INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

How do we help our girls take the big leap?

A CLOSER LOOK

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WE as a nation take a lot of pride in the achievements of our women and girls. Whenever we see them making their mark in various fields, we applaud them for their tenacity and perseverance.

But how many women or girls in our country get the opportunity to chase their dreams?

There is no denying that in the last few decades, especially since the 90s, Bangladesh has made significant progress in empowering girls and women, especially through providing greater access to education and healthcare facilities and fighting child marriage and child labour. Our secondary school enrolment for girls increased to 67 percent in 2017 from 39 percent in 1998, riding on the success of the Female Secondary School Assistance Project (FSSAP), which focused on providing tuition waivers and stipends, among other incentives, to encourage enrolment and retention of girl students in secondary schools. Also many policy measures have been taken over the past two decades to curb child marriage and provide healthcare services to girls, especially with regard to menstrual and reproductive health.

But it goes without saying that these measures are not enough. And to make matters worse, climate change and Covid-induced economic and social shocks have dealt significant blows to the progress we have made over 20-30 years.

During the lockdowns and "general holidays" in the first year of Covid, when schools and offices were closed and national life came to a halt, many families struggled to feed their families without an income. The government's corruption-riddled special social safety packages were not enough to keep these households fed. In such a dire situation, many families opted to marry off their girl children, leading to a sharp rise in child marriage. A report by Manusher Jonno Foundation published in January 2021 revealed that in 2020, there was a seven percent increase in child marriage in the country, with more than 100 such cases being reported and 6,000-plus incidents prevented.

A Unicef report titled "Ending child marriage: A profile of progress in Bangladesh," published in October 2020, suggested that more than 51 percent of our girls are married off before they reach the minimum marriageable age of 18. The report added that of the 38 million child brides in the country, 13 million are married before the age of 15.

Meanwhile, some families send off their girl children to earn a living for their families as domestic helps, and these girls face an entirely different set of problems: dreary working conditions, inhumane working hours, lack of access to sufficient nutrition, battery and torture, sexual abuse, and even trafficking by employers. The nation, unfortunately, is not unfamiliar with the frequent news reports of domestic help suicides – most of them young girls – a manifestation of their desperation and our inaction and failure to ensure their basic human rights.

The girls who successfully pass secondary schools do not find the state of affairs any better; rather, finding or securing access to tertiary education or decent jobs becomes the next obstacle in their journey towards empowerment. While the garments industry has played a pivotal role in empowering semi-educated young women, there are simply not enough jobs in the country, even for university graduates. In 2021, we had an unemployment rate of 5.23 percent. In such a situation, how are young girls with secondary school certification expected to continue their education or find respectable jobs?

And these problems are being aggravated by an aggressively approaching climate emergency. With families losing homes and livelihood opportunities to natural disasters, young girls are becoming the first victims through marriage or labour. Unfortunately, these desperate families are often taken advantage of by human traffickers, who show them dreams of a better and brighter future and then sell their girls into bondage and sex slavery in foreign lands.

Our policymakers and the relevant authorities must take these issues and challenges very seriously. For our girls to grow empowered and thrive, we should eliminate these risks and obstacles through a comprehensive, multisectoral approach, with the participation of relevant actors from the public, private and development sectors.

While the development sector players have been supporting the government's drive to empower the girls for decades now, in the recent years, private sector players, including big companies – both local and multinational – have come forward to support the empowerment of young girls, from facilitating access to education, to giving them the platform to engage in sporting activities, to promoting their well-being, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or sustainability agendas. These are good initiatives, but these are also sporadic initiatives. If we can bring together these responsible private sector players and align their plans and investments with national goals – including the SDGs – then we would be able to reap more effective results from such collaborative programmes. The future is unleashing the potential of our girls through creating shared values by multisectoral actors.

As we mark the International Day of the Girl Child today, with the theme "Our time is now – our rights, our future," we should not lose sight of the possibilities of adopting a holistic approach and initiating well-coordinated programmes to eliminate the risks that take away from our girls their right to dream big. Our girls should grow up empowered, confident in the knowledge that they are their own agencies. Only then would they be able to realise their full potential and play their due role in the narrative of a rising, emerging, unstoppable Bangladesh.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

Our girls should grow up empowered, confident in the knowledge that they are their own agencies.

