

FEATURE WRITING AND CULTURAL REPORTING:
AN EXPERIENCE AT *NEW AGE, The Daily Newspaper*

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Sharmin Chowdhury Sumi

1. Introduction:

A lot of activities revolve around the term “news”; the people involved in a newspaper dedicate their days and nights to provide the readers with news of their country, abroad and beyond. This little but very powerful term has different theories of its being. One theory is that the term "news" was developed as a special use of the plural form of "new" in the 14th century. A folk etymology suggests that it is an acronym of the cardinal directions: north, east, west, and south; it was to indicate that news is all around the world.

As a student of Media and Cultural Studies, journalism in print media always intrigued me. During my print media courses I felt an urge to have a practical experience in the field of journalism. Therefore, for my internship I decided to choose a newspaper organization to work with. *New Age* was my first preference. The reason I preferred *New Age* to other newspapers is- I have been a satisfied reader of *New Age* for last two years. In my opinion, *New Age*, stands out in terms of its news angle, language and style of writing. My good impression of the newspaper as a reader pushed me towards choosing to work with it. I was also lucky enough to get a chance to do so as part of my internship.

At *New Age* I worked as a feature writer; I was a writer for the two weekly magazines; *Xtra* and *Trends*. My work did not include news reporting for the daily broadsheet. In just three months time it was difficult to manage the chance to go beyond the area I was appointed in, yet I tried to do some work for the section called *Timeout*, the cultural section in the main broadsheet which led me to the first hand experience of cultural reporting as well.

For me, the entire internship period was a time for intensive learning and practicing in order to be able to work successfully in the field of print media. The focus of this report, therefore, is on different aspects of feature writing and cultural reporting based on my learning experience. I am going to substantiate the topics I will discuss; using examples of features written by me that were published in the magazines. The purpose of using

examples of my work is to make my practical experience and the quality of my effort more visible to the readers of this report.

1.1 *New Age* : The Organization and the Newspaper

New Age is one of the well reputed daily newspapers of the country. The very name of it resonates a promise of being new and of being different than those already exist. *New Age* started its journey on June 7, 2003 with the vision of neutrality. As the tag line reveals, *New Age* has always claimed and proved that it is 'biased towards people'.

The people who read *New Age* consider it to be a very quality newspaper in terms of its views, presentation and effort.

In only five years of its journey *New Age* has captured 30% of the English newspaper readership in the country. This daily newspaper comes out with different sections like national, home, international, editorial, op-ed, business and timeout including the two weekly supplements; *Xtra* and *Trends*.

The first floor of the *New Age* office is the place where this newspaper gets its shape everyday. It is a huge room divided into different sections. The work flow of the newsroom is very intricate and interesting too. At first the reporters submit their reports at the Chief reporter's or City Editor's desk, then the selected reports go through the News/joint news editor's desk where the joint news editors checks the reports with the subeditors. The photojournalists and the news collected from news agencies go directly to news editor's desk. Then the news flows to the revision editors' desk. After that it goes for page design and make up at the desk of the graphic designers. Then the news goes for editor's approval and finally to the printing plate. That is how the main newspaper performs its task everyday.

The feature section of the office is set separately in a different floor of the office building. The environment of this section is very cozy yet professional. The two weeklies, *Xtra* and *Trends* fall under this section. *Xtra*, the feature magazine comes out every Friday and *Trends*, the lifestyle magazine, comes out every Tuesday. Meetings are held every Saturday (for *Xtra*) and Tuesday (for *Trends*) in this section where all the feature writers plan for the next issue. The feature writers have more liberty than the reporters while

writing. The writers pick up interesting issues during the meetings and then visit places and meet people to gather information before writing the stories assigned to them.

2. The difference between writing news and writing features:

News and features are different from one another. Before getting into the details of feature writing, let us take a look at the basic differences between writing news and writing features which, I believe, will make the report more comprehensive. The following discussion on writing news and writing features will clarify the differences between the two.

2.1 Writing News:

Writing news is like putting on a strait jacket. News writers have to follow certain formulas. One of the most commonly quoted formulas of writing news is to follow the inverted pyramid.

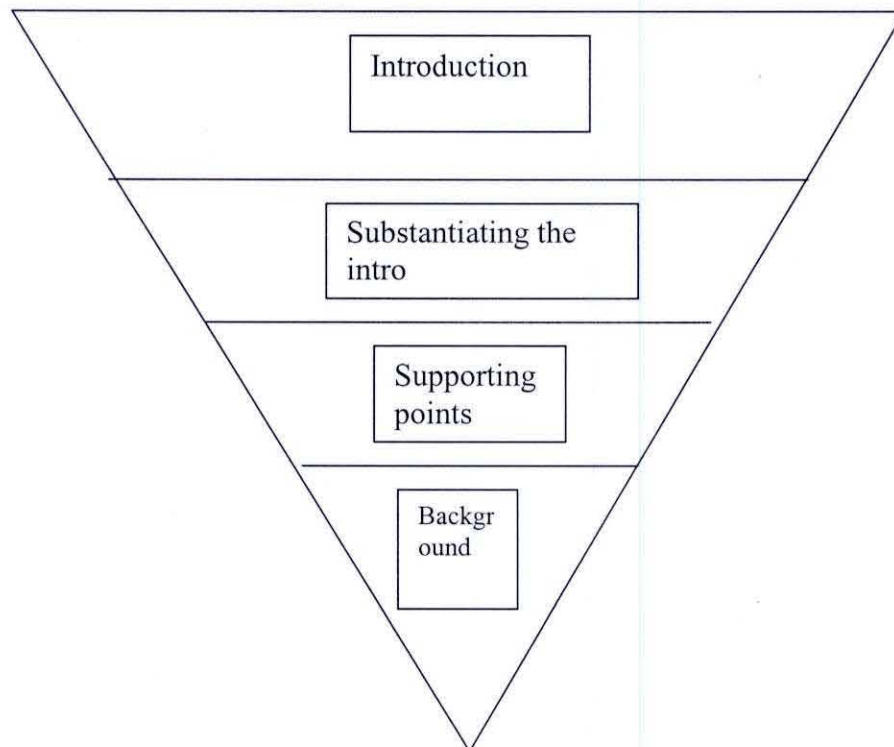


Figure: Inverted Pyramid/News Pyramid

The pyramid structure is followed to ensure that the points in a story are arranged in a descending order of importance. As the story progresses, it gets more specific. "News is written so that readers can stop reading when they have satisfied their curiosity-without

worrying that something important is being held back. It is written so that subeditors can cut stories from the bottom up-again without losing something important. This structure as, Carole Rich rightly observes, “Organizes the story from the most important information to the least important. It usually starts with a summary lead that gives some of the basics: who, what, when, where, why. The reader may not read past the crucial information.” (Rich, 201)”¹

The ‘basics’ that Carole Rich talked about is another formula to follow while writing news, that is to follow the six questions of Rudyard Kipling- who, what, when, where, why and how (abbreviated to five W s and one H). In Kipling’s words

‘I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and when
And How and where and who’

Two of the six questions are essential to ask. They are who and what, because in all news intros somebody or something must do or experience something to create news. But all the six questions are not always necessary to be answered in the introduction. These six questions work more as a good checklist. It is very much used to check the holes in a story.

News writer’s needs to keep in mind that news should be devoid of the writer’s personal comments. News should be objective. For example, If Fashion designer Bibi Russel has given a speech in an awareness raising campaign regarding AIDS, and a news reporter while writing the news writes, ‘While giving speech Bibi Russel was wearing a beautiful sari’ is in way qualified to be a sentence of a news story.

The main idea of writing news is to write an objective report, following the structures and formulas as strictly as possible.

