

MAILBOX

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Let's spread our vision

The article "Finding the superbug, the invincible bacteria" published in the *Star Weekend* on June 7, caught my attention as it demonstrated the rise of the superbug, a bacteria which is resistant to all types of antibiotics. As the superbugs are spreading quickly in our cities, soon we will not have any option left to cure our diseases. Wastewater samples collected from hospital adjacent areas and communities were found to contain bacteria resistant to antibiotics.

The leading cause of spread of these superbugs is mismanagement of medical waste. Disseminating bacteria to normal environment helps them to get resistant, causing change in their genetic codes. So, for saving ourselves and future generations, we have to spread our vision. Government and all other concerned authorities must come forward to take necessary actions to manage medical waste and dispose of these appropriately and efficiently to prevent bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics.

Nafis Sadik
Farmgate, Dhaka

Closing the skills gap to address unemployment

The article "Employing our burgeoning youth population" published in the *Star Weekend* portrays the country's unemployment scenario. High levels of unemployment among graduate youth begs the question of whether the universities of Bangladesh provide their students with the necessary education, skills, and training that the market needs or whether they are spending their valuable time teaching things no employer needs. Whereas sectors such as agro processing, information technology, ready-made garments, healthcare, education, manufacturing, and infrastructure development are facing severe skills shortage, the country is producing numerous graduates in other areas of study where there are fewer opportunities available. This gap between market needs and the number of graduates in arts and social science disciplines, for example, makes the situation worse.

In today's world, the role of universities cannot only be limited to impart knowledge but also to introduce job-oriented curricula and skills-based training in order for students to be successful in their careers. Universities should identify the skills that are assessed by corporate bodies for employability in Bangladesh. They should equip their students with these identified skills, attitudes and abilities to be more effective in creating skilled manpower. The gap between education and employment can be closed though employer engagement in education and training. In order to address these challenges, the government and other stakeholders need to establish a close link between employers and universities.

Md. Khalid Hasan
Institute of Education & Research, University of Dhaka

Empowering our burgeoning youth population

It is very disturbing and saddening when a university graduate has to struggle in order to find secure employment, and the fact that 2015 onwards this rate of finding employment has plummeted. It is a dilemma for students, as even after studying to the highest degree one has to scavenge for jobs. Moreover, the stigma of not getting a job worsens with

time. Affluent members of society often go abroad to pursue education and after graduating, start their career there. But for people who are not so well-off, they have to stay here and make do with limited career opportunities. With time, the youth have to face pressure from society, friends and family which may lead some to depression. While on one hand, ministries fuss that there are

plenty of jobs on the other hand, the common public is very much aware of nepotism in public sector jobs. Let's hope with time that the youth, who will shape our future, do not have to face such uncertainty for much longer and find a solution for unemployed graduates.

Rafid Alam
Molhammadpur, Dhaka

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

HUMAN RIGHTS

Earlier this month, 11-year-old domestic helper Sabina Akhter was severely beaten by her landlord, Ayesha Latif (35), wife of Lt Col Taslim Ahsan, in Mirpur DOHS. The picture of the child—her eyes swollen and black, her hands severely scarred—went viral on social media, drawing the attention of people of all social classes. In fact, there were thousands of Facebook posts condemning the cruelty of abusing a child like that, just for breaking the yolk when making a poached egg.

The officer-in-charge, Dadan Fakir of Pallabi Police Station, informs that Sabina managed to escape from the house, and later, with the help of a journalist, came to the station to file a case against her landlord. "Sabina notes in her statement that her eyes became swollen and black as she was hit repeatedly with a bread roller. Besides, her forehead, head, back and hips were severely wounded," says Fakir. The statement also mentions that Sabina's landlord burnt her chest and hands with the hot cooking ladle.

On social media, we lose no time in expressing our "shock" over such inhumane behaviour; the activist in us may even post a moving Facebook status demanding exemplary punishment of the accused. But in reality, how many of such cases actually see the light of justice?

On March 6, 2016, 12-year-old domestic helper Jania Begum was reportedly raped, killed, and thrown off from the rooftop of the residential quarters of Non-Aligned Movement officials in Mirpur. On the 23rd of the same month, 15-year-old domestic worker Jannat Akter Shilpi was found hanging from the ceiling of the home of well-known singer Krishnakali. On September 6 the year before, 11-year-old domestic worker Mahfuza Akter Happy was allegedly beaten and tortured by her employers, cricketer Shahadat Hossain and his wife Jesmin Jahan Nrittya.

There are too many Sabinas, Janias, Shilpis and Happys in our societies who are treated, even in this day and age, as slaves by their employers. Unfortunately, we do not have any specific data on how many domestic workers are employed in Bangladesh currently. A glance through the recent data of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) shows that from January 2012 to June 2017, a total of 388 incidents of violence against domestic workers have taken place, and, of them, only 161 cases have been filed over the years.

On Tuesday, the court, after almost four years, convicted Nawrin Jahan with a fine of BDT one lakh for abusing her

THE NEVER ENDING CYCLE

NILIMA JAHAN



PHOTO: COURTESY

The picture of 11-year-old child domestic worker Sabina that went viral on social media after she was abused by her employer.

domestic worker Aduri and sentenced her for life imprisonment. The 11-year-old was rescued by a police inspector from a dustbin, half-dead, in the capital's DOHS Baridhara.

However, in an overwhelming majority of cases, the perpetrators get away scot-free, especially when it involves employers who are in relative positions of power within our society.

The accused in Sabina's case, Ayesha Latif, is still absconding. "The police have already conducted raids in all possible places where she could be hiding," says Sub Inspector (SI) Asif Iqbal of Pallabi Police Station, who is also the Investigating Officer (IO) of the case.

Curiously, although Sabina was admitted first to the One-stop Crisis Centre (OCC) of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), she was later transferred to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Dhaka. Since the OCC is equipped to address all the needs of a

female victim in one place—such as healthcare, police assistance, DNA test, social services, legal assistance, psychological counselling, and shelter—it raises the question, why was she sent to CMH?

"OCC victims can be sent anywhere for better treatment if his or her IO has consented or ordered it," informs Brigadier General Md. Mizanur Rahman, Director of DMCH. "In the issue of Sabina, the army authority expressed their interest to undertake full responsibility for her, which is why she was sent there for better treatment with the permission of the IO. We did not hand her over to the army or CMH authority, rather, we have handed her over to the IO," he explains.

The IO, on the other hand, says that he gave his consent because DMCH referred her to CMH for better treatment. However, since DMCH already serves patients with severe ailments and the OCC, since its inception, has a record of serving 29,778 victims up to June 2017,

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the reason behind sending Sabina to CMH remains unclear. It raises another question—was there any pressure? Curious still is the fact that since she was moved to CMH, the OC, IO and even Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA)—which has been providing legal assistance to this case—have failed to establish any communication with her parents.

However, when contacted by *Star Weekend*, Sabina's father Md Badal informs that they have already "mutually solved" the case, as they don't want to pursue the legal process. "We have already signed the agreement and the employers of Sabina have ensured that they will take full responsibility of her health. We have requested them to find a job for my daughter in the future. They have also agreed to help us when Sabina gets married at the request of my

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