

Learning feature writing: Experiences from *The Daily Star*



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Abstract

Keeping with my concentration, I choose “The Star magazine” of *The Daily Star* to commence my internship, where I could meet both my interest and academic knowledge. I joined “The Star Magazine” as an intern feature writer on 11th May, 2014 and worked for twelve weeks till 2nd August, 2014 as a part of my under graduation program. In these twelve weeks, I have witnessed different steps of making news and writing feature stories. During this internship, I was able to closely observe the *Daily Star* department involved with writing and editing features. I have written a number of features and was involved in different works related to it too. So, this internship report mainly focuses on the process of feature writing based on my experience.

This paper is divided into four chapters. The first chapter initiates the idea of journalism and the immense power of mass media in today’s life. The second chapter takes a glance at the newspaper industry of Bangladesh and global. However, the focus of this chapter remains on the history of *The Daily Star* and how it became a name. The third chapter describes the process of feature writing through my experience during my internship at *Daily Star*. Here, I have introduced ‘The Star Magazine’ where I actually worked, including its different segments and working process. I have also related my experience with different theories and my academic knowledge. This was a life changing experience for me as it helped shape my writing skills and has also helped me to learn new things and re think issues of our life.

Overall, this paper is a looking back on my exciting and rewarding journey of becoming a feature writer in the nurturing environment of “The Star Magazine”.

Introduction

Today's world is more global than it used be. Modern societies are based on a sense of mutual awareness and connectivity. Contemporary societies are characterized by mass and electronic media. But mass and electronic media date back to traditional written and print journalism. So, perhaps it would not be wrong to say that much of the advancement made by twentieth and twenty first century has been done with a blessing of a great organism called journalism. This is one of the greatest source by which we are able to know not only what is happening around us in our society or in our country but also what is happening all over the world. Journalism is a form of writing that informs people about the things which are happening around them and which are not known to everyone. It is also a practice for investigating the truth and facts and reporting or sharing it with the whole world through print media, visual media, online media such as newspaper, magazines, books, radio and television stations and networks, blogs and social media. Journalism is a very broad aspect and has many different forms. News, Opinion and Online are three different forms of journalism. Breaking news, Feature stories, Investigative stories are the part of news; Editorials, Columns, Reviews are the part of opinion and Blogs, Online news are the part of online journalism.

In recent time different forms of Journalism plays a vital role in our life. From dawn to dusk directly or indirectly we are dependent on newspaper, online news, editorial, columns and features. News is the part of journalism that provides us information and creates awareness of those remarkable incidents and problems which are taking place around us. They recreate ideologies; subvert or reinforce social, religious and political stereotypes. On a more technical note, news deals with those particular issues which have important, positive and negative impact on us. News is note- worthy information especially about current events.

On the other hand feature writing is a popular substance of newspaper, magazines, blogs, websites and other mass media and it does not always deal with fresh issues. It always deals with published news which has impact on us and on our society. It covers the stories in depth and does more research than the hard news and explains the most interesting elements of a situation or occurrences. Feature writing is more liberal than hard news writing. It provides the writers, reports and editors more flexibility to write. The most interesting aspect of feature writing is that it does not follow any ‘Kipling’s Points’ the 5 W’s and 1 H and ‘Inverted Pyramid’¹ structure. This is why writers, reporters and editors are able to use their creativity. But it always follows the five value factors such as proximity², prominence³, oddity⁴, timeliness⁵, and consequences⁶. One who writes feature stories he or she must have good command or mastery on the target language.

When I got chance to do my Bachelors in Media concentration of English and Humanities Department at BRAC University, I put my first step to know about the process of newspaper and magazines. I have done different courses regarding media during my Bachelors (Hons) such as Editing, Copywriting, Cultural Studies, Globalization and Media, Translation Studies and English for Print Media, which taught me many steps, methods, procedures and helped me to gain knowledge about the process of newspaper and magazine. When the time came for me to do my internship and gather experience in the media world I was in a great dilemma. By crossing all the odds and dilemmas “*The Daily Star*” gave me a marvelous opportunity to join as an intern feature writer at “*The Star Magazine*”

¹ Inverted Pyramid is the method in which the information of the stories or news should be in order of importance.

² Stories or incidents that are occurring nearby us, within our country and all these incidents and stories are more newsworthy than any other stories that are occurring outside our country.

³ Stories and incidents occurring with the celebrities, well-known person and prominent person have higher news value for the readers.

⁴ Something very odd and unusual incident take place in our society. Such as, cow with three legs.

⁵ Incidents that have taken place recently. Those have more news value than earlier happenings.

⁶ Incident or story that has a positive or negative impact on the readers. Readers are always influenced by those stories.

Chapter Two: A glance at the Newspaper industry and the history of *the Daily Star* in brief

We are living in 21st century where everything is based on communication and we are fully depended on media. Modern societies and media are connected with each other. From the moment we woke up till we go to sleep we are constantly attached with communication in different form. Newspaper is one of the most important media and communication component which is related with our daily life and of our social life. From the very beginning of the society it is the most common, famous and mostly used medium around the globe to convey latest news to the readers. The role of newspaper is not limited in delivering news to the whole world but it also creates public awareness amongst the people. Journalists are the guardian of the society and they are providing us the truth. In this modern time, the role of a newspaper is noteworthy in the trade, commerce and business. To promote new products big corporate houses and business houses give ads on the newspaper. Not only advertisements but also sports, educational, entertainment, editorials are also a part of newspaper. The readers get the knowledge of everything in one place.