¹ Saleh, Nadia, ‘Different Aspects of Print Media: The Daily Star-A Case Study’ , BRAC University, April,2008

2.2 Writing Features:

Feature writers have more liberty than a news writer. He/she can come out of the strait jacket and also has the chance to be creative and subjective to some extent. The introductions of features do not follow the six question formula. They can start with interesting quotes, anecdotes or intriguing statements.

One of the main targets of a feature writer is to hold the attention of the readers till the end. It does not depend on the readers how far they want to go. It depends on the writers how far they can take the readers with the features.

The basic differences between writing features and writing news are expected to have got clarified. The following sections are going to go into more detail about feature writing which will help clarifying further queries about feature writing and its differences with news writing if necessary.

3. Feature writing: An in-depth view

“The joy of feature writing lies in its variety. Anything from an agony column to a profile, a product round-up to obit, can be considered a feature.”²

Being very varied the term ‘Feature’ is not easy to define. The simplest possible definition perhaps would be- a feature is an article that goes beyond reporting of facts to explaining and/or entertaining. It is probably the safest to say that features are not news. News only informs of the facts. Features on the other hand, have the liberty to be analytical, sympathetic, entertaining, inspiring or sometimes even bitchy. In today’s world where there is 24 hour TV, radio and internet that carry any news to people’s home as soon as they occur, newspapers are becoming more feature oriented day by day. Readers want to take a tour beyond news reports through features.

3.1 Rules of writing features:

Though features are not news, feature writers need to have the skills of a reporter. Because, ‘to inform’ may not be the sole, but it is one of the very important responsibilities of a feature. Therefore, a feature writer has to have the skills of a news reporter and in addition he/she has to have the quality to attract and hold the readers attention with not just the information in it, but with its presentation as well. It is often required that the writers would research and master complicated subjects and then make those information accessible and digestible for the readers by writing them in a simple and lucid manner.

The structure of a typical feature includes

- Intro : introduces the theme to the readers with an appealing approach
- Premise: summarizes the main themes of the feature
- Context: holds the most interesting background facts or information, possibly backed up by short quotations

² Sally Adams *Writing Features, Writing for Journalists*, Wynford Hicks (Routledge,2003) 47

- Analysis/ anecdotes: takes the readers deeper into the issues/ tells experiences or secondary effects
- Conclusion: sums up the main points of the feature, inspiring hope etc.

3.2 Writing intro: the biggest challenge

The first and foremost condition of writing a good feature is to have a strong introduction. If a reader does not find the feature attractive at the first glance he/she might not even bother to go to the second paragraph. A good intro may combine one or two of the following elements.

- Strong/ provocative/ intriguing statement
- Narrative/ anecdote
- Description/scene-setting
- Question
- Quote

An example of a good intro:

Here is an example of a feature intro written by me as a feature writer of *New Age*. I am not claiming it to be an excellent intro but, this had been appreciated by the feature editor of *New Age* as a good one. In stead of using examples from professional feature writer's stories, I chose to use from my own work to make my effort evident. The intro starts with a quote which I found very intriguing and suitable to use at the beginning of the feature.

Saved in a cage

Sharmin Chowdhury visits the Government Shelter Home in Narayanganj which is meant to help rehabilitate women who have nowhere else to turn to but in fact keeps them entrapped and forced to survive in abysmal conditions because the law says so

Intro: 'Please take me with you. You don't have to worry about my food or clothing, just set me free!' pleaded a girl at the Government Shelter Home in Godnail, Narayanganj. It is the same plea that every girl captive for years inside this home makes. Fourteen-year-old Anu was born and brought up in this home and she can only remember stepping out of this home just twice in her entire life.

3.3 After the intro

After starting with a good intro the writer must keep the flow smooth with an equally intriguing approach to the whole story to keep the reader with it from beginning till end. In short, it has to involve the readers.

Words should be chosen correctly, clichéd words or statement can disrupt the goodness of the whole article. The crunchier the words, the more attractive the feature will be. But an overdoing of the crunch is not a good idea either.

While writing features one has to be careful about the accuracy of the information given. To ensure the accuracy it is always a good idea to cross check and verify the information gathered. Talking to more than one person can help in finding the real information.

Finally, in order to write a good feature one should start with an attractive intro, an opening that is strong, written in a very articulate, clear way with an appropriate and equally satisfying conclusion.

3.4 What the editors look for:

Study has been conducted several times to find what an editor looks for in a feature. Some qualities are found to be commonly demanded by the feature editors. They expect a feature to -

- Be readable
- Be credible
- Have a grabbing intro
- Involve the reader
- Meet the brief
- Be accurate
- Be crafted
- Have substance
- Contain an added element of surprise

3.5 Some basic guidelines

The basic guidelines for feature writing are as follows:

- Think
- Focus
- Have something to say
- Take the readers with you from A to Z
- Choose your words carefully and make them flow

It is important to remember that there are no absolute rules to follow for writing features. The guidelines are just to help the writer to show the general path. 'Good feature writers take risks; they are the sky divers of print journalism.'³

³ Sally Adams *Writing Features, Writing for Journalists*, Wynford Hicks (Routledge, 2003) 47

3.6 Types of features:

Features can be divided into four main categories

- Profiles (of an individual person or company or of a group)
- Product stories
- Background features
- Opinion pieces

I have written different types of features but not all of them. Like, I have not done any opinion pieces. I am going to discuss the different types of features with examples of my work that I have done during my internship at *New Age*.

3.7 Discussing different types of features with examples

- **Profiles:**

Profiles can be of an individual person or a group of people like pop groups, sports teams, clubs, councils etc and also of companies. Profiles are usually done based on interviews which can be written in a narrative style or in a question-answer format. If the subject is dead, these become obits or obituaries, usually written by cobbling together from newspaper clippings or by the acquaintances or admirers of the subject.

Some examples of different types of profiles are given below

- **An example of a profile written in a narrative style:** This profile was written for the magazine *Xtra*.

An eventful journey

Sharmin Chowdhury talks to the multifaceted Nima Rahman, the author of the immensely popular television soap Gulshan Avenue

‘People assume that I am an angry person and fear me for some reason. On the contrary, I am someone who is very fun loving and loves to laugh,’ says a cheerful Nima Rahman, with a wide smile on her face that reveals her bubbly personality. She feels it is her straightforwardness that works as the adverse ‘fear-factor’ most of the time to many around her.

She could be a singer and a dancer as she learnt it all, but somehow she fell passionately into the world of television and theatre and moved ahead successfully keeping the other hidden talents within her. The recent success of the daily soap Gulshan Avenue has put this veteran television and theatre artist once again under the limelight. Nima Rahman has established herself not just as a good actor, director or a person who recites, but also as a show host, scriptwriter and a successful businesswoman.



There are many who are not aware of Rahman’s skill in the field of interior designing. Her beautifully decorated house boasts of her talent. She is also involved in the set-design of several dramas and other shows. She believes she has inherited this quality from her maternal family who were very creative. ‘My interior designing skill is partly inherited and partly learnt from my architect friends; I used to work as kamla (labour) with my friends of the architecture department during my student life.’

Nima Rahman’s penchant for learning and improvising is evident. The artist proudly states that she does not do anything without prior homework. The scriptwriting of the

Mumbai-style drama Gulshan Avenue is an outcome of Rahman's creative thinking as well as her devoted learning.

'I have a few scriptwriter friends in India. I went there and worked with one of them for three months and attended two workshops to learn the techniques, such as the plot, the length of the scenes, etc. I did not want to work without knowing the intricacies properly and I started writing Gulshan Avenue four years ago, after returning from India,' she shares.

Though the drama centres on the elite class it is not exactly a realistic portrayal of Bangladeshi elite society. There are some exaggerations in the plot and in the presentations. Rahman clarifies that the idea of exaggeration is from chipping in her knowledge about the making of Indian serials as she tried to follow those techniques in her work.

'It is not a generalised portrayal of the elite class of our country; everything that is happening in the drama might not happen in every family on average, but fragments of it do. I have conjured certain things together for the sake of the drama,' she says.

