

# The curse of dowry still haunts the poor



NAWSHAD AHMED

Dr Nawshad Ahmed, a former UN official, is an economist and urban planner.

I was shocked to know recently that my housemaid, who is a widow, had to pay for Tk 2 lakh worth of furniture and clothing for her daughter's soon-to-be husband as dowry. When I discouraged her from making the dowry payment and informed her that it is unlawful, she replied that it is a social custom and if she refuses, her daughter will forever remain unmarried. She further added that if she does not pay, she is afraid that her daughter's husband and in-laws will not treat her well.

Different studies have shown that poor families in rural Bangladesh raise money to pay dowry by selling off their productive assets such as land, ponds, livestock, trees, and by taking loans often at high interest rates. These families are unable to buy land or other assets again. And, sometimes, when they fail to repay their loans, they enter into a phase of chronic poverty.

The underlying causes of this practice are often associated with the status of women in society, who are seen as unproductive, uneducated and helpless. To deal with this issue, the government had enacted the Dowry Prohibition Act, 2018, by repealing the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980. However, the practice of dowry still remains prevalent in Bangladesh.

Interestingly, however, during community dialogues, most people agree that dowry is a social evil and a symptom of greed, and should be eliminated. Many have shared their personal stories during such dialogues about how dowry payments had made them poor and economically vulnerable.

It is important to mention that in the past, the dowry amounts were small and were part of the exchange of gifts between the bride and groom's families as a gesture of goodwill. But with time, as conceived by many as a consequence of inflationary pressure, the dowry demands have risen and at the same time, become



more prevalent in rural communities. It is, therefore, unfortunate that society has made marriage a commercial transaction, giving more weight to money and property instead of the bride herself.

There are a number of negative consequences of dowry for poorer families. Being unable to meet their basic needs due to the loss of productive assets such as land, rickshaw or van, families are sometimes forced to withdraw their children from schools and engage them in work to bring in additional income. Besides, loss of income forces family members to reduce their food consumption and become malnourished. Due to poverty, many families decide to migrate to urban areas in search of work and start a new life in the slums. Thus, similar to natural disasters, dowry can push moderately poor families into extreme poverty.

ILLUSTRATION: PIP KRUGER

There are potentially two types of measures required—one to stop dowry and the other to mitigate the effects of dowry on families who have become poorer because of it. The first set of measures include raising awareness in society, strict law enforcement and community mobilisation by local government bodies and NGOs. An important aspect that should be highlighted in the awareness campaign is the notion that both boys and girls are equally valuable and deserve to be treated equally.

While the attitude towards girls should change, the importance of educating girls should also be promoted. This would change the perception about girls being unproductive burdens to economically active persons. In addition, the propensity towards having expensive marriage ceremonies should change, since wedding expenses in rural areas are often borne by

the bride's family.

On the flipside, families who have become poor because of dowry payments will require financial support by NGOs through micro-credit and skills training programmes, and through the government's social safety-net programmes. NGOs and ministries working directly on women's empowerment and economic upliftment should work together to improve the socio-economic status of these families.

The practice of dowry exacerbates poverty and inequality, is a source of post-marital disputes, and is a major cause of divorce in the country. Since it is a widely practised social problem, only legal measures will not be enough—social interventions are critical to end it. Many women become victims of violence every year over the payment of dowry, and thus this issue demands serious attention from the government and civil society.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Band clip
  - 6 Persian Gulf nation
  - 11 Decorate
  - 12 Bring together
  - 13 Namely
  - 14 Second president
  - 15 Without mess
  - 17 CIA fore-runner
  - 19 Crater part
  - 20 Air gun ammo
  - 23 Come to an end
  - 25 Drifting ice
  - 26 Othello's emotion
  - 28 Quiche base
  - 29 Russia's Brezhnev
  - 30 Kicker's aid
  - 31 Fellow
- DOWN**
- 1 Brewery sight
  - 2 Wedding words
  - 3 Toward the audience
  - 4 One of the Great Lakes
  - 5 One of the Great Lakes
  - 6 Uneasy feeling
  - 7 Tennis star
  - 8 Acapulco aunt
  - 9 Money machine
  - 10 In medias —
  - 16 In name only
  - 17 — d'art
  - 18 Long attack
  - 20 Sign of writer's block
  - 21 Bacall's love
  - 22 Run-down
  - 24 High trains
  - 25 To's opposite
  - 27 New York tribe
  - 31 Tonic, for one
  - 33 Disconcert
  - 34 Spur on
  - 35 Scoundrel
  - 36 Outback bird
  - 37 Research site
  - 39 Energy
  - 40 Word of accord



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO [dsopinion@gmail.com](mailto:dsopinion@gmail.com).

