

## MAILBOX

thestarmagazine@gmail.com

### Stop tiger killings

July 29 is observed as 'World Tiger's Day'. It is a matter of sorrow that while the number of tigers is increasing worldwide, the number of Royal Bengal Tigers in the Sundarbans is decreasing day by day. A study has shown that tigers are being killed in the Sundarbans due to traps. In the past few years, at least 30 tigers' body parts have been found in different places of our country. The people who are involved in tiger killings have not been exposed yet. This means the Royal Bengal Tiger is in big trouble. Preservatives are being used for killing tigers. Why are preservatives being sold at open marketplaces? Our government should take immediate action to stop tiger killings. Persons responsible for tiger killings should be punished. At the same time, selling of preservatives at open spaces should be banned. Otherwise it will be impossible for us to save our tigers.

Marshia Afrin  
Mirpur, Dhaka

### Raising our voices against child abuse

The articles "What about justice for the unheard?" and "The never ending cycle", published in the *Star Weekend* of June 21 displayed accurately the perverted minds and cruelty of people against children. For example, the latter talks about the barbaric abuse of 11-year-old domestic worker, Sabina Akhter, by the wife of Lt Col Taslim Ahsan. Cases of physical, mental, verbal and sexual abuse of child workers go unheeded as the legal procedure to get justice for them is too slow and the perpetrators manage somehow to get away with their offences. Thus, the never ending cycle of violence against domestic workers continues.

The article "What about justice for the unheard?" showed the perverted mindset of an old man devoid of humanity and the effect of psychological trauma on a child. I came to learn how difficult it is to get justice for intellectually disabled (and other) persons after suffering violence. It is really important to set examples of punishment of the offenders through legal procedures to save our children from violence. To ensure a healthy environment for the development of children, we have to make the world safe for them. We have to resist violence against children. We have to raise our voices against child abuse.

Nafis Sadik  
Farnigate, Dhaka

### Peoples' master plan for a livable future

With rising urbanisation and rapid industrialisation in Bangladesh, the demand for electricity has increased and the pressure on resources is burgeoning. In order to meet the challenges in coming days, the government has taken up a master plan for power generation but the efforts will eventually cause major environmental impact and financial burden as the plans leave Bangladesh dependent on coal-fired power plants and imported coal, liquid natural gas (LNG), and above all, huge loans.

However, Bangladesh is blessed with a plentiful supply of renewable sources of energy e.g. solar, wind, and biomass. A study shows the country receives an average daily solar radiation of 4-6.5 kWh/m<sup>2</sup> falling over 300 days per annum. Besides, the country is

endowed with a 700 km coastline that can be utilised to generate wind energy. Why should we increase the annual growth rate of greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel-based power generation if we can utilise renewable energy resources?

We urge the government to take into account the proposals of The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports which provides an alternative to the government's master plan under the title "Peoples' Master Plan for Power and Energy (2017-2041)". This will ensure sustainable use of national resources and development of the country's energy sector.

Md. Khalid Hasan  
Institute of Education Research (IER)  
University of Dhaka



PHOTO: COURTESY

PHOTO: MD ATA ISLAM KHAN MOJLISH

"With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else." — *Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities*

SNAPSHOT

### EDUCATION

As a teacher, I should not talk about body parts that are not dignified. Still I chose to write about a particular finger; that too, of a colleague at the University of Dhaka. But I dare NOT speak about the senate election or the panel being proposed to head the university, for understandable reasons. What if I receive a letter enforcing me to go on a long leave? Or what if a disciplinary committee is formed against me or worse still, what if someone files a case under the ICT Act's Section 57?

What ensued was a violent altercation of teachers and 'would-be' teachers with about 20 or so students, who wanted to stand in front of the senate building to form a human chain as a sign of protest. Some teachers claim that the students were violent, therefore the violence perpetrated by the teachers was justified.

Really? First, a human chain is a non-violent protest. Second, even if my student is violent, I will not be violent like him/her; I have more responsibility. In no circumstances, can I push and shove him/her off a hedge

On that day, when the students of DU were being assaulted by their teachers, we identified a few who were not even teachers but aspiring candidates. They decided to physically abuse the students to show off their allegiance for the senate. Later, the proctor of the university attested that the aspiring candidates of Jagannath University who took part in the assault would soon get a job in the university.

