



PRONOB GHOSH

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”
— Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

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The spectre of red October

I would like to thank *Star Weekend* for publishing a valuable article on the 1917 Revolution written by our respected scholar Serajul Islam Choudhury. That momentous revolution changed the world forever. The revolution pioneered the freedom of humanity from the clutches of feudalism and imperialism. When imperialist rulers exploited their subjects to build their own fortune, when property rights became the exclusive right of the rich, this revolution showed how wealth can be owned by a community to ensure its proper and equal distribution. Unfortunately, the revolution was short lived. Soviet leaders' increasing hunger for power, infighting

among the revolutionaries and growing capitalist influences all over the world brought an end to the USSR in 1989. However, the Marxist ideology which fuelled the revolution will be relevant in the global economy for centuries to come. Because, it is Marx who for the first time showed the way to change the society by changing the nature of human's relationship with capital and property. In this world, where 99 percent of the world's resources are confined to only one percent people, there is no doubt that Marxist ideology will inspire newer and more effective solutions to humanity's eternal struggle with poverty and justice in property ownership.
Shamsad Khan
Bariadhara, Dhaka

Increase retirement age of the government officials

The retirement age for Bangladesh's government officials is 59 years at present. The government earlier extended the retirement age of public servants by two years from 57 to 59 in December 19, 2011. Certainly, it was a praiseworthy decision. However, still a government employee can serve only 29 years if s/he joins the service at the age of 30 (30 is the maximum age limit to join government service whereas it was 37 years in British-Indian era).

In Bangladesh, retirement age for the teachers of the public universities is 65 years now. And, the retirement age for the honourable judges of the Supreme Court was increased to 67 years a few years ago. These two provisions prove that age is not a barrier to serve the country in any capacity. The lawyers, physicians and businessmen are performing well even after 59 in Bangladesh. The Prime minister and a few renowned ministers are also performing well though they are more than 59 years old. Then, why not the bureaucrats? If the retirement age of the civil servants is increased up to 67 years, expenditure to pay the pension and other facilities will also be reduced significantly. According to the recent census, a government employee in Bangladesh lives up to 70 years nine months on average. In that case, an employee will get pension for four years and none months if the retirement age is increased up to 67. But if an employee retires at the age of 59, government has to pay pension for 11 years and nine months. In many developed countries, government officials can serve their offices as long as they are physically fit. Singapore has recently increased the retirement age of its government officials up to 67 years recently. Considering all these points I think government should re-consider the current retirement age and increase it up to 67 years. It will benefit the officials financially and give them security in their age old which may also curb corruption.
Md Ashraf Hossain
Central Bashabo, Dhaka



ANIMAL RIGHTS

On November 3, a video of a stray dog getting beaten in a bathroom of a residence in Kazipara in Mirpur went viral on Facebook. The dog had supposedly bitten a 12-year-old in the region and as a result, the child's uncle, the watchman of the residence, and an accomplice were punishing it.

Those who watched the four-minute-long video could easily perceive the amount of hatred the attackers had for the animal. “Why is it not dying? Why is it still breathing?” one of the frustrated attackers gasped before deciding to insert a rod, nearly a metre long, into the dog's mouth. It shrieked, and it shouted, until it stopped moving, for good.

The very same day nearly 40 activists rushed to the spot with the police and demanded that the attackers be punished. A question-answer session with the members of the family ensued. Zahid Hussain, Founder Secretary General, Care for Paws, who went to the spot that day, argues, “First of all, the dog did not bite the baby, rather it was a scratch. Secondly, there was no proof that the dog in question had rabies, since none of the others living in the community were bitten. A rabid dog generally results in more people getting bitten in the community.”

Subsequently, the activists went to the Kafrul Police Station to file a case. Unfortunately, the Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the station did not allow them to file a case, but asked them to make a complaint. According to Hussain, the OC was not aware of the century-old Cruelty to Animals Act, 1920, under which someone can be fined up to BDT 200 and also be imprisoned for at least six months for “killing any animal in an unnecessarily cruel manner.”

“We tried to explain the whole situation to him. But the OC did not allow us to file a case. We were told to just make a complaint,” says Hussain.

After that episode, Zahid and others tried to contact the police a number of times to get an update on their complaint. But they failed to get an appropriate response. They even went to the police station in person on the fourth day. That, too, failed to make any difference.

Eventually, the OC picked up the call and, according to Hussain, shouted: “What's your problem? Why are you calling me for such trivial issues? Don't call me any further and don't come to the police station with this issue.” When contacted by *Star Weekend*, after continued attempts, the OC hurriedly stated that the “issue was under



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

THE INHUMANE HUMAN ACT OF ANIMAL ABUSE

NILIMA JAHAN

investigation” and that he would talk later.

The reality is that such cases are hardly ever filed, and perpetrators rarely fined, despite the fact that animal rights activists, such as Rakibul Haq Emil, founder and chairman of People for Animal Welfare, popularly known as Paw foundation, has documented many cases of animal cruelty.

“Only three cases in the history of Bangladesh have been filed regarding animal cruelty. From our experience I can say that the police are not keen on accepting such cases and many of these incidents go unnoticed,” says Emil.

At any rate, the fine is so meagre that

it can hardly act as a deterrent. The cabinet approved The Animal Welfare Act, 2016 earlier this year, but it is yet to be passed by the parliament. The proposed law states that any person committing animal cruelty would have to face two years' imprisonment or pay BDT 50,000 fine or both. While this is no doubt a long overdue step in the right direction, without proper monitoring and implementation, it will remain nothing but a false promise of protection for those too helpless to defend themselves against the inhumane cruelty of human beings.

What does an animal abuser look like?

According to Sarah Zarrar, Programme Coordinator of Obhoyaronno-Bangladesh Animal Welfare Foundation,

an animal rights organisation that has been working since 2009, most of the perpetrators are street children and young adults.

“This can be due to lack of education and awareness, pent-up anger from abusive parents and most commonly, a false sense of heroism,” she says.

Citing the recent case of two mother dogs and 14 puppies being buried alive in Rampura, Zarrar observes, “That was also the doing of a 'youth welfare' club. When they received a complaint about a boy being bitten by a dog, they had to prove themselves as heroes by doing something worse to the dogs.”

Such “heroism,” according to psychologists, is a dangerous sign. “These kind of people suffer from 'conduct disorder.' People who have this disorder, enjoy violating others' rights. It

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