

A Feature Writing Experience
At *NEW AGE*

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1. Introduction

When I began my university career, I actually had very little idea about the kind of profession I wanted to pursue and even less about how to go about achieving it. However one thing I remember very poignantly from my teenage years is my fascination with a multitude of German magazines, my favorite being *BRAVO! Mädchen*. Though it specifically targets young women in their teens, I am still captivated by any new edition I get my hands on. And ever since those days I have always dreamt of running a successful institution like a fashion magazine. Movies like *The Devil Wears Prada* have also made the post of editor of a leading fashion and lifestyle magazine alluring to me. Yet this never seemed like a feasible dream to me, and on entering university, I was more interested in Linguistics than the Media concentration.

My first encounter with a media course was the English for the Print Media class. Copywriting and Editing followed, and needless to say, I was hooked to journalism. All of a sudden the door of possibilities swung open, and I found myself faced with the option of doing an internship with the features section of *New Age*, one of the leading English dailies in Bangladesh.

During my 12 weeks at *New Age*, I was involved with the two supplements *Xtra* and *TRENDS*. My assignments were varied in terms of nature and style, and the learning experience was manifold. It was the ideal opportunity for me to put all the theoretical information I had accumulated into practice, to get a hands-on feature writing experience and to get a real feel for how the journalism industry in Dhaka functions.

Surprisingly enough, those are not the only things I learnt. Being exposed to a variety of tasks, I had the opportunity to mingle with and interview people from all walks of life, starting from established celebrities and reputed professors right down to virtual strangers on the street. My interpersonal skills flourished, as did my level of confidence. It would be very difficult for me to pinpoint which one thing was most beneficial to me.

All of a sudden, realizing a childhood dream I was too shy to reveal to people until now does not seem impossible anymore. My time at *New Age* has opened my eyes to a world of possibilities, and has given me a somewhat clearer-than-fuzzy sense of direction and purpose. This invaluable experience is one for which I cannot thank BRAC University enough.

2.1 *New Age*: The Basics

On the morning of the July 7, 2003, another quality English daily hit the stands. Armed with a reputed editor, the late Enayetullah Khan, a vibrant young team and fresh ideologies and perspectives, *New Age* came out not to be “the holy choice,” as Deputy Editor Zayd Almer Khan quips, but to provide readers with a choice. Five years down the line *New Age* has made its way to the top with its democratic, secular and egalitarian beliefs, being recognized as one of the leading English newspapers of Bangladesh.

The *New Age* is a 12-page broadsheet paper, priced at Tk 6 on regular days and Tk 10 on days it includes supplements. The paper is divided into three sections: A, dealing with National, International, Editorial, Op-ed, Home, Timeout, Metro; B, dealing with Business, and C, containing the Sports articles. The paper has two weekly magazines called *Trends*, circulated on Tuesdays and *Xtra*, which comes out on Fridays. Various special supplements are published to mark significant days and events; these include the Independence Day Special, *New Age* Ekushey Special, Victory Day Special, A Special in Remembrance of Enayetullah Khan and an Anniversary Special among many others.

There are primarily five stages of production *New Age* goes through before it reaches its readers. In the first step, reports are brought into the newsroom, where they are checked for validity by the Chief Reporter, who is also referred to as the Chief of Correspondents. It is his duty to assign tasks, and verify the angles and statements against various sources including press releases. Information comes to him via the telephone, fax, or emails. In the second step, the reports move on to the central desk, where the language is edited. Shortcomings in terms of information or structure are identified and corrected, and the article is given a headline. Next, the Metro page is designed. In the fourth step, the International, Business and Home pages are designed. The other pages are also prepared. The fifth step deals with the make up of the paper—the photography is seen to and appropriate captions are given. There are several layers of printing, the white print and the trace print are made; the aluminium foil is sent to the printing press and after that the only job left is distribution. On certain days, when

there are developmental stories or late incidents, numerous editions are made and these are taken care of in the provisional 6th step.

One of the biggest challenges a newspaper faces in a developing country like Bangladesh is the low literacy rate. Statistics claim 41.4%¹ of the population is literate; however this is a misleading figure because literacy is defined in terms of the ability to write one's own name. Even then, the literate population does not necessarily have a grasp over English, much less reads an English newspaper. A meagre 10% of the total newspaper readership in Bangladesh subscribes to English dailies, says Deputy Editor Mir Ashfaquzzaman, of which *The Daily Star* claims 50%. With an impressive 30% of the market share to accredit to its name, it is quite obvious that *The Daily Star* is *New Age*'s only real competitor. The figures may be disheartening to some, but put in the context of time, they are actually rather remarkable- *The Daily Star* has been in print for about 17 years, while *New Age* has only been around for five years. In those terms, the figures appear promising for *New Age*.

2.2 The Features Section

In order to diversify its readership and cater to the discrepant interest levels of a variety of age groups, a newspaper can introduce a range of supplements. By segmenting the readers with more targeted in-house publications, newspapers succeed in catching the attention of their audience and meet their needs more specifically. Though *New Age* does not match *The Daily Star*'s prolific supplements in quantitative terms, it does compare positively in terms of quality. *New Age* can easily be called the pioneer of supplements, as it took the initiative to broaden readership through diverse supplements. *Slate* and *Glitz* stand witness to that fact, although they had to be discontinued due to logistical and budget-related reasons. At present, the paper has two regular supplements, *Trends* and *Xtra*.

Trends, "the lifestyle weekly from *New Age*", is a lifestyle magazine published each Tuesday under Konka Karim's discernment. Regular sections in the magazine include

¹ www.data360.org

a Cover Story, generally dealing with fashion, culture, lifestyle in Dhaka featuring models from a pool of readers' acquaintances, Up Close & Personal, a question-answer style profile of a popular figure of Bangladesh, En Vogue, an analysis of new stores or products and where they are available, Global Vogue, which presents snapshots and descriptions from international fashion shows, Events, covering various events in the city and of course Horoscope, a weekly astrological forecast (downloaded from yahoo.com). Due to the nature and the low cost (about Tk 3) of the magazine it is quite obvious that the targeted audience is a younger generation of school-, college-, or university-going readers who live the contemporary Dhaka life. *Trends* is also a more cost-effective solution to students' thirst for fashion and lifestyle-related updates compared to other local or international magazines, such as *Ice Today* priced at Tk 75 or the Indian *Cosmopolitan* priced at Tk 300. The Department of Economics and Social Sciences at BRAC University subscribes to the *New Age* regularly, and seeing students leafing through a copy of *Trends* enthusiastically, engaged in lively conversations about the choice of models and whether someone knows them personally or not is not unusual. This reinforces the fact that it appeals to a younger group of readers, who are most probably not familiar with the clichéd "having a newspaper and coffee for breakfast" concept.

The other weekly magazine brought out by *New Age* on Fridays is *Xtra*. The features editor is Mubin S Khan. Although *Xtra* started out as a broadsheet supplement, it underwent a makeover shortly before I began my internship, and is now an attractive magazine. Dealing with serious issues like the significant news items of the previous week, my guess is that intellectuals and the more educated, academic readers take most interest in *Xtra* story items. Featured sections include a Cover Story that is based on current happenings and major headlines of the preceding week, a Profile of a renowned figure, On The Line, an interview on prominent ongoing issues with a relevant, authoritative personality, Art Calender, which outlines ongoing exhibitions, News Of The Week, which depicts the historical occurrences of the week, Five Minutes Briefing which puts recent developments on national and international events into perspective, Literati, the literature page comprising book reviews and pieces on television, art and music, and Digest, covering amusing news items. It also contains a Travellogue, Score, the sports section and a Comments page featuring quotes by eminent individuals. This magazine appeals to students as well, or to anyone

intending to widen their understanding of the world around them. As it comes out over the weekend, it gives people plenty of time to read the magazine during leisure. Once again, *Xtra* is a lucrative alternative to other international magazines with similar themes, like *Readers Digest*, priced at Tk 90, or *Time* magazine, priced at Tk 110.