This statement is emblematic of the current reality, in at least two ways: first, the confidence and ease of the statement shows disrespect for any selection board in selecting or appointing a teacher in the university; second, the way our proctor has informed the media about the probable selection of an applicant is unprecedented and clearly points to the unhealthy practice of selecting party cadres in different departments as teachers.

A handful of teachers showed how such appointments pay off. They have successfully broken

## WHEN A TEACHER'S FINGER EXPOSES OUR HUNGER FOR POWER

SAMINA LUTHFA

Therefore, most of the times in the university, teachers and students are more likely to conform than oppose the authority. However, at some juncture, even the most conformist needs to raise a voice.

On July 29, 2017, there was a protest event organised by some student organisations at the University of Dhaka. They argued that a senate meeting was being held without student representatives. The meeting was already marred by, on one hand, lawsuits from two factions of teachers and, on the other, students and registered graduates expressing their anger against their lack of representation.

The public universities of Bangladesh that are run by the 1973's order claim to uphold and celebrate democratic values and dignity of the profession. Elected senators, in their meeting, propose the names of three members from whom the chancellor will select one as the next vice-chancellor. The senate should include participation from current students, alumni and research centres as well as teachers, among others. It is a very democratic process to run a university.

However, when you do not hold democratic values highly, you might not care to assure the representation from all stakeholders. You care for only those who will ensure that some names are proposed. Before the election of the teachers' representatives for the senate this year, two factions arose among the Blue group of teachers, supporters of the current ruling-party. There were two panels; one was later cancelled by the election commissioner, which only raised a few eyebrows.

Now, without Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU), there is no representation from the students. In addition alumni representative election did not take place and the research centres are not represented either. According to news reports, the aggrieved faction filed a case against the meeting and got a ruling, which was again vacated by the chamber judge. So, the meeting already irked a lot of controversy since it was taking place in an undemocratic manner. Students decided to protest. Teachers (in favour of the current authorities) reported to the media that they were ready and 'were waiting for them'. Wait for whom? The students? Really? I feel ashamed at the thought of it.



PHOTO: STAR FILE

or snatch her orna or grab her to assault her physically.

But the teachers involved in both the incidents were irresponsible and they have defamed the whole profession. They have tarnished the image of Dhaka University as the highest echelon of democratic values and rights of students. I am ashamed that my colleagues find it normal to use physical force against their students (females included).

This whole incident is so outrageous that I cannot imagine how I should interpret the complete absence of any uproar from the teaching community after the assault on students at Dhaka University. They will say that they are quiet for the 'greater good.' To me though it seems as though they are silent because of their personal gain. The kind of relationship that they have formed with the authority compels them to stay quiet and not protest. Perhaps someone needs a promotion; while someone wants house tutorship to avail accommodation; others want to receive higher administrative responsibilities that will get them some extra money or prestige or power; some just want to keep the social network intact to use it when the need arrives.

students' glasses, torn their shirts, smashed hedges in front of the VC office, fractured their own fingers (one or two!) while grabbing a female student, and snatched female students' ornas. When the authority recruits such teachers, they no longer need anyone else. The university has become self-sufficient.

At the end of the day, the spirit of this university, the democratic values and the respectability of the profession is at stake. Those faces circled in red in the news are my colleagues—that itself is enough for me to feel disrespected. If you are really that desperate, University of Dhaka should relieve itself of the 1973's order and put an end to the farce of democracy that takes up a lot of time and energy of the institution and unfortunately ends up producing a new class of 'royal teachers' replacing the political musclemen.

Your broken finger, dear colleague, exposed that our biggest enemy is within—our greed for power and material gain. I am sorry that you broke your finger. But you are not the victim—you are the perpetrator.

I demand justice for the injured students.

Samina Luthfa teaches Sociology at the University of Dhaka.



www.bsr.com

**EARTHQUAKES DON'T KILL PEOPLE, BUILDINGS DO! BUILD SAFE!**