However, the drama turned out to be a real success. Rahman is receiving a very good response that she shares with her team of Gulshan Avenue. 'It is also the result of good teamwork. I have a very good team and the director Syed Awlad is doing a great job.'

Nima Rahman talks about the women who have contributed to her success. Firstly it is her mother who has played a big role in her life. 'She is my sole inspiration. She is the one who introduced me to the world of art and culture. She used to be there all the time with me, even when I joined theatre in 1974,' recalls Rahman.

Though her mother was very supportive, at a certain point of her life, the rest of the family did not allow her to carry on with her performances. 'I remember how my mother used to lie to others to cover up for me if I was late coming back home from rehearsals.

Her impact was so great in my life that I could not walk off from this arena before actually proving myself in this profession. Whatever I am today is because of my mother,' she reminisces.

After her mother, it is the great Indian actor Aparna Sen who Rahman credits for helping her to reach the height where she stands today. 'I met Rina Dee (Aparna Sen) in 1990 in Dhaka and we have been very good friends since then. Whenever I used to go to Kolkata, I used to stay with her. I have learnt a lot from her. She guided me with clothes, make up and so on. She changed me into a better person. I always feel that the influence of great people causes better grooming.'

Nima Rahman has also worked in a film by Aparna Sen called Juganto. Although Rahman was offered the lead role she opted for a smaller role as she was apprehensive about working in the big screen at that point.

While working for this film Rahman met Anjan Dutta who asked her to work with him in the recital and song album Gane Gane Bhalobasha that hit the two Bengals in the year 1998. The album was a huge success and Rahman still enjoys the appreciations even after all these years. 'While Anjan Dutta offered me to work for the album I readily agreed because it sounded really good. I also participated in seven stage shows with him before doing this album. But I was very surprised to see people's response; really, I did not expect that much. It was probably the way I used my voice that worked.'

She has worked in different talk shows that she herself directed which were aired on ETV — 'Bhalobasha Karey Koi', a show about couples, the cooking show 'Rondhoner Bondhon' and 'Shongsharer Tukitaki', a lifestyle show.

Nima Rahman is an ardent reader of books which inspired her to start her bookstore Words n' Pages in 2004. 'I was thinking of starting a business. I feel that one's work should relate to her passion and as I am very passionate about books I decided to start something with that and came up with Words n' Pages.'

The chronicles of Nima Rahman's activities commenced from long back since the age of two and a half years. She first started appearing on Bangladesh Television, reciting poems. She acted in Atiq Ul Haq Chowdhury's drama 'Jedin Chithi Elo' at the age of five, and the drama was aired all over Pakistan. At the age of eight, Rahman joined the theatre group Nagorik Natya Sampradaya, inspired by her mother. Rahman received the Best Child Actor award from the Bangladesh National TV Awards in the year 1976.

In 1979 Rahman played her first lead character while she was still in school, in a drama called 'Shetu Kahini' where she starred opposite Humayun Faridi. But it was the TV drama 'Amader Montu Mia' written by Mumtazuddin Ahmed, which gained her immense popularity. Rahman cherishes her role of Princess Dilruba in the drama called 'Gronthikgon Kohe' written by Selim Al-Deen on Bangladesh Television and on stage, she mentions her character in 'Mukhosh', directed by Sara Zaker. 'Himmati', originally written in German by Bertolt Brecht is another favourite play of Rahman.

Rahman's presence on screen is very rare off late because she does not want to play the kind of roles people expect her to play now. 'I'm still not comfortable doing the role of a mother as I feel I am still young to portray them. Plus it is so difficult to embody the character of a Ma,' she says.

While asked to compare the state of television and theatre of the past with that of the present, Rahman clarifies, 'as I am not involved with theatre anymore I would not make any comment about that. However, regarding television, I can say that a huge change has taken place in this form of media.' She recalls how the great TV personalities of yesteryears were involved in creative addas and how that helped the junior artists to learn. 'Good addas always result in a healthy outcome, which is hardly the case now.'

How does she manage to do so much work? 'Well, I am an extremely organised person, though it may not look so,' replies Rahman. She is very focused about her work and

progresses according to her schedules. She is writing another drama which is a comedy based on the upper-class and is also gearing to direct a film next year.

- **An example of a profile written in a question-answer format**

Afsana Mimi

interviewed by Sharmin Chowdhury

What are your hobbies?

Reading books, gossiping and traveling

What is your favourite food?

Bhaat-maachh

What kinds of books do you enjoy reading?

Novels and short stories

What do you watch most on TV?

Bangla channels, specially drama

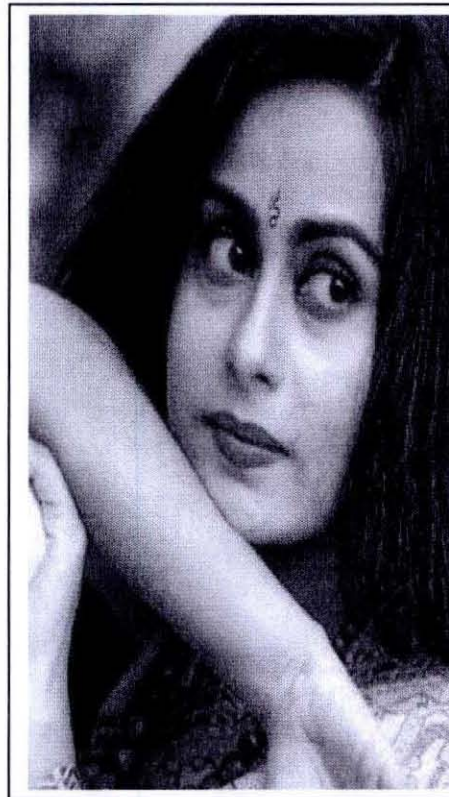
What is your favourite sport?

I like to watch football and cricket and like to play cards and chess

What is your favourite vacation spot?

My grandma's place (nanubari), Khulna

What is your favourite colour?



White

Which electronic appliance makes your life easier?

Nothing really

Your most memorable moment...

Moments with our friend Monir who is no more

Who is your favourite actor / actress?

Uttom Kumar, Shuborna Mostofa and many more...

What traits in a person do you dislike?

Short-temper, distrust

What do you do to make yourself feel better on a bad day?

Shopping

What is the funniest incident you experienced?

In my first drama I played a bride, I was sitting in the studio wearing a red Benarasi, suddenly one part of the studio caught fire(a small one), everyone was getting out of the studio but I would not move, then Shanta Islam came to me and said, 'girl you'll get many chances if you are alive, now run!'

What is your favourite cologne / perfume?

I don't use perfumes

Who is your favourite singer / s?

All the artistes of Tagore's song, Sabina Yasmin, Firoza Begum and Runa Layla

What is your idea of romance?

Sharing my time with my loved ones.

Anything you regret?

Life getting complicated

Your inspiration...

Rabindronath Tagore, my friends and my colleagues.

Your birth date...

20 December

• **An example of an obituary:**

Since I have not written any obituary during the course of my internship, I am going to cite an example from another feature writer of *New Age*. Reading/ studying other's works have helped me a lot improving and learning different skills and strategies. The following obituary is of the renowned dramatist Abdullah Al Mamun.

May he rest in peace

by Saad Hammadi

'Hats off to an artiste of his stature,' acknowledges Abul Hayat about his friend, and source of inspiration Abdullah Al Mamun, who passed away on August 21, 2008. Millions of television and theatre audiences and the cultural fraternity of the nation spent a gloomy week trying to come to grips with the passing of the celebrated cultural personality.

As a playwright, dramatist, director, actor, writer and thinker, Abdullah Al Mamun had explored all dimensions of the media and entertainment industry.

