

Pray, tell me why?

CHINTITO SINCE 1995



NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

ALL retired government, police and military officers have all the solutions to all the problems and a big-window plan for the next one hundred years, and yet those presently serving are at a loss for words. I have been following this divisive culture only as deeply as bearable because one has to loathe the hypocrisy in their failing of the moral oath as one is compelled to switch channels.

The woman in the pillion holds on to her lap the lone helmet the family chooses to afford. The family of four rides happily on a motorcycle without any head protection.

Their babies are secured to them by parental love alone. The helmet has become a symbol of the law-abiding citizen; its usefulness trivial for long. Motorcyclists should have a helmet and that is elementary; "where" is not important. The parents are more afraid of the traffic police than death. The policeman loves the children and waves them on.

The society is bereft with corruption, and yet every son and daughter proclaims on the social fora that his/her father is an ideal and a most righteous person—the "bestest" that can be. Does that mean that the corrupt have no truthful children? The fact is, corrupt persons also have legitimate children, but they are born with wool over their eyes and thick wax in their ears. They see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil about their father. N.B. Read "mother" where applicable.

Airline stewards, male and female, are seen shouting high pitch at passengers bound for the Middle East or arriving from the deserts. Come here! Give that! Why are you out of queue? Take this! Sit down! No one will stand up! I doubt these airline staff had enough general knowledge training during their grooming. Do they know that their salary comes from the air tickets bought by the migrant workers? In a roundabout way, these illiterate, uncouth, Bangla-speaking workers are their employers. Housemaids do not raise voice over their master lest they may lose their job. I wish to see the day when our



PAINTING BY R. RAJKUMAR STHABATHY

workers will have the education to request the shouting ladies and gentlemen at airports to shut their irritating trap.

None of us could buy a red dress at Eid for the ten-year-old daughter of a rickshaw-puller. Oh! How much she must have wanted it! She must have bragged to her friends that her Baba will get her one, on *chand raat* for sure. I only came to know after the child's suicide made news. Her slum will be red because we will all give her a red dress now that she does not need one in the lofty clouds where she dwells. Let us paint a child's world before her father has to beg for his daughter's joy.

RAJUK maintains a secret service. The

capital's development regulatory authority does not dare declare a building illegal until one catches fire or collapses. As soon as a building is engulfed in smoke and burnt contents to smithereens, or one has come tumbling down killing people, a special cell at RAJUK Avenue starts composing a press release declaring what we knew all the while—that the building was "illegal". Now obviously RAJUK does not have the workforce to go and check every column, beam, slab and brick-wall in every building in its area of jurisdiction, i.e. 1528 square kilometres (590 square mile). The world actually works by example. The enforcing authority can penalise or revoke occupancy

certificate or demolish a property, and the rest of the building owners will fall in line. For instance: One car fined for illegal parking sends the right message to all the cars on the street and beyond.

Many of us haggle with a rickshaw-puller for Tk five-ten. I have done it too. If we think about it, savings over thirty rides spread perhaps over a month would not be worth a burger. But, then rickshaw-pullers do not eat burgers and such. Mind you, their children would love one, as many of them watch the cheese and meat on television.

The media is not making a *tu-shabdo* when Uber is providing a great service. The odd bad case may happen but the good

deserve the kudos. Our newspapers and channels are waiting in some nearby car for a mishap, and then the digital car hire service will be cut to pieces and fed to the dogs. Hot-on-the-heels investigative reporting shall tag the concerned *manoniyo montree*, the delinquent driver and the questionably-dressed passenger; he was wearing a *lungi*.

Every toothpaste must make us shout in delight, every shampoo make our hair lustrous in endless waves, every sip of a soft drink take us to another cloud. Are they not mere lies? Every weekday morning, it's the same paste that grinds your teeth. The same shampoo can be pretty stiff on a crew-cut head. You can finish an entire bottle of carbonated sugar and still look for the healthy fairies to pick you up.

We have to get up as soon as a flight lands, and not wait for the "fasten seatbelt" sign to switch off despite shrill admonishing from the alarmed hostess. She must know something we don't. Alighting from the aircraft is usually by seat position unless someone wants to sit it out, not by who stood up before whom. So sit back, and enjoy the news about the local weather.

They can never tell exactly how many people died in a fire, or in a building collapse, or in a launch disaster, or in a train accident, or in a large-scale road accident. Newspapers give varying figures from one day to the next, their sources remaining ghostly, as they try to out-sensationalise each other. Parents and relatives squat for days outside an ill-fated building or along the riverbank of a tragedy or at the scene of the accident, waiting for news of the missing. More than four years after the collapse of Rana Plaza, families are still on vigil with hope of their loved ones emerging from the dust.

A "famous" Indian medical specialist would need to use a TV ticker to announce his arrival in Dhaka and the times that he would be available to see patients. If he was that famous, people would have chased the doctor, and not the other way around.

Pray, tell me why?

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Cruelty unabated in the classroom

SIR FRANK PETERS

ONE bright spark once said: "truth is stranger than fiction". I think it was Mark Twain who uttered the immortal words, but I personally didn't hear him, so I can't be sure. But whoever said them knew what he was talking about.

