

SAMIHA'S WRITINGS

IN

DIFFERENT

NEWSPAPERS

IN

BANGLADESH

Just a simple question

SAMIHA MATIN

On 20th April 1999, which happened to coincide with Hitler's birthday, two senior boys of Columbine High School in Colorado, America, armed with shotguns, semi-automatic handguns and knives, entered their school campus, injuring more than twenty students and killing twelve of

the multiple victims, who had their lives ahead of them, are suddenly all gone in a whirl of a moment. But the debates and heated discussions continue as the American public divides into two.

Shouldn't gun laws become stricter, for the safety of civilians after all these tragedies, or should guns be readily available to give protection from the enemies? Why is it so easy for anyone in

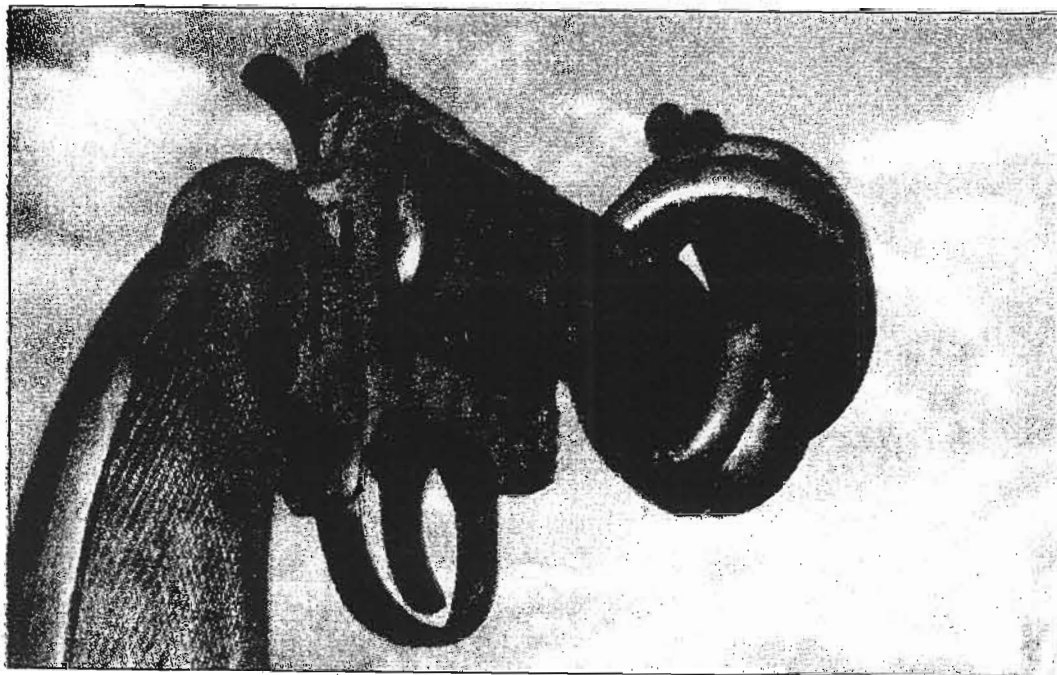
its citizens? And then the spotlight falls onto the murderers themselves. They were bullied, oppressed, psychologically depressed and took out their anger out on anyone who crossed their paths. But does the blame for their actions solely fall upon themselves or do the parents, the teachers, violence entertainment all take a share as well? Then there's the slow unfolding of their lives and personalities before they committed the heinous crimes.

Most are found to have symptoms of severe mental disorders and have often displayed bouts of violence from their early childhood days. Hasn't anyone ever bothered or noticed to check them into an asylum or provided them with any sort of help needed? Also, the way American media constantly upgrades about the tragedies have people from all walks of life glued to their televisions, as these massacres sadly become a part of popular culture, and even movies and songs about them are made. Even somewhat farfetched topics like certain books and musicians creating rebellious streaks in the readers and audience come into the picture. The ratings in television increase overnight and to another psychopath lurking in the corners this is a chance to take to the streets with armed weapons.

But the main, simple question is getting lost through all these debacles that associate with the tragedies in the months and years afterwards. After all these massacres, why isn't America taking adequate actions to prevent these shootings? If Columbine or Connecticut massacres weren't enough, what will take America to initiate the steps of restricting its gun laws and making it a safer place for everyone?

The writer is a student of Sunbeams School

GUN LAWS IN US BECOME STRICTER, FOR THE SAFETY OF CIVILIANS AFTER ALL THESE TRAGEDIES, OR SHOULD GUNS BE READILY AVAILABLE TO GIVE PROTECTION FROM THE ENEMIES?



them, after failing in their original plan to detonate bombs and blow up the entire school. What resulted from this mass murder shooting was the debate about gun controls, Americans suffering from mental disorders and the necessary precautions that needed to be undertaken to stop such tragedies from happening ever again.

And nearly a decade afterwards, in 2007, at Virginia Tech, the same thing happened, with nearly thirty-two students and teachers killed, and worse, the shooter paying tribute to the two killers of Columbine High School. The former massacre seemed to have created a legacy of its own, and multiple times there have been incidents with several killers trying to copy it. And then the two recent ones in 2012, one at Aurora theatre during the premiere of the Batman movie and then the most shocking and disturbing one at Sandy Hook elementary school in Connecticut, where a twenty-year-old man armed with military weapons fired at groups of children, aged between five and ten. He had killed his own mother earlier and then later committed suicide at the school.

The primary consequences of these mass murder shootings are the constant broadcastings of heartbroken families and the president rushing off to provide comfort, and promising that this is the final time something like this will ever happen in America again. The faces of

America to buy a gun, with no need for background checks, especially considering its history of notorious mass murder shootings? Should teachers at school be armed with guns, and what evidence is there not one of them would point it a student? After the Connecticut shooting Lie Pierre (manager of National Rifle Association of America) said, 'The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun,' but is that what will be the solution to stop gun violence: more guns? Even the concept sounds ludicrous. And most importantly, why isn't America banning military assault weapons from being brought by



The Independent: 20.11.2013

READER'S CHOICE

Morning Walks in Erlangen, Germany

A graceful tranquillity existed in the early winter mornings in Erlangen, the little town situated a few kilometres off Nuremberg in Germany. The air always refreshingly cold, my overcoat soon became dew sodden as I stood for a few seconds on the sidewalk with my camera in my hands.

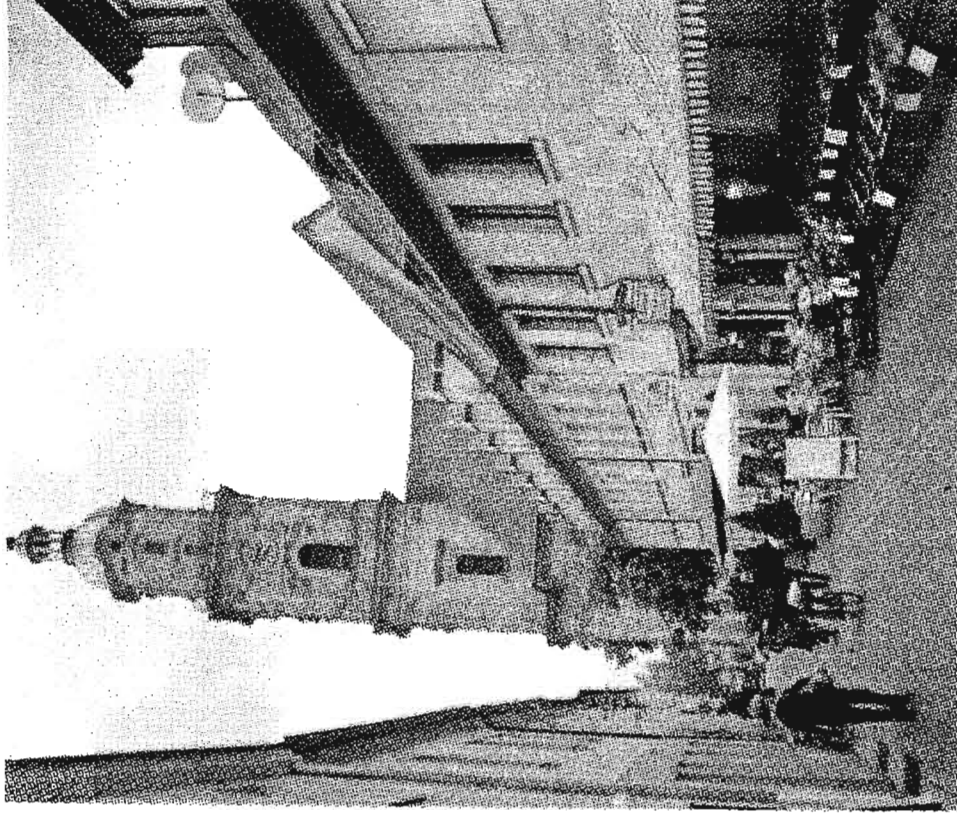
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Cars and bicycles were parked idly on the roads, as the indolent residents of the town went on in their deep slumbers. I loved to walk on those quiet mornings, memorising the soft echoes of my footsteps as I strolled along the clean pavements and headed for the small park in the centre of town.

It would always be deserted in the early dawn and I would choose a seat on one of the wooden chairs beneath a shady tree and breathe in the fresh air. My journal seldom kept me in ardent company, as I scribbled a few lines or jotted some topsyturvy ideas on it now and then. However, the moment only felt right to just to sit there quietly; watch morning advance and wait patiently for the grey skies to clear up and transform into a light blue hue.

I enjoyed gazing at the scenery as the sun slowly shone and its rays gleamed on the golden green grass. I remember thinking how remarkably cold it still felt afterwards as I hastened to tighten my scarf around my neck and watch my breaths come out in little wisps of smoke. A few toddlers and their parents would come later on, the children chattering as they clambered over the slides and see-saws.

If they caught me looking, they would always smile their friendly smiles and I would politely smile back. During one walk, I could not help but stare at an adorable dog that this old



lady was walking, and as soon as she caught my eye, she started speaking in her soft musical voice -- a stream of fluent German. I could not understand a word of it, but neither could I stop smiling. A friendly vibe exists here.

The shops in the corner of Erlangen town, all lined on the same street, were adorned with Christmas decorations, garlands and festoons. A smell of freshly baked bread and rolls,

and a whiff of gingerbread being taken out from a hot oven, mixed with the spicy scent of freshly ground coffee, emanated from the bakery shop as I watched people dressed in their trench coats walking hurriedly along the streets, on their way to work.

I enjoyed ambling into the small but seemingly endless department store at the corner of the street, with a wine shop next to it, filled with thousands of colourful glass bottles piled from the floor to the ceiling. And I loved the walk around it so that I could head off to the forest behind the beige-coloured independent houses, with their pruned gardens of gnomes and statues.

A bridge led over to the quiet, deserted forest and then a long way off to a canal. The evergreen trees held their canopy over the winding pathways, covered by bushes and brambles that continued towards the horizon. The sweet musical chirpings of the birds and the scampering of squirrels provided solace to my solitary walk.

The ripples of the water in the canal fell into a rhythmical sync as the wind softly blew strands of grass and flowers in the air. In the distance I could see narrow meandering roads above mounds of earth covered in green grass, whilst around me remained an unimaginable and yet comfortable silence.

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By SamihaMatin

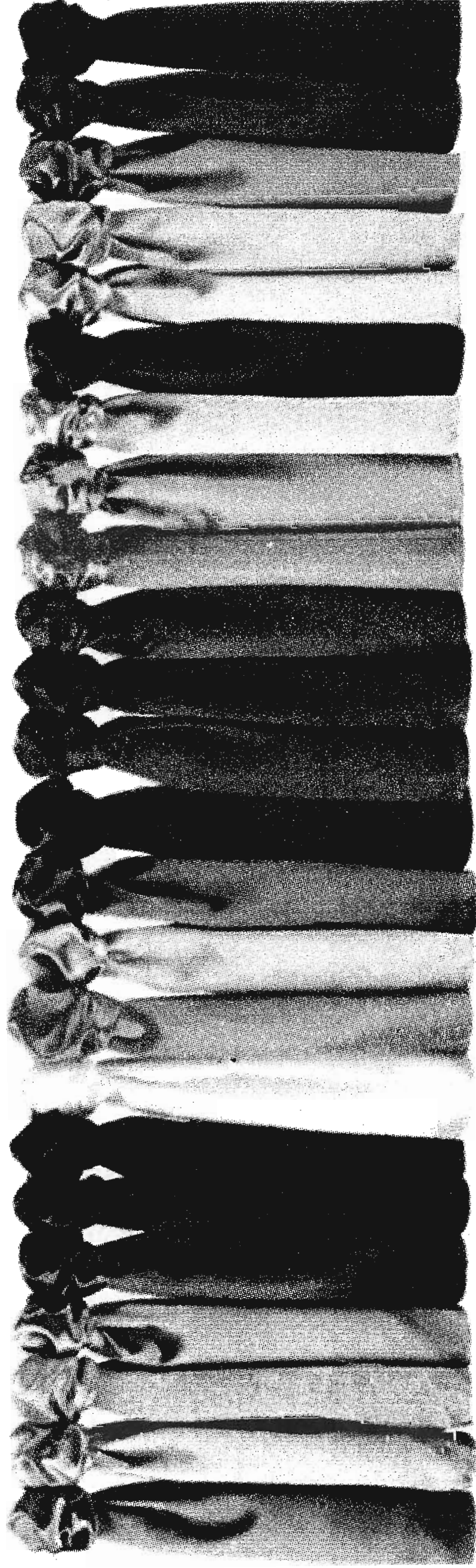


 parade



 ADVANCED

Scarves & mufflers



In recent times, scarves and mufflers have become fashion symbols. For women, they are the perfect way to give oneself the elegant, retro and chic look. Coming in a variety of colours and patterns they indeed add a new vibe to our typical attires.

In winter, it becomes almost necessary to grab a muffler or scarf and wrap it around our necks to protect ourselves from the cold when we go outside. Clothing stores in all parts of the city have come up with a variety of fashionable scarves and mufflers to cater to our tastes. Whether it's a simple, monochrome cotton scarf or an expensive cashmere and silk scarf, these garments are

always in high demand in the market, and not just during winter.

Personally, I find it easier to hang a scarf around my neck, rather than drape a long orna or shawl. Scarves certainly add decency to our outfits and especially during the warmer weather, they act as marvellous substitutes. They are smaller, easier to handle and goes great with T-shirts, fatuas, jeans, etc.

The way scarves can be manipulated to provide a fresh new look is incredible. A long scarf goes well with jeans and coat and you can go for the traditional way of draping it around your neck and ending with a

knot.

Then there's the double wrap, where you drape your scarf around your neck and shoulders twice and then leave it like that. Thin long scarves can also be used to create double knots which add a nice effect when you're wearing plain scarves. And let's not forget the method of fluffing it around the neck which goes immensely well with women in their office outfits.

In summer, small silk scarves are the perfect accessories. Wearing it like a bow tie, twisting it around one part of our shoulder, engulfing our neck and ending it with several knots and wrapping it around our hair --

scarves and mufflers are a great way for you to get inventive. Plus, the Internet is flooded with various websites that will provide you great tips to help you stylise your look.

And scarves and mufflers are not just for women, they go well with men too. Think about how sexy Benedict Cumberbatch looks in his muffler and high-collar trench coat in Sherlock, although the high cheekbones and blue eyes do play a great role in that!

So start getting creative if you want to develop a new style, with the help of your favourite scarves and mufflers.