Going down memory lane film actor Razzak recollects hat in 1965 when he went to the television station atthe DIT Bhaban to audition for a news presenter ob, he came across Abdullah Al Mamun for the first time. Mamun encouraged him to take up acting and

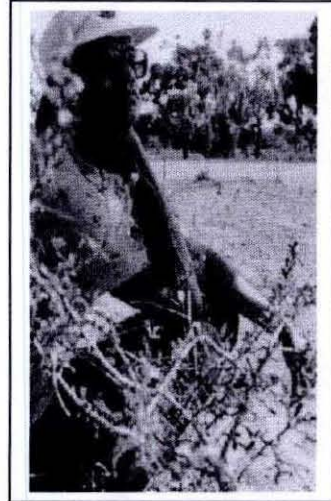
that is how film star Razzak began his career.

Friend and co-artiste Ramendu Majumdar had to return to Birdem when he heard the news of Al Mamun's demise.

'I know Mamun since 1961,' says Ramendu Majumdar who had been the deceased's friend for 47 years.

'When I had just gotten into the University of Dhaka, I witnessed Mamun's enthusiasm towards theatre.

In a few years we had formed a student's theatre group and since then Mamun moved on to shape a whole era of theatre and films.'



He was a veteran and versatile artiste who won audience appraisal during his time in the entertainment scene. He was applauded by his peers for his skills in producing, directing, acting, as well as his uncanny knack of recognising and developing talent.

He wrote his first stage play, Niotir Parihas, in 1950 when he was still a schoolboy. Since then, under the guidance of Shaheed Muneir Chowdhury, he developed his skills as a playwright, director and actor.

'Mamun has been my inspiration in the media,' says celebrated actor Abul Hayat. 'Whatever place I have in the media industry today is because of Mamun's contribution. And that is the reason Mamun was one of the few people I actually wrote a letter to, on the first day of my job abroad.'

Mamun had often mentioned those letters saying, 'Everyone has seen Hayat crying on television but I have seen his tears in the letters he wrote to me from Libya.' And then he would smile with his trademark dimples adorning his cheeks.

Born in Jamalpur on July 12, 1943, Abdullah Al Mamun joined the media after graduating in History from the University of Dhaka in 1966, when he joined Pakistan Television as a producer. He worked there for two years.

Abdullah Al Mamun held many important positions in several departments. He was the deputy director general of BTV, director general of the National Institute of Mass Communication (Nimco) and director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

His inclination towards plays and theatres during his days in university eventually gave him the platform to establish himself as the core of the theatre movement.

Till his death, Al Mamun had written at least 29 theatre plays.

Some of his lauded theatre works include Shubochon Nirbashone, Akhon Durshomoy, Chardike Juddho, Shena Poti, Akhono Kritodas, Tomrai, Kokilera, Desher Manush, Krishno Kanter Will, Meraj Fakirer Ma, Meher Jaan Arekbaar.

‘Mamun was a friend as well as a drama guru for me,’ says actor Bulbul Ahmed. His first film from Bulbul Ahmed’s production house, Angikar although was a commercial flop, their second project Jibon niye juwa was a hit. However, Mamun could not use his name or bask in the public eye at that time, because he was still in government service.

His debut as a film director in 1978 led to the production of one of Bangladesh’s most remembered and timeless films ‘Shareng Bou’, based on Shahidullah Kaiser’s celebrated novel of the same title. And as the list goes on, he went on to direct Shokhi Tumi Kar, Ekhani Samay, Dui Jiban, Damka, Janamdukhi, Bihanga and Jibon o Obhinoy.

Mamun’s desire to transcend his popular drama serial Sangshaptak onto celluloid has gone unfulfilled, laments Suborna Mustafa. ‘He asked me to grow my hair long,’ she says. Humayun Faridi apparently was at first unwilling to act in the character of Ramjan that he played on the drama serial, but later, he too was convinced. Mamun had completed his script as well for the film but in the end the project never materialised.

Some of his memorable works on television dramas include Sangshaptak, Ami Tumi Shay, Pathor Samay, Joar Bhata, Baba, Shirshabindu, Uttaradhikar, Shesh Bikeler Meye, Jibon Chhobi, Ghoroa and Ek Janame.

In his long performing-arts career, Mamun won many awards including the prestigious Ekushey Padak, Bangla Academy Literature Award, Alakta Sahitya Purashkar and Tarokalok Padak.

‘He spent his life developing and nurturing talent. Back home, he wanted the same thing- he wanted to see the artist in us,’ remembers daughter Deeba Nargis, fighting her tears.

Abdullah Al Mamun has left behind three daughters and a son, all of whom have grown up with his principles. After his wife passed away in 1984, his children feel, he played the role of a mother and a father at the same time. His fundamentals in life - live and commit - has been deeply embedded in his children.

Abul Hayat, Al Mamun’s longtime friend reflects on his friendship with the celebrated artiste, and speaks of their relationship over the years.

‘Mr. Cool - that is what I used to call him. I envied Mamun as I could not be as cool as him,’ says actor Abul Hayat in a column he recently wrote.

Complementing his calm, Hayat says that with a tender smile Abdullah Al Mamun could tackle all the troubles around him. Wearing a pair of sandals, a Hawaii shirt, baggy trousers, a pair of thick-framed spectacles on his nose, and long hair, he had created a unique style of his own.

‘We had not met for about a year until he called me this June requesting me to make a play for him.’ Hayat initially thought that he would have to perform in the play until Mamun explained that he was not in the position to make the play and wanted his friend to make it instead.

'I wrote a play about 25-30 years ago that resembles the current state of the country. Perhaps I realised things a little too early. Will you be able to make it for me,' said Mamun to Hayat who had committed to carry it out for him. Mamun had initially developed the play titled Arokkhito Motijheel for stage production.

At the intensive care unit of Birdem Hospital, this celebrated artiste breathed his last on August 21 at 11:25am. Abdullah Al Mamun had been ill for the last one year suffering from acute coronary syndrome, diabetes, hypertension and complications in his kidney and liver. May he rest in peace.

• **Product Stories**

Product stories are may be about one product or roundup of many products; described, compared, tested. Following is an example of a product story which describes the products to the readers.

The example of a product story is a feature written by me for the lifestyle magazine *Trends*. This is about ornaments that go with casual outfits. The feature basically describes the products in a vivid manner with ideas on how and when to use them.

Go Casual with ornaments

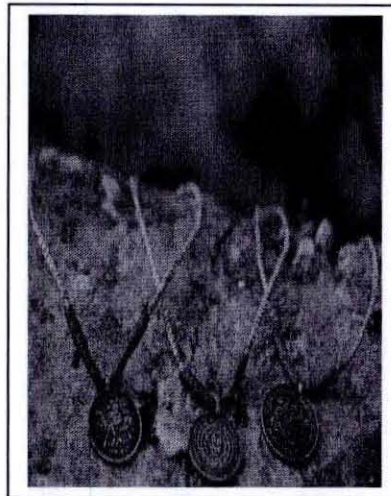
By Sharmin Chowdhury

An ornament can add an aesthetic dimension to your beauty if you can pick the right piece for the right occasion. If you are going to a wedding party you may need the gold necklaces and other flashy jewellerys, but what about the every day hang-outs, your work place or your campus? A thin gold chain with a little stone locket might have its own appeal but sounds a bit old now a days. While we go crazy over new outfit styles why not go for an excitement in the ornament designs too!

Ornaments are always associated with the clothes you wear. As 'looking casual' is the latest fashion Fad, the ornaments you wear must go with your overall casual look.

Ornaments made of gold, diamond or pearl in conventional designs without which we could not do once upon a time; do not add excitements in the casual trend of fashion today.

You better save them as some traditional party-wears and take a look at the simple but fabulously artistic ornaments made with copper, silver, threads, clay, dry seeds and beads available at the fashion outlets around you.



