



PHOTO: SALMAN TASEEN HAQUE

“The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.”  
—Friedrich Nietzsche

**SNAPSHOT**

**Prison babies:  
Childhood behind bars**

It is very unfortunate that a large number of children have to spend their lives in jail without committing any crimes. Crimes of their parents take them to this god-forsaken place where these innocent lives become victim of utter negligence and abusive treatments. The article titled, “Prison Babies: Childhood behind bars,” published in October 20, 2017 in *Star Weekend* revealed these children’s forgotten stories. I would like to thank the writer for highlighting how the corrupt prison authority and social welfare officials deprive these innocent children of their due food, shelter, clothing and education. These children are brought up with the tax money of Bangladeshi citizens. We often see that government’s high ranking officials go to pointless and fruitless foreign tours and purchase luxury cars with our hard-earned taxes. On the other hand, the authority is claiming that it cannot feed these mouths and ensure their education due to budget limitations. This is simply outrageous. The government should take immediate steps to stop this utter violation of human rights and reform the existing prison rules that have been depriving thousands of children of their joyous childhood.

Salman Khalid  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSEIN AGAZ APURBO

**Alia Madrasa: An education system on its death bed**

The article on Alia madrasa based education system published in *Star Weekend* on October 27, 2017 really drew my attention. The article was very well researched and I would like to thank the writer for bringing this significant but neglected issue to light. However, a few important points were absent in his article. Academic achievements of the current Alia madrasa students in spite of severe shortage of teaching-learning resources were not mentioned. In this regard, I would like to mention that 84

students of an Alia madrasa called Ta'mirul Millat Alia Madrasa passed Dhaka University's B Unit admission test this year which is an awe-inspiring record for any institution. Besides, our government does not patronise Alia madrasa based education at all. There are only three government controlled Alia madrasas in the entire country which is a negligible number in comparison to the number of government controlled schools and colleges. The writer could focus more on these issues. I believe our

government should invest more on Alia madrasas. It is an effective and unique education system which can produce skilled graduates equipped with ethical and moral knowledge. I would like to reiterate the quote stated by our Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, “If a madrasa student becomes an engineer, he will not steal rods and use bamboo sticks in its place to construct a building.”  
Shahidul Islam  
Azimpur, Dhaka

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

**SPECIAL FEATURE**

A group of undocumented Bangladeshi-Americans are in a fix but there is no talk of it in their country of origin.

One of them is Nayim Islam, a 25-year-old activist living in New York City. He is a recipient of protection provided by an immigration policy known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). DACA protects undocumented people, who were brought to the United States as minors, from being on the frontline for deportation. Passed in June 2012, the order enabled undocumented high-school educated minors to get two-years of clemency and a valid work permit. This was enacted by former President Barack Obama through an executive order.

“I came to the US from Bangladesh when I was nine years old,” he says, “I came to the US on a visitor’s visa and as soon as the visa expired, I became undocumented.” His parents too are undocumented.

He received his DACA in 2013 and holds a job with a local rights



PHOTO: REUTERS

**HOW TRUMP IS ENDANGERING UNDOCUMENTED BANGLADESHI-AMERICAN YOUTH**

**ZYMA ISLAM**

organisation. “I currently work as a community organiser at Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), focusing on immigrant rights in the South Asian community in New York City,” he says. “Having DACA has allowed me to work legally with benefits and support myself and my family.”

This protection that gives him the basic right to work and earn a livelihood may not be there for very long. On September 5, 2017 the Trump administration formally announced that it will end the Obama-era presidential executive order. The administration gave it a dying grace of six months.

Rolling back the protections given by DACA means asking Nayim Islam to go

back to Bangladesh. In a video produced by a non-profit called MoveOn.org, that is circulated online, Islam says, “The Department of Homeland Security, in their memo, basically said to us, ‘Pack up your bags and leave.’”

“No. I’m here to stay and I’m here to fight,” he states, resolutely.

On September 5, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website announced: “The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) initiated the orderly phase out of the program [me] known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).” In addition to snuffing out the hope of renewal for existing applications, this also meant that no new applications were to be processed. The website further explained: “If you did not request initial DACA on or before September 5, 2017, then the DACA process is no longer available to you”. Similarly, if “[y]our DACA expired on or before Sept 4, 2017, and you did not

properly file your renewal request on or before Sept. 5, 2017” then there is no further protection from deportation This effectively denies rights to a whole group of youth who are eligible for DACA but do not have it yet—numbers of which are unavailable.

Although the provision gave visibility to undocumented immigrants for only two years at a time, it was renewable. Trump’s decision will effectively take away that option turning the policy into what Vox has termed a “ticking time-bomb”. According to USCIS data, this will affect 689,000 active DACA recipients of whom 490 are of Bangladeshi-origin.

This population could have contributed USD 280 billion to USD 430 billion over the next 10 years, as per research by think-tanks Center for American Progress and Cato Institute.

Bangladeshi-Americans are one of the fastest growing immigrant communities in the United States; the 2011 community

census showed that this population almost doubled in number from 2008 to 2011. According to the census, a population of around 50,000 were living in New York City alone, constituting the fifth largest Asian group in the city. Of the population, half did not hold citizenship, and while this included people on different visas, it also comprised a large number of the undocumented.

DACA did more than just allow Nayim Islam to work—it let him have a meaningful career.

“Not having it [DACA] also means after you graduate with your degree you cannot get a job legally,” states Islam to this correspondent.

Islam has a college degree from the United States but had to overcome more barriers than the average American to go to university. “Going to college (university) while undocumented entails having to pay full tuition on your own because undocumented students do not get loans or financial aid from the government,” adds Islam.

In an interview given to a local Bengali-language community television,

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**THE COLOSSUS RISES  
OUT OF THE MIGHTY PADMA**

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