By Samiha Matin

FEEDBACK

For the simple people here

SOMEONE once told me that what makes Bangladesh so special is its simple people, who live in its rural, poverty-filled confines and yet remain content with their seldom, meagre joys of their lives. These are the people who get satisfied and joyous over the little things and even smile at the harshest of times. This Bangladesh was made for them—for these people who forever remain in hopes that something good is going to come out of all the bloody battles and the disasters that seem to perpetually torment them. These are the people who live their simple lives, asking for nothing more and getting little in return when calamity strikes them. If they can do so, why can't we, the so-called 'educated' segment of this nation—negotiate on something and

work together to develop this country, instead of using violence as the only route?

Samiha Matin
Dhaka

King's court in the country

IN THIS era of turmoil and political strife, people seem to have resorted to the practice of burning cars and vandalising property to make their voices heard. Our country is supposed to be a constitutional democracy, but our supreme legislative body, Jatiya Sangsad apparently functions more like a king's court rather than facilitating the dialect leading to actual democratic laws.

Due to fettering discretions of power like article 70 of the constitution, the government becomes more of a mass of legally bound soothsayers

'Our country is supposed to be a constitutional democracy, but our supreme legislative body, Jatiya Sangsad apparently functions more like a king's court rather than facilitating the dialect leading to actual democratic laws.'

ers rather than a collection of individuals elected to represent the common people. Perhaps the ultimate irony in this democratic predicament is the justification provided for article 70, the apparent need to safeguard against corruption, to prevent members from joining other parties for personal gains. It is intriguing that someone at some point in time came to the conclusion that politicians in Bangladesh cannot be trusted, and accordingly decided that, to protect the greater good, democracy has to be crippled.

An intrigued citizen
Dhaka

Our lives revolve around hartals

WE JUST had 60-hour hartals for two consecutive weeks, imprisoning people within the four walls of their

homes or stepping out of their safety zone and risking their lives to get their business done. As if this was not enough, the main opposition party has declared a 72-hour hartal, beginning from today. This is simply outrageous!

I don't think this occurs prior to elections in any other country across the world. People are sick and tired of the obsession our politicians nurture towards hartals.

During a meeting with businessmen, Khaleda Zia sought alternatives to hartal to demonstrate their opposition against the government. Why is she or her party not concerned about the opposition of the masses to hartals called by their party?

The country is undergoing such a difficult phase and our honourable prime minister seems hardly concerned at the plight of the people.

Pinky Hossein
Chittagong

New Age requests readers to send letters and opinions to <letters@newagebd.com>, <newage.feedback@gmail.com> or 'Feedback', Holiday Building, 30 Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208. All submissions are subject to editing. Letters must be signed and include valid mailing address, e-mail address and telephone number (if any).

The New Age : 10.11.2013

FEEDBACK

Changing views about marriage

ANY woman here, above thirty years at least, can relate to the fact that whenever they apply for a job, eyebrows are raised and questions asked if they do not happen to be married. Why, despite our educational values, is the very idea of marriage still being viewed as the epitome of a woman's success in life? Why do we still label fighting for basic rights as women's empowerment when it comes to women when the phrase itself sounds like an oxymoron? Why are the same choices for men and women marked at opposite ends of the spectrum? Are we really changing our mentality, as a nation, or are we still as deeply rooted as before in our traditional ways of

finding a man for a girl as soon as they come of age?

Samihah Matin
Uttara, Dhaka

New era for taxpayers

IN BANGLADESH the fiscal year 2013-14 has ushered in a new era for taxpayers; they can finally enjoy the hassle-free way of submitting tax returns online. Earlier, they had to go through a lengthy process and eventually ended up waiting in a long queue. In a continuous process of digitalisation, the government and the National Board of Revenue introduced online tax payment system in May 2013.

The revenue board introduced online tax payment in an effort to help people pay tax without hassle. Simplified income tax return form, reduced contact between taxpayer and tax officials and voluntary compliance can ensure a friendly taxpayer environment. The board has also introduced online issuance of tax identification number and set up connectivity with national identification card from this September from where existing or new taxpayer can collect e-TIN easily.

Moreover, from this income year, tax can be paid through debit or credit card via internet. In support of the Sonali Bank, 24 banks are going to facilitate payment of tax, VAT or customers duty through the NBR website.

The website is easy to use, se-

cure, and completely free of charge. Only registered users can make e-payment and get full functionality of the site. There will be separate sections for income tax, VAT and custom duty in the profile from for each taxpayer.

The website will ask for card number and password once a user enters his or her account. Then income tax will be automatically deducted from the card and the user will be able to see the amount deducted on screen.

Specialists think that this online system will increase revenue collection and encourage all citizens having taxable income to pay tax as they will not have to face any hassle and will help the revenue board to achieve its target.

Zerin, Sadia and Mitu
East West University

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17/11/2013, Newage

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FEEDBACK

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Just a simple question

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And nearly a decade afterwards, in 2007, at Virginia Tech, the same thing happened, with nearly thirty-two students and teachers killed, and worse, the shooter paying tribute to the two killers of Columbine High School. The former massacre seemed to have created a legacy of its own, and multiple times there have been incidents with several killers trying to copy it.

And then the two recent ones in 2012, one at Aurora theatre during the premiere of the Batman movie and then the most shocking and disturbing one at Sandy Hook elementary school in Connecticut, where a twenty-year-old man armed with military weapons fired at groups of children, aged between five and ten. He had killed his own mother earlier and then later committed suicide at the school.

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Uttara, Dhaka

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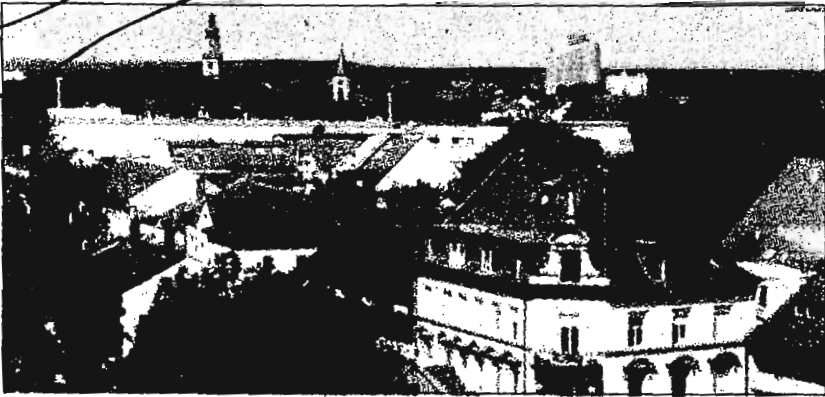
The New Age:

8.10.2013

Independent, 29.09.2013

DHAKA, SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 29, 2013

Local and global issues



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SAMIHA MATIN

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The writer is a student of Sunbeams School

Independent: 29.09.2013

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Menace of bullying

The other day I was surfing through the TV channels when a documentary on CNN titled "The Bully Effect" caught my attention. The documentary follows the journey of a father whose son died due to bullying at school. A few years later, the father has built an organisation that works to remove bullying in America. The organisation became quite successful and famous after visiting numerous schools.

One particular event of the documentary which moved me so much was when a father asked everyone present in the auditorium to raise their hands who ever got bullied by others, and, astonishingly, everyone raised their hands.

In western countries children, however, have the privilege to reach out to organisations for help. In our country the issue of bullying is ignored by teachers, guardians and all. Parents and teachers seem to be insensitive when it comes to dealing with these matters, and children don't find it reliable to confess to them in fear of being rejected by the peers.

It's absolutely necessary that parents, teachers and the authorities concerned become aware of bullying and work together to remove this social evil once and for all.

Samihah Matin
Uttara, Dhaka

Mistakes in school textbooks

As reported by the daily Prothom Alo, a few days ago, the textbooks meant for the school students published by NCTB are full of errors. The higher mathematics book prescribed for the students of class IX and X contains as many as 81 errors! The books of other subjects of the same classes such as general mathematics and chemistry also contain numerous errors. It has been also reported that the editors and authors of the textbooks are paid a paltry sum of honorarium for their job. While NCTB is spending crores of taka in publishing books, it is not giving the editors the honorarium they deserve.

We hope the institution will make sure that students get error-free textbooks from the next year.

Zabed Wali
Chittagong

Empowering women in Muslim societies

Although the Quran has given men and women equal rights, biologically men and women are different and therefore their responsibilities are also different. It's essential for every Muslim to understand that every Ayat of the Quran has a context.

Recently in Iran the religious leader cancelled the seat of Nina Siahkhalil Moradi, who won the city election of Qazvin. She was disqualified because she was too beautiful for the post. (Daily Dawn, "Too Beautiful," dated 25-08-2013)

This sounds strange, especially when a part of the world is struggling to empower women. The Muslim world also needs to think about empowering women. They should make policies to uplift women's status.

Farhan Juman
Pakistan

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The Catcher in the Rye

SAMIHA MATIN

A book that certainly provided me with a fresh new perspective is J.D. Salinger's 1951 masterpiece *The Catcher in the Rye*, which I have to admit I became quite enthralled with and couldn't stop re-reading.

Selling over 65 million copies or more, this American masterpiece has been controversial ever since its publication due to its immense use of profane language in almost every other sentence and the fact that it became associated with several assassinations—the most famous one being that of John Lennon, where Mark Chapman actually read a paragraph from the book at the crime scene after the killing.

This novel focuses on themes such as teen rebelliousness and isolation which are well portrayed through the relatable protagonist Holden Caulfield, whose telling of the story is always engaging and often humorous. The story starts when the seventeen-year-old gets expelled from his rich school, Pencey Prep, due to failing in four of the five subjects he took. Holden however passes English and admits he loves reading a lot of books, his favourite author being his

elder brother D.B. and Ring Lardner.

Holden has previously dropped out three times from other schools and he describes it due to the 'phoniness' of those places. Before returning home for Christmas, he goes to see his history teacher, Mr. Spencer, who tries to knock some sense into him after Holden wrote a note in his exam paper, trying to reassure that it wasn't Spencer's fault that he had failed. Holden then returns to his dorm later that night but ultimately ends up leaving Pencey Prep after he gets into a scuffle with his roommate, when the latter doesn't appreciate Holden's writing of his dead brother Allie's glove for him and a girl Holden liked before. The novel continues into Holden's days at New York City before he returns home.

He goes from bar to bar, getting drunk, and then to a theatre where he meets up with an old girlfriend whom he impulsively tries to force to escaping with him somewhere. Holden also hires a prostitute at the hotel he stays for one night. But she ends up leaving when he desperately wants to just talk after realizing she's of the same age as him. Although appearing confident when he meets people, Holden slowly descends to depression as he encounters the

1001

SIGNET

J. D. SALINGER

The Catcher in the Rye



'phonies' almost everywhere and tries his best not to become one. Holden's often seen reminiscing about his dead brother Allie and his little sister Phoebe whom he cherishes a good friendship with. It is to Phoebe he ultimately confesses his dream of

becoming a 'catcher in the rye,' where he would stand atop a cliff, in a field of rye, surrounded by only children and he has to stop them from falling over.

Catcher in the Rye can be best described as an iconic classic. Holden

may often seem helpless and desperate, but you end up liking him and relating to him more than you can ever imagine. What's precocious about this novel is that it gives us glimpses of anyone battling out in the real world whilst trying to hold onto

one's innocence and moral values taught from childhood. The Catcher in the Rye, I would say, is a must read for any adolescent or adult.

The writer is a student of Sunbeams School

Want to contribute?

at.independent

@gmail.com

The Independent : 22.09.2013

national and global issues



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Anne Frank: The Whole Story

SAMIHA MATIN

Independent: 08.09.2013

I want to be a champion skater, a writer; I want my pictures in all the magazines. Maybe I will be a movie star. I want to be different from all the other girls. I want to be a modern woman. I want to travel, study languages. Languages and history. I want to do everything. —Anne Frank, as in the series.

Those of us who grew up reading *The Diary of a Young Girl* will be quite pleasantly surprised by *Anne Frank: The Whole Story*, a mini-series based on the biography *Anne Frank* by Melissa Mueller, with two parts each spanning more than one and half hour. Starring Hannah Taylor-Gordon as young Anne Frank and Ben Kingsley (*Gandhi*, *Schlinder's List*) as Otto Frank, Anne's loving father, it's no wonder that the series became a favourite among critics—winning an Emmy for best mini-series of the year, and a Screen Actors Guild's awards by Kingsley.

The first part of the series deals with Frank's life in Amsterdam, during the Nazi invasion, until the year 1942 where the entire family goes into hiding in the Secret Annexe on account of them being Jews, where they are joined by another family and a dentist. The second part focuses mainly on the consequences after the families are caught almost two years later.

The series flaws in the fact that it doesn't use the writings or quotes of Anne, so there'll be a certain amount of disappointment.

Despite that, the series keeps true to the facts, and there will be more than once where you'll feel that this is indeed a very a noteworthy adaptation of the book.

Whilst performance of some actors may seem a little unauthentic, Kingsley and Gordon's performances are praiseworthy and they both are amazing tributes to the characters they play. Anne records her thoughts in the journal she got from her father

in her thirteenth birthday, by writing letters to her friend Jacque (as opposed to Kitty in the book) during their stay at Annexe. Anne's character, personality changes, secret wishes, longings and her relationship with everyone through the years are all portrayed in the series, but you can't help wish a bit more of the life and other characters at Annexe were focused upon as well, like the funny incidents Anne herself wrote in her diary in most occasions.

The second part of the series, though poignant, as they are taken to the concentration camps, will no doubt move you to tears and it clearly solidifies Gordon's groundbreaking performance as Anne Frank. Ending this, the series is certainly a must-watch for anyone.

ger International

Independent: 08.09.2013

CTD

Samiha

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SCARVES AND MUFFLERS FOR SUMMER

Sir,

Scarves and mufflers have become fashion symbols. For women, they are the perfect way to give oneself the elegant retro chic look. Coming in a variety of colours, patterns, shapes and sizes they indeed add a new vibe to our typical attires.

In winter, it becomes almost necessary to grab a muffler or scarf and wrap it around our

necks to protect ourselves from the cold when we go outside. Clothing stores in all parts of the city have come with various types of fashionable scarves and muffles to cater to our tastes. Whether it's a simple cotton scarf in one colour you can use to wrap your neck with, or expensive cashmere and silk scarves, these garments are always in high demand in the market, and not just during winter. Personally, I find it easier to hang a scarf around my neck,

rather than drape a long ornate shawl. Scarves certainly add decency to our outfits and especially during the warmer weather, they act as marvelous substitutes. They are smaller, easier to handle and goes great with t-shirts, fatuas, jeans, etc.

The way scarves can be manipulated to provide a fresh new look is incredible. A long scarf goes well with jeans and coat and you can go for the traditional way of draping it around your neck and ending

with a knot. Then there's the double wrap, where you drape your scarf around your neck and shoulders twice and then leave it like that. Thin long scarves can also be used to create double knots which add a nice effect when you're wearing plain scarves. And let's not forget the various websites that will provide you great tips to help you stylize your look.

Scarves and mufflers are not just for women, they go well with men too. Think of Benedict Cumberbatch in his muffler and

high-collar trench coat in Sherlock. So start getting creative if you want to develop a new style, with the help of your favourite scarves and mufflers.

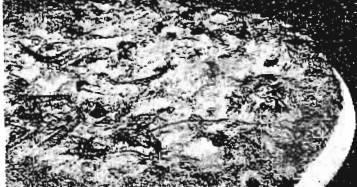
Samiha Matin

Sector 12, Uttara, Dhaka

Plz send your letter to the Editor by e-mail and include your full name and address (not necessarily for publication) opinion.independentbd@gmail.com

The Independent : 05/09/2013

Pizza fiesta at Dhaka Regency



If you are a pizza lover, you should definitely pay a visit to Dhaka Regency this month. A special and exclusive pizza carnival is going to start from 5 September and will run till 11 September, 2013. The

hotel is going to feature selections of home-made pizza and other Italian specialties cooked to perfection.