The advertisement campaign used by *New Age* to attract readers is mention worthy at this point. With the ongoing discourse about journalism ethics and neutral reporting, a slogan like “biased towards the people” seems controversial at first. Many may be of the opinion that a slogan as such is somewhat audacious, since a newspaper is generally expected to not have any prejudices. However, the associated connotations of dedication, sincerity and honesty in terms of news coverage make it an effective slogan. “Dynamic. Daring. Daily” is the other dramatic slogan used by the paper. It is catchy and very efficient when analyzed with a marketing perspective.

New Age is a very young paper, and in the few years of existence it has shaken up the industry and made its presence felt. It has built a solid reader base and a strong reputation for itself. Innovation, objectiveness, professionalism, courage and success are terms commonly associated with the *New Age*. The paper has made its stance on numerous issues quite clear; opinions expressed in the editorials are articulate and straightforward. As an advocate of reporting without fear, the paper truly is “biased towards the people”. Backed by a vibrant team of young minds and professionals, *New Age* is well on its way to reaching the top, with a story of success behind it, and a prosperous journey lying ahead of it.

3. Features Versus News Stories

Having been involved exclusively with the features section at *New Age*, I felt it appropriate to include a section on what features really are in this report, as well as how they vary from news stories.

The best way to define a feature is probably as follows. "A feature story differs from a straight news story in one respect – its intent. A news story provides information about an event, idea or situation. The feature does a bit more – it may also interpret news, add depth and color to a story, instruct or entertain."²

Due to the nature of news, news articles solely inform and features employ emotive factors in addition to informing. While it is true that the most prominent aspect for which a news article differs from a feature is the purpose of the article, there are also notable differences in terms of structure, style, background research (i.e. gathering information) and so on.

Consumers of newspapers generally skim through headlines and leads, aiming to update themselves about the goings on of the community, country and the world over breakfast. Although there must be a significant population who reads a majority of the articles, people tend to be short on time, and so a paper over breakfast is a common practice. The five news value factors outlined below therefore play key roles in the formation of a story.

1. Consequence: A news story is only of interest to the reader if the news affects her/him or a large portion of the population.
2. Prominence: A story about a prominent figure makes a story newsworthy.
3. Proximity: The location of the event described in an article often makes it either more or less relevant to the reader.
4. Timeliness: News must be on time. Dated events are hardly of interest to readers.
5. Oddity: Any items that are odd, unique, unusual, infrequent or unexpected will make their way into newspapers as readers are interested in them.

² www.econnect.com.au/pdf/quicktips/writing_features.pdf

In an attempt to make the skimming process easier for readers, news stories follow an inverted pyramid structure. In this structure, journalists are required to answer the 5 W's and 1 H (what, who, when, where, why and how) in descending order of importance. The structure ensures that readers are presented with the salient points of the article even when they do not make it to the end of the article.

Feature writers on the other hand have a lot of liberty with the structure of their articles. Their main aim is to retain the reader's attention for the length of the article, and so there are no strict guidelines, formats or formulae prescribed. While placing key concepts in a logical, sometimes chronological order may be more convenient, there are no rules forbidding them to experiment with the structure for the reader's sake.

There are four basic types of features: the profile, product stories or reviews, background features and opinion pieces. During my internship period at *New Age*, I have had the opportunity to try my hand at a variety of themes, most of which can be categorized as per the basic types. These are going to be discussed in more detail over the next chapters.

4. Interviewing

Once a topic for a feature has been conceived and discussed at one of the meetings, it is up to the journalist to go out and find sufficient relevant information that makes the story interesting to readers. Interviewing, I have discovered, is probably the most important aspect of the information gathering process, and hence this chapter to give it due credit.

“Interviewing allows you to find out the who, what, when, where, why and how of the story and retell in the words of those who know about it with conviction, credibility and authority.”³ The value of comments made by relevant figures of authority, celebrities or even lay people cannot be stressed enough, as each point made in a feature has to be backed up by a quote validating the statement.

The steps to conducting a successful interview are to arrange it (and this can sometimes be tricky because important people rarely have the time for a ‘chitchat’ as they see it), to prepare for it (which includes doing all background research on the subject and having a rough set of questions) and to have the strategic social skills to commence and conclude an interview pleasantly. How these steps are to be fulfilled depends entirely on the type of interview, and these are going to be discussed below.

The following are various broadly categorized types of interviews typically used by journalists.⁴

1. The formal, arranged press conference interview
2. The one-to-one short interview
3. The one-to-one interview
4. The vox pop
5. The profile interview

Once the interview has been conducted, it is advisable to type the story up at earliest convenience because the informal shorthand journalists tend to use while taking notes becomes incomprehensible even to them after a while. This happened to me once but

³ Sally Adams. Interviewing for Journalists. New York: Routledge, 2001.

⁴ Ibid

thankfully I had a backup of the conversation on a recorder, so my procrastination in terms of writing the feature did not jeopardize the story.

Although interviewing appears to be second nature to humans, it is surprising how uncomfortable, queasy or nervous one might feel when one is still new to the skill. I remember how my knees were shaking the first time I interviewed a professional golfer for a profile, and even after three months of the internship I would be lying if I said I do not feel hesitant at all. What has changed with experience however is my confidence in myself, and a sense of purpose in terms of the interview itself.

Once the material has been gathered, the feature writing process begins.

5.1 Types of Features

In his book Writing for Journalists, Wynford Hicks categorizes features under four broad labels⁵. These are:

1. Profiles, which can be of prominent individuals, sports or music groups, companies and so on;
2. Product stories, which aim to highlight a particular product by describing it, or comparing and contrasting it to another;
3. Background features, also known as news features, which put current events into perspective; and
4. Opinion pieces, which are similar to editorials, columns and diaries.

The following are a collection of articles that have been published either in *Xtra* or *Trends*. Most of these are articles I have worked on, and I chose to include the examples that I feel support the titles best. These are going to exemplify the four basic types of features as outlined by Hicks.

5.2 The Profile Feature

- Example 1: This is an example of a profile feature written in a narrative form.

From caddy to champ

Tamara Zaman charts the journey of Mohammad Siddiqur Rahman, a one time caddy at the Kurmitola Golf Club who recently became the first Bangladeshi to win a professional international tournament, the PGTI Player Championship held at the Poona Golf Club

The most striking things about Mohammad Siddiqur Rahman are his radiant eyes, his warm smile and his amiable persona. Siddique's name splashed across the headlines of countless papers last week, as he became the first Bangladeshi to win a professional international tournament, the PGTI Player Championship held at the Poona Golf Club in Pune between September 2 to September 5.

⁵ Hicks, Wynford, Sally Adams and Harriet Gilbert. Writing for Journalists. 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Born on November 20, 1984, Siddique is a simple man with humble ideologies and modest beliefs. Siddique moved to Dhaka from his hometown Madaripur with his family when he was studying in class I or II, in search of a sustainable job to finance his education. He took up work as a caddy at the Kurmitola Golf Club grounds to make ends meet when he was a student of class V. He maintained this lifestyle until his SSC examination.

