 Uptight
 - 44 Fizzy drinks
 - 45 Passover meal
 - DOWN**
 - 1 Second-largest country
 - 2 Region of Spain
 - 3 Succeeds
 - 4 Brewery output
 - 5 Standard
 - 6 Golfer steward
 - 7 Gibbon, e.g.
 - 8 Places
 - 9 Late hour
 - 10 Be generous
 - 17 Went in
 - 23 Schedule C org.
 - 24 Bud's buddy
 - 26 Bests
 - 27 Lowers
 - 28 Big name in Havana
 - 30 Go by
 - 31 Tot tender
 - 33 Rotunda tops
 - 39 Dry -- bone
 - 41 Ruby of films



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

C O C O A P A N E L
A T O M S O L I V E
N O V A K T A X E D
E R E C T S
E A R D A Y C A T
A U S T I N C O R A
G R O U N D C O V E R
L A N G L E G E N D
E E G P E R R A Y
P E S E T A
P E C A N B A L S A
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