Throughout this promotion, guests can taste a variety of exclusive dishes such as 'Dhakaia nababi special' (complete with roasted chicken, onion, green chili, capsicum, coriander leaf, fresh mint, ginger, korma sauce, tomato sauce and mozzarella), 'Meat and more meat' (a feast of

smoked chicken, ground beef, pepperoni, roast lamb, capsicum, onion, olives, oregano and mozzarella), 'Tandoori prawn' (a culinary chemistry combining tandoori king prawns, onion, capsicum, mushroom, olives, oregano and mozzarella) and many more. These delicacies will be available both for lunch and dinner. For more information and reservations, please call 01713332565.

Symphony slim and smart

technological revolution of smart phones and apps, speed and efficiency is indeed at full swing.

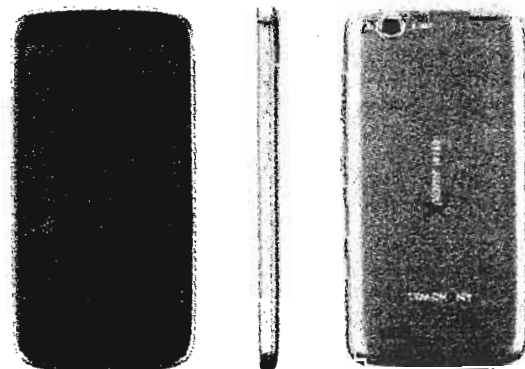
Symphony in this market has surely become one of the most popular brands to reckon with. Recently, it has launched yet another handset, the powerful and super-slim Symphony Explorer W150.

Run with Android Jelly Bean 4.2.1 operating system, the 7.9mm thick handset promises a rediscovery of the virtual world, with lightning speed ensured by 1.2 GHz (Quad Core).

This 3G supported smart phone boasts 1GB RAM and 4GB ROM, calling for a super-swift usage experience.

The handset comes with 8MP rear camera, 2MP front camera and LED flash. With a 4.7 inch HD screen having a resolution of 1280 by 720 pixels, the phone makes a satisfying attempt to bring things to life.

Having so many exciting features packed on a beautiful handset, the price tag is indeed very reasonable: BDT 16,990.



Daily Star: 03/09/2013

Classical music at Alliance Francaise -- A review

ALLIANCE Francaise is popular for its multiple options of extracurricular activities where students have the freedom to explore their creativity to the fullest potential. With a wide assortment of classes ranging from advanced French classes to art lessons, photography, classical guitar, violin, piano lessons, even dancing -- the list indeed goes on. Classical guitar, a very popular choice, is one of the classes I have attended for nearly three years and I can honestly say that the experience has indeed been very memorable.

The basic curriculum for learning the fundamental principles of classical guitar lasts for one year, but if students wish, they can stay for much longer to learn more. One year consists of four sessions of three months and anyone can join at any time of the year, given that it falls on the month where the sessions

initiate.

Beginners are given to study from the book 'The First Guitar Milestone' by Sveinn Eythorsson, which is usually finished in five or six months, depending on the dexterity and determination of students. During this time, students are made to learn and identify different kinds of notes, play a few basic chords, note the variations between rest strokes and free strokes, and also get to play few compositions as well, most notably the popular Christmas carol, Greensleeves.

With a time slot of one hour for different batches, the classes are taught by Iftekhar Anwar, a very much admired and helpful teacher. The intermediate sessions follow the young guitarists into much harder and well-known compositions as they tackle pieces of famous classical guitarists of all generations such as Sebastian Bach, Carcassi, Francisco

Tarego, Mozart, etc. More advanced techniques of finger style playing, learning pull-offs, hammers and harmonisation and playing different scales are taught in an effort to make students play harder compositions with more flexibility and much more easily.

Students even get the opportunity to learn compositions from other well-known artists of the popular culture such as Beatles and others.

Another great feature of Alliance Francaise Classical Guitar classes is after every three months, students get to perform in their very own concert, hosted usually at the Dhandmondi building. Students from Uttara and Gulshan branches also join to create a memorable, fun night of showcasing their hidden talents and playing a variety of compositions on their guitars for hours at a stretch.

Students have also performed together as

orchestras, playing a variety of compositions simultaneously and in sync, to create overall outstanding music. Parents and other guests are welcome to join them in the auditorium to proudly watch their children or loved ones play such refined and sophisticated music. Plus, these monthly concerts allow students to branch out from their stage fright and nervousness and improve their playing in front of a large number of people.

In Dhaka, where options are few and far between when it comes to having extracurricular activities, Alliance Francaise definitely stands out as a paragon for providing the students very fun and innovative classes. The classical guitar classes have definitely paved the way for the students to learn something incredibly meaningful and also opened the doors for young musicians to kick off a career!

By Samiha Matin



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The National Science Museum of Frankfurt

SAMIHA MATIN

Independent: 25.08.2013

Frankfurt is one of the most famous and commercialized cities of Germany. It is an international financial hub and home to numerous private and commercial banks, stock exchange markets and the new headquarters of the European Central Bank. It also contains one of the busiest airports in the world. Frankfurt is a historically significant city, as it happens to be the birth place of Anne Frank, poet Wolfgang Goethe etc. To commemorate our last day there, after taking the city bus tour, we finally decided to go to the National Science Museum, and the experience has been both eye-opening and marvelous.

Located outside the centre of Frankfurt and almost as big as a football stadium, this impressive two storey high museum is house to great exhibits of prehistoric times. Evidence of its popularity can easily be seen by the large scores of children and adults flocking to the museum on a weekend.

The front yard, filled with green grass, has a colossal landmark statue of a green Diplodocus Longus dinosaur, where students and tourists crowd around to take pictures. As we entered the giant hallway, we were at once greeted by gigantic skeletons of all kinds of dinosaurs imaginable—Tyrannosaurus Rex, Stegosaurus, Protoceratops, Oviraptor, even the Diplodocus Longus with its long neck—and a real skull of a Triceratops with three horns. These skeletons are constructed, based upon the most up-to-date discoveries and are indeed a wonder to see. A fascinating display upon one wall, was a bone of a dinosaur, the size so big that it covered the entire length from floor to the roof. Another highlight was to see the skeleton of a Pterosaur or 'flying dinosaur' hanging from the ceiling, its size bigger than an eagle. From the floor, it almost looked like a large lizard, and we all had a good laugh imagining everyone's reaction if it still existed now!

After seeing the skeletons of dinosaurs, we walked through a narrow corridor, which opened to another hallway, where one part of the wall and ceiling was painted in light blue to give an aura of being underwater. This section contained skeletons of gargantuan prehistoric whales, dolphins, seals and porpoises. The rest of the hallway consisted of skeletons of animals which roamed on land before the Ice Age, such as mammoths and elephants, with massive tusks, which are almost thrice the size of normal elephants. One of the most knowable skeleton of the mammoths was that of the Woolly Mammoth, which provided inspiration for the beloved character, Manny from the movie Ice Age. The most memorable one to see was the skeleton of Finback Whale, nearly twenty-two meters long with a incredible huge biting beak. The skeletons on the body were so big that you can stand behind and be encompassed by them. It was certainly a very popular attraction for most of the children. A scary revelation was to view the predator dolphins or Orcas, with their large fierce teeth, seeming to attack upon all vulnerable aquatic life; they indeed represent a very wide distinction from the dolphins we have come to know.

One really helpful feature of the Museum was that beside the huge skeletons of the prehistoric animals were the actual skeletons of animals from modern times, so it became easier for the viewers to compare the sizes. The massive sheerness of some of the prehistoric animals were given in plain view proof; for example, the skull of a prehistoric turtle alone was larger than a large turtle from this era. Strolling through exhibits was also a very fun learning experience because there were little side-notes written all over the walls (some in German, others in English) such as what were the scientific names for the animals, what species and which land they originated from, trivial facts such as how much they used to weigh, how they became extinct etc. For instance, upon reading one note, I learnt that one of the species of mammoths perhaps only contained one eye, and they indeed survived like this millions of years ago. Then there was one type of whale, which was named the Unicorn of the Sea (the inspiration for the legend of the unicorn itself) because from its backside a coiled 'tusk' grew, and the male species, who happened to have bigger tusks, used them to attract the females and fend off any rivals.

The Grube Messel exhibit, one of UNESCO's world heritage site, located in the basement, is the centre piece of fossils which are all showcased in big glass boxes. It was almost with childlike stupefaction we watched the fossilized remains of so many varieties of reptiles, fishes, amphibians, lizards, snakes, frogs, even plants and flowers that once existed in this planet, and noted all the similarities and differences because of the eras.

The most jaw-opening fossilized exhibit was the one of a preserved, 'mummy' Edmontosaurus dinosaur. Not only was it gigantic, you could almost still see some parts of the skin, looking very ghastly, on the body. It also happens to be the one of the rarest preserved dinosaurs in the world. Another one that caught my attention was the fossilized remains of little horses, no bigger than the palms of our hands.

Our tour through the museum then took us to the geology section of the museum on the first floor, where there were small size renditions of volcanoes, mountains and many displays of rocks, stones and crystals of vibrant multi colours, all very beautiful. The crystals and rocks were another great feature to see, providing fathomable proof of how the course of nature itself can create so many valuable beauties. A wheel, mounted in front of a screen, provided a cool game for youngsters. By turning the wheel you could see how earthquakes actually take place, via the movement of different kinds of plates, and how earth was once only made up of a massive terra in the very beginning. Coming out from the geology section was the astronomy compartment; the ceilings were painted dark and coated with large size displays of all planets in the solar system and other astronomical bodies such as asteroids, comets, etc.

For me, another thrilling experience, which happened at the end of the visit, was definitely seeing the life size, models of several extinct and eradicated animals. For instance, there was one where they showed this humungous Anaconda snake, its mouth so big that it was devouring an entire cow. There were also displays of several animals which I had absolutely no idea existed: zebras with brown stripes, bulls with horns the size of trumpets, mountain reindeers bigger than jeeps, humungous sea turtles, vicious-looking vultures and what not. These animals are the perfect examples of showing how far evolution has actually occurred. But it was also disillusioning to know that it is mankind's fault that some of these animals have become eradicated due to hunting and other purposes.

Visiting the National Science Museum certainly evoked my interest in science again, and though our visit here ended a little earlier than I hoped, I learnt many things and can't wait to visit again. The National Museum excels in educating its audience and the experience is mind-blowing. This is definitely a place where everyone should go to while visiting Frankfurt.



ACK

‘We expected that some life-oriented as well as necessary things will be included in the textbooks... so that next generation can grow up learning and practising the right things from an early age.’

water. I think it should be in the curriculum so that our next generation can grow up learning and practising the right things from an early age.

Mawduda Hasnin
Raninagar, Rajshahi

Dealing with over-competitive people

WE ALL have friends and acquaintances who often go overboard when it comes to any sort of work and end up treating mundane activities with an unnecessary high level of determination, usually accompanied by the same level of arrogance. They can certainly get onto our nerves sometimes, but here a few tips below which will help you to deal with these kinds of people and ease the tension in the relationship.

Over-competitive people suffer from lack of attention, whether it is at school, work or at home. We often

believe ourselves to be the centre of this useless dilemma or unhealthy obsession that they seem to perpetually have for us, but that's not usually the case. Their unhealthy competitive natures initiate from childhood, of which sibling rivalry is often the primary cause. Now the revenge has somehow fallen upon you, as you become the unfortunate newer substitute.

Over-competitive people will do anything that would make them feel important and especially better than you. If this is the case, then it's time you provide them with hearty challenges. Over-competitive people adore challenges, and they can't wait to gloat if they win. If you're of a passive nature or simply don't care, you can just back off and let the person win. The gloating might continue, but after sometime they are likely to remain quiet and find another person to pick their revenge upon.

However, if you're not willing to surrender that easily, then it's time

you stand up and give them a taste of their own medicine. That is bound to get random stony silences, and in extreme cases, cause pointless drama, but if the message is reached to the person's ears, then your work is done.

Over-competitive people are also unlikely to change. They may even go to the point where they make you look bad in a crowd. You might want to talk openly to them about the issue, but usually they are likely to either pretend that this is not the case or get plain angry for what they would think is a false accusation. Sometimes circumstances are unavoidable so do not get become frustrated at their scowling faces and the way they continuously pester you.

Just remember that if their time is consumed in overthrowing you from the makeshift throne they put you on, then sooner or later, you're likely to be removed when someone else shows up. As time goes, things will change for the better.

Samirha Matin
Dhaka, Dhaka

and opinions to <letters@newagebd.com>, <newage.feedback@gmail.com> or 'Feedback', Holiday Building, 30 Teigaon Industrial
re subject to editing. Letters must be signed and include valid mailing address, e-mail address and telephone number (if any).

New Age : Dat: 23.08.2013

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Independent, 20.08.2013

DEALING WITH OVER COMPETITIVE PEOPLE

Sir
We all have friends and acquaintances who often go overboard when it comes to any sort of work and end up treating mundane activities with an unnecessary high level of determination, usually accompanied by the same level of arrogance. They can certainly get onto our nerves sometimes, but here a few tips below which will help you to deal with these

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**Samiha Matin
Uttara, Dhaka**

Plz send your letter to the Editor by e-mail and include your full name and address (not necessarily for publication)
opinion.independentbd@gmail.com

FEEDBACK

'These greedy teachers lack all norms of morality and so are unfit for the profession. They should be sacked or terminated from their jobs, under the terms of their contracts, as per legal norms of service applicable.'

Greedy university teachers

A REPORT front-paged in New Age on Saturday highlights the corrupt practices of the so-called highly-educated public university teachers (or cheaters), who we generally take to be intellectuals in society. It is really a profound shame and slur on the noble profession of teaching. Greed in their character transcends all bounds of duty, honour and respect, usually associated with this profession of teaching. Now I believe in the remarks I have overheard, and was initially surprised, that many university teachers

are far richer cash-wise than even the ill-reputed, corrupt and bribe-prone engineers of the Roads and Highways, and Public Works Departments.

In this connection, the statement from the University Grants Commission is worth repeating: 'Some public university teachers spend more time at the private universities than at their main universities.' From this report, it is clear that these corrupt practices are known. The report, however, did not mention anything about private individual or group coaching given by some university teachers. These greedy teachers lack all norms of morality and so are unfit for the profession. They should be sacked or terminated from their jobs,

under the terms of their contracts, as per legal norms of service applicable.

The Anti-Corruption Commission should take notice of this, and thoroughly investigate and give them the maximum possible legal punishment to set an example. Small wonder, the country is flooded with the tide of corruption, from top to bottom.

SA Mansoor
Dhaka

A funny trivia

IT WAS quite funny to read in a local English-language newspaper that someone in India underwent a plastic surgery for the sake of looking good in

her profile picture on Facebook. The entire procedure is a waste of money and the reason behind it ridiculous; one should know that there are far easier and cheaper alternatives of making one's picture look better, and that is Photoshop editing. With a wide variety of options and with the click of mouse, one can add many special effects and improve the images when needed. The software for Photoshop-ping can easily be downloaded from the Internet or bought from shops, and definitely allows the inner creativity inside anyone who wants to look different in their pictures.

Samihha Matin
Uttara, Dhaka

New Age requests readers to send letters and opinions to <letters@newagebd.com>, <newage.feedback@gmail.com> or 'Feedback', Holiday Building, 30 Teigaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208. All submissions are subject to editing. Letters must be signed and include valid mailing address, e-mail address and telephone number (if any).