His skill and talent as a golfer were identified in 1999, when late Lt Gen Mostafizur Rahman and Major General Jibon Kanai Dash decided to form a national team. Out of the 50 to 60 players on trial that afternoon, Siddique was the single clear winner, his outstanding performance highlighting him from among the rest.

With this began Siddique's golf career. That October, he was chosen as a special member of the three-person team to represent Bangladesh at the Namura Cup hosted by Pakistan. His first national success came to him in 2001, with the National League Championships, an amateur tournament hosted in Bangladesh. Six SAARC countries participated, with the exclusion of Maldives. Siddique went on to enjoy the same title as the national amateur champion for three consecutive years, in 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Siddique's exposure to the world of golf continued to expand after his first victory in 2001. Within the 2003-2004 period, Siddique encountered triumph in various tournaments, held all over the world. He has won an assortment of titles and some of the successes accredited to his name include four victories in Bangladesh, two victories in Nepal, two in Sri Lanka, one in India, Bhutan and Pakistan.

'I played these tournaments with the intention of representing my country. If I won a title in South Asia, it would first be acknowledged as a win by Bangladesh, and only then would the names of the players be mentioned.'

But with his first international professional championship in the bag, Siddique observes the scenario has changed. 'Now people first recognise me as the PGTI Player League champion, and inquire where I am from afterwards.'

He has truly put Bangladesh on the map and shown the world that Bangladesh can play golf.

With the victory and Taka eight lakhs worth of prize money, his days of financial difficulties are reduced to distant memories. The Kurmitola Golf Club generally covers all of Siddique's expenses on a golf tour and Grameen Phone has actively been sponsoring him for the past four years, and the contract expires this December.

He has also secured a permanent place with the Ansar VDP, for whom he plays in the Olympics once a year. The club members have very generously been helping him out as well, he says.

Siddique proudly announces that his parents along with his three brothers who live together in the same house with him are completely dependent on him, and they are doing quite well.

'My mother has been very supportive of me and a big source of motivation. When times were bad, they (family) helped me the best way they could - with prayers.' And just how strong the powers of faith are is apparent in all of Siddique's accomplishments so far.

How does he feel about his successes? 'I was somewhat shocked when they announced my name as the winner.' After the completion of round one, Siddique tied in second with three other golfers; in the second round, he secured second place, only one shot behind Muniyappa, a professional Indian golfer; in the second round things became more exciting as Siddique took a four stroke lead.

In the final round, after overcoming the the eleventh hole, bad weather intervened and pulled the strings of fate, leading to the dismissal of the round. Siddique was pronounced winner of the PGTI Player Championship 2008 based on his overall impressive performance.

This ranks him as twelfth on the PGTI Order of Merit 2007- 2008 list. With this prestigious title, Siddique has become the first Bangladeshi to play at and win an international golf tournament of this stature.

'I really cannot explain how it happened. The victory was a gift from God.' Siddique claims he had been aiming at becoming a pro within a two year span, but victory caught up with him at the end of 14 months of training. 'This is my most memorable experience by far,' he exclaims. We are convinced.

On his return, Siddique was given the status of honorary member at the Golf Club. His victory has given his confidence level an immense boost.

Siddique will be in Malaysia for a week starting September 17, to play in the World Cup qualifiers. The second week of October will find him back in India, touring Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata.

Now he does not hesitate to aim high anymore. Siddique's future goals include playing at the US PGA. Judging by his successes it seems his dreams may not be too far from reality.

Siddique admits that even today, golf remains an elite leisure sport.

‘Only golfers know golf,’ he reproaches. Of the 3000 or so registered Kurmitola Golf Club members, he says, only about 1400 are regular members, and not all of them play golf. He especially commends the efforts of chief officer Col (rtd) Syed Anwar Hossain and executive officer Maj (rtd) Anisul Islam (rtd) to revive golf at Kurmitola Golf Club. Besides facilitating all types of golf activities and events at the club, they have attempted to attract the younger generation, regardless of gender, to the game by arranging the required logistics and bringing in qualified trainers.

‘Golf here has achieved a high standard nowadays, with many enthusiastic players,’ he shares.

It is interesting how this golfer had to rack his brains to name a hobby other than golf (which he eventually failed to do) but responded eloquently when asked about his idol. ‘Ernie Els,’ he states effortlessly. He goes on to explain that a person’s mentality has a great influence on his or her game. ‘I like him (Ernie Els) for his mentality. He is very cool and I want to be like him.’

Having played on numerous national and international golf courses, one might expect Siddique to be in a dilemma about his favorite grounds. ‘I have played at the golf courses in Comilla, Chittagong, Gazipur and Savar, but my favorite course is my homecourse, the Kurmitola Golf Club,’ he says with a pleasant smile.

As he poses for the photo shoot, Siddique proves to be the perfect picture of a champion golfer. He is a natural- clad in a black T-shirt and cap bearing the blue Grameen Phone logo his eyes are focused, and his face is aglow with anticipation despite the scorching heat.

‘I do not give formal lessons, but when senior members say to me “Siddique, show me how the game is played” I cannot turn them down,’ he says with a shy smile. Perhaps by this he really means that he cannot resist the temptation of spreading his passion or instilling some of it in someone else.

Siddique continues to play golf today, just as he did when he started off as a caddy when he was permitted to play once a week. Each Monday, he recalls. The difference is evident: there is more confidence, conviction, and determination. ‘Winning the first place does not seem impossible anymore.’

- Example 2: This is an example of a profile feature written in a short and

Imran Rahman

Interviewed by Tamara Zaman

What are your hobbies?

Playing music

What is your favourite food?

I like Thai, Korean, Japanese and of course Bangladeshi food as well.

What kinds of books are you fond of reading?

A mix of good novels by good authors- not necessarily bestsellers. I like non-fiction. I am currently reading Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri, and Amitav Ghosh.

What do you watch most on TV?

Travel and Living. It reminds me of all the places I would love to visit.

What is your favourite sport?

One day cricket and the premier league. It's a tie.

What is your favourite colour?

Dark blue

What is your favourite vacation spot?

London

What is your favourite cologne/ perfume?

I don't really have a favourite. I use anything that will not drive people away.

Which electronic device makes your life easier?

My Macbook, definitely

Your most memorable moment...

When my children were born

Who is your inspiration?

My late father

Who is your favourite actor/ actress?

Robert De Niro, Audrey Hepburn

Who is your favourite singer/s?

Stevie Wonder, Arnob

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

I just take my guitar and sit on the veranda and sing my ballads

What trait in a person do you dislike?

Dishonesty

What is the funniest incident you experienced?

One time it was raining and I came out of my car, and forgot to take my umbrella down. It was only when someone pointed it out to me that I realised I was inside the building.

Anything you regret?

No. I like to look forward to things

You admire...

People who try their best to reach for their dream

Your birth date...

February 22

5.3 The Product Feature

- Example 1: This is an example of a product feature.

Kay Kraft's Lifestyle Section

For the past decade, Kay Kraft has become a prominent presence among leading fashion houses in Dhaka. Celebrated for their extensive use of *desi* fabrics and the revival of traditional materials in modern designs, Kay Kraft clothing items are a hot favorite not just before occasions and festivities, but all year round. With so much focus on their apparels, the wide-ranging lifestyle section sometimes gets undeservingly overlooked. Hence the designation of an entire section of the Kay Kraft outlets on Bailey Road, in Sobhanbag, Mirpur and Banani is not met with raised eyebrows by those who are familiar with this exclusive line. From bed wares to bags and curtains to candles, a visit to Kay Kraft's home accessories section is sure to find you the perfect item to complement your home.