The intellectual retreat

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ASH NARAIN ROY

WE are living in intensely paradoxical times. While the 21st century is experiencing an explosion of scientific advances, there is a sense that intellectuals are no longer playing a major role as protagonists of change. The world seems to be moving towards the atomisation of life of the mind. Technology grows and thinking shrinks!

The Bill Gates of the world marvel at the 21st century's major advances in the fields like gene editing, machine learning, driverless cars, robotic surgery, and artificial intelligence, among others. Mr Gates predicts that some of the breakthrough technologies will include custom cancer treatments tailored to a person's genome, sanitation without sewers, and carbon dioxide catchers.

Science has advanced, but has philosophy retreated to the ivory tower? Economists and historians are taking an ever more visible role in public life, but why not philosophers?

One of the profound questions that philosophy raises is the question of how one ought to live. Have philosophers and thinkers abandoned their traditional role as critics of our beliefs and practices? If yes, why?

Is it because of the rise of "corporatocracy" or the exhaustion of the modern mind? Is it because of the sclerosis of institutions? Is it the internet which is leading to a certain kind of illiteracy? Is it too much to expect philosophy to continue answering Emmanuel Kant's questions: what can I know? What should I know?

Thinkers and public intellectuals are quietly disappearing as influential factors on the public scene. In ancient times, intellectuals and philosophers added character to society. When intellectuals shine a light on a public sphere, only then does a society flourish. Plato served as an adviser to the ruler of Syracuse. He travelled to the strife-torn court of Syracuse three times risking his life to create a philosopher king. John Stuart Mill served a term in parliament. Bertrand Russell got involved in nearly every public policy debate of his time.

Philosopher David Blitz considers Russell like "few others before him and even fewer after him" bringing his intellectual acumen to bear on public issues. Public intellectuals often fight a war on the plane of ideas. But the industrial society, considered by some as a "suicide machine," has squeezed the space for philosophy. Didn't Arnold Toynbee warn us that civilisations are not murdered – they commit suicide? How do we explain the greatest minds walking the earth over two millennia ago: Confucianism in China, the Upanishads and Buddhism in India, Homer's Greece and Hebrew prophets?

With our stress on techno-solutionism, many intellectuals have been forced to live in hermetic bubbles. Intellectuals also align today with corporate and institutional thinking. And uncompromising intellectuals like Noam Chomsky have become marginal as they are excluded from the mainstream media.

It was around 500-300 BC that saw the advent of the greatest religious, spiritual and philosophical traditions in Eurasian societies. German-Swiss philosopher Karl Jaspers explains that these societies independently embraced moral universalism, prompted by the teachings of Plato, the Hebrew prophets, Zarathustra, Buddha and Confucius. Does one assume that there are extraordinary times in history when the world throws up a torrent of genius?

But why was it possible then and not before? There are others who argue that these societies were not necessarily "islands of light." Plato's writings aren't really conceivable without Zoroastrianism and Egyptian moral ideals. Jonny Thompson, who teaches philosophy at Oxford, explains that "when cultures, ideologies and peoples come together, great steps forward happen."

The advent of great cities allowed great thinkers and intellectuals to debate and collaborate. Great cities nurtured great thinkers and philosophers. Cities thus spurred intellectual ferment. American diplomat and academic Nick Burns pose a rather provocative question: "Who among today's literary figures has any chance of being recognised as a thinker on par with Dostoevsky or Marx?" We still do have great minds amid us. *The New York Times* columnist Ross Douthat's list of most influential intellectuals today includes Ibram X Kendi, Robin Di Angelo, Steven Pinker, Peter Singer, Peter Thiel, and Yuval Noah Harari, among others.

With our stress on techno-solutionism, many intellectuals have been forced to live in hermetic bubbles. Intellectuals also align today with corporate and institutional thinking. And uncompromising intellectuals like Noam Chomsky have become marginal as they are excluded from the mainstream media. Is smart technology dumbing down the human race? Nicolas Carr in his book *Is Google Making Us Stupid?* says that the daily use of the internet is "rewriting our brains for skimming rather than the sustained concentration required by books."

Susan Jacoby in *Age of American Unreason* argues that technology has damaged our ability to think. She further maintains that the rise of religious fundamentalism, the failure of public education to create an informed citizenry, and the triumph of video over print culture account for anti-intellectualism in the US.