New Age: 18.08.2013

'Have we really become so used to seeing and reading about these disasters that now we have almost become immune to any sort of compassion, and have reached the point where we basically think that a person's life is worth a mere amount of money?'

Changing our attitudes

A DAILY poll published on a local English-language newspaper showed an alarming 15 per cent of the people who have participated in the poll supporting that Tk 1 lakh compensation for workers in accidents or disasters is justified. It's very disheartening when the government and the people responsible do not take any worthwhile actions, but what about the general public? Have we really become so used to seeing and reading about these disasters that now we have almost become immune to any sort of compassion, and have reached the point where we basically think that a person's life is worth a mere amount of money? What would our reaction have been if we were standing in their shoes and have lost our beloved ones and suffered from severe injuries? It's time we changed our attitudes and act more humane.

Samiha Matin
Uttara, Dhaka



Rescue workers recover a body from inside the rubble of Rana Plaza on Friday.

— New Age/Sanaul Haque

Our future role in global economy

THIS refers to an essay on the subject, published recently in the 'editorial page' of a local English language daily. Maybe, it has some good and favourable news for the Eid, promising better days ahead for this political strife-torn country. We can only hope and pray that this very welcome prediction for 2050, though still 37 years away, really does come true, when the younger teens of today, will be well past 40.

Being optimistic, I will go along with the Goldman Sachs views as stated in the subheading of the essay; but with a big IF, in capital letters. The views are: 'Bangladesh would be among eleven countries of the world an important role in the global economy by the year 2050' to play. However, I am sure it will depend on our political stability. Today, we are mired in seemingly endless political violence, along with constant 'religious extremism' on the sidelines. It is the worst

possible scenario for progress and improvement. One can only wonder if we will ever get out of this endless circle of vicious and violent political interaction that passes off under the garb of 'freedom of expression and freedom for opposition' guaranteed under the constitution. Rationally, it can only lead to more gloomy and unproductive days ahead, at least in the short run for this decade.

Hopefully, the eyes of our politicians will open to this national 'sui-

cide' that we are senselessly committing. Again 'hopefully', in the next twenty years, we will gain some political maturity to get out of this mindless and endless quarrel over the elusive *goddhi* that is the sole Holy Grail for all our politicians, a lesson our politicians have not learned since 1972 onwards. Without getting rid of our endless political conflicts, we have no future to look forward to.

A frustrated Bangladeshi
Dhaka

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The New Age : 7.8.2013

What puzzles me is who finances these sizeable deficits. If it is commercial banks, then we should know which banks finance these political parties that have no tangible fixed assets as such against which overdrafts are usually allowed. We should keep away from such banks.'

Political party finances

ON AUGUST 1, almost all English dailies reported last financial year's audited financial figures. However, one daily provided the best highlighted summary presentation stating the four main parties make up the 'circus' of Bangladesh democracy! The term 'circus' is appropriate as ours is a democracy closely linked to 'demonocracy', the closest term that one can find to describe our diabolic one-person rule, surrounded by countless yes-persons!

This 'demonocracy' is practised through violent hartals resulting in many indiscriminate killings and injuries; destruction, looting and burning of private vehicles, shops as well as assets of the 'not so rich' traders, and shopkeepers, who may ignore any 'hartal' that is imposed by arson, bombs and bullets and other violent methods. There is nothing peaceful or democratic about it. Here 'might is right' rules the event which is more often than not, carried out for two or more days, preceding or succeeding a weekend; not only by party men but also reinforced by professional hoodl-gans.

The summary with financial figures reveal that the party in power, the Awami League, has the highest income of Tk 10 crore while the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party has the lowest, only 17.9 per cent of the AL income (Tk 1.79 crore). Surprising was the income of

Jamaat-e-Islami, which was just over Tk 6 crore. The Jatiya Party also had a good collection of Tk 4.8 crore. Probably, many wealthy people who earlier gave funds to the BNP have shifted to the party now in power, for obvious reasons. However, the sad failure of the Awami League in the recent mayoral elections indicates that it made very poor returns on their investment.

Except for the Awami League, which showed a cash surplus of Tk 1 crore, all other parties showed cash deficits, with the BNP having the highest deficit of Tk 46.9 lakh, followed by Jamaat Tk 13.88 lakh and the Jatiya Party Tk 9.6 lakh.

What puzzles me is who finances these sizeable deficits. If it is commercial banks, then we should know which banks finance these political parties that have no tangible fixed assets as such against which overdrafts are usually allowed. We should keep away from such banks.

A critical voter
Dhaka

Not so rosy

THE Awami League-led government apparently wants to showcase that a significant progress has been made in the education sector over the past few years. However, the reality on the ground seems to indicate otherwise.

More than 3,000 teaching positions in 292 government colleges have been vacant for a long time. More than 200 secondary schools out of 315 government secondary schools

have no head teachers for a prolonged period of time and the picture is not rosy for government colleges either.

All classes are overcrowded with students in most of the colleges so the quality of teaching is a great concern particularly in the urban areas.

Less qualified teachers have been recruited at the non-government colleges, which is another acute problem for quality teaching.

It is now no open secret that teachers of colleges have been giving high marks in the papers for the last few years even if the candidates do not deserve and the trend will be continued.

Around 50 per cent students could not pass in all the honours courses of National University in the first year final examinations, which proves the reality.

Mawduda Hasnin
Raninagar, Rajshahi

Importance of customer service

THERE'S a saying in customer service that when a salesperson treats a customer well, he or she is likely to talk about it to five people. But if the customer isn't treated well, then the minimum number of people a customer will talk to can be nine or more. In Bangladesh, there are few websites where online shopping can be done, so majority of the people tend to go to shops to buy products.

Salespeople here, instead of welcoming the large numbers of people

coming regularly, have almost become immune to treating their customers with the respect they deserve. They will talk back at them, make insane affirmations about the products, ask for ridiculously high prices and then argue incessantly about it.

Sometimes, salespersons won't allow customers to return back their products even when they haven't been used, the label is on, the receipts are brought and it's been only a couple of hours later. There have even been incidents where salespersons demand that the customers leave their shops because they refuse to sell their products to them anymore. We acknowledge the fact that at the end of the day the job is tiresome and tedious and not all customers will be pleasant company. However, in the long run, by treating them rudely or not paying them enough attention, one is only hurting the business and losing great profits.

There's another category of salespersons that tend to become over-enthusiastic in treating their customers, almost to the point where they are prying on them and begging them to buy the items. This usually results in customers leaving the place hurriedly and going someplace else to shop in peace.

I suggest that these salespeople take some hours of training, and a brushing up or two of their social skills. Otherwise they will end up losing too many customers and have to close down their shops.

Samihha Matin
Uttara, Dhaka

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The New Age: 04.08.2013

FEEDBACK

Foot over-bridge!

THIS refers to a back-page photograph published in a local English-language daily on July 30. Part of the text below the photograph says 'though a foot over-bridge is still there.' I have come across the word 'foot over bridge' a number of times in our English-language newspapers. It made me curious. Sometimes, it was written 'foot over bridge' 'foot over-bridge'.

I, therefore, looked it up in the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Third Edition). I could not find either 'over-bridge' or 'foot over-bridge' anywhere in the dictionary or the CD-ROM that is supplied with it. The only word I found was 'foot-bridge'. The meaning of the word was

given as follows: 'a narrow bridge that is only used by people who are walking.' However, enterprising people in Bangladesh even set up 'rent free' stalls. Possibly, it is because the bridge is not narrow enough.

Since I could not find the compound word 'foot over-bridge', I would be grateful if you or some reader could give me the source where to find this word and also how it came to be used since my knowledge of English is very limited, having read only up to ISC in 1950, when we had only one paper in English with four compulsory subjects in science. Subsequently, I graduated in engineering in 1954, where English was the only language used.

In my opinion, perhaps the pertinent clause you wrote could have been

as follows: 'though a footbridge is still there'. I hope you will agree with me that this would have been appropriate.

SA Mansoor
Dhaka

Bathrooms in Shahjalal int'l airport

HAZRAT Shahjalal International Airport is the largest airport in Bangladesh and important transit destination. However, service at the immigration counters is excruciatingly slow and inefficient, which often results in flights getting delayed. Another distressing aspect is the condition

of the bathrooms there, as they are unkempt, unhygienic and lacking in essentials such as toilet paper, tissues, liquid soap, etc. Sometimes one will even find the taps and faucets broken, and very few dustbins kept for waste. Even more terrible is the perpetual stench in nearly all of the cubicles. This is very distressing and uncomfortable for majority of the passengers, as we would much rather use the airport bathrooms than the small ones at the plane. This also creates a very unsatisfactory picture for foreigners who come to Bangladesh. The government should make sure that the money spent in the maintenance of the airport is being utilised well.

Samiha Matin
Dhaka

New Age requests readers to send letters and opinions to <letters@newagebd.com>, <newage.feedback@gmail.com> or 'Feedback', Holiday Building, 30 Teigaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208. All submissions are subject to editing. Letters must be signed and include valid mailing address, e-mail address and telephone number (if any).

The New Age: 01.08.2013

Service at the immigration counters is excruciatingly slow and inefficient, which often results in flights getting delayed. Another distressing aspect is the condition of the bathrooms there, as they are unkempt, unhygienic and lacking in essentials such as toilet paper, tissues, liquid soap, etc.

FEEDBACK

'It had definitely crossed into all our minds sometime or other when Dzokhar was finally captured, hurt and defenceless, that it could have been anyone's son or an acquaintance or a daily passerby in the same predicament.'

Controversial Rolling Stones cover

ON APRIL 15, 2013 the Boston Marathon bombings took place, killing three people and injuring more than two hundred when the bombs exploded near the finishing line. After photos of the culprits were released by the FBI, a great manhunt followed, with the entire city and its transport system on lockdown until the perpetrators were captured. The culprits were found to be two brothers, Tamerlan and Dzokhar Tsarnaev, who had immigrated to America from Chechen, nearly a decade ago. After a brutal struggle with an officer, the elder brother Tamerlan was killed, and a few days later, the younger one was ultimately arrested when the FBI

found him hiding inside a boat in a neighbour's backyard.

So now the question arises why a magazine like *Rolling Stones*, that is widely popular for covering stories of music and celebrities, has posted a picture of the younger brother on its cover on one of its issues. Many people became outraged, demanding the magazine to boycott the photo and saying that it is portraying him as some sort of a victim or martyr, which he clearly wasn't. Other magazines have also heaped criticisms on *Rolling Stones*, saying that it is using this image to exploit more people to buy the magazine, since someone who was not aware about the situation might get a wrong notion that the brother is just a random new celebrity. What most people, however, failed to realise is that precisely this is why the *Rolling Stones* printed the photo. This is to show that behind the youthful nature and boyish face lies

a monstrosity that should never be forgotten.

It was sickening that the two brothers used Islam to defend their actions and claiming the reason behind their attack was due to the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, in what way have they ever hoped to fight for justice by killing innocents, is something that only the younger brother can now explain. With a promising academic performance, he was enrolled in Dartmouth University and described by several classmates as 'kind and nice', who couldn't believe that he had committed the crimes. For these reasons, you can't help but wonder what caused him to choose this unforgivable path.

Our hearts definitely go out to all the victims and we offer condolences because the tragedies will continuously and heavily affect their families all their lives. Everyone rejoiced at the capture of the killer, but that couldn't

stop the truth from hitting us on our faces. It had definitely crossed into all our minds sometime or other when Dzokhar was finally captured, hurt and defenceless, that it could have been anyone's son or a daily passerby in the same predicament.

Maybe, some will say it's the victimisation of the culprit or maybe it's just our conscience that makes us feel bad about him being so young and having a high possibility of either a death penalty or a life imprisonment sentence. This is precisely what the message the cover picture manages to give, that a typical person, living what seems to be a normal life, can do and have done such heinous crimes. In the end, one must acknowledge that the word 'terrorist' or 'extremist' can never be labelled to a certain group of people.

Samiha Matin
Sunbeams School, Dhaka

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New Age : 31/07/2013

FEEDBACK

Independent consultant is a must

THANKS for an important first page report on July 25, published in a local English-language daily. There can be no two opinions about the writer's sound proposal for an independent consultant for the dangerous Rooppur project. However, the fact remains that a radiation leaking U236 nuclear power plant, and that too from Russia, is, in my firm opinion, a very unwise decision. We are buying in a prospective future nuclear disaster for us, for which we are paying heavily in foreign exchange. To compound the felony, as the report stated, we are also having consultants from the same Russian group that is selling us

the dangerous U236 fuelled nuclear plant. How much foolish can we be? It is like deliberately pouring petrol on an ongoing fire.

Why cannot we go for smaller, absolutely radiation free and much cheaper U238 nuclear power plant that is running in many countries, including South Africa and China among others. For this price, possibly we can easily buy a number of small U238 plants and locate it safely in urban centres where load demand is concentrated and save on the cost of expensive river crossing HT transmission lines from Rooppur. Maybe, there are some very subjective ideas and reasons for this proposed foolish blunder that this government is determined to go for.

Even if the plant we are planning to have is supposed to be safe (which I totally doubt), I can bet that once it

starts operating (hopefully never) we will herald the new danger and misery of radiation sickness that is there still in Japan even after over sixty years of the atom bombing, masked as various types of cancer.

SA Mansoor
Dhaka

Children on reality TV shows

WATCHING reality television shows are a favourite way to pass time, and TV channels here have come up with all sorts of programmes to cater to the viewers' tastes. What's unsettling, however, is some of the ways that children are delineated in the shows. Often, they are coated in heavy doses of make-up and kohl, clad in jewelery, made to wear glitzy dresses and

act almost coquettish or 'grown up' just in an effort to increase ratings. It is even worse in the talent hunt shows where one child's aptitude naturally gets overshadowed by another one who is able to be more vocal, and in some cases, dramatic.

However, it's something that people seem to find adorable, instead of strange and false, and which automatically leads them to punching more messages in support. It's sad that children in these television shows are made to assemble showbiz personas at such tender ages and gaining approbation for these characteristics. What would be much more invigorating and real to watch are children just being themselves and on talent shows, getting recognised for their talents alone, without any drama and flair.

Samiha Matin
Sunbeams School, Dhaka

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The New Age: 29.07.2013

FEEDBACK

'Another vice that has become rampant is the issue of the ominous cyber bullying... What makes cyber bullying the scariest is that easily a large number of people can target a student, and if they choose to, they can even remain anonymous.'

Awareness of bullying

I WAS shuffling through the channels one day when I saw a documentary on CNN, called the *Bully Effect*. Initially, I wasn't all that interested, but I ended up watching all of it and was struck by the simple and yet powerful message that the documentary managed to convey. It follows the journey of a father whose son died due to bullying at school. A few years later, the father took it upon himself to build an organisation that helps with these sorts of incidents in America. Soon it became quite successful and famous by visiting numerous schools in different states. One particular moving incident of the documentary was in the auditorium where the father asked everyone who ever got bullied or picked upon to raise their hand, and astonishingly every single hand was lifted into the air. This makes you wonder about all the circumstances that go unnoticed through the walls of classrooms here in our country

and under our very noses.

It's not an uncommon issue hearing or reading about teen suicide, cutting, depression, addiction and substance abuse. Particularly, in the United States, the unprecedented high number of school shootings has a strong correlation with the culprits being victims of bullying. In western countries children however have the privilege to reach out to organisations for help. Celebrities have taken it upon themselves to help out their fans or anyone by talking about their personal experiences or establishing foundations. Notable examples are Oprah, Lady Gaga, Demi Lovato amongst several many. In our country, the issue of bullying somehow seems to be under coverage. Parents and teachers seem offhand and strangely insensitive when it comes to dealing with these matters, and children don't find it a reliable option to confess to them, in fear of rejection of peers.