Kay Kraft has a great collection of bedcovers and bed sheets, so if you have been looking for something to adorn your bed that is conventional but not clichéd, this is the perfect place to visit. For Tk 500 to Tk 2,500, you will find a range of hand-woven styles designed by Kay Kraft to fit your king-sized, queen-sized or semi-double bed. The off-

white, French grey, green and orange designs to name a few range from embroidery, strap loom, hand sewn and crocheted designs to block printed ones.

A diverse collection of curtains is available, and these are mostly in 'tribal weaving' from Rangamati or hand-woven Norshindi *tat*. Bold colours including deep reds, blacks, oranges and mixed shades dominate the collection. These cost between Tk 300 and Tk 650 per piece.

To beautify your sofas or a cosy corner in a room, the wide variety of cushions and cushion covers at Kay Kraft are bound to appeal to your artistic nature. The trend these days is to have a variety of mismatched cushions together, and if you intend to follow the trend, this section has an assortment of styles to suit your needs. There are appliqué, hand embroidery, *katha* stitch, satin stitch, cross stitch, patchwork, spray paint and tie dye designs. With Tk 150 to Tk 1,000 you can opt for cushions as well as their covers, and if you are bored of the customary square cushions, be adventurous and try the varying sizes, the round, semi-circle, florid and strawberry shaped designs that prove Kay Kraft has not forgotten its younger clients.

Bags are another item on the list of lifestyle commodities available here. Cloth bags in a multitude of colours, shapes and sizes made with tribal prints are most suitable for university students or any casual outing. Among other designs are handy shopping bags that can be reduced to a purse, and *khadi* bags all at Tk 125 to Tk 215 and mobile cases at Tk 125. Leather hand bags in lovely pastel shades are also available.

Mirrors framed in detailed carved wood in traditional motifs, asymmetric abstract shapes and other creative designs are a unique part of the Kay Kraft collection. These are a huge hit with children of all ages and well as fashion-conscious homemakers. These cost between Tk 375 and Tk 5,500. Wooden photo frames carved by the same expert hand are also available for Tk 355 to Tk 465. These are exemplary creations by artist Saiful Islam, who has a small workshop in Mymensingh. Since there is no mass production of these items it makes them invaluable assets for yourself or a present for a dear one.

The metal objects here are the perfect souvenir, popular among expatriate Bangladeshis. These are available as ashtrays, mirrors, ornament boxes with stained glass, vases and in a range of animal figures including owls, cats and dinosaurs at Tk 100 to Tk 1,200.

Pottery is another popular item found in Kay Kraft outlets. This conventional material has been used to create a range of modern home accessories, including mobiles, mirrors, pen stands, candles and ornaments. These would cost you between Tk 55 and Tk 420.

Kay Kraft also addresses the common issue of finding trendy utility products, and so if you are looking for a hanging cloth tissue box, fancy lacey or crocheted place mats or ones made of woven bamboo with napkins, trash cans, magazine racks, wooden trays with carved fish motifs, bamboo bottle holders, kitchen towels or even wooden flower vases which are an asset to any home, you will definitely find what you are looking for here.

A visit to this section is also a good way to shrug off worries and a week's stresses, as the décor is warm and comforting. Even if you feel your home is as complete as can be, you might like to drop by the mentioned Kay Kraft outlets soon, as something or the other is guaranteed to catch your attention, or cheer you up to say the least.

5.4 The Background Feature

- Example 1: This is an example of a background feature that I worked on with another feature writer.

Living independent

Sharmin Chowdhury and Tamara Zaman discover how women living independently in Dhaka city have to confine themselves to whimsical rules imposed by house owners as well as putting up with all sorts of discrimination from high prices to sexual innuendo

For women, living single in Dhaka city is one of the most difficult experiences they say, when it comes to finding an accommodation.

And though the problem of finding a suitable residence is common for both single men and women, the social position of women makes it more difficult for them to live alone in the city. The options most single women in the metropolis are left with are either renting apartments with roommates or finding women's hostels.

The city over the last decade has secured its social position at par with most developed economies across the world with women's participation leading the progress in literacy and various fields of work. But in a mixed society of conservatives and forward minded, independent women coming to Dhaka for work or study are often refused accommodation, defeated by some extreme conservative ideologies by some apartment owners.

Neda Shakiba, a university student who lives by herself in a flat in the city says, 'owners do not want to rent their flats to single women. I used to live in another flat before, from where I was asked to vacate because I stayed alone. The owner said that people "talk" about me and they did not want to hear that anymore.' Neda comes from a city outside Dhaka. Her parents had rented the flat for her, but when the owners realised that Neda was to live there alone, they threw her out fearing society's irrational comments.

Sultana Kamal, executive director of Ain O Salish Kendra, identifies two major challenges faced by women living by themselves. 'There is the practical problem – landlords are hesitant to provide accommodation to women without a male counterpart,' she explains. 'Society has a basic tendency to label these women as vulnerable, weak and not careful about their physical protection.' She adds, 'it reflects our patriarchal outlook. The other problem is that society views these women as easily approachable and easily accessible and this leads to their harassment.' Not much of legal support is available from the law enforcement when it is sought by the women during an incident, she regretfully says.

The notion of women living alone in Dhaka is still widely unacceptable, though times have improved. Neda says, 'before I started living alone, I used to share a flat with eight other girls in Banani where our neighbours used to think we were disowned by our parents and were of lower standards, rejected by society because we were "not of good character". Even the guards used to talk to us very disrespectfully.' It appears that in an attempt to educate herself and gain financial stability, a woman is made to choose between her 'image' in society and her future. This is one consideration that discourages many girls from moving away from their families to come and pursue a good education or establish a solid career in Dhaka. 'No one has the right to evaluate a girl's character. The state and society should create a safe environment to ensure free mobility for women,' says Ayesha Khanom, president of Mahila Parishad.

While the prospect of living independently may seem more attractive, this is rarely the case. 'My landlord does not feel the need to fix my air-conditioning, change the bulb lights or repair the plumbing since I live alone,' shares Neda. As a result, only one of the two bathrooms in the small flat she occupies is fully functional. Despite not having a superintendent monitoring her hours, having experienced the trouble of finding accommodation, Neda has to think twice about her lifestyle that would not raise eyebrows in the neighbourhood. 'I used to be involved in social outings before, but I realised that returning home late raised questions in the community.' She has also had to check on the number of visits her friends made to her.

clearing rumours against me. If my guards complain to my landlord, I may have to walk out of the house.'

In order to save themselves from social degradation, and live up to society's definition of how women should lead their lives, many forgo their education and careers. 'Social consciousness needs to be raised. Women should come forward and set examples and solidarity,' muses Sultana Kamal. Their morale must not be let down. 'Women have every right to live by themselves. The government can ensure legal provision against landlords and form rules against sex discrimination where a woman's job or accommodation is not assessed by her sex.'

Another option for single women is to live in hostels. Dhaka's women's hostels are the abode of hundreds of girls who come from different parts of the country, and they are not without their own drawbacks. 'Your things get stolen, your stuff gets shared by others without your consent and you can also fall prey to your room-mates' jealousy,' says a 22-year-old former resident of a private women's hostel in Dhanmondi claiming these to be the commonest problems that one has to deal with no matter how good or bad a hostel is.