2.1History of Newspaper:

Newspaper is the most common and famous form of print media. It is a piece of paper where news, articles, editorials, features and advertisements are printed and distributed to the people. A newspaper can be daily, weekly, monthly and yearly. Newspaper was not invented in one day. The history of it is very interesting. From Mary Bellis's article named "Timeline of the Newspaper History" I came to know that first newspaper was published at 59 B.C in

Rome. It was called Acta Diurna⁷. By the flow of the time the idea of the newspaper spread all over the world and become popular amongst the people. Daniel Defoe is considered as the world's first journalist. The history of newspaper dates back to the early 17th century. At that time newspaper was handwritten and published only for the aristocrats regarding particular matters. Johannes Gutenberg invented the first printing press at 1445 AD and William Caxton introduces the printing press into England at 1476 AD.



First picture from the left is the first printing machine; second picture on the left hand is the first journalist in the world Daniel Defoe; Middle picture is Acta Diurna and last picture on the right hand is Johannes Gutenberg the inventor of printing press.

At the very first time, newspaper was only for the royal families. In 1512 Henry VIII created the Royal Mail and by 1635 King Charles allowed private citizens to use newspaper by giving a fee. During the Industrial Revolution, newspaper was being sold whole over the world on a regular basis. It played a very important role during Industrial Revolution and become famous. Tim Lambert in his article named “A Brief History of Newspaper” explained the history of famous newspaper. In 20th century, newspaper changed a lot and some of

⁷World's first newspaper

famous newspapers were introduced to the world. Such as “*The Daily Herald*”, “*The Sun*”, “*The Daily Star*”. In 1986 the first color newspaper was introduced in Britain.

2.2 History of Bangladeshis Newspaper:

From “First Newspaper in Bangladesh” article we came to know that, in Bangladesh first printing press was introduced during 1847 in Rangpur. *Rangpur Barttabaha* was the first weekly newspaper that published from Rangpur printing press in August, 1847. The first two Bengali papers were published from this printing press. The first English newspaper in Bangladesh was *The Dacca* and it was printed and published from Dhaka in 1856.



Picture no 1 is the newspaper of Bangladesh before independence, Picture no 2 is the first newspaper of Bangladesh after independence and Picture no 3 is the first Bengali newspaper.

Newspaper has played a vital role in The Independence war of Bangladesh of 1971. During the liberation war of Bangladesh, newspaper was a very important weapon to convey the situation of our country to the whole world. The first newspaper of Independent Bangladesh was *The Daily Azadi (Dainik Azadi)*. After the independence of Bangladesh on

17th December, 1971 only one newspaper was published and that was *The Daily Azadi*(*Dainik Azadi*) and their headline was “Joy Bangla, Banglar Joy”. Muhammed Abdul Khaleque was the founder of this newspaper.

2.3 History of *the Daily Star*:

The Daily Star is the most popular and English daily newspaper in Bangladesh. People of different ages, classes from home and abroad read this newspaper. From “*The Daily Star*” website I came to know that, this newspaper started its journey as an independent daily English newspaper on January 14, 1991. Syed Mohammed Ali founded this newspaper at a very crucial political moment when the military autocratic regime was failed and Bangladesh was ready for a new era for establishing democracy. The motto of this newspaper is “Committed to People’s Right to Know”



Logo of *the Daily Star*

Mahfuz Anam a freedom fighter and former United Nations official, an editor is leading this newspaper. There is also Board of Directors conduct by six members are also leading this organization. Many journalists, reporters, photographers and editors from home and abroad are the member of this organization. In today’s date, 280 staffs are working in this newspaper and between them 40 are female staffs. Beside these staffs there are many contributors who are contributing their works with this newspaper in search of truth and create public awareness. It is organized in many sections, such as News, Opinion and

Editorial, Star Business, Law and Our Rights, Star Sports, Arts and Entertainment, National and Metropolitan, Advertisement, Educational Sector and Online section. All these sections are published on daily basis. It also has some major magazines and supplements including The Star, Lifestyle, Shout and Science and Life. Almost every one of every class, age and religion read this newspaper. It is a great platform where the creativity is given preference. It is providing new, fresh news everyday and creating public awareness through the weekly magazines. This newspaper is attracting ladies and teen ager girls and boys through their “Lifestyle magazine”. This magazine is all about fashion. “The Star Magazine” is for every conscious people as it publishes every small detail of the problems and burning issues in the society.

In today’s world where the gender discrimination, racism, biasness in religion is a burning issue “*The Daily Star*” newspaper does not believe in all this issues. Every staffs, any gender, any skin tone and any religion related with this organization doing their work in unbiased environment where everybody is everybody’s friend. It is a very good platform for everyone and creativity has its own space. This newspaper is also maintaining the transparency and accountability with its administrative and national interest. The most interesting part of this newspaper is it holds a great number of press releases regarding burning issues on a regular basis. It also organizes different educational programs and events for the students of schools, colleges and universities such as Spelling Bee and motivates students.