Bullying can happen in so many ways. It can be physical like beating someone up or it can be verbal by spreading vicious rumours or

backbiting about someone. The latter tends to have a greater psychological effect on the victims, leading to lower self-esteem and trust issues that might even prolong into adulthood. The reasons for bullying are many, though most notable ones are based on appearance, speech, gender, ethnicity, etc.

Another vice that has become rampant is the issue of the ominous cyber bullying. It's basically using the means of technology to humiliate someone. What makes cyber bullying the scariest is that easily a large number of people can target a student, and if they choose to, they can even remain anonymous. Cyber bullies usually start from being our acquaintances, and the moment the breach of trust and confidentiality has been reached, numerous photos and messages, either true or hoax, are circulated in social media, being exposed to almost everybody, particularly the victims' families. Cyber stalking also is another form of cyber bullying, with the culprit stalking and threatening the victims at every corner.

It doesn't seem half as bad to

read about these incidents on paper, however, only the victims can truly talk about the pain from experience. Some cynics might even argue that being bullied does have a good effect on children. After all, reality is going to barge on them sooner or later, and it's better to be prepared for out there, instead of having some delusional image. I, however, beg to differ. The factor mentioned above can have a positive effect, but do you honestly expect someone in their teens or a ten-year-old to think at such level, particularly when they have no one to discuss these matters with? If this were the case, we wouldn't have so many teenagers in rehabilitation or committing suicide, with no hope that there was a way out.

I am not saying that we can stop bullying overnight. The world couldn't, and we are definitely a long road behind. But it's absolutely necessary that parents, teachers, students become aware of the situations and the consequences that follow afterwards.

Samiha Matin
Sunbeams School, Dhaka

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The New Age: 27.07.2013

Teaching literature, learning Shaw

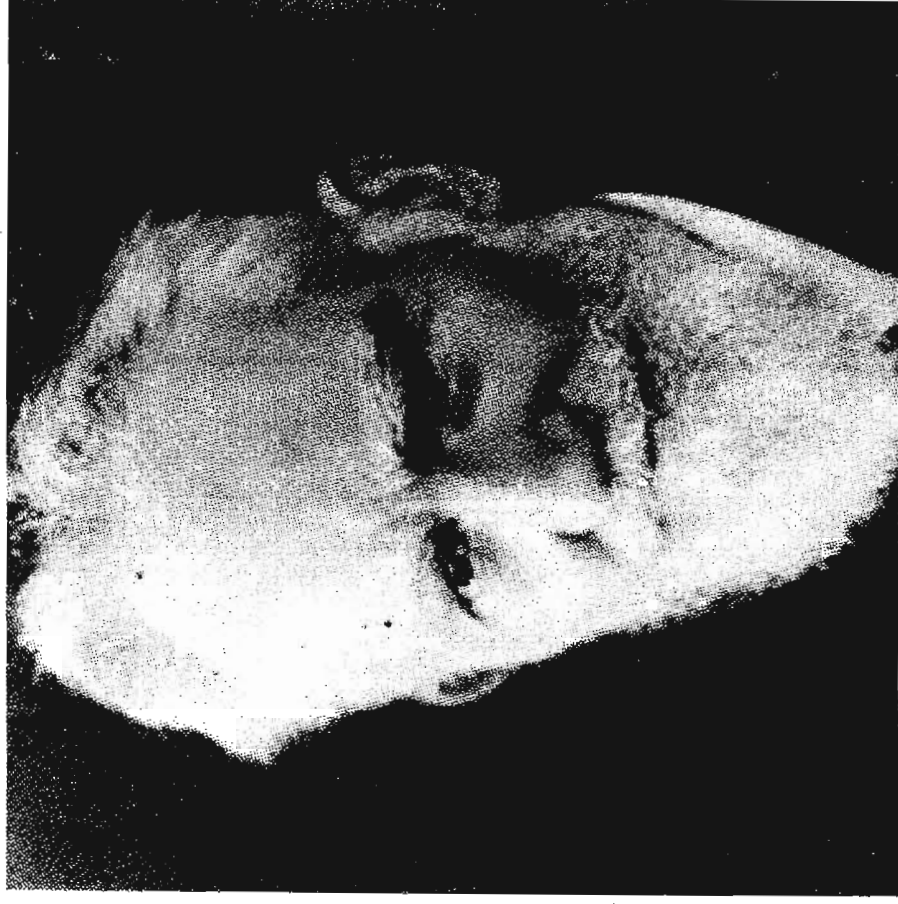
SAMIHA MATIN

As a subject, English Literature has never been a popular choice for candidates sitting for their O-Level examinations, let alone their advanced levels. Even though nearly all of us have been taught from childhood to read story books, few of us later still hold the earnest passion to scurry into the library at every free period and burrow their noses into a book. However, that is precisely what we need English Literature classes for, don't we? So that our language skills and writings can become improved, our limited vocabulary more enriched and our desire to read books no longer remains embedded. The sad, underlying truth, however, is that English Literature classes often don't help. Because most of them are taught in the wrong way if you'll blatantly admit; the consequences accumulate to half the students fearing the subject and the other half remaining aloof and indifferent.

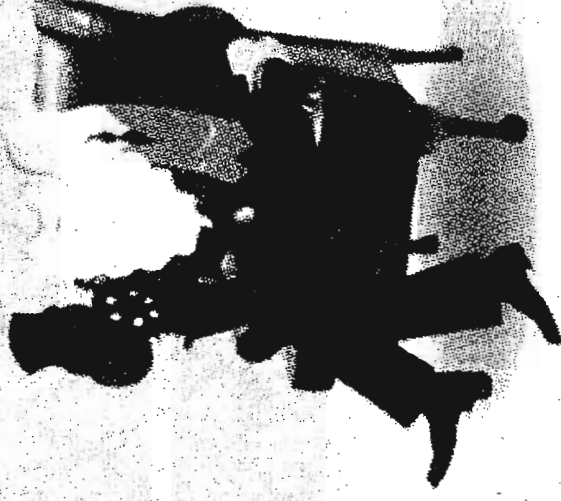
When I was in eighth grade, we were given the book *Arms and the Man* by George Bernard Shaw for our English Literature Class. I had bought the book during the holidays, and at that time, wasn't familiar with the name Bernard Shaw. Frankly, I had absolutely no idea who he was as a writer, what were his attributes, and couldn't care less if he were alive or dead. Nevertheless, I started reading the play, more in an effort to appease my mother and also I didn't want to start classes utterly clueless. I liked and enjoyed the simplistic dialogues that the characters used, and all the characters seemed funny and comical enough, to my taste, so I did finish the book within a few days. What I detested was the abominably large description of the scenery that Shaw continuously seemed to put in most of the story. I found that very tedious, and used to skip off the parts, shrugging that it didn't matter. Back then, I had no idea that this was one of Shaw's trademarks and that using such elaborate descriptions helped the readers to gain a better picture of what was happening. Being like any impatient fourteen-year-old, I enjoyed the book to the point

where I never picked it up again in the holidays, and had another game up my sleeves to gain good marks—to surf the internet whenever we were to give a test.

Our eighth-grade English Literature class was taught by this respectable lady, Nilofar Prakash, who had come from India. I had thought that we would straightaway start with the play and perhaps finish it in one term, considering there were only three scenes and the book was very short. However, she made us do a project first dealing on the background where the story was set,



ARMS
AND THE
MAN



We also had loads of fun in the classes too. Our teacher sometimes used to make the students act out some parts, which provided a showcase for anyone to show off his or her acting skills or just be plain dramatic. We even listened to contemporary songs from her iPod, that she would connect to an amplifier, and compared it with the theatrical love that Sergius, one of the main leads of the story, always displayed for his upper-class lady love, which was a dark contrast to what he really felt for someone beneath his own class. But the classes were also a learning experience, since we gave tests based on the dialogues and wrote about the messages that were being conveyed to the readers and what we thought about them too. Then later we had to pen down essays on character analysis and development of the different characters, the plots, etc.

focusing mainly on the Victorian era and the biography of George Bernard Shaw. Our project mainly involved finding anything about Shaw and drawing some sketches of clouds where we could write phrases or paragraphs about him. As you can imagine, researching about the writer proved to be much more exciting than I could have ever thought, as Shaw wasn't just any normal playwright, but possessed so many other extraordinary, witty, eccentric, even mind blowing qualities. That beginning proved to be one of the best introductory sessions to start off the class.

Our teacher went on to great depths to explain almost every single line; and though in the beginning, it seemed a lot of work, I soon became very appreciative. After all, there were so many hidden underlying themes that existed in the dialogues and needed to be explored thoroughly. So many ambiguous references to class divisions and the almost laughable phoniness that people from the upper class showed just to fit into their 'respectable' societies, were delineated to us, giving acute knowledge that it exists painfully in our society, even now. Our teacher often used to ask us what we thought of the dialogues as well; and you would be surprised at how differently everyone viewed them from each other.

I cannot speak for my classmates. I can only say that memories of the class still stick to my mind, even after four years. It was something I greatly looked forward to every day of school. It was a chance for all of us to say what we thought of the story and the characters and see for ourselves how greatly all of our opinions differed. It's exactly how any class, be it any subject, should be taught—a platform for students to voice their thoughts, learn, grow up, and still be young at heart.

SAMIHA MATIN IS A YOUNG WRITER.

FEEDBACK

Going through the page was indeed rewarding as it told us about the various good deeds and constructive activities of our youth. Normally, their image in the printed pages is usually tarnished with reports of political violence and other misdeeds by wayward youths.

Pesticides found in school lunch

ON A typical Tuesday noon at a primary village school in Bihar, one of the poorest states in northern India, students crowded in their classrooms to have their daily lunches, supplied by the school. According to CNN, ever since 2001 when the Indian government implemented the rule to allow free lunches at all public primary schools, there has been a boost in the number of students attending. Little did they or any of the victims know that this practice would one day be the end to at least twenty-three of them, with several more in dire consequences.

Monocrotophos was the agricultural pesticide that was found in the lunches served, which immediately resulted in students vomiting, having severe stomach aches, excruciating headaches and uncontrollable diarrhoea. Some even fainted and were rushed to hospitals, but ultimately lives of twenty-three children aged five to twelve were lost. The reason behind the sudden tragedy was due to the pesticide's deadly effects.

Not only is it toxic to birds and insects that eat the crops, but is also fatal for humans if consumed. The sole use of this particular pesticide is to kill off pests that devour vegetables. In fact, it is so strong that it has been known to kill twenty-five birds or more per acre of land where it is applied. Once popular, the use of monocrotophos has considerably diminished, with both the United States and the European Union having actually banned its use.

The main question now arises why an agricultural, biodegradable pesticide was found in lunch items served to small children, and why the school authorities weren't able to identify it and stop the food from being distributed. The blame has fallen on the headmistress of the particular school and her shameful negligence of the matter by telling the cook to serve the lunches despite the bad odour that was emanating from the food and oil being cooked. Protests have erupted in several villages, demanding for the food standards and sanitation of the kitchens to increase.

Perhaps with more monitoring, funding and maintenance, the standards of the school lunches can improve

with time, but still the question about what these deadly pesticides were doing in the food remains.

The entire incident is eye-opening and requires immediate actions from the Indian government to make sure that children in the remotest villages are being properly fed. They have to further enhance their efforts to decrease the level of malnourishment of children in India.

We may as well learn a lesson from this, as this incident might have just happened here as well.

Samiha Matin
Sunbeam's School, Dhaka

On youth activities

YOUR 'Youth Page' of July 2 was a very rewarding reading experience on a Ramadan morning. Firstly, there was the report by Ali and Alam, on the sunlight reflecting lamps, a cheap and innovating gadget to enable the poor slum dwellers of Mirpur, to avoid consuming electricity even on sunlit days, which usually should not be dark on sunlit days. But here people live in dwellings with windowless walls, as most walls of the shanties are also common for the next

dwelling too. It was indeed a very commendable effort of the young volunteers, also called 'Youth' who are helping the poor dwellers, getting free light, at least during the day.

Your next report was from your 'Youth Desk'. It was about Sifat Fahmida Naosin's exploits in climbing mountain peaks! She has climbed many mountains in many countries in many far-off lands. Now she awaits an opportunity to climb the nearest and highest mountain peak on Earth — the Mount Everest.

Last but not least, the page also had a report from Bachchu of Jahangirnagar University about the JU-PDF, a volunteer organisation, that helps disabled students in many ways, including helping them in providing prospective job opportunities.

Going through the page was indeed rewarding as it told us about the various good deeds and constructive activities of our youth. Normally, their image in the printed pages is usually tarnished with reports of political violence and other misdeeds by wayward youths across the country.

SA Mansoor
Dhaka

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The New Age: 25.7.2013

FICTION

A day in Panu's life

Daily Star: 20.07.2013

SAMIHA MATIN

No one knows his real name; it's always 'Panu this' and 'Panu that.' It's a pretty terrible name, but you will never hear anyone call him anything except that, well at least to his face. You shouldn't be surprised, though: Panu is a very ordinary and insignificant man.

He is tall, thin and balding, always wears a grim, mutinous expression and he hardly ever smiles. However, on the rare occasions when he smiles, it's a horrendous picture. His mouth is shriveled up and resembles that of a donkey's. Panu likes wearing long, black trench coats and black caps. He thinks they make him look like a *bideshi*, a foreigner. Panu, you see, tries very hard to be like them.

It's a foggy Monday morning and Panu wakes up early in his little flat. He groans, remembering the conversation he had with his aunt earlier. His aunt and her husband are coming and they are bringing three other people to his house today. Panu isn't pleased at all. They are from Bangladesh, and there's nothing in the world that displeases him more. His wife, dwarfish in size, is more excited and restless than him. But both are deeply worried about the calamity of the situation. After all, Bangladeshis do not know manners, they do not know how to be clean, Panu and his wife talk amongst themselves, so what would happen to their clean little home now? Panu could hardly dare to imagine.

Panu can't eat much of his bread, butter and jam today. He likes his uncle and his aunt well enough. They are the only relatives who ever kept contact with him and, bonus point, they have been living abroad for nearly fifty years. It's the thought of the three other dratted people coming that is making Panu nauseous. One thing that saves Panu from anxiety is the fact that he can show-off all these dairy products that he bought from a nearby department store to the Bangladeshi guests. He's sure they have never seen them. Panu becomes a little happy at this thought.

Panu goes to his job today. He can't concentrate much on his boring job of punching some files and copies. He is going to pick them up later that evening. Panu goes shopping then and decides to buy cheap Bangladeshi ingredients. Oh, how long it had been since he had eaten something Bangladeshi, Panu thinks to himself, as he reminisces about the country where he almost never goes now.

Panu picks up the five guests. He isn't pleased at all by what he sees. So much luggage. He doesn't like the look of the children either. They are overweight, which according to Panu equals ugliness. Panu doesn't have children of his own, he knows nothing how on to treat them, and now standing in front of him are two who are not only Bangladeshis but are also overweight. Panu hates fat people; his hatred for them, according to his timid wife, escalates to what Hitler felt for Jews. Panu immediately decides to teach them a lesson.