This story is no different in India. Globally, the disconnect between the people and the intellectuals is widening. Intellectuals in India are often ridiculed by the ruling class. Today, parties prefer cheerleaders, rather than intellectuals. Those who have fallen from the great height of moral values are making the biggest splash.

The media, the gatekeepers, have long given up gatekeeping. Instead of public intellectuals, we now have pundits on TV channels. They denounce, mock, vituperate and lash out at their opponents in the strongest possible language. Their reasoning generates more heat than light. Social media is a poison tree. We need intellectuals and philosophers as they are the world's eyes. As Einstein said, "Intellectuals solve problems, geniuses prevent them."

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শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি
গ্রাম শহরের উন্নতি

Memo No. 46.02.1500.000.99.010.22.3490 Dated: 10/10/2022

e-Tender Notice-11/2022-23

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.
The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents of following packages from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches.

Sl. No.	Package No.	Name of works	Tender ID	Procurement method	Last date & time of selling documents	Last date & time of submission documents
1	FDR/CTG/21-22/UNR/W-48	Rehabilitation of Shakpura UP-Golokmunshir Hat-Pachim Gomdondi UP Road (Shakpura DC Road) from Ch: 1058-2280m; Upazila: Boalkhali, District: Chattogram (ID No-415123003) Effective Length-1,222km.	693650	LTM	26/10/2022 17:00pm	27/10/2022 13:00pm
2	IRIDP-3/CTG/DW-197	a) Improvement of Old Station (Mostannagar RHD-Forest Office) Road at Ch: 00-1165m b) Construction of 01 No. 2x2.50x2.50m Culvert at Ch: 600m on the same road c) Construction of 01 No. 1x1.00x1.00m Culvert at Ch: 748m on the same road d) Construction of 01 No. 1x0.750x0.750m Culvert at Ch: 840m on the same road; Upazila: Miresarai, District: Chattogram (Salvage Materials Cost Tk. 98661.00) (ID No-415534182).	713604	LTM	26/10/2022 17:00pm	27/10/2022 13:00pm
3	CAFDRIRP/Chattogram/VR-A/FD/W-14/2021-22	Maintenance of Susia GPS-Paschim Saralvala GPS (Hafez Mohammed Sharif Road) at Ch: 00-890m; Upazila: Rangunia, District: Chattogram (Road ID: 415705378).	726358	LTM	26/10/2022 17:00pm	27/10/2022 13:00pm
4	IRIDP-3/CTG/DW-203	Improvement of Kokdondi High School Road at Ch: 00-1380m; Upazila: Banskhali, District: Chattogram (Salvage Materials Cost Tk. 1209403.00) (ID No-415085038).	727330	LTM	26/10/2022 17:00pm	27/10/2022 13:00pm
5	GCP-3/ctg/WD-301	Development of Puchery Habban Ali Road-Jangle Napora GPS (Muktijodha Fafidul Alam) Road by BC at Ch: 00-1170m; Upazila: Banskhali, District: Chattogram (Salvage Materials Cost Tk. 371732.00) (ID No-415084129).	733124	LTM	26/10/2022 17:00pm	27/10/2022 13:00pm
6	FDR/CTG/21-22/UZR/W-47	Rehabilitation of Arabsha Bazar GC-Ishwar Babur Hat GC Road via Bashrullah Mazi Hat Chorua, Gondamara, Saral, Shadhonpur UP (Moulana Ashraf Ali Road) by BC from Ch: 4270-6000m; Upazila: Banskhali, District: Chattogram (ID No-415082009).	732263	LTM	26/10/2022 17:00pm	27/10/2022 13:00pm