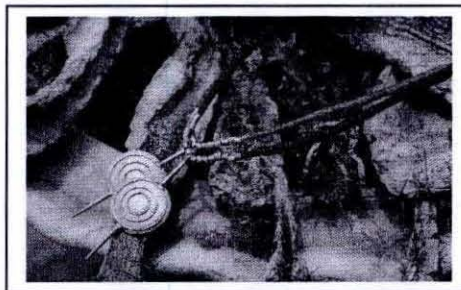
Jatra:

This fashion boutique has caught the attention of the stylish people of the city since it started its journey. Along with its trendy outfits *Jatra* has also introduced a line of exquisite ornament product. The ornaments in *Jatra* are unique in design and have a great demand among its admirers. The ornaments include ear-rings, necklaces, anklets and bracelets. The necklaces are mostly adorned with beads, metal pieces of different shapes, multi-coloured threads, and kori. You can wear them with desi as well as western outfits. They are able to complement saree, salwar-kamiz, fatuas as well as skirts and jeans.

The kori necklaces of *Jatra* will go best with sarees and skirts, and the geometrical shapes will complement jeans and salwar-kamiz.

You can also find long, one-line necklaces of multi coloured beads that would look simply superb with skirts or even with T-shirt and jeans.

The necklaces are priced between Tk 70 and Tk.150. The ear-rings that you can wear with

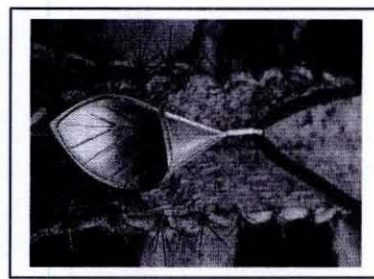
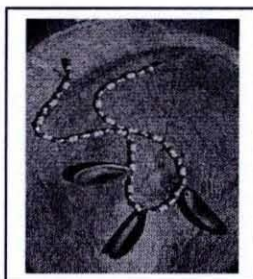
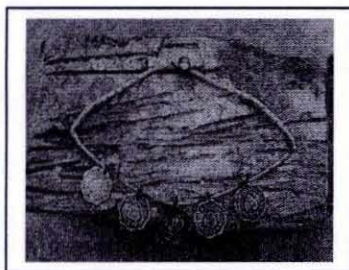


any casual dress are priced between Tk. 55 and Tk. 140. You can buy necklaces and ear-rings separately but sets are available too; between Tk. 140 and Tk. 225. The new arrival 'clay sets' will simply catch your eyes as some artistic pieces.

Apart from necklaces and ear-rings, you'll get to see bracelets and anklets decorated with metal stars, beads and tiny bells. The anklets are mostly available at Tk. 120. Anklets with kori work are available at Tk. 140 and the bracelets are available within Tk. 85. You can also buy threaded bangles of different colours at Tk 35 and Tk 95.

Aadi:

Aadi is an emerging brand of artistic ornaments that perfectly go with today's fashion trend. Looking at the designs you'll feel that you have actually waited for something like this to happen to the designs of ornaments. The artiste who is doing magic with the designs, Amman Rashid calls each of his ornaments an 'art'. He has created some wonderful pieces of ornaments using indigenous and African motifs. Each piece tells you a story and has a particular name. Some of the names are *Motso Puran*, *Krishnobott*, *Prachin Mudrar Kahini*, *Aadibashi*, *Museum*, *Protnotattik*, *Dhal* and so on. Amman's artworks are unique in the sense that each item is different from the other and the ornaments are meant specially for daily attiring.



The materials used in these aesthetic pieces are shell, clay, silver, copper, Rajasthani stones, antic coins, dry fruits, seeds, beads etc. the ornaments include necklaces and ear-rings. Each and every ornament has the touch of artiste's hands and magic of his imagination. One who would wear one of these ornaments would actually carry an art with her. Therefore, while pricing the ornaments the artist has incorporated the value of his imagination, hard-work and passion.

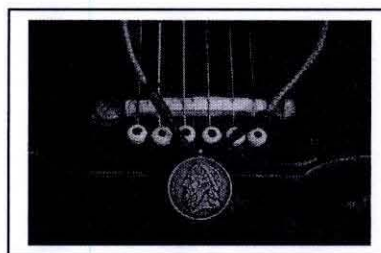
These ornaments are priced between Tk. 500 and Tk. 5000 depending on the work. *Aadi* does not yet have its own show-room but the ornaments are available at the fashion outlet

Aranya in Banani, you can also catch the artiste live at work in the five-star hotel Westin as the artist is participating in an event on ornament making for the whole month of July this year.

Bibiyana:

The trendy fashion house *Bibiyana* has been providing the style loving people with a wide range of casual ornaments since its beginning. The designs of these ornaments are a blend of trend and tradition. The materials are mostly brass but silver, clay, bronze and beads are also used in these ornaments.

Bibiyana has necklaces, ear-rings, anklets and bangles of different shapes and colors. The ornaments would go very well with cotton sarees, fatuas, skirts and salwar-kamiz.



The brass ear-rings are available at Tk. 100 regardless of its size and designs. Silver ear-rings are priced between Tk. 220 and Tk. 750. You can buy the bangles at Tk. 150 and Tk. 250 (per piece). These bangles are made of Bronze and silver. Threaded bangles are also available at Tk. 30. Necklaces & ear-rings sets are available between Tk. 140 and Tk. 300.

Different motifs and geometrical shapes have given a smart look to these ornaments and at the same time the rustic touch in the designs has added a beautiful dimension to the pieces. Even if you wear them with western outfits you will still be able to hold onto your 'bangali look'.

You can give your personality a new magical tone if you can make the perfect fusion of your casual outfits and such smart looking ornaments. What you need now is some time to browse these shops yourself. If you have a fashionable taste you cannot resist the desire to adorn your beauty with these stylish pieces.

- **Background features:**

Background features put news in context. This is also known as news features. News features are hybrids of a straight forward news story and a feature.

An example of background features/ news features:

The example that I am going to give is not written by me. Another feature writer of New Age wrote it. This is a good example of background features as readers will be readily able to connect to the news based on which this feature was written.

The feature's title, "Tainted milk from china" says that it is based on the news regarding the recent milk scandal in china and its effect on Bangladesh.

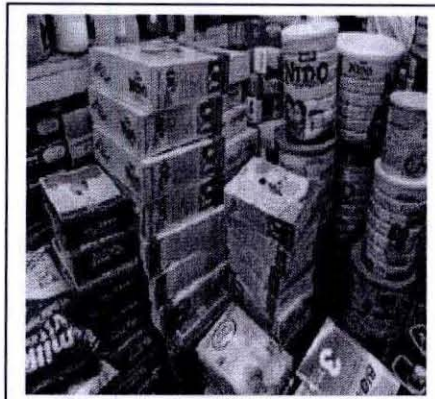
Tainted milk from China

Dyuti Monishita reveals how some unscrupulous manufacturers in China used melamine to artificially increase protein content in dairy products and exported them to Bangladesh and elsewhere in the world while the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution allegedly approved the milk products without checking their quality

While the three Chinese brands have been lifted off the markets, almost all powder milk brands are now under suspicion

As the news about toxic chemical substances found inside Chinese dairy products unfolded in newspapers and news channels in September, the Bangladesh government had no time to realise the severity until Chinese authorities officially informed the government only recently. The news was of a toxic chemical called melamine that had been contaminating milk powders which in turn were being circulated throughout the world in form of other dairy products.

At the end of September, the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution – the national food testing authority – officially announced the existence of melamine inside the imported dairy products widely circulated in the local market. Health and consumer rights activists immediately pounced on the government's food testing standards as it had approved the milk products without verifying the quality.



‘What concerns me is that these milk products have been certified at the entry point, but when the fiasco started, they started testing,’ says Quazi Faruque, the secretary general of Consumers Association of Bangladesh. ‘This is very disturbing and BSTI being the national food testing authority should have been able to control and implement the law that any imported products need to be thoroughly tested and then certified to be circulated in the local market. This is an unethical way of conducting business by all means,’ says the consumer rights activist.