Zuri, a 24-year-old inhabitant of a government-owned hostel in Nilkhet, criticises the management. 'The food is not cooked with sufficient spices and looks unappealing. They use too much palm oil, and the rice is often too soft. We often find bugs in the daal,' she remarks. When the girls protest in the canteen, the matron assures them that the hygiene and quality will improve, but the effects are never consistent. Water shortages are another major issue. The girls are informed beforehand when water will be available and it becomes their responsibility to save up as much as they can in pails and bottles. 'Many a time we find the fan or light not working in our rooms,' she says. Formalities require them to hand in applications which result in nothing. 'They tell us to manage on our own, and we end up paying for the repairs,' she says. Boarders of ten rooms share two grimy bathrooms and the lights of one are out of order. 'We have to make do in the dark,' she sighs.

The hostel owners are more concerned about earning money than ensuring good services for its boarders, say some independent women. A private hostel called Rupali at Indira Road makes about Tk 9,000 for just one room with three boarders in it. Sometimes the amount can rise up to Tk 15,000 or even more as they try to fit new boarders into the rooms that are already occupied. One disappointed boarder says, 'the room I was placed in was for three people. A few days back the authority informed us that two more people would move in with us and we tried to protest but they asked us to leave if we do not agree. I pay Tk 3,500 per month and I do not think I receive the kind of service I deserve.' Ayesha Khanom feels there is no justification for this type of exploitation. 'This profit-making tendency is a chronic disease of

Bangladeshi society. It is linked to the lack of accountability,' she expounds.

The quality of service in most hostels are poor be it Rupali or anywhere else, says one resident of Rupali who has earlier lived with similar troubles in another hostel at Farmgate.

Eve teasing is another social problem faced by many women who live on their own. 'When I come and stand on my balcony at night I often have to witness one of my male neighbours indulging in explicit sexual innuendos directed towards me,' shares an appalled Neda, totally uncomfortable about the situation. Some of the authorities too are involved in harassing independent women with similar unpleasant behaviour.

The owner's son of a Dhanmondi hostel sought every opportunity to pry into girls' private affairs which made the girls very uncomfortable but there was hardly anything they could do about it, a former resident reports. 'The rule at the Banani flat I shared with eight other girls was that no men were allowed in the room. Ironically, the owner himself stayed a lot of the hours inside the house,' says Neda, half-smilingly.

In order to discourage such activities, Ayesha Khanom prescribes a 'multidimensional, collective approach,' where change needs to begin with families and continue in the educational system. She believes 'young men's participation in women's movements is essential to change the feudal attitudes and patriarchal mindsets.'

There are exceptions. Batikrom is a private hostel in Mohammadpur which actually devotes itself to helping women living alone through their services. They do not allow more students than their capacity and maintain a healthy and homely environment inside the hostels. Itee, one boarder of the hostel likes the place so much that she is not thinking of moving to any other place at the moment. She says, 'Hostel life is fun. I love the freedom. It is not like we are exploiting our liberty, because we have to abide by the hostel rules which put us under a controlled environment, yet this lifestyle teaches us to live independently.'

More than a double bind

* For one room shared by three women, a hostel charges from Tk 9,000 to Tk 15,000 or more

* Hostels are home to hundreds of girls from all over the country

* Landlords are unwilling to take in single female tenants

* Eve teasing and gossip in the building are common occurrences

* Most women living alone must return home before nightfall, restrict visitors and maintain conservative clothing

* Women not only end up paying more rent but also must tip security guards and accept lack of regular maintenance - from plumbing to electricity - while hostel inhabitants must accept theft as a regular phenomenon

- Example 2: This is an example of a background feature that I worked on by myself.

The mosquito menace

Tamara Zaman finds out why the actions of the city's insect and pest control to fight the mosquito population will ever remain an uphill struggle without bigger changes in the city's infrastructure, higher priority and more manpower involved

Every year the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) takes initiatives to bring the mosquito population under control. Every winter, the DCC staff is very visible with fogger machines spraying into bushes and onto ponds. These efforts seem to go in vain, as mosquitoes remain persistent with no signs of being eliminated.

'Even after ensuring my daughter's bed is free of mosquitoes inside the net, we constantly find new mosquito bite marks on her arms and legs,' shares Ashfaque Hossain, a service holder in Dhaka, about his eleven-month-old daughter. 'With so many reports of dengue in the papers, we constantly fear for her safety.'

Any resident of Dhaka will be able to vouch for the common problems people face regularly due to the constant presence of mosquitoes. The knowledge that the mosquito population is growing exponentially and a degree of familiarity with the health hazards involved is enough to get anyone to panic. The solutions are not as easy to list. Urban experts point fingers at DCC officials, who themselves throw the responsibility between the Health Department and the Engineering Department, while people suffer.

The issue of mosquitoes as vectors of numerous diseases is an alarming concern for city inhabitants. Malaria, dengue fever, kala azar and typhoid are some common illnesses spread via mosquitoes. 'Though the threat is highest in the monsoon season, there is a significant amount of patients suffering from these diseases in winter as well,' says Dr Ali Azgar of Maa O Shishu Clinic in the Notun Bazaar area. 'Children are most susceptible to these diseases.'

The structure of Dhaka City as well as the lack of adequately planned development facilitates lend to the increase in mosquito population rather than preventing it.

‘The infrastructure development of Dhaka City has a relationship with the large mosquito population in Dhaka. For one, the drainage system of the city is faulty. Constructions are not well-planned and this creates the possibilities of water congestion, which form the ideal breeding centres for mosquitoes,’ says Professor Nurul Islam Nazem from the Centre for Urban Studies who attempts to explain the reason behind the large mosquito population inhabiting Dhaka.

In many cases it is seen that the drains are filled with plastic bags and other garbage, which clog the drainage system. This invariably affects the drains in other parts of the city as well. ‘The road network is also flawed as there is no proper drainage link in many cases. Finally, the existing water bodies of Dhaka are poorly maintained and polluted, and the garbage that is disposed of gives off a bad smell, especially near rail lines and bostis (shantytowns).’

The DCC has an insect and pest control section, an offshoot of the Health Department, which takes part in mosquito control activities. When asked about the DCC’s specific plans to combat the problem this year, a DCC official explains how the system works. ‘We make a plan for the whole year, and not a separate one for winter,’ says senior entomologist at DCC, Nasimul Siraj, ‘which we act on after the mayor approves it.’

The plan allocates the Taka 17 crore budget given to the insect control division. ‘Taka 15 crore is for servicing and monitoring, and Taka two crore is for the purchase of equipment,’ he explains. This includes the purchase of the foggers and portable ULB machines carried on shoulders as well as the larger ones which are placed on trucks. The money is also spent on transportation costs, purchase of petrol for the operation of the equipment, the removal of kochuripana from eutrophicated ponds and stagnant water bodies and also the procurement of larvicide and adulticide.’

‘We kill mosquitoes in two ways,’ explains DCC staff Md Liakat Ali. ‘Larvicide is sprayed in the morning and targets the larvae of the mosquitoes. Adulticide is used in the afternoon, and this kills the adult mosquitoes. This year, we have had more rain, which accounts for the higher number of mosquitoes this year. Even if we kill the mosquitoes in Dhaka, mosquitoes do not maintain borders, so they fly in from neighbouring regions. We just have to accept it.’

‘There are only 22 inspectors in charge of 90 wards, who are brought in from the City Corporation to work overtime,’ Liakat reveals.