7	LGED/Ctt/VRRP/Rehab/22-23/W-51	Rehabilitation of RHD Ctg-Kaptai Road-Chandra Goan High School-Kodala Ghat Road from Ch: 00-900m, Upazila: Rangunia, District: Chattogram (ID: 415704011).	736331	LTM	26/10/2022 17:00pm	27/10/2022 13:00pm
8	GCP-3/ctg/WD-315	Development of Lalmohan Sikder Road BC & RCC at Ch: 00-1480m; Upazila: Rangunia, District: Chattogram (Salvage Materials Cost Tk. 2423514.00) (ID No-415705092).	736323	LTM	26/10/2022 17:00pm	27/10/2022 13:00pm
9	CAFDRIRP/Chattogram/UZR/FD/W-17/2022-23	Maintenance of Chanpur-Moddhom Kanchana (Sha Zabbana) Road at Ch: 2000-4000m; Upazila: Satkania, District: Chattogram (Road ID: 415822008).	736336	LTM	26/10/2022 17:00pm	27/10/2022 13:00pm
10	GCP-3/ctg/WD-320	Development of Karani Hat GC-Khagoria Bhorbazar GC Road by BC at Ch: 3600-4960m; Upazila: Satkania, District: Chattogram (Salvage Materials Cost Tk. 2624257.00) (ID No-415822004).	737636	LTM	26/10/2022 17:00pm	27/10/2022 13:00pm
11	GCP-3/ctg/WD-299	Development of RHD Gochora Bazar-Mirzerkhil-Betagi UP H/Q (Court Road Cum Amanullah Road) by BC at Ch: 5747-6697m & RCC Ch: 6697-7703m; Upazila: Rangunia, District: Chattogram (Salvage Materials Cost Tk. 1299500.00) (ID No-415703012).	679107	OTM	02/11/2022 17:00pm	03/11/2022 13:00pm
12	CAFDRIRP/Chattogram/UZR/FD/W-16/2021-22	Maintenance of Charati-Khoderhat-Moulavir Dokan-Bazalia-Bomang Hat-Noya Hat Road (From RHD # 129) at Ch: 23500-29000m; Upazila: Satkania, District: Chattogram (Road ID: 415822010).	716385	OTM	02/11/2022 17:00pm	03/11/2022 13:00pm
13	GCP-3/ctg/WD-311	Development of Embankment-Circular Road via Adarshapara GPS & Shibarhat GC (Abul Khair Khan Satgoria Road) by RCC at Ch: 00-1730m; Upazila: Sandwip, District: Chattogram (ID No-415783018).	722002	OTM	02/11/2022 17:00pm	03/11/2022 13:00pm
14	GCP-3/ctg/WD-312	a) Development of Freedom Fighter Akram Khan Dulal Road (Molla Road) by RCC at Ch: 1000-2000m (ID No-415784017) b) Development of Ponditer Hat & RHD Road to Embankment via Kamala Maitbhanga Road (Alam-Khushi Road) by RCC at Ch: 3380-4380m (ID No-415784016); Upazila: Sandwip, District: Chattogram.	722008	OTM	02/11/2022 17:00pm	03/11/2022 13:00pm
15	GCP-3/ctg/WD-313	Development of Sandwip Upazila Sontoshpur UP to Companigonj Ghat (Noakhali) Road via Dirgapar UP & Urirchar UP (Sandwip Char Elahi Connecting Road) by RCC at Ch: 1500-3227m; Upazila: Sandwip, District: Chattogram (ID No-415782002).	723090	OTM	02/11/2022 17:00pm	03/11/2022 13:00pm
16	IRIDP-3/CTG/DW-204	a) Improvement of RHD Road (Hatem Mahmod Bari) to Kamala (Hayet Mahmud Road) Road at Ch: 520-1270m (ID No-415784032) b) Improvement of RHD Road (Moyajam Master Bari) to Embankment (Galatubi Road) Road at Ch: 615-1115m (ID No-415785018) c) Improvement of Tonasha Road-RHD Road Gachua Pole Ghat (GC Center Road Gachua Road at Ch: 2100-2700m) (ID No-415784085); Upazila: Sandwip, District: Chattogram	713719	OTM	02/11/2022 17:00pm	03/11/2022 13:00pm
17	IRIDP-3/CTG/DW-129	a) Improvement of Dirgapar UP H/Q to Sonoshpur UP (Sandwip Char Elahi Road) (Dirgapar Union Porisher Road) Road at Ch: 00-750m (ID No-415783020) b) Improvement of RHD Road (Ibris Factory) to Musapur Uttar Paschim GPS via AB College (Chanikha Road) Road at Ch: 00-1000m (ID No-415784033); Upazila: Sandwip, District: Chattogram	659290	OTM	02/11/2022 17:00pm	03/11/2022 13:00pm

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