



PHOTO: THAHNAN FERDOUS

“The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal and hasten the resurrection of the dead.” — William Lloyd Garrison

SNAPSHOT

MAILBOX

Please note we have a new email address:
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Cyber safety for children

This is in reference to a write-up titled “How safe is your child online?” on February 16 in the *Star Weekend*. I think the write-up touched upon all the hazards growing children are exposed to when they venture into the internet. However, the point I would like to re-emphasise, as was stated in the write-up, is the massive role that parents and teachers play in this regard. The internet is a powerful tool that can be immensely dangerous in the wrong hands. Therefore, curriculum in schools must educate the youth about safe internet browsing habits. Teachers and parents need to have open conversations with children about the internet. Moreover, our government needs to establish policies that create a culture of safe cyber browsing. Lastly, those who do not abide by these laws must be dealt with harshly. Negligence begets negligence, and we cannot overlook this issue any longer.



Dr Shamima K Choudhury

Dr Rubhana Raqib

Dr Zeba Islam Seraj

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Women scientists

I was glad to read the spotlight of *Star Weekend's* issue which was published on February 16. There are so many brilliant women in our country and yet they don't often get the recognition that they deserve. In that regard, I personally thought that the story entitled 'Against the Odds' was much-needed. The one aspect

regarding the story that deeply touched me was the amount of sacrifice that the women had to make in order to reach their respective goals. Balancing both a career and work at home is difficult for any woman. But to constantly stay at labs for testing and missing out on crucial family moments is something else on the whole. When I talk to most of my friends, a majority of

them—including me—think about different ways of how we can reach the ultimate 'comfort zone' in life. Not many of us want to step out of the box and take that difficult route which is bound to give us success. However, reading the story last week made me realise that if someone actually wants something and is desperate, nothing can stop that person. The lives of the women scientists featured in the

SPECIAL FEATURE

In the early twentieth century, when Calcutta's political and social elites were protesting against the formation of a university in East Bengal, which would educate the “uncouth, working class”, the Nawabs of East Bengal came forward. Dhaka's Nawab Khwaja Salimullah donated 600 acres of land to establish necessary buildings for the university. The property also included Nawab's gardens and court buildings (now Madhur canteen and Shahbagh area). Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury of the Nawab family of Dhonbari, Tangail even mortgaged a part of their estate to collect funds for the university.

Thanks to their selfless charity and donations in the form of estate and funds, today Bangladesh has their three top institutions of higher education, the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and Dhaka Medical College. Although Bangladesh's national history and identity is indebted to these endowments, Bangladeshi people have largely forgotten this culture of charity and social welfare which once salvaged the nation's honour and identity.

Like these Nawabs, once upon a time, it was actually customary among rich Muslims to donate a significant portion of their property for the sole purpose of social welfare. This practice is called

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

have completely disappeared. Land developers, corrupt government officials and political leaders have illegally occupied and sold off the properties which were meant to be used for religious or educational purposes.

One of the most valuable waqf (endowed) estates of Dhaka is Ainuddin

A waqf property can never be sold, developed or transferred without full consent of the entitled trustees and for any cause except which is essential for the better welfare of the beneficiaries.

waqf: an endowment made by a Muslim for a religious, educational or charitable cause. Inspired by Quranic verses and Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) words, rich Muslims donated huge amounts of their property. Some even donated their entire property for charitable causes to get blessings in the life thereafter.

However, due to corrupt practices of our society and negligence by our government, most of their endowments

Haider-Faizunnesa waqf estate which comprises of 12,500 acres of land in Dhaka metropolitan city. In 1864, an influential magistrate Ainuddin Hiader, endowed most of his property (around 8000 acres of land) for religious and charitable causes from his death bed. A few years later, his wife Faizunnesa donated the rest of his property (i.e. the entire property of 12,500 acres of land) for religious purposes. After the

promulgation of Mussalman Wakf Validating Act, 1913, the then Waqf Board registered the estate as waqf property. However, after the partition of 1947, this massive waqf estate became completely dispossessed. At present, many important government establishments such as Bangladesh Secretariat, Bangabhaban (President's House), Railway Headquarters, House building Research Institute, Headquarters of Dhaka South City

which took a long time to retrieve.” However, the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act entitled the government to acquire only private estates of the zamindars which were not endowed for charitable causes. But, the government somehow also acquired those waqf estates as its deeds and papers were still in India. However, after the promulgation of Waqf Ordinance, 1962, the trustees of the waqf property filed cases to restore their control from this

PLUNDER OF THE WAQF ESTATES



WHAT IS WAQF?

An endowment made by a Muslim to a religious, educational or charitable cause

Total registered waqf estates in Bangladesh
21,588

Total amount of land under these estates (in acres)
193,249

Under illegal occupation (in acres)
122,294

INFO: MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

DESIGN: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

Corporation have been established on the properties of this estate.

Md Shahidul Islam, administrator of Waqfs explains, “Many of these estates were acquired by the government after the promulgation of the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950. The government acquired zamindar estates for the state establishment and some were distributed among citizens. Again, deeds and papers of some were preserved in Calcutta

illegal acquisition. “Some of these cases are still pending after 50 years and some of these cases have been solved. But by this time, the government has surveyed and developed these lands and distributed among its subjects. They further transferred these properties to others and all of them are paying regular taxes. Although after 40 to 50 years, in some cases the court has restored the

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বিশ্ব বলেছিলো- পদ্মা সেতু ‘সম্ভব না’
একজন প্রধানমন্ত্রী আর ১৬ কোটি বাঙালি বলেছিলাম-
‘কেন না!’

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