Who picks up the blame? Nazem explains that 'it is the responsibility of the DCC to tackle the issue. But dealing with it is not on their list of priorities. Ward commissioners and contractors spend a lot of money to get into the jobs for prestige. They are not motivated. There is no commitment to the job from their side, and the DCC takes no initiatives. There is too much bureaucracy there.'

Siraj expresses the difficulties with working in current conditions. 'Dhaka is divided into 10 zones and 90 wards, with each zone having no less than eight wards. We have a staff of merely 558, while in order to satisfy the public with our services, we need at least five times the labour we have now. For optimum results, employees need to go into the field every day.'

The difficulties don't end there. 'No vehicles are provided to us, and transport costs are not covered. How are they expected to cover the five or six miles they are in charge of?' Siraj asks. 'We still follow the municipality system, and no one has bothered to change it officially.'

Despite all the shortcomings, some party has to take responsibility and the task is generally associated with DCC. 'First and foremost, the breeding places need to be destroyed,' says Siraj.

'A clean environment solves 50 per cent of the problem. We need flowing drains so that the larvae of mosquitoes can wash out. It is the job of the engineering section to take care of drainage. They claim soil has accumulated in the drains, and hence they do not slope, so the water remains stagnant,' Siraj says. 'They show us plans and they probably have plans to fix the problem as well, but nothing has been done yet.'

Nazem stresses the importance of public awareness regarding mosquitoes, something that cannot be achieved overnight. 'One third of the garbage in the city is not managed well, but isolated cleaning is not the only solution,' he says. 'The government can clean up the city and the stagnant water, but individuals can also be active citizens and help out by keeping the areas surrounding their houses clean.'

He blames a poor level of urbanisation and behaviour problems stemming out of a lack of education and practice in the public for these issues.

Siraj agrees that the government cannot eliminate the nuisance of mosquitoes alone, and talks about DCC's investments in awareness raising programmes around the city. 'Dengue can kill, and filariasis and phallitis are other diseases people suffer from. Mosquitoes also cause disturbances in sleep; it has an impact on people both mentally and physically.'

DCC has taken a number of initiatives to help raise awareness among the public. Alongside advertisements in newspapers and non-government television channels as well as flyers and posters, Siraj outlines a few new measures to encourage broad participation in society. 'We have sent letters to Imams, requesting them to encourage participation of individuals in their localities after the Friday prayers. We have issued notes to REHAB, asking them to not make use of structures where water can collect. We have alerted tire and tube shops about disposing of materials which are potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes as well.'

There are few stones left unturned as far as Siraj is concerned, though the problem hardly seems to change. 'The new steps we have taken include visiting selected schools, where we talk to students of various classes for an hour and encourage them to spread awareness. We have also chosen 400 scouts to help us with our activities and get involved.'

- Example 3: This is an example of a background feature that is based entirely on secondary sources, unlike the previous examples.

British-Bangladeshis who have made a mark

What are British-Bangladeshis up to in the UK? Tamara Zaman searches out people originally from Bangladesh who have made a name for themselves, one way or another

From world-class chefs to choreographers and musicians to novelists, British-Bangladeshis have ventured into diverse fields, and very successfully too.

Initially, many Bangladeshis moved to the UK in search of better job opportunities, quality education and higher standards of living. In economic terms, a large part of the money earned by Bangladeshis living in Britain was sent back to Bangladesh in the form of remittance.

An academic paper by Dr David Garbin Cronem of the University of Surrey, titled 'Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK: some observations on socio-cultural dynamics, religious trends and transnational politics,'

reports that 283, 063 Bangladeshis resided in the United Kingdom in 2001. At the time that amounted to 0.5 per cent of the entire population. 54 per cent of the Bangladeshi population in the UK lives in the London area alone, and Tower Hamlets is considered to be the 'heartland of the London Bangladeshi community.' The third generation of Bangladeshis in the UK constitute roughly about half the British Bangladeshi population.

Akram Khan

Why does his name sound familiar? You're probably thinking of the cricketer by the same name. Or you're thinking about the artist/performer who accused us all of being incapable of comprehending the beauty of his choreography — a fusion of traditional and contemporary dance. That's him: Akram Khan, the British-Bangladeshi dancer and choreographer. You might remember him if you've seen Peter Brook's production of *The Mahabharata*; he played the part of Ekalavya and was only 14 years old.

Akram Khan was born on July 29, 1974, in London. His Bangladeshi parents who are of Pakistani descent, made efforts to keep him in touch with Bangladeshi culture and tradition. Learning traditional dance, Kathak, was his mother's idea. Over the years, his performances have gained recognition; *Polaroid Feet* (2001), *Kaash* (2002), *Third Catalogue* (2005) *Zero degrees* (2005) and *Bahok* (2008) are his most notable works. Khan has been a fan of Australian pop singer and songwriter Kylie Minogue for a long time, so you can imagine how he must have felt when she asked him to choreograph 20 minutes of her concert *Showgirl* in 2006.

The Excellence in International Dance Award (2007) by the International Theatre Institute, the Best Choreography in a Ballet or Dance Work (2007) at the Helpmann Awards, an Honorary Doctorate of Arts award from De Montfort University (2004) and the International Movimentos Tanzpreis for Most Promising Newcomer in Dance (2004) are only a few of the major titles and awards that British Bangladeshi dancer Akram Khan has accredited to his name. In addition to these awards, perhaps the most prestigious one Khan has been given is the status of MBE for his contribution to Arts in the UK.

Iqbal Ahmed

At a time when Bangladeshis are hesitant about calculating the worth of their assets, there is one man who proudly breaks this norm. Our very own Iqbal Ahmed, who was awarded the status of OBE, was placed at number 511 on the Sunday Times Rich List 2006, with his wealth valued at £110 million.

Known as 'Mr Shrimp' or 'King Prawn' in the British community, Iqbal Ahmed turned Manchester into the shrimp capital of Europe. He made his fortune from importing fish and other seafood to England from Bangladeshi hatcheries. He has also earned a Queen's Award for

Export.

Manzila Pola Uddin

Baroness Uddin is the first Muslim woman in the House of Lords. She is a Labour Party politician, and was one of the signees of a letter to Tony Blair in 2006, which criticized the UK's foreign policy.

Baroness Uddin was born in Bangladesh in 1959 and brought up in Tower Hamlets. She studied social work and was actively involved in community work. Her areas of interest include education, equal opportunities and disability rights. In 1990, she was elected to be a Labour councillor in Tower Hamlets, which made her the first Bangladeshi woman to hold a position of local authority in the UK.

Anwar Uddin

Anwar Uddin is a professional English footballer – the only Bangladeshi so far – who started off his career at West Ham United as a captain in the youth and reserve teams. Earlier this year, Kazi Salahuddin, chief of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), invited Uddin to play for the Bangladesh national football team, but apparently he has not made his decision as of yet.

Anwar Uddin was born on November 1, 1981 in Whitechapel, London. One of the highlights of his career is the victory against Coventry City in the 1999 FA Youth Cup. This British-Bangladeshi has won over seven Man-of-the-Match awards. He has moved around several clubs including Sheffield Wednesday and Bristol Rovers before settling down with Dagenham & Redbridge, where he is the captain and defender in Football League Two.