In Bangladesh however, a New Age investigation reveals this week, most dairy products imported from China are substandard for the ingredients it carries. The quality of imported milk has always been under scrutiny and doubt by the experts.

‘Adding low quality protein to milk in order to cut back cost is nothing new. We have often seen that many foreign countries add soy protein, as in plant protein in order to cut back cost,’ says Professor Nazma Shaheen, a member of the expert committee of Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI).

She also explains that these milk products of poor quality are imported by many distributors in Bangladesh to make it cost effective. Animal protein is essential for the development of children and plant protein fails to serve that purpose. This causes

malnutrition and retarded development in children. 'In fact this is the same reason Chinese doctors first thought that it was severe malnourishment, because the nitrogen content failed to provide any nutritional value,' she adds.

Melamine was added to milk in order to pass the Chinese government's protein content tests after water was added to fraudulently dilute the milk as a way of cutting down cost. Professor Sagar May Barua of Institute of Nutrition and Food Science (INFS) explains why this dangerous method has been used. 'Melamine is a nitrogenous compound and if it is added to any food products, it is going to enhance the nitrogen content of that product.'

And this was the reason to add melamine and make the protein content of food appear higher than the true value. Officials estimate that about 20 per cent of the dairy companies tested in China sell products tainted with melamine.

No one had ever heard about this chemical substance being a contaminant in food products. Panic-stricken China investigated as countless small infants started to get severely ill and quite a few of them started to die. By April 2008 more than 13 infants died and the doctors in China said that the tainted baby milk is responsible for the worst malnourishment they have seen in 20 years. The babies developed what doctors called 'big head disease', where heads of the infants appear abnormally large in comparison to their bodies.

The world was in haste to get rid of the tainted products and ban all Chinese food products. Bangladeshi authorities found melamine in Chinese dairy products on September 30, 2008. The government eventually banned three brands of baby formula manufacturers that were blamed for selling the tainted milk that has sickened over 53,000 infants and killed four others in China.

Bangladesh government was at a standstill until the Chinese authorities informed it about the possible existence of melamine in the products of two companies Sun Care and Yashli, who manufacture 'Sweet Baby' and 'Yashli-1' and 'Yashli-2' milk powders.

Bangladesh is very new to the idea of the chemical melamine which is used in making popular kitchen utensils. The technology and equipment needed to efficiently and quickly determine the existence of the chemical are not in knowledge or possession of the Bangladeshi authority.

When asked about the testing methods of melamine, the director of Institute of Food Science and Technology, a research laboratory in Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR), Fahima Rokhsana said that they still have not started testing the sample products sent in by BSTI. She said that melamine is a new thing for them and they are still finding it hard to start testing. This only adds to the concern that something so serious is not taken seriously by the authorities to eradicate the problem.

In the meanwhile the BSTI has collected samples of Cadbury's chocolate bars imported from five countries to test for the contaminant melamine. Cadbury's chocolate bars were imported from India, United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Australia and the United Kingdom. They are currently being tested in the BSTI laboratory, the chemistry department of Dhaka University and a private laboratory called Plasma Plus. Melamine content has already been detected in the banned milk formula Yashli -1 by Plasma Plus.

'It's a concern for our country because we don't have the expertise needed to defuse this kind of fright and the chemical melamine is itself much unknown to us,' professor Khursheed Jahan of INFS worries.

'We don't even know when these contaminated products started to come here and whether any damage has been caused in our country, is still unknown,' 'When we test the amount of protein present in a certain substance, we test the amount of nitrogen first by using Kjeldahl method and then multiply that numerical with 6.25. The result of that is

the amount of protein present in a substance.’ The content measurement cannot determine the source of nitrogen which is why the existence of melamine was overlooked until critical scrutiny.

In genuine dairy product, nitrogen is a component of animal protein. However, to increase the protein artificially, some unscrupulous manufacturers used melamine that contains a higher amount of nitrogen, consequently showing a higher amount of protein.

‘And melamine being an artificial chemical and having high artificial nitrogen content affects the kidneys the most when exposed to high quantity. They crystallise and remain in the kidneys and cannot pass out of the body, as kidneys function like sieves,’explains Barua.

However, Roberta Weiss, a nephrologist suggests that, as opposed to the popular notion that the infants in China dies from kidney stones formation, ‘Probably acute renal failure resulting from cyanuric acid crystal formation in the kidneys of babies that ingested the melamine contaminated formula was responsible for the infant deaths, not kidney stone formation.’ She had e-mailed to provide Sciencebase readers, a popular website, with some more background on melamine contamination and toxicity.

Melamine is an organic compound used in the manufacture of plastics and fertilizers, she says. ‘It releases cyanide when burned and has been associated with cyanide poisoning in industrial accidents. Melamine monomer, as opposed to the plastic used to make kitchen utensils and table coverings, it itself also has irritant properties.’also says that adding melamine does not really improve the quality of the food products.

Melamine itself, when consumed in small amount is not toxic. And after intense and extensive analysis by scientist the limit of melamine considered safe were set at one milligram per kilogramme of infant formula and 2.5 milligrams per kilogramme for liquid milk, milk powder and food products that contain more than 15 per cent milk.

When small infants mysteriously started to fall ill earlier this year in China, physicians initially started treating it as malnourishment, mistaking the preliminary symptoms caused by toxicity of melamine. But the severity of the health decline soon started indicating that there was more to this epidemic problem than just ordinary malnourishment.

It was not clear if the counterfeit powder included any toxic ingredients, but some children were reported to have died within three days of being fed the fake milk. Upon investigation, it was determined that a toxic substance called the melamine was responsible for all the deaths. The total number of children falling ill from dairy products tainted with melamine grew to 54,000. Nearly 13,000 children have been hospitalised.

‘It is not surprising that it took such a long time to determine the cause of such a fiasco,’ Rahman, paediatrician and assistant professor in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

‘Melamine is a lot like arsenic. It slowly kills and damages the brain, heart, liver and the kidneys. It will be quite sometime before the cause is determined here,’ ‘by the time the causes can be determined, it is too late to do anything about it because the damages are irreversible. Even if the toxicity is not severe enough to kill, the damages in children can vary between dementia and memory loss combined with physical and mental retardation.’

Melamine is combined with formaldehyde to produce melamine resin – a very durable thermosetting plastic — a polymeric cleaning product. The end products include countertops, dry erase boards, fabrics, glues, housewares and flame retardants. Melamine is one of the major components in Pigment Yellow 150, a colorant in inks and plastics.

Melamine by itself is nontoxic in low doses, but when combined with cyanuric acid it can cause fatal kidney stones due to the formation of an insoluble melamine cyanurate. Scientists explain that when melamine and cyanuric acid are absorbed into the bloodstream, they concentrate and interact in the urine-filled renal microtubules, then

crystallise and form large numbers of round, yellow crystals, which in turn block and damage the renal cells that line the tubes, causing the kidneys to malfunction. This has been the main cause of so many deaths and illnesses so far.

Toxicity by melamine can be of two types, one is acute and another is chronic. Acute toxicity lasts only for a short time, the symptoms varies from diarrhoea, vomiting and malnourishment. Physicians do not consider this type of toxicity as a serious form of toxicity, but chronic toxicity has a long term affect and is critical in nature. Chronic toxicity causes irreversible damages to the organs. China now has to deal with chronic toxicity of an epidemic level.

‘This is affecting the infants because their consumption of milk is a lot higher than adults. Adults barely consume milk or candies, so the casualties are mostly children,’ Dr Atik says.

‘Besides children’s need to consume high amount of milk consumption, infants still don’t have well developed immune system and mechanisms to resist toxicity,’ Nazma of INFS.