Panu enters into a conversation with his aunt. And of course in no time, starts jabbering about his hatred for fat people. A year back, Panu rants, this relative of his came and, gosh, she was so fat that Panu couldn't stand the sight of her. Now he can't believe his bad luck again. *Oh what would happen to all their food? Don't fat people have a tendency to steal,*



Panu wonders to himself. His anxious thoughts however get interrupted when he hears about the compliment of his own thin figure. Panu's ego inflates and he brags relentlessly *I am a sportsman, if I don't run for a day, I feel like dying.*

Panu's temper takes a turn for the worst once the guests enter his house. The guests need to be fed and he needs to preach to the fat kids. Panu tackles the daughter first. But Panu can't be a gracious host, he is always nasty and ill-mannered. Why is she just standing there instead of helping his wife out in the kitchen? I bet you do nothing at home but only sit around, Panu says, almost as if he didn't just meet her meet her for the first time now. But Panu doesn't care that they had an eight-hour train journey, it's a new place, he could've just asked nicely and everyone is tired. He doesn't seem to know that people aren't blind to their faults and there is something

called a lack of space in Dhaka city. But Panu only sees what he chooses to. It's his house and the dictatorship belongs to him.

Panu doesn't stop there. He has to open his mouth at dinner as well. What? The son wants to study at America. Panu is incensed. He at once enters into a huge rant about how America is possibly the world's most dangerous and inhumane place. He himself would never go to that place even though he apparently can. Why would anyone ever want to go there, Panu says continuously. He doesn't let anyone else talk either, after all his opinions are the only things that matter, don't they? After some time the son replies that some of the world's finest research institutions belong to America. But Panu doesn't get that and defies it boldly.

Panu busies himself showing at how nicely he can eat with a knife and fork. He tries to steer the conversation to his advantage, and he doesn't like it when his poor knowledge gets tested. Well, not to worry, Panu has a game up his sleeve. He decides to jabber about his hatred of Bangladesh, about how all the people there are corrupted, uneducated, thieves, burglars and glad he is that he has left it. He vows proudly that he'll never come back again. Panu is a little taken aback when the guests shot back at him for being such a hater towards one's country and uttering such negative and vile things. The guests claim he's being hypocritical; after all he hasn't done anything good by abandoning the country that provided with education and made him into who he is today. If Panu had a conscience he might have listened. But he doesn't, so he merely shrugs and tries to laugh it away.

When dinner is over, everyone is tired and wanting to go to bed. But not Panu, he wants to rant more. Finally he gets outvoted by majority who are dying to get away from him.

Panu shows the kids where they are going to sleep and He talks about how all Bangladeshi kids are spoon-fed and they grow up becoming nothing. Except himself, of course. He then leaves and sinks to his bed. He can't sleep for some time. After the guests are gone, he decides, he'll clean the whole house from scratch. That would get rid of any unwanted dust.

It's nearly after midnight that Panu manages to fall asleep.

Tomorrow, he knows, would be a hard day.

SAMIHA MATIN WRITES FICTION.

Daily Star: 20.07.2013



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

ATM Booth Horror

One of my colleagues entered the ATM booth of a well-known private bank opposite the police station in Motijheel. The booth had two more ATM machines which were occupied. As soon as my friend collected the money from the ATM machine, the two men who were earlier busy punching numbers into their respective machines, appeared next to him. One of them had a shot-gun in his hand and they both ordered him to hand over the money he had just taken out. Claiming to be sources of the police, these guys warned my colleague to make no noise about this incident or they could implicate him in a false case. Seeing no choice, my colleague handed over the money to them and watched as they hurried towards the police station. It is sad that the law and order situation in our country is so poor that a normal citizen would rather hand over money to looters than get the police involved. The concerned authorities need to seriously look into this matter or the situation might turn even worse.

M. Noray Alam Rasel
Via E-mail

An Insipid Misogynist Comment

I had gone to a musical instruments store some time back and was looking at some classical guitars since I would be joining a music class soon. While the shopkeeper was showing me the different types of guitar, a young male customer, sitting on a stool with his guitar, trying to tune it, suddenly asked snidely, 'Can girls even play the guitar?' I was pretty bemused by the comment since later in class, majority of the people who performed turned out to be women. It's very disheartening that even in this era when women are successful in every field, some men in our country try to undermine their achievements by saying such ignorant, misogynist things.

Samiha Matin
Uttara, Dhaka

Daily Star
28/06/2013

The Star

Date: 23/6/2013

Shoes from Magic Carpet!

Once, during the winter holidays, my cousins and I went to Fantasy Kingdom on a weekday. Thankfully, the place wasn't all that crowded, so we were able to wander around quite freely. It had been years since we all came here, so we decided to ride the Magic Carpet, straightaway. It was something we hadn't tried before, but now felt like we could since we were much older. Unfortunately, for one of my cousins, she didn't know the potential of the ride, so she took off her high heeled shoes and crossed her legs. As the ride commenced, both her shoes flew in the opposite directions and landed on the ground, almost hitting an astonished man who was standing nearby. Luckily, it didn't, though he did get a good scare. We wanted to laugh, but the ride proved to be a little more scary and exciting than we anticipated, and our need to throw up was overpowered by laughter!



Samiha Matin
Sunbeams School, Dhaka.

Mistakes can save you

One day I was going to my coaching center and asked my mother to put 15 taka in my money bag to buy some A4 size papers for my assignment. I saw her putting some money in it but didn't see how much it was. So I got into my car and bought 15 pieces of papers from a nearby shop paying fifteen taka. On the way to the coaching center, our careless driver bumped into a car and slightly damaged it. The car owner became furious and demanded tk 100 for the damage. Our driver pleaded him saying he had no money but the man did not agree to let us go without paying. I knew that my money bag was empty but checked it anyway. To my surprise, I found a 100 taka note tucked in another chamber of my money bag. I gave it to the man and got rid of him. On returning home I asked my mother how much money she had put in my money bag. She said that she put 115 taka. She had mistakenly heard 115 taka instead of 15. Her mistake saved me from an embarrassing situation.

Syed Towsif Imran

Maple Leaf International School, Dhaka.

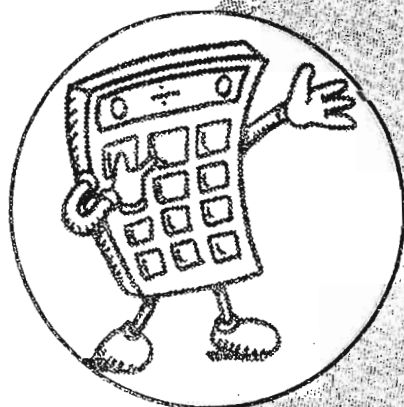


Hijackers Aren't Too Smart

This happened when I was in class ten and studied at Badda Alatuessa Higher Secondary School. After finishing our pre-test exams, four of my friends, Anik, Emon, Amin and Kajol, and I went to Banasree area to the opening of a new taka 1 to 99 market. After shopping, the five of us head out and while three of my friends were walking hurriedly, my other friend and I were taking a relaxed stroll on the the Banasree highway. It was around 2 in the afternoon when my friend and I noticed that that the other three attracted a crowd of hijackers. We went up to them and my friend asked if there was a problem. They turned their attention towards us, and suddenly started checking our pockets. My friend had a calculator in his pocket for some reason. The hijackers thought it was a cell phone, and that they scored real high in this attack, took the calculator and left. The five of us were absolutely stunned at the stupidity and laughed all the way back home.

Arifur Rahman

Daffodil international university, Dhaka.



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Just a Simple Question



PHOTO: ZAHEDUL KHAN

SAMIHA MATIN

Daily Star: 21.06.2013

W

On April 20 1999, which happened to coincide with Hitler's birthday, two senior boys of Columbine High School in Colorado, America, armed with shotguns, semi-automatic handguns and knives, entered their school campus, injuring more than twenty students and killing twelve of them, after failing in their original plan to detonate bombs and blow up the entire school. What resulted from this mass murder shooting was the debate about gun control, Americans suffering from mental disorders and the necessary precautions that needed to be undertaken to stop such tragedies from happening ever again. And nearly a decade afterwards, in 2007, at Virginia Tech, the same thing happened, with nearly thirty-two students and teachers killed, and

worse, the shooter paying tribute to the two killers of Columbine High School. The former massacre seemed to have created a legacy of its own, and multiple times there have been incidents with several killers trying to copy it. And then the two recent ones in 2012, one at Aurora theatre during the premiere of the Batman movie and then the most shocking and disturbing one at Sandy Hook elementary school in Connecticut, where a twenty-year-old man armed with military weapons fired at groups of children, aged between five and ten. He had killed his own mother earlier and then later committed suicide at the school.

The primary consequences of these shootings are the constant broadcastings of heartbroken families and the president rushing off to provide

W



Daily Star : 21.06.2013

comfort, and promising that this is the final time something like this will ever happen in America again. The faces of the multiple victims, who had their lives ahead of them, are suddenly all gone in a whirl of a moment. But the debates and heated discussions continue as the American public divides into two. Shouldn't gun laws become stricter, for the safety of civilians after all these tragedies, or should guns be readily available to give protection from the enemies? Why is it so easy for anyone in America to buy a gun, with no need for background checks, especially consider-

✓
LAST YEAR, HANDGUNS KILLED
48 PEOPLE IN JAPAN.
8 IN GREAT BRITAIN.
34 IN SWITZERLAND.
52 IN CANADA.
58 IN ISRAEL.
21 IN SWEDEN.
42 IN WEST GERMANY.
10,728 IN THE UNITED STATES.

GOD BLESS AMERICA.

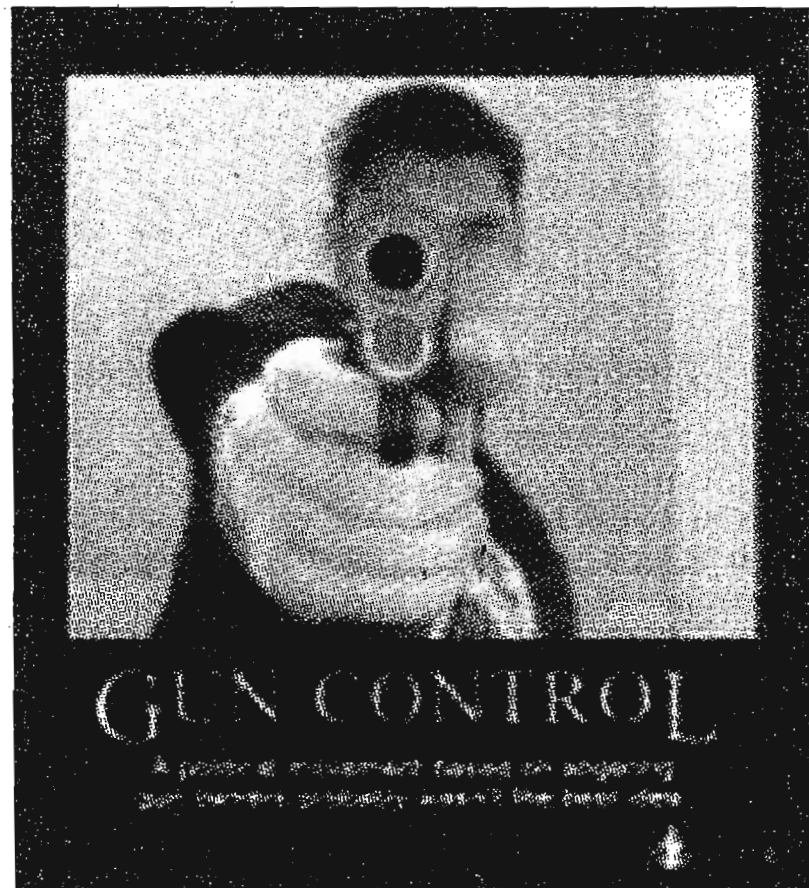


ing its history of notorious mass murder shootings? Should teachers at school be armed with guns, and what evidence is there not one of them would point it at a student? After the Connecticut shooting Lie Pierre (manager of National Rifle Association of America) said, 'The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun,' but is that what will be the solution to stop gun violence: more guns? Even the concept sounds ludicrous. And most importantly, why isn't America banning military assault weapons from being brought by its citizens?

And then the spotlight falls onto the murderers themselves. They were bullied, oppressed, psychologically depressed and took out their anger on anyone who crossed their paths. But does the blame for their actions solely fall upon themselves or do the parents, the teachers, violence entertainment all take a share as well? Then there's the slow unfolding of their lives and personalities

before they committed the heinous crimes. Most are found to have symptoms of severe mental disorders and have often displayed bouts of violence from their early childhood days. Hasn't anyone ever bothered or noticed to get them professional help? Also, the way American media constantly upgrades about the tragedies have people from all walks of life glued to their televisions, as these massacres sadly become a part of popular culture, and even movies and songs about them are made. Even somewhat farfetched topics like certain books and musicians creating rebel-

Why is it so easy for anyone in America to buy a gun, with no need for background checks, especially considering its history of notorious mass murder shootings? ✓



lions streaks in the readers and audience come into the picture. The ratings in televisions increase overnight and to another psychopath lurking in the corners this is a chance to take to the streets with armed weapons.

But the main, simple question is getting lost through all these debates that associate with the tragedies in the months and years afterwards. After all these massacres, why isn't America taking adequate actions to prevent these shootings? If Columbine or Connecticut massacres weren't enough, what will take it take for America to initiate the steps of restricting its gun laws and making it a safer place for everyone?

After

stat Camps

Walking Through Mainz

Samiha Matin

PHOTO: SAMIHA MATIN

Daily Star

Market Place with the unique statue.

Date: 09/06/2013

LOCATED in the western part of Germany, next to Frankfurt, is city of Mainz—a unique embracement of fascinating old architecture modern towering buildings and shopping-malls. Sadly, the city heavily bombed during World War II which resulted in many renovations of the historic buildings by famous architects, but still ambling down its streets gave me a very memorable experience. We reached Mainz half-an hour before our walking tour began. Since we were the only ones speaking English, and majority of the people taking the tour were Germans, it was lucky when the tourist agency gave us our very own private tour guide. Our tour started beside the Rhine River, bordering Mainz, with our guide explaining us of the city's importance as a famous port destination and how Mainz became one of the religious centers during the Roman Empire. Saying this, he took us to see the remaining of the Iron Tower, which was a few steps from the Rhine River, and which happened to resemble a structure of a fortress. Constructed during the 13th century, this Iron Tower helped Mainz become a successful fort city back then.

Our tour continued through the narrow winding streets of Mainz and I was astounded to see huge towers of a red-bricked church and hear the constant chiming of church bells. Our tour guide took us to see the gargantuan 1000-year-old Roman cathedral, the Mainz Cathedral, which is a very fine example of Romanesque style architecture, with the fronts doors shaped as archways. It was the first time I ever entered a church, and the insides were nothing like I ever expected. The gigantic hallway or nave was quite dark, with huge rows of seats, and a big Christmas tree mounted in the front altar. All around were huge limestone statues of bishops, vaulted ceilings, huge pillars and beautiful paintings covering some of the walls. But the most exciting part was to see the huge Gothic church windows which made the light entering the hallway look very colourful and almost eerie. Since we entered the cathedral from the

back, when we exited it we took a run through the streets to see its front view. It was incredibly beautiful with its huge steep red-bricked towers, but it was also under reconstruction that time. Coming out from the cathedral and just on the opposite side of the street was the famous Gutenberg Museum, a very impressive old building, beige coloured with old, dark wooden doors and pretty windows. Our tour guide then took us through the streets of Mainz, pointing to us that the city devised a very clever way of showing off its old architecture, especially the ones that were badly destroyed during World War II. That involved only reconstructing the front parts of the buildings so that they looked like they were from the old era, and then making the rest of it modern! We stopped for a few seconds in the market place, in front of a very unique-looking structure, consisting of statues of thousands of little people. The statues symbolizes the beginning of a carnival that was going to take later in the month in Mainz. Another old building that we saw from the gates since it wasn't allowed for visitors was the Electoral Palace originally home to the Archbishop of Mainz. Our last part of the tour was visiting another church, which is called St. Stephen's Church. It is famous for its Gothic structure, and I was immensely impressed with the windows again, since they were all coated in light luminous blue, and consisted of many paintings that showed scenes from the Old Testament. A doorway led to the courtyard, surrounded by the church from all sides, and was filled with green grass and huge trees. Our walking tour ended during evening, and since we felt hungry, we went a shop where the menu was an inventive one—sausages and hot sauce, starting from A to F grade, with F being the spiciest and A being mild. We ordered B-plus and although the fried sausages were delicious, they was still so spicy I ended up spilling a few tears and admitting defeat straightaway! (The writer is a student of Sunbeams School.)