Boyan Chowdhury

Boyan Chowdhury was born in 1983 and was brought up in Liverpool. He achieved his fame with the indie rock band The Zutons. He was the lead guitarist for the English band before he left in 2007 due to 'musical differences.' Samples of his work with The Zutons as well as solo works are available on his MySpace page. He then started his own band by the name of The Gravity Trap. With The Zutons, Chowdhury saw quite a bit of success, bringing out the albums Devil's Deal, Creepin' and A Crawlin' and the single Haunts Me. Their debut album entitled Who Killed..... The Zutons? came out in 2004, and reached 13 in the UK album charts and moved up to place 9 the following year. In 2006, after the release of their second album and their UK tour, The Zutons recorded a session with Live from Abbey Road. 'It was like splitting up with someone. It set us back in a way and moved us forward too. I had a little bit of a cry about it. I'm not

ashamed to admit. It was hard confronting him about it,' commented one of his former band members.

Shefali Chowdhury

Shefali Chowdhury is best known for her performance as Parvati Patil in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire as well as Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. The 20-year old Welsh actress was cast for the role while she was still in her final school year. She has also played an uncredited role in a Tamil movie called Kannathil Muthamittal. She is currently studying Photography in Birmingham.

Syed Ahmed

Born in Sylhet in 1975, and raised in Bethnal Greens, Syed Ahmed participated in the British version of The Apprentice (season two), with Sir Alan Sugar as 'the boss'. He got fired in week 10 for being careless with recording details of a day-long event on the deck of a cruise ship. Ahmed had an affair with fellow contestant Michelle Dewberry, which ended after Dewberry had a miscarriage.

At present, Ahmed is the CEO of SA Vortex Limited, developers of energy-efficient, carbon emission-reducing hand and body driers.

Ahmed has made his way into the public eye on a number of other occasions. In July 2006, Ahmed was arrested for drunk driving while his license had already been suspended. He was given a two-month suspended jail sentence and banned from driving for three years. He was arrested again in August, on suspicions of being involved in a money laundering incident involving a sum of £400, 000. The charges were pressed by Terry Brady, former director of the Portsmouth Football Club.

Konnie Huq

Konnie Huq was the longest serving female presenter of the children's programme Blue Peter, holding the record at ten years (1997-2008). Huq is a British- Bangladeshi TV presenter and she began her career as early as 1989, when she sang a solo on Blue Peter with the National Youth Music Theatre. She has been the main presenter of a number of other shows including Milkshake (2007), UK Top 40 (2002-2004), ITV1 London (2007), New York Fashion Week (2007) and Zoo Days (2008).

Huq was born in Hammersmith, London, to Bangladeshi parents in 1975. Earlier this year, Huq was one of the 80 carriers of the Olympic Torch relay through London. When she was passing the Torch on to the next runner, a protester attempted to snatch it away from her. The police intervened. Huq has turned down a six-figure offer from Playboy Magazine and one Loaded Magazine to pose for their covers.

Kia Abdullah

Kia Abdullah was born in Tower Hamlets in 1982. The publications of *Love, Life & Assimilation* and *Innocence Lost* acknowledge Kia Abdullah's talent and success as an author. Abdullah's books tell 'real' stories about the struggles Asian women encounter growing up in London. Her novels have been compared to others with similar themes like *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali, and were met with the same kind of controversy. On the one hand, they were praised for being so realistic in their portrayal, and on the other, they were being criticised for being 'offensively bold', dealing with the drug abuse problems in Tower Hamlets and 'explicit' scenes. 'I wanted to write a novel that did not sugarcoat what it's like to be last in the pecking order of society; a female member of a racial minority with a faith that is plundered and vilified all across the western world. I wanted to show what it's really like to be a modern Asian woman caught between two cultures, two minds and two hearts. This is something I feel I have achieved through *Love, Life & Assimilation*.'

And Abdullah continues to write with this zeal. At present, she is a sub-editor for a magazine called *Asian Women* and is a weekly columnist in *The Docklands* newspaper. She has appeared on numerous programmes on BBC and Channel 4, to speak about issues affecting the Asian community.

Abdul Latif

The late Abdul Latif (1954 – 2008) was a British-Bangladeshi restaurateur, who claimed that his restaurant, the *Rupali*, served the world's hottest curry. Located in Newcastle, the *Rupali* made its way into the Guinness Book of Records in 2004 for making the longest curry delivery ever. A frozen vegetable biryani and peshwari naan bread from his restaurant was delivered to Sydney, which is almost 11,000 miles away.

'Curry Hell' is one of the specialities of the restaurant, which is offered free of charge to anyone who manages to finish it. The dish is so extremely spicy that only two or three out of hundreds of customers have been able to do so; a man from Manchester set a record by completing this dish, which has been compared to molten lava, in 90 seconds flat much to the amazement of everyone present.

Latif's roots trace back to Sylhet, which he left in 1969 to move to England. He started off as a waiter in a restaurant before he established his own in 1977. In his lifetime, Latif indulged in a number of activities of a rather interesting nature, to say the least. He bought himself the manorial title of Lord of Harpole (a parish in Suffolk) for £5,500 in 1994. Latif offered free curry to pregnant women, personalities like Jonny Wilkinson, Graeme Souness and British military personnel on leave from Iraq. He served mulligatawny soup in steel ashtrays. In 2003, Latif was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 2003

for 'his efforts to make a difference in society.'

The next year, when the restaurant went into liquidation, his son took over and renamed it the Curry Capital.

Lisa Aziz

With numerous awards and titles to her name, Lisa Aziz is most known for being an anchor on Sky News for 10 years. On completion of her BA (Hons) in History of Arts and Religious Studies at the University of London, Lisa Aziz became a presenter at Radio City in Liverpool. Aziz joined HTV West as a television reporter and a presenter. During her career at TV-am, Aziz made a name for herself reporting travel features and news of the cyclone that hit Bangladesh. After working as a news presenter at TV-am and Sky News, Aziz moved on to Bristol-based ITV West, where she was a newscaster of The West Tonight, the evening news on weeknights. Aziz won the EMMA award for Best Television News Journalist (2004), TRIC Presenter of the Year (1992/1993), Asian of the Year (1989) and the Achievement Award (1989) from the Asian business community.

Eenasul Fateh

Eenasul Fateh is the son of Abul Fateh, Bangladesh's first foreign secretary, who achieved a high status in the days of East Pakistan. During the Liberation War of 1971, Abul Fateh took all the money out of the Pakistani Embassy in Baghdad, and forwarded it to Bangladesh. The story of his flight with his family during the war has been documented by the National Geographic under the name Running for Freedom, a documentary on refugees from across the globe who are settling in London.

So Eenasul Fateh, who was born in Washington DC, grew up in London as a refugee from Bangladesh. He has made a name for himself as the self-taught magician Aladin, and is one of only two Golden Turban members of the Magic Academy of Bangalore, India. He is also a former International Magician of the Year and has been a Selected Artist at the National Review of Live Arts U.K.. He starred in the movie Magicians (2007). His tricks filmed as part of a compilation of skills for a DVD called Book of Cool.

Runa Islam

Born in 1970 in Dhaka, Runa Islam is a visual artist dealing primarily with film and photography, who grew up in London and attended the Royal College of Art, London and at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam. She participated in the 51st Venice Biennale, which is a contemporary art exhibition held in Italy

every two years, as well as the Prague Biennale 2, in 2005.
Islam has been short listed for the Turner Prize 2008.

5.5 The Opinion Feature

- Example 1: During my internship period, I did not have the opportunity to write an opinion feature, so here is an example of one written by Amanat Ullah Khan.

Anger management: urgently needed governance tool

by Amanat Ullah Khan

I am back in my city. It's so hot here! It's the 'climate' man! If we could steer this change for the better! No, you cannot change climate the way you want it.