‘We want to prevent a disaster from happening and so we are urging the authorities to put a complete ban on these products. I met with the director general of BSTI and pointed this out to him,’ Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

The director general of BSTI, Ajmal Hossain refuses to comment on this current situation and clarify his institution’s current position except that they are now testing the suspected products for the presence of melamine.

The government banned three brands of Chinese milk powder in the wake of the milk scare, though at least two Bangladeshi firms have since been found marketing the products without BSTI approval and mobile courts have seized tins in open markets.

Nevertheless, before importing food products, it is compulsory for importers to submit food samples to BSTI. After the products have been tested in the relevant laboratories, the BSTI technicians compare the test results with the Codex, approved by expert committee. If everything seems scientifically sound, BSTI gives permission to import the products. Hence, if the system had worked properly and everything had been monitored strictly, there would have been little reason to doubt the safety of imported food products.

‘Melamine is only a momentary problem, but the poor quality of imported milk is a long term concern. It digs deep into the sources of malnutrition in our country. We experts have said that since the milks are imported from developed countries, the Codex should be set according to their standards,’ concludes.

‘Parents think that as long as the products are imported, they are of excellent quality. Nobody can persuade them against that, they should have more awareness regarding these matters,’ really does not end with the currently suspected products, but any imported milk products have high risk of being contaminated by melamine or any other toxic substances.

The law regarding this issue was drafted with the intention of ensuring public safety regarding consuming imported food products and yet the BSTI has failed in implementing the law strictly, regrets Quazi Faruque. ‘It should not have dragged this far, and BSTI does not even have proper equipments to test the products. This is very irresponsible of them.’

- **Opinion pieces:**

Opinion pieces can be Leaders/editorials, think pieces, columns or diaries.

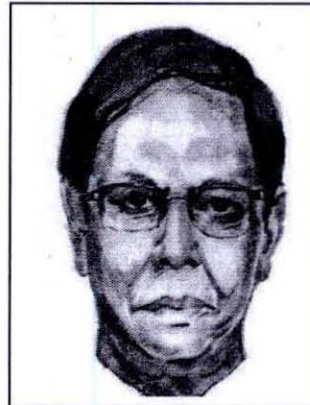
An example of an opinion piece:

The price of instant-mix change

by Amanat Ullah Khan

I some time wonder what the world would have been, if Al Gore in the year 2000 had asked his democratic party supporters to come out on the streets of Washington DC with 'loggy and boitha' to fix up the Supreme Court judges who decided that Bush has won the elections.

For one thing, global warming would have been long gone and we would not be sinking under the Bay of Bengal waters and of course, Iraqi museums would not have robbed of their priceless treasures. Gore, not fit to be the Commander in Chief, however, was cowed down and vanished from the scene at the speed of the melting of the polar ice-cap and made things very hard for the 'odrissho shokti' We, however, did not have to play our innings that long, the 'odrissho shokti', they did not wait for those ballots to be casted or counted or results declared. They were helped by skilled and powerful birth attendants. As Mr. Fix-it-all, they looked cool, but often behaved as bulls-in-china-shop. Here we are now, wondering if Road Map (with no known datum line and unknown co-ordinate system) will take us to the destination. In the mean time, I have been photographed (without my glasses of course!) and I have 'the card' as well. I also know that all the see-through boxes (brought from countries beyond seven seas!) for the '' are here at last. The date December 18 is etched in stone. Still wonder what the datum line and the coordinate system of the road map are.



The bullying in the shops has worked wonders! It has apparently softened up all the centres of 'shokti' including the 'Jatitabadi', non-jatitabadi kind; ' ', 'bipokkho' kind or the ' ', 'onoislamic' kind. These 'shokti' jingo-lingo has apparently changed so much from the 'boitha' kind that even Al Gorians will be put to shame. And finally ' ' has relegated us to the seventh position instead of our secure first position. Systems have been put in place with the hope that the decline continues.

A number of government service organisations were put on notice. The essential services provided by these departments provided them the opportunity to oppress the citizens. Many people of such organisations were brought to task. The resources that they have acquired through their oppressive behavior were confiscated. However, the disease is so pervasive that such token measures will have very little long term yield unless the successor constitutional government continues the process.

The court system was boldly but rather hurriedly separated from the public administration system of the government. The aim was the emergence of an independent judiciary. Results are still awaiting as the court procedures and the judgments leave a lot of questions unanswered as to the level of independence of the justice system.

Attempts to make foray into the economic life have been unsuccessful. The use of coercive power failed to sway the economic ground realities. Prices only increased and goods supply became erratic. Industrial sector was put to instability due to irregular supply of fuel and raw material, labour unrest. Investments into new economic activities declined. Agricultural production declined due to irregularities in power and fertilizer supply, besides the usual hydro-climatologically induced problems.

What would have happened if the 'loggy and boitha' kind of talk could somehow be stopped and the 'friends' were not given the opportunity to conceive in January 2007? We would have balloted with the non-see-through deshi boxes in due time, with no photographs of course. Some mix-ups would have occurred (it will occur with the

photographs as well). The odrissho shokti could still play its role in resisting the looming disasters predicted by 'some'. The constitutional continuity in governance would have continued in this country like the United States elections in 2000. That the odrissho shokti are powerful and disciplined enough to steer the country through an impartial balloting process has been proven. We, however, did not think constitutional continuity was important.

Permanent societal changes are only possible only through permanent long term processes. The attempt to remedy the whole basket of the society's problems in one or two broad sweep in a short time was ill conceived and will fail to produce the desired results. In one basket you have apples as well as oranges and other items as well. One surely knows that the apples and oranges grow in different climates and needs different type of care. The apparent successes which were indicated above will not be permanent as these changes do not indicate any systemic corrections.

The constitution is an agreement between the citizens of the country and represents the wishes of the citizens as to how should they be governed with the right of the individuals and the right of the governmental institutions clearly defined. Governing by the constitution represents the fulfillment of the wishes of the citizens and such governments command the studied allegiance of the citizens. As we have steered through the ups and the downs of the last two years many a times I was reminded of this fact. The apparently good intentioned measures of the unconstitutional government were ignored, questioned, and often resisted. Most cooperation was apparently through veiled coercion. The good deeds done in such processes, I am afraid will evaporate once the coercive power is gone.

We should be going back to the constitutional process as soon as possible. Ground realities do not allow us to go back to where we were in November 2006. The reality is to face the December elections with full vigour. Attempts to manipulate the elections even before it is held (by trying to dictate who can and cannot be a candidate) would be to continuing on the mistaken path that has been taken so far. People are the best judges, let them decide who is corrupt or not corrupt; honest or dishonest; mastan or gentleman.

Make sure the voting process is free from any type of coercion and every candidate has the same level playing field.

Finally I want to remind the readers about the tremendous sacrifices that the people of the most powerful nation on the earth had to endure, only to keep the constitutional continuity rolling. They accepted Bush and see what he has given them in his first four years - two wars that is still continuing – and a declining economy. His economic policies are mortally hurting many and he has become hugely unpopular, however, we still do not hear ‘Bush miar godite, agun jalo ekshathe’.

3.8 How is writing for *Xtra* Different from writing for *Trends*

One very important thing that I noticed and had to be very careful about at the beginning is, the two magazines are completely different from one another; not only in terms of choosing the subjects but also in terms of the style of writing and presentations.

Xtra is a 40-page weekend magazine that basically deals with serious news issues like politics, corruptions, exploitations, crime etc. It also includes light hearted, entertaining issues like review of movies, music albums and other entertainment stories. The magazine gives a scope to use ones ability to the fullest as a feature writer. It includes all types of feature writing. *Xtra* is the kind of magazine that has materials to intrigue all sort of readers regardless of their taste, age and personality.