[Handwritten signature]

28/5/2019

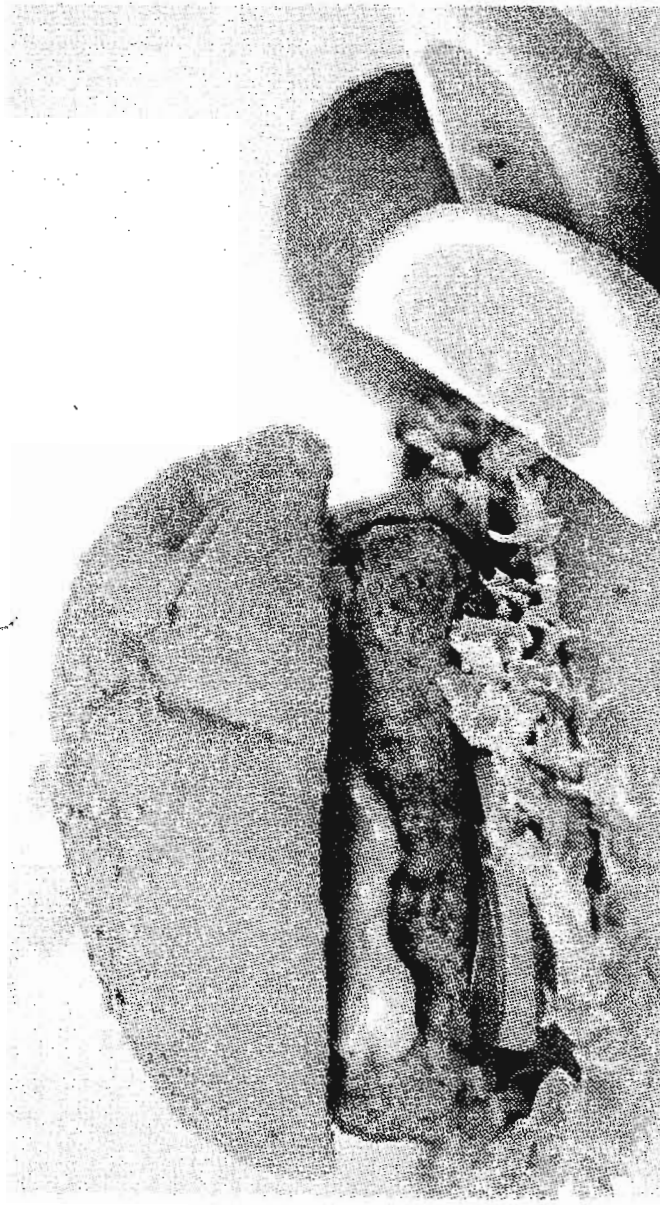
German fish burgers

THE inspiration for these fish burgers came from a train station in Germany. The moist deep fried fish, covered in crunchy breadcrumbs, nestling between the sweet sesame-coated bread and layered with mayonnaise and fresh coleslaw was a perfect combination of remarkable flavours.

The memories made me want to try my hand at making these burgers since I miss their taste so much now. It is necessary to fillet a big piece of fish in this recipe. Whilst I was lucky to try it with a piece of salmon, any other big fish such as snappers, tuna, herring, catfish, etc. will do. The original one that I had in Germany was made of a fish fillet called Buchfish, which is commonly found in the coastal regions of the country. Since that is unavailable here, any large fish that you like goes well with the recipe.

You have to pin-bone the entire fillet, so that it's completely clean of bones, and remove the skin as well. The slices of filleted fish should be cut thinly, as it is going to be deep-fried in bread crumbs to provide a crunchy texture. I didn't want to make this fish taste like ones we have for curries here, but rather wanted it to contain a bit of German flair so I made sure the marinade was relatively spice-free.

Two tablespoons of lemon juice, a tablespoon of lemon zest, a clove of garlic finely sliced and one whole red chilli makes a great marinade for a medium-sized fish fillet to



rest in for at least half an hour. After that the fish should be coated in egg and then covered with bread crumbs. You must deep fry the fish on a saucepan, with hot oil, so that it becomes very crunchy. Fish does not take much time to cook, so three minutes on each side is fine. It is ready when the bread crumbs have become golden-brown. And then to create the perfect burger, use toasted buns from a good bakery. You may fry them in a little bit of butter to provide that extra bit of crunch and flavour.

For the mayonnaise and coleslaw to go on the burgers, I made sure that the flavours weren't overpowering. I used a combination of mustard and mayonnaise, and dabbed them lightly on both the buns. For coleslaw, use cabbage, carrots, diced tomatoes, red onions and parsley. Drizzle the coleslaw with a little bit of olive oil, sugar and lime juice. It's both refreshing and light, and goes perfectly with the delicious fried fish.

By **Samiha Matin**

ABOUT ME

Workshop on
Wedding Photography



The Smart Kid



This incident took place when I was moderately young and was still a laughing stock of my family. I was 4 and it was time to get admitted into a school. My mom took me to Aga Khan School for me to take their admission test. I used to be smarter than other children and knew almost 40 rhymes, all alphabets and numbers which were asked in English Medium schools. Back then, I didn't know what admission tests were so my mom told me to be myself. A lady took me to a room and started asking me some questions. After some time, I grew impatient. She started asking me about the alphabet all jumbled up, and I ended up thinking she doesn't know it herself and that she was learning from me. Irritated, I decided to play a prank on her. When she pointed 'Q', with a sly smile I said it was 'R' and when she pointed 'R', I said 'Q' to teach her the wrong letters and trick her! Exiting the hall, praising myself, I told mom about the smart prank and the silly teacher who was learning alphabets from me! She was shocked but burst out laughing!

Lamia Saiyara Adrika

RAJUK Uttara Model College, Dhaka.

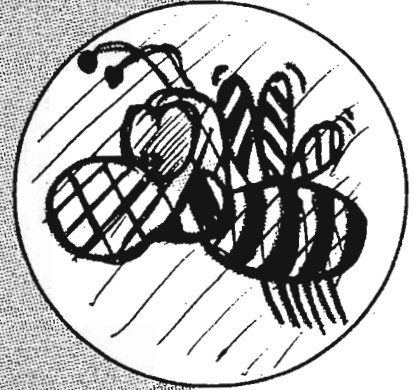
The Weird Wasp

Back in ninth grade, during a class, a huge wasp suddenly came floating into the classroom through the open window. Of course, screams erupted from everyone, as the wasp started flying haphazardly in the air and then began following our teacher. Scared, he immediately left the classroom, telling the students to take care of it and that class was dismissed. Whilst majority of the class backed away in fear, one of my friends had this clever but insane idea of jumping in the air like a ninja and beating the silly wasp with a copy. Surprisingly, it worked! And though everything became normal within a few minutes, it was still a very funny and heroic moment for my friend.

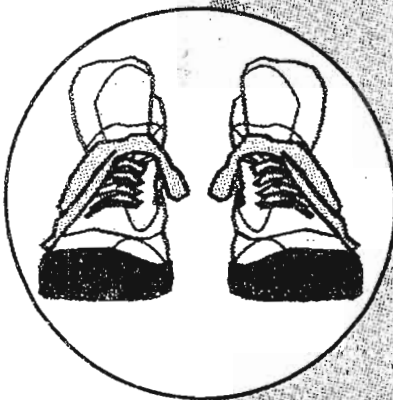
Samiha Matin

Sunbeams School,
Dhaka.

Daily Star, 26/05/2013



"SNICKERS" or "Sneakers



During the winter holidays, my cousin, Sabrina, her older brother Shomyo and their mother had come over to our house. My mother suggested we take a walk to the nearby mall and enjoy the cool breeze. Shomyo stayed back. After we came back home, Sabrina and our moms went to my mother's room while I walked to where Shomyo was watching TV. He asked me what was in my hands. I replied "Boxes of sneakers." His eyes, glued to the screen, he asked, "Can I have one?" I looked at him confused wondering why he would want my shoes! I said, "Sorry but I like all of them and most of them are either coloured black or dark chocolate. You hate those colors and also they are for girls not boys." "Oh c'mon, you shouldn't be so selfish. Snickers are for everyone. Now give me one!" he pressed looking closely at the cricket scores. Confused, I took a pair to him. Feeling the object he did a double take at them and then finally taking his eyes away from the screen frowned. Then he looked at me and said "Why in the world did you give me this?" Turns out, when I said 'sneakers', he had mistaken it to be 'snickers'- the bar of chocolate.

Zeba Fariha Farooq

Sunbeams School, Dhaka.

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A Trip to Remember

Samiha Matin
Photos: Samiha Matin

Daily Star: 5.05.2013



The breathtaking view of Switzerland.

A two-day trip to the quiet city Lucerne, located in central Switzerland, was a perfect way to end the winter holidays in January 2013. Boarding a train from Erlangen, Germany with my uncle and aunt who accompanied us on this trip, it took almost eight hours to reach the old-fashioned city, with its entangling cobblestone roads and dim neon streetlights which provided the place with a holiday afterglow.

The first day, my brother, mother and I set off for Mount Pilatus, the gigantic snow-capped mountain overlooking the city. With everyone exclaiming how cold it would be up there, we managed to wear two coats to protect ourselves. Using the traditional way of riding on cable-cars, we went upwards, and I was starting to feel a little queasy, being rather afraid of heights. But the views were so amazing and breathtaking that it soon became easy for me to forget



DID YOU KNOW?

Karl Marx

Prussian-German philosopher and revolutionary socialist Karl Heinrich Marx was born on 5 May 1818 (today would be his 195th birthday!). He was baptised into the Lutheran Church along with his surviving siblings Sophie, Hermann, Henriette, Louise, Emilie and Karoline in August 1824. He was privately educated until 1830, when he entered Trier High School, whose headmaster Hugo Wytttenbach was a friend of his father. Wytttenbach had employed many liberal humanists as teachers, angering



A once in a life time experience in Lucerne.

that the mountain was more than 2000 metres high!

Green fields stretching into the horizon, with drops of white snow scattered all around, surrounded by the mountains; huge evergreen trees almost touching the cable cars and miles and miles of crystal clear blue sky—I don't think any description could ever do the picture perfect scenery any justice. The second stop provided other activities for the visitors such as hiking, sledging, skiing etc. Thanks to our slippery boots, we had to stand in disappointment as people took sleighs and dashed down the mountains, screaming in joy.

Unluckily for us, the tallest peak was covered with snow, so we had to take a steep narrow stairway to climb the opposite peak on foot. There was a strong breeze blowing, and we held onto the rails tightly in fear of toppling over. But it was all worth it in the end when we reached the very top and felt the warm sunshine.

After spending the morning and afternoon at Mount Pilatus, we finally came down, and then spent the rest of the day roaming around the beautiful city. Lucerne

is famous for its huge lake, named after the city itself, and we had a great time feeding the beautiful swans and birds biscuits and bread as we took a stroll down the pavements. But the most fascinating part for me was walking across the historic Chapel Bridge, made entirely of dark wood, with intricate interior paintings. It is one of the oldest bridges in Switzerland, built around the 14th century and walking across it gives you a sense of travelling back in time. The next day, we took a car ride to other parts of Lucerne. However it wasn't as enjoyable as the first day, since rain started pouring and a fog covered the mountains, hiding everything from view.

My trip to Lucerne has still been one of the most amazing experiences I have ever had, and I have fully realised that nature can indeed make you feel better irrespective of what happens. And the best thing about it was before coming home, my brother and I managed to bring chocolates from this shop called Ledorach, and to be very honest, Swiss chocolates really are the best in the whole wide world!

• (The author is a student of Sunbeams School.)

the government. Police raided the school in 1832, discovering that literature espousing political liberalism was being distributed among the students; considering it seditious, the authorities instituted reforms and replaced several staff. Aged 17, in October 1835, Marx traveled to the University of Bonn; although wishing to study philosophy and literature, his father insisted on law as a more practical field. Avoiding military service when he turned eighteen due to a condition referred to as a "weak chest," at Bonn Marx joined the Poets' Club, a group containing political radicals which was monitored by the police. Marx also joined the Trier Tavern Club drinking society (Landmannschaft der Treveraner), at one point serving as club co-president. Additionally, Marx was involved in certain disputes, some of which became serious; in August 1836 he took part in a duel with a member of the university's Borussia Corps. Although his grades in the first term were good, they soon deteriorated, leading his father to force a transfer to the more serious and academically oriented University of Berlin.

Information Source: Internet



For the Love of Coconuts

In April, my friends and I were walking around the corridors, sweating due to the heat, but suddenly something grabbed our attention - coconuts! Two of our school's guards were carrying dozens of them; they were from our school's garden. We had tons of those coconut trees in our school's front yard so we probably thought that if we asked for one they might give us, but they didn't; of course. It was for the "teachers", they told us with their usual taunting expressions. So the next day, I somehow ended up falling behind our auditorium stage after my fat cousin punched me and I spotted the coconuts there. I stole one coconut after that, but struggled a bit to peel off the cover by stabbing it thousand times with my pen. My friend finally figured out a solution- he peeled it off with a steel scale and stole the school bell's hammer to break it off and later we used my pen as a straw and finally smirked at the guard when he came to bring out those "squashed" coconuts from under that stage.

Nashita Behroz Jalil

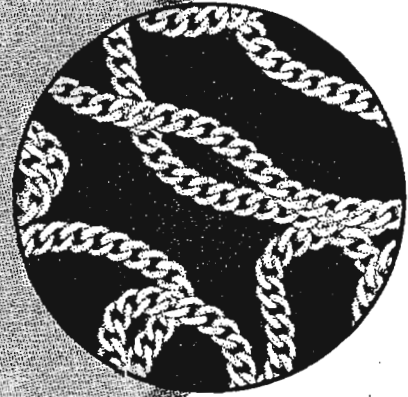
Shaheen English Medium School, Dhaka.

A scary day for us

During Eid holidays around two years ago, my family and I were visiting my mother's house. We went to Kamapur Railway Station, boarded the train, and sat there for about 15 minutes until the train started. Our compartment was very crowded. There were some people standing near us. All of a sudden, a man of about 25 years of age snatched my mother's chain. He pulled her chain but he could not take it off because my mother also grabbed the chain tightly. The snatcher only took away a part of the chain and got off the train in no time. We started shouting. There were so many people but no one bothered to catch the thief. They could've caught him if they wanted. After about 4 hours, we reached at our house in Kishoreganj. My grandparents and uncles also felt sorry knowing the fact that my mother had to go through this. From that time onwards, my mother never wears anything made of gold when she goes out. She wears imitation gold. That day was really very frightening for us.

Raju Paul

East West University, Dhaka.