It chooses its own way and that has been the rule for millions of years of earth's history. It has changed and changed. We had multiple ice ages when continental ice sheets covered much of the world and intervening warm periods when the ice sheets receded to their polar location, all in our 'recent' geological history. We are only beginning to understand the complex 'SUN' centred processes involved in all these changes.

However, let's come back to some issues that are influencing the political and social climate. I like to take the issue of the 'sit-in' that our empty-handed returnees from Malaysia, observed. These unfortunate young people have been duped into buying those useless pieces of paper that you call 'work permit' from recruiting agencies run by people with no scruples. They sell all their ancestral properties, borrow at high interests and are very vulnerable to the sales pitches of the recruiting agents. In the end dreams are shattered, families are destroyed. The result is 'anger' against the state that accumulates. The state has a duty to ensure that they are not duped, defrauded and pauperised. Additionally, like the organised groups – the BGMEA or the FBCCI – members, they also possess the right to the government largesse that is being demanded invoking the world wide financial crisis and the resulting export difficulties. These people are also exporters – exporters of their labour. They do not have their own organisation. I am very scared of the collective 'anger' that accumulates. This has time and again shattered our peace and

tranquillity. Recent happenings that shocked the nation are evidence of how completely unable we are, in anger management. Leaders please take note.

The manpower export policy should be proactive and dynamic to the rapidly changing employment situation around the world. While we try to respond quickly to the immediate demands of various countries, we should be researching the future manpower need pattern of many of the countries that like to take our people. The nature of the economic growth of these countries, the short term and the long term trends in their demographic structure, the manpower strategies and plans of our competitors in the manpower export business has to be studied. Sometimes you do it like 'intelligence' gathering. We need dedicated 'think-tanks' for such activities.

We also need to design our education and skill development system responsive to national as well as external needs. There was a time when it was sufficient for an education commission to plan for education and skill development in such a way as to make provision for the young graduates' (of high schools, technical schools, madrassahs, colleges and universities) employment in various sectors within the country.

An ambitious education plan in the past may have attempted to expand the number of jobs available in the existing employment sectors of the country. But in the present day globalised world, such a commission should plan for making our graduates employable all over the world. The kind of skills needed in North America, Europe, the Middle East and South Asia all should be researched and the education policy should be responding to that. The education planners should be looking very well within the country and beyond our borders.

For a country that says it is committed to a digital future for its young people, its planners should already be on the drawing board and comparing various plans and strategies and studying the plans of our competitors. This spirit of competition must be ensured in everything we do if we are to succeed. And being very successful within the country, nowadays, may mean nothing as one has to immediately compete with people of other nations. If we had begun this practice earlier, we would not have a 'sit-in' at our airports that we had witnessed.

Are we really doing this? No, unfortunately! It is not yet clear what the government is doing. There have been statements that the new education policy would be designed in the light of the Qudrat-e-Khuda commission. At this moment I do not have the details of the report. Even then I would like to venture that, the world was a different place when that commission report was drafted years ago. The policy and programmes of our education and skill development should be both ideological as well as 'practicalological' (what I call) – meaning

targeting particular employment sectors in particular geographical regions so that our response to the situation becomes practical. So the whole world is ours.

What are we doing? I hear one of my former colleagues at the university (according to the newspapers and has not been denied) saying 'I have to listen to the requests of the people who have brought me to the post!' – I am amazed. I know that the honourable chancellor has appointed him. Is he accusing the chancellor of violating the admission rules of the university that he presides over? We are getting reports of extensive 'bharti banijjo' from many other leading institutions. A lot of young people are now being denied their proper admission and opportunities for proper education.

Would you be able to manage the anger that such injustice will produce?

6. Judging a Feature

What makes a good feature, many people inquire. What gives it that extra edge that compels readers to not put the magazine down until the entire feature has been read? While people tend to believe it is mainly the topic and the reader's interest in it or shrug it off as "a good piece" there is a lot more to the stylistics than meets the eye. Sure, there is a lot of thought behind the actual theme and its relevance to readers, but the following aspects characteristic of features help to sustain attention to say the least.

- A solid intro: whether it be an anecdote, a quote, the description of an image or a human story, the kind of intro used has got to be right for the story and captivate readers immediately.
- Quotations: Without real comments from the people involved or whom the article is about, the feature would be completely dull and flat. Quotes bring the story to life for readers.
- Language: While the language needs to be sophisticated and precise to maintain the standard of writing, feature writers need to be wary that they do not overdo it with thesaurus-worthy vocabulary. Readers of features comprise a general audience, and hence the language should exceed their level.

An editor edits for six Cs:

1. clarity
2. comprehensibility
3. cohesion
4. coherence
5. correctness
6. consistency

In addition to everything mentioned so far, these C's are vital for the writer to keep in mind during the writing process. While MS Word will correct most typos, spelling or grammatical mistakes, thanks to the state of technology today, the editor need not bother herself or himself with these as much as before- proofreaders pay more

attention to such errors. Editors place more emphasis on the structure of the article, and its appeal to the respective readers.

The label “a good feature” is relative: to an editor, this would be one that follows all the rules in the book yet brings an unprecedented yet highly appreciated dynamism to the table. For a reader, it would probably be less formulaic; a blend of new information juxtaposed against a familiar context written in a captivating style can be considered “good”.

7. A Personal Account

I enjoyed my three month long period at the *New Age* a lot. Among the highlights are meeting various personalities prominent in the media circle, conversing with a variety of people on a multitude of topics and gaining invaluable experience from working with the outstanding team that backs the two publications at *New Age*, *Xtra* and *Trends*.

As explained in previous chapters, *Xtra* deals primarily with somber, current issues. The cover stories deal mostly with hard news items that have made the headlines recently, contemporary events or in-depth articles about proverbial subjects of the more investigative type. *Xtra* includes soft news as well, like the reviews and Digest. Writing for *Xtra* therefore naturally required thorough research, a scrupulous understanding of the matter and interviews with more than one expert source. Coming up with story ideas was quite challenging.

Trends, the lifestyle magazine, seemed to be my cup of tea, with areas of interest revolving around food, fashion, shopping, healthy habits and so on. Product reviews and story reviews were prime focuses, and one's own inclinations could underlie the angle of the stories. While *Xtra* is concerned with hardcore facts, *Trends* employs a more laidback approach, and the language used reflects this well. With *Trends*, write-ups could be more descriptive, the language could be baroque and all-in-all rather flexible, as endorsing a certain lifestyle, appliance, accessory or designer was the target. *Xtra*, however, has a more formal, impersonal outlook.

8. Conclusion

Spending twelve weeks at *New Age* has undoubtedly shaped my notions and understanding of the newspaper industry here in Dhaka. Not only has the experience enhanced my theoretical knowledge, it has also given me real-life practice and just the kind of exposure to print media journalism that I had been hoping for.

Meeting deadlines and conducting relevant interviews for an article was not always easy; in fact it was among the biggest challenges. Working in this fast-paced environment has made me a more informed and effective writer. As this report aims to validate, my horizons have expanded and I believe I have grown as a person as well, alongside my work.

One thing that has left a major impression on me is the spontaneous nature of a feature writer's job. Nothing besides the meeting times is ever repetitive. Each assignment is different from the next; one interviewee's attitudes are a complete contrast to the attitudes of the next. Although the duration of the internship is short, one learns to cope and adjust. Having had the opportunity to get acquainted to all the processes that go into the publication of a magazine: starting with conceiving ideas for articles to finding relevant sources to writing and editing the stories, I truly feel that I am one of the privileged few who was able to relive a childhood dream through an internship.

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