QUOTABLE Quote

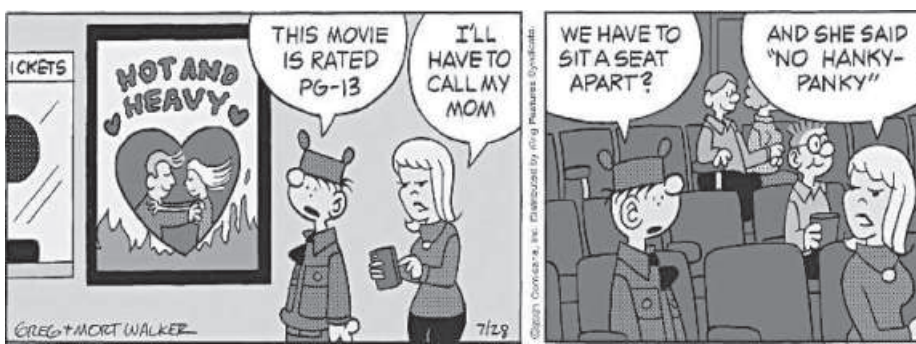


MAYA ANGELOU

(1928 - 2014)  
American poet


**My mother said I must always be intolerant of ignorance but understanding of illiteracy. That some people, unable to go to school, were more educated and more intelligent than college professors.**

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT





বিশেষ সংস্থা জড়িত থাকায়  
ইংরেজিতে লেখা হল।

## Barishal City Corporation Barishal

(German Financial Cooperation with the People's Republic of Bangladesh)

Memo No. BCC/CCAUDP/001/2022 Date: 04/01/2022

**Publication of the Result of the Tender Process**

This is to notify that in response to the Invitation for Bid (IFB) Vide BCC/CCAUDP/190/2020 dated 06/10/2021 for the Package W15: Drainage Network Rosulpur, (NCB No. BCC-CCAUDP-NCB-06) & Package: W16-19: Drainage Network Palashpur (NCB No. BCC-CCAUDP-NCB-07) under Climate Change Adapted Urban Development Programme (CCAUDP), Barishal Component. Phase-1 Project, in accordance with the conditions stipulated in the IFB, the members of the Bid Opening Committee opened the Tender on 05.11.2021 at 3:00pm, BD local time and received total five (5) Bids for Package W15: Drainage Network Rosulpur. (NCB No. BCC-CCAUDP-NCB-06) & total five (5) Bids for Package: W-16 – 19: Drainage Network Palashpur (NCB No. BCC-CCAUDP-NCB-07) and performed preliminary records & examinations of all the Bids/Bidders. No withdrawals were found in the submitted Bids. No modifications were found in the submitted Bids. All ten (10) Bidders were found initially responsive for the comprehensive technical & financial evaluation.

Members of the TEC went through the evaluation criteria of the Bids (Financial and Technical Requirements and Qualifications, and performed comprehensive analysis and evaluation on the basis of that criteria, and other terms & conditions stipulated in the Bid Documents. They also examined and verified all technical & financial documents, certificates and evidences as required for the comprehensive evaluation.

**Results of the Tender Process for W15: Drainage Network Rosulpur. (Reference No. BCC-CCAUDP-NCB-06):**

In regard to the required Technical Qualifications, Mozahar Enterprise (Pvt.) Ltd, M/S. Shafi Enterprise, M/S Md. Jamil Iqbal and M/S Al-Mamun Enterprise have failed to meet the technical requirements and Md. Mahfug Khan Naichity, Jhalokhathi only passed both technical and financial requirements and qualifications, and was evaluated a substantially responsive 1st lowest Bidder with its corrected price amounting to BDT 29,453,550.00 (two crore ninety-four lakh fifty-three thousand five hundred fifty only) which is (+) 1.05% above than the estimated cost BDT 29,147,501.38. Therefore, Md. Mahfug Khan was recommended for awarding the Notification of Award (NOA) for signing Package W15: Drainage Network Rosulpur. (NCB No. BCC-CCAUDP-NCB-06)

**Result of the Tender Process for W16-19: Drainage Network Palashpur. (Reference No. BCC-CCAUDP-NCB-07):**

In regard to the required Technical Qualifications, M/S Al-Mamun Enterprise, Mozahar Enterprise (Pvt.) Ltd, M/S. Shafi Enterprise and M/S Md Jamil Iqbal have failed to meet the technical requirements and Md. Mahfug Khan Naichity, Jhalokhathi only passed both technical and financial requirements and qualifications, and was evaluated a substantially responsive 1st lowest Bidder with its corrected price amounting to 144,671,336.25 (fourteen crore forty-six lakh seventy-one thousand three hundred thirty-six and paise twenty-five only) which is (+) 0.31% above than the estimated cost BDT 144,211,434.39. Therefore, Md. Mahfug Khan was recommended for awarding the Notification of Award (NOA) for signing Package W16-19: Drainage Network Palashpur (NCB No. BCC-CCAUDP-NCB-07).

It is noted that the Employer shall promptly respond in writing to any unsuccessful Bidder who after (NOA) in accordance with ITB 41.1 requests in writing the grounds on which its Bid was not selected.

04/01/2022  
**Muhammad Anisuzzaman**  
Project Director  
CCAUDP, Barishal Component Phase-1  
Barishal City Corporation, Barishal

GD-29