Trends on the other hand is a 13 page magazine and it includes sections like *en vogue*, *up close and personal*, *eating out*, *cover*, *global vogue*, *horoscope*, *event*, *shop reviews* etc. This magazine is for the people who are fashion conscious and look for updates about anything related to lifestyle, e.g. food, music, dresses, events, new shops, home appliances, electronic appliances and so on.

The two magazines demand two different styles. While *Xtra* emphasizes more on realistic expressions *Trends* exaggerates on making things sound exciting and appealing. The angles of the stories of the two feature magazines are very different too. *Xtra* always

takes a serious and a critique stand about a story while *Trends* tries to be appreciative about the issues dealt with in the stories of the magazine. Another difference between the two magazines is *Trends* tries to be very attractive visually. It uses more pictures than *Xtra* does in a story.

While *Trends* features are written using lots of adjectives to describe someone or some thing, *Xtra* is moderate about use of adjectives. The examples given earlier will help illustrating these differences.

4. Cultural reporting

Cultural reporting includes news of any cultural event. The cultural page of *New Age* also includes reviews of art exhibitions etc. taking place at the moment. The issue has to be a fresh one like 'news'. For example, if there is a ten day long art exhibition, the report should be done within the first or the second day; the fresher the better. Though cultural reporting is like writing news, it actually combines the flavors of both feature writing and news reporting. Such reports usually start with a style of 'news' as it deals with the five W's and one H(who, when, where, what, why and how) in the introduction. But as the report develops, it does not remain objective. The reporter in such cases has a chance to include critical comments on the event.

The cultural page of the main broadsheet is titled *Timeout*. There are spaces for graphic cartoons, TV schedules; international news related to culture and most importantly a space for cultural report on a program taking place in the city. The international issues are collected from the internet sources, but the cultural programs in the city are covered by a reporter as per instructions of the person in charge of the cultural page or invitations from different organizers.

4.1 How to go about cultural reporting:

Firstly, the reporter has to watch the program herself. After that he/she needs to collect the press release if provided any by the organizers. Brochures are handy in case of art exhibitions. After that, the reporter sometimes needs to talk with the performers or the organizers for detailed information and quotes. If it is an art exhibition the reporter should talk to the artist for an in depth view of the paintings he/she is going to write about. After gathering all the necessary information the reporter starts writing the report.

4.2 What a cultural report should be like

Firstly, the report needs to have an introduction saying what the event is, where it is taking place, when is it taking place, who organized the program. 'Why' and 'how' are though not relevant in this case, yet it might be applicable in some.

Secondly, a description of the event including some details should be included in the report. For example, if it is a cultural program, the reporter might discuss the atmosphere of the auditorium in order to let the readers see the place in their imagination.

In case of an art exhibition the description of the paintings; their subjects, the colors used on them etc can be discussed. The reporter can be critical about the program or the exhibition. To do that, a good sense of judgment is very necessary (especially in case of art and paintings). If the reporter is not an art critique, he/she should refrain from doing so and always quote from the artist or some critique rather than commenting him/ herself. The conclusion of such reports does not necessarily have background information like regular news has. Sometimes it might be so, but sometimes it can also be different.

Examples of a cultural report and a review of an art exhibition are given below. I have used examples from my own work done in the course of my internship for the page *Timeout*

- **An example of a cultural report**

Shilpakala honours 7 artistes

-by Sharmin Chowdhury

The Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on Wednesday honoured seven eminent artistes for their contribution to their respective fields.

The artists were baul maestro Shah Abdul Karim, singers of modern Bangla songs Sabina Yasmin, Runa Laila, Shahnaz Rahmatullah, Niaz Mohammad Chowdhury, Subol Dutta and the dancer Zinat Barkatullah.

The artistes also received crests, cheques of Tk 10,000 each and flowers. Four out of seven artistes were present in receiving the honour in person. Runa Laila, Shah Abdul

Karim and Niaz Mohammad Chowdhury could not be present due to some unavoidable circumstances.

Shah Abdul Jalal son of Shah Abdul Karim, Fayaz Mohammad Chowdhury – son of Niaz Mohammad Chowdhury and Umana Angelina received the crests on behalf of Shah Abdul Karim, Niaz Mohammad Chowdhury and Runa Laila respectively.

The artists expressed their heartiest gratitude towards their fans and the academy. They also mentioned the necessity of showing respect to the senior artists of the country in their lifetime.

They also requested the authorities to find out the artistes who contributed a lot to the country's culture.

Adviser to the caretaker government Rasheda K Chowdhury was present as chief guest and handed over the awards to the recipients. Secretary of the cultural affairs ministry, Sharful Alam, music and dance department director Sunil Chandra Das and the academy's director general Bhuiyan Shafiqul Islam also attended the function. Rasheda K Chowdhury announced that from next year the academy would honour the artistes of music, dance, drama and fine arts.

The event was interspersed with music where popular artistes including Fahmida Nabi and Monir Khan sang their hit numbers.

- **An example of a review of an art exhibition**

Oriental Art Exhibition'08 by Md. Abdul Aziz

-by Sharmin Chowdhury

Artist Md. Abdul Aziz holds his 4th solo art exhibition titled **Oriental Art Exhibition'08** in Gallery Zoom at Alliance Francaise de Dacca from 19 June to 2 July. 17 of his paintings reflecting the oriental life are being exhibited in the gallery.

Md. Abdul Aziz has chosen women, nature and birds as subjects of his paintings to open up the orient psyche and culture because he believes that women tell the story of the orient best. He also mentioned that women have always played a role in upholding the true culture of particular societies; their dresses, ornaments, gestures and postures, are all very distinguished and unique.

In the paintings the artist portrayed the harmonious relationship among women, birds and nature. According to Aziz, he tried to give an insight to the orient by revealing the moments of solitude in women's life and their connection with the nature. Some of his paintings are titled, **Mirror with lady, Nature with woman, Lady with bird, Fallen etc.** In the paintings one will find how a woman nurtures the beauty of nature within herself or how she wears nature as an ornament and also, how she shares her solitude with a bird or how nature tells the story of the beauty of orient and so on.

Md. Abdul Aziz explains that oriental art is realistic and very detailed and it takes time and patience to create it. All the paintings of this exhibition are made using water colour in 'wash' system. The artist said, "There are not many quality artists for oriental art in the country, I have arranged this exhibition in order to uphold and enhance the level of appreciation for this particular form of art." Though oriental art emphasizes on detailed drawing, Abdul Aziz has experimentally used some semi abstract forms in some of his paintings which added a new dimension to his work.

On the fifth day of the exhibition we found that the gallery was not very crowded but it was never empty; people were always seen coming in groups of two or three. The common remark of the visitors was, 'It really is worth paying a visit'.

Md. Abdul Aziz is going to exhibit more of his paintings later this year in his fifth solo exhibition which will be based on the same theme. The venue for his next exhibition is Zainul Gallery-1, Institute of Fine Art, University of Dhaka.

Md. Abdul Aziz also participated in several group exhibitions in and outside the country including India and UK. At present he is working as the Assistant Professor in the Institute of Fine Art, University of Dhaka.

Conclusion:

Working with *New Age* has been a great experience for me. I have practically experienced the applications of my classroom learning in the three months time. My learning was not limited to practicing the rules and skills of feature writing; I have also learnt techniques of interviewing, dealing with people, approaching people for an appointment etc. I have learnt to research on subjects before interviewing. Most importantly I have learnt to get adjusted in a work place; few of the important requirements were to come up with story ideas every week and start working on it if approved, and meeting the deadlines of the submission of the stories. If the deadline is not met, it hampers the total plan for the magazine and everybody gets affected. Taking the responsibility, realizing the weight of it and working accordingly is therefore the best idea. The thing I like most about the job of a feature writer is, the work is never monotonous. The writer deals with new topic and new people every week, which is very interesting as well as very challenging. I want to conclude saying that working for *New Age* may not have taught me everything about the field yet but it has made me a better-informed apprentice of this field.

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