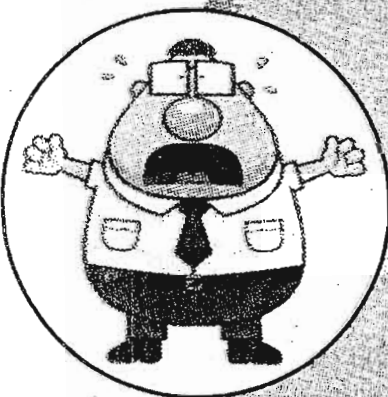


Panic in the Auditorium

On March 25, my friend Samara and I had to perform solo pieces at a musical performance at Alliance Francais. The two of us were extremely scared and nervous, but we managed to get through it and played quite decently. However the long performances by all the other students left everyone feeling very bored especially at the end, when one of them were playing this incredibly long and complicated music, our teacher kept on jumping if we even whispered a word. It was during this moment that this kid suddenly started crying and muttering gibberish very loudly and the two of us in the front seat began guffawing and snorting, until we made everyone else at the auditorium start laughing as well. Our teacher, all worried that his show wasn't going as well as he expected, kept running back and forth, telling everyone, especially my friend who always has this knack of getting caught as the only culprit, to be quiet. Needless to say, we had a good laugh after this!

Samiha Matin

Sunbeams School, Dhaka.



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Last month at a relative's house abroad, I had the unfortunate incident of meeting quite a despicable man. His officious personal remarks about how he couldn't stand fat people (almost as if they weren't humans) though ridiculous, silly and ill-mannered, can be laughed off but not his constant jabbering about his hatred of Bangladesh which made the impression long-lasting. He incessantly talked about how all the people here are corrupted, unedu-

TO THE HATERS

cated, thieves, burglars and how glad he is that he has left it and is never going to come back again. My mother who is usually quite soft-spoken, asked him rather loudly about how he could utter such vile and negative things about one's own country to which he merely shrugged his shoulders and tried to laugh it

off. I would like to address this issue, because we should realise that no matter how much we boast of hating Bangladesh and loving some other place and doing our best to copy their lifestyles, people there would never accept us as one of them. It's natural to blame the politicians, but we need to realise that we haven't been much better either, by abandoning the country and doing nothing to improve it.

Samiha Matin
Via email

X



PHOTO: ZAHEDUL IKHAN

Ignorant Police

On the 14th of February, my friend and I went to the Press Club in order to participate in the OBR (One Billion Rising) human chain protesting violence against women. While we stood in front of the club we noticed there were several police officers standing around us and we assumed they were there for our protection. At one point, one of the officers, by the look of him a senior one, walked over to us and asked us which "political party" we belonged to. When we said none, he asked what our protest was about. When we explained, he asked one of the people there where he was from to which he replied he was from an NGO. At this the policeman scoffed and sneered at us, saying all sorts of derogatory things about women and how they are tired of protecting them. He continued to speak in this manner until my friend and I got so upset we started to leave. Before we walked away however we asked him if he had any women in his family, and what they would think of him saying such things. He backed off after that and reluctantly apologised still clearly sneering. I was left seething as I realised, why crimes against women go unreported every day. If this is the attitude of the police, I would certainly not want to go to them with my complaints. I sincerely hope the government will take measures to sensitise their law enforcement officers to such issues so that they don't go around with this offensive attitude.

TKhan
Via email

Patriotism Lost

I was with a colleague at Shahbagh Projonmo Chottor on the 15th of this month for the Mohashomabesh, waiting to sing the national anthem with our fellow protesters. When the anthem started, we noticed that everyone stood up except the police officers who were sitting decidedly in one corner, refusing to budge. We were extremely surprised by this blatant lack of respect and stared at them in shock. Then a senior officer showed up and asked them to stand up. They followed this order extremely reluctantly and barely stood up straight when the anthem ended. If this is their level of patriotism, I am scared that these are the people who have been sent to defend us.

Preetha S
Via email

Annoying Surprise



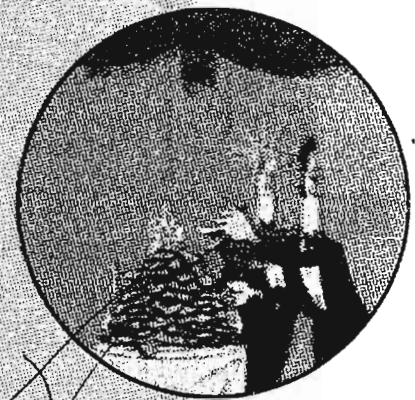
My older brother and I used to stay in the same room. Every evening, when I used to return from my coaching classes, I used to yell at my parents to give me my own room so that I could study properly instead of staying with my older brother who always did things that would annoy me and not let me study properly, but that was just a fake reason. I actually wanted my own room to have all the fun without any interruption! There was a vacant room in our house and I always wanted it. One day, after I returned home, my parents asked me to close my eyes as they had a small surprise for me and then they took me to the vacant room and when I opened my eyes, I found something really horrible. The room was completely empty, only my study table was at one corner. Then, my parents surprised me by telling me that this was the best place for me to study!

Sakhor Saha

Oxford International School, Dhaka.

Gaylord

Last month I had the most amazing opportunity to go to Germany for the very first time. So when we went to Frankfurt and took the city bus tour, I was very excited. All the office buildings and the commercial banks looked very sophisticated and elegant, and we ended up taking thousands of pictures. There was one Indian restaurant that caught my attention due to its amusing name-- Gaylord, and also because it looked pretty expensive from the outside. I ended up telling all my friends back at home about the place and we made many jokes about how anyone in the world could be so weird as to name a restaurant like that. It was later that I saw on TV that Gaylord was actually one of the finest Indian restaurants in the world, with all kinds of diplomats and VIPS and even The Beatles going there! I now wish I had actually gone there for a meal instead of laughing at it!



Samiha Matin

Sunbeams School, Dhaka.

Daily Star: 17/02/2013

Physics Slumber



There were just four of us who had Physics in our O' Levels. Physics classes were the worst since they were held at the end of the day and it was very hard to stay awake. To make it worse Sunday classes were consecutive. My friend, Shafayat used to suffer a lot. He used to, literally, sleep with his eyes open, staring blankly at the book, only waking up by my nudge to change the page. On one of these enduring days, the four of us were forcing ourselves to look fresh while our teacher was solving problems on the board, when my friend suddenly said, "Dude, let me know if she turns around." Then, he shut his eyes while I stared at him in disbelief. Before I could say anything, our teacher turned around for a calculator. Never did she raise her voice at us, but that day she did--"My goodness, how can you sleep in my class?" Shafayat woke up as if thunder struck him. He turned left at me, then right, then straight at our fuming teacher. All he could do was say sorry.

Aquib Ul Wadud Alam

Maple Leaf International School, Dhaka.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Saving Islam?

Islam is known as the religion of peace. We have known from different Hadiths that our beloved Prophet (pbuh) forgave all his enemies after Mecca had been conquered by Muslims. The non-Muslims of his time were motivated by his kind behaviour and consequently they accepted Islam as their religion. No blasphemy law was needed at the time. But Hefajat-e Islam activists seem to be walking in the opposite direction. Is Islam really in danger in this country where the majority of people are Muslims?

Rafikul Islam, BAU, Mymensingh

Outrageous!

The Savar tragedy is the deadliest man-made disaster Bangladesh has ever faced. But seeing the brave rescuers we got the feeling that Bangladeshis are always ready to protect their fellow countrymen even by risking their own lives. However, there have been some reports on television that a few corrupt people have taken compensation from the government claiming that they were the families of the victims. This is outrageous. These culprits should be punished. At a time when sympathy and help are what the victims' families deserve to get, it is disheartening to know that there are still many amongst us who act from their own selfish motives.

Samira Matin, Uttara, Dhaka

An objectionable picture

I am writing this letter after seeing a picture published on the back page of your newspaper on 1st May 2013. The picture of two hapless human beings clinging to each other under the rubble of the collapsed building was too much to take. I was wondering what the newspaper authorities were thinking when they published this picture.

One should realise that these bodies were of people who probably had brothers and sisters, friends, spouses, children and other family members. It must have been very unpleasant for them to see the picture and the caption.

We want to see true and detailed news reports, but in a more sensitive way.

Asfarul Islam, Architect, Dhaka

Journalism for truth

Journalists' duty is to tell people the truth fearlessly. But we really get shocked when we see two different reports of the same incident in two different newspapers. We don't want yellow journalism. People want to know the truth from journalists.

Snawara Shimul, Dhaka University

Govt decision and people's sufferings

We are really surprised to know that our government refused to accept help from foreign countries in the rescue operation at Rana Plaza. The government should have sought help from foreign countries to rescue the people who were buried under

27.12.2012

Samika Matin

Daily Star

Living 8 Jan

THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME

By Samika Matin

LED ZEPPELIN is undoubtedly the most iconic band that ever was - with their signature voice, legendary guitar solos and furious drumming - the band practically defined rock and roll. And for Zeppelin fans out there, *The Song Remains the Same* is a treat - containing concert footage and a private tour of the four members who became legends. Starring of course the four band members, Robert Plant (vocalist) Jimmy Page (guitarist), John Paul Jones (bassist) and John Bonham (drummer) the movie is set in Madison Square Garden, 1973, where the band played for three sold-out nights consequently. The movie is mostly concert footage but also contains 'fantasy sequences' of the four members to portray their personalities.

With Page's electrifying guitar and his cheeky smiles (girls, prepare for a treat!), Plant's soaring vocals and dancing, Bonham's aggressive and speedy drumming and Jones' breathtaking melodies at New Quarter - one thing is for sure, no matter how much the critics jab at the movie for having a poor production, these rock gods indeed know how to put on a show. Lots of smoke effects, lights, and Plant's incredible vocal take on the

sound effects produced by synthesizers - this concert really showcases the band at its glory days. Page steals the show most of the time but then again with guitar skills like his how could he not.

Then there are the fantasy sequences, which at times seem very magical and straight out of a fantasy novel with Plant playing a knight rescuing a maiden in Wales, Page playing a hurdy gurdy and climbing a snow capped mountain in search of the Hermit, Bonham spending his time with family and drag racing and Jones as a masked horseman, riding in the night with three others. With classic Zeppelin songs as background to all these sequences, these are brilliant to watch and show the band members outside their life on stage.

As for highlights: watch Page at Rock and Roll, and Since I've been Loving You, playing guitar with a cello bow at Dazed and Confused and of course the extended guitar solo at Stairway to Heaven. Plant's unfaltering vocals at all the songs, Bonham at Moby Dick (honestly a must-watch) and Jones at No Quarter and more (though often the poor guy is too much in the background). All in all, a must watch for any Zeppelin fan.

LED ZEPPELIN
THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME



IN
CONCERT
AND
BEYOND

effective!

Shirley

WE ARE
MANKIND,
ID QUEENS
RELATIVES!

BETA WRITERS

We liked this week's published piece for its writing style. It was well written and the story was interesting. Next week we have 'The Land of the Glass Flowers' as our topic. All submissions need to be sent in to ds.risingstars@gmail.com by Sunday noon. Word limit: 350-500 words. Good luck.

The Water's Edge

By Samiha Matin

MY therapist scrutinised me as she sat on her mahogany desk, littered with papers. It was my first day. I glanced around the room; it was quite dreary and contained expensive-looking furniture. *Great, a professional,* I thought sardonically. I sank into one of the chairs in front of her desk, composed, looking everywhere but at her.

Actually I shouldn't even call her my therapist since I had no intention of spending any time having a tête-à-tête with her and wallowing in self-pity. But after my last and seemingly desperate attempt at committing suicide by jumping in front of a cab and then getting stopped by the police, I was dragged against my will to her office. After the police came to the realisation that I wasn't a nutcase of course, which by the way involved hours of speculation about sending me to a mental hospital. Taking a deep breath I started my story in short clipped phrases, about the usual crap, that my "parents were getting divorced". A downright lie, but it worked every time. After several minutes of silence while I fidgeted uncontrollably, she remarked in an icy tone that I was pathetic.

I was shocked. True, I had been called far worse terms, but somehow these words managed to catch on my nerves. She was calling me pathetic? If only she knew what I felt and had been feeling for so long. The perpetual never-ending nothingness which seemed to paint my life; the desperate loneliness and alienation

and the feeling of everything being so lousy and hypocritical. The heartaches, the tears, and the complete breakdowns in front of peers with judging eyes. The urge to find a place in this world, living up to people's expectations and exceeding beyond that, but somehow never reaching it. How I had read countless books and delved myself into fantasy, and only realising bitterly that they weren't ever coming true. My ceaseless wandering in this dreary cramped city with towering buildings and people with masked expressions. And my heartfelt longing to be in a place where nature has blossomed to perfection.

I bit my lip. I could see myself standing at the edge of the water, whilst the river thundered in front of it. I longed to escape it for once, but I couldn't. My feet were unmoving. My therapist, after some time when I made no reply, burrowed her nose into a book, apparently forgetting my presence. Sighing I got up and spun around, whilst she softly, but in the same disparaging tone, said, 'You just don't know how to feel.'

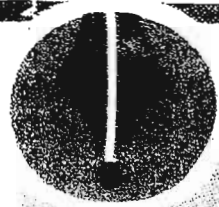
Hearing this I suddenly let out a hysterical shriek of laughter and tears flew out of my eyes. I could feel the river surrounding me in its cool fingers, washing away my despair and taking me very slowly in its currents. I felt ecstatic; I had crossed the water's edge!

'Next time,' I heard her muttering distinctly, 'Twenty years of experience...'

I scowled, but half-heartedly.

Game over...

Daily Star : Rising Stars : 14.06.2012



BETA WRITERS

Last week our BetaWriter topic was Crooked. Quite a few entries turned up and the submission below, while appearing to be sappy on the surface, held the darker, heavier undertone of a conflicted soul. For next week, our topic is High Voltage. Submissions have to be within 500 words and have to be sent in to ds.risingstars@gmail.com before Sunday noon. Good luck.

Crooked

By Samiha Matin

HE was exactly the way he had ever imagined her to be: long, beautiful hair cascading down to her shoulders, full round lips, the elegant pose her face always displayed, protruding cheekbones, with a cleft at her chin. All these pictures had been seared into his mind ever since he was a young lad, who dreamt of love and happiness. Now, ten years later, he could hardly believe his luck.

She was perfect too, in every manner he could think of. His friends laughed at him, calling him 'crazy' and 'lovesick,' but he didn't care. For once, it didn't matter what others said. She was just too beautiful; he didn't even mind making a fool of himself for her. He often came home early from work and just stood there and stared at her remarkable features, feeling so proud of himself. Sometimes, when he was too enthusiastic and could hardly contain himself, he talked to her about absolutely anything that came to his mind. But most of the time, the days were passed in silence. It was the most comfortable feeling in the world, and he finally felt that someone understood him. It was almost as if they were made for each other.

However, love and life didn't go as smoothly as he planned. One night, he was so distraught by the overwhelming pressure at his job and problems with his family members that he finally lost it. He ended up punching her in the face. He cried all through the night after he

hurt her. He even stopped counting the times he said sorry and cursed at himself. He couldn't help it, he was so mad at himself. How could he have ever laid a finger on her? What explanation would he give when everyone would come around? How could he stop the tears and guilt that was crashing down around his ears?

The next day, he sat in the corner of the gigantic hall where he worked, very sober and solemn. Everyone else was busy, tinkering with whatever it is that interested them. A woman, with a clipboard at her hand, came up to him with a smile and said, 'Let's see what we have here?'

He removed the cover without any dramatic sweeps and returned to his seat, with his face turned down.

'Ah, good piece of work, my boy. Extremely fine, but we do have a problem...'

He didn't even bother to look up.

'It seems so unrealistic, doesn't it? These eyelashes, eyelids, hair; it's almost like you've conjured up some sort of a perfect person. But... this nose here, it's crooked but that's what makes it so lifelike and beautiful. Almost like, pardon me if I'm mistaken, you hit it deliberately. You do know that the hardest job in any kind of art is to always produce a lifelike image of something; you've certainly done an amazing job with that nose. That's fine sculpting. Well done.'

He just stared at her expressionlessly.

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