Take, for example, a recent incident at the Gangaprasad Primary School in Zajira Upazila, nearly 100 kilometres south of Dhaka, where a teacher was accused of forcing more than two dozen students to drink sewer water as punishment. This is one you might find incredibly hard to believe. Then again, considering the history of corporal punishment in schools and madrasahs throughout Bangladesh, it might not be so difficult.

If Ripley had produced a 'Believe It Or Not' series devoted exclusively to corporal punishment on students, this one would definitely qualify.

But before coming to it, let us remind ourselves of some other 'Believe It Or Not' and 'truth is stranger than fiction' qualifiers.

For example, the "hellish nightmare" that unfolded at the Talimul Quran Mahila Madrasah in Kadamtali where 14 young girls were literally branded with a red-hot cooking spatula by their teacher to demonstrate her concept of what hell would be like. The smell of burning flesh may have left the madrasah building by now, but not the horrific memories in



the minds of the teenagers who have been scarred physically and mentally for life.

Are these teen girls feeling love and respect for that teacher and those who allowed it to happen? Let your own common sense answer that.

And what about that teacher at a Sunamganj school who sent a pupil to a local barber to collect all his used razor blades and then forced her Class V students to cut their hands and legs with the razor blades until they bled for not doing their homework!

There have been many more

similar incidents, most are hushed-up and don't make headlines, but the Zajira school incident is a real mind-boggler.

Since drinking the poisonous liquid, which was apparently a punishment given for the students' failure to deliver lessons in class, several students fell ill. The school authorities have since suspended class teacher Shahnaz Parvin after parents took to the school field demanding justice. It boggles the mind how she came up with the idea in the first place.

Bangladesh has made some baby steps forward since the

Supreme Court banned corporal punishment in schools in 2010, declaring the outrageous practice to be "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and a clear violation of a child's fundamental right to life, liberty and freedom."

This ruling, no doubt, engineered change for the better, but as evidenced in the previous paragraphs, there are still many teachers and headmasters who are refusing to comply.

Corporal punishment in the classroom makes sense only to the totally ignorant, mentally dis-

turbed or to masochists. It's been proven over and over again that corporal punishment serves no useful purpose whatsoever and doesn't help in raising a child or help to make them better citizens.

In another time, corporal punishment would be declared a poison—the formalin of the education system—by the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Education; and appropriate steps would be taken to eradicate it speedily.

Parents who claim to love their children and send them to schools knowing them to be corporal punishment hellholes are hypocrites, ignorant, or both. And it wouldn't surprise me if their children tell them so years later.

There are no excuses for corporal punishment. There are no redeeming factors. Facts are facts that cannot be altered. Corporal punishment is evil and wrong.

How could hitting children by hand, cane, strap, or other objects, kicking, shak-

ing or throwing them against the wall, scratching, pinching, biting or pulling their hair, forcing them to stay in uncomfortable positions be right?

Or tying them up with ropes, chains or tape, burning, scalding or forcing them to wash their tongues with soap, getting them to drink sewer water, cutting themselves with old, rusted razor blades, branding them with scorching hot spatulas or binding them in chains?

It is up to the parents to protect their children from the poison of corporal punishment and prevent it from happening by writing a note, phoning, or visiting the school or madrasah and making it known to the teachers and headmaster that they do not want their children to be subjected to the toxin, but that applies only to parents who love their children.

Corporal punishment would not exist in schools if parents objected.

Sir Frank Peters is a former newspaper and magazine publisher and editor, and a human rights activist.

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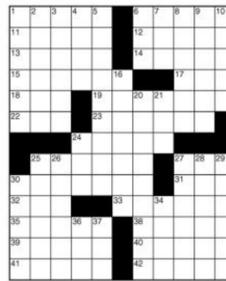


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CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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



NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY

Center of Excellence in Higher Education

INVITING LETTER OF INTENT FOR PACKAGED FOOD CATERING SERVICE

North South University (NSU), the premier private university located in Bashundhara, Dhaka is inviting Letter of Intent (LOI) from established, reputed companies, caterers, restaurants, etc. to provide ready-made packaged lunch, breakfast & dinner, and snack items for sale from their own kiosks setup within the NSU campus. NSU presently has 23,000 students of which at least 50% is always present on campus.

NSU is embarking on major renovation of the existing student cafeteria & kitchen for which the facility will be shut down for a period of 6 months. The food catering service is required during this period of 6 months.

Interested companies are requested to submit the following information:

1. Description and Credentials of the company, including registration and/or trade license, VAT registration.
2. Proposed ready-made food items for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks, with prices. Cooking will not be allowed on campus, but warming facilities may be arranged by the service provider.
3. Proposed method/form of food supply, set-up for selling at NSU campus, and volume of food supply per day.
4. Proposed quality control and assurance for maintaining hygiene, quality, and taste during preparation, cooking, packaging, transport and selling at NSU.

Interested companies may visit the NSU campus to ascertain the premises and environment, and are requested to submit their Letter of Intent (LOI) in sealed envelopes to the undersigned by 4:30pm on Thursday, 14 September 2017.

Mushtaque Habib
Project Director, NSU