In one word, we can say that *The Daily Star* is the most widely distributed and appreciated English newspaper of Bangladesh. It has also online version which help those Bangladeshi people who living far away from the country to keep connect with their motherland.

Chapter Three

Learning feature writing: Experiences from the *Daily Star*

As a part of the requirement for my B.A (Hons), I had the opportunity to work at *The Daily Star* as an intern. I was given the opportunity to undertake my internship in one of their popular magazines called “The Star” magazine. It was an exciting opportunity for me as the magazine offers a lot to learn from. It is a weekly magazine and is published on every Friday. This department is managed by the magazine editor who is assisted by the assistant magazine editor, senior staff reporter, photographer, graphics designer and staff reporters. In total, this department has nine members. Together they are an enlightening company who made my transition from a student to a professional easier and very interesting.



Team members of “The Star” Magazine

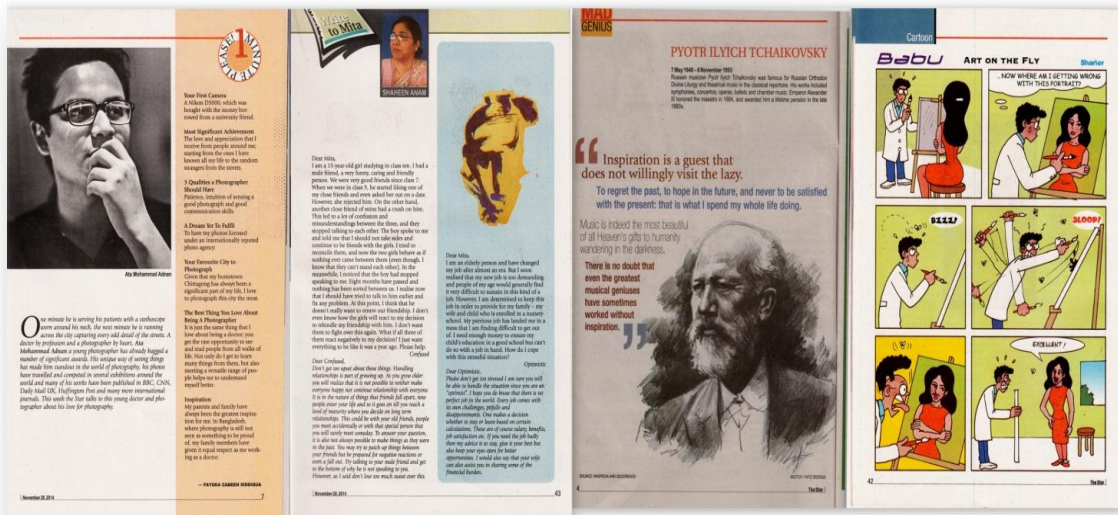
The staffs including the editor welcomed me and helped me in every step during my internship. Beside the members of the department another important matter for an institution is its environment. The environment of this organization is very friendly, gracious and sociable. Moreover, there was no instance of gender harassment or racism. So, when I entered

the office I did not feel unease and was very comfortable. This department always takes young interns and trains them in becoming professionals. So, I was in good hands. Instead of burdening me with pressure, they helped me learn things slow but effectively. It was the first time for me to work in any newspaper magazine and the writing strategies were different from my academic writing strategies, to some extent. Therefore, initially it was a little difficult for me as I had to work a lot but as days past I could see the meeting point of academic writing and professional journalism and was able to find my style.

3.1. Segments of ‘The Star Magazine’:

I joined “*The Daily Star*” on 11th May, 2014. In my first week, they introduced me with the entire department, with the process of magazine and its writing strategies. But as I was going to work as a feature writer, they sent me to the magazine sections. There are a few sections where their regular contributors contribute their writings. The regular sections are called ‘**Mad Genius**’ ‘**One Minute Please**’ ‘**Strange History**’ and ‘**Write to Mita**’. The ‘**Mad Genius**’ section provides biographies of people who are recognized as rare talents. But in doing so, they start with a famous quotation from that person. “**One Minute Please**” gives the readers information about their favorite singers, artists, actors and directors. This section also talks about their dreams and information about the things they are planning for the future. So, it’s quite catchy for readers of all age. This is also weekly and it chooses one famous personality and interviews them about their interests and life. “**Strange History**” is about unusual things that happened in different parts of the world. It requires a lot of research as they must find unusual things and keep it coming. All However, “**Write to Mita**” is perhaps the most well read segment of “the Star Magazine” as it reaches out to the readers directly. The name is well justified as it is called “Mita” which is friend in Bangla. Readers can share their problems and seek solutions in “**Write to Mita**”. Readers send their problems

to a given address and the advisor, who works almost as a psychiatrist, tries to give them useful guidelines. Shaheen Alam is working presently as the voice of Mita.



Sections of “The Star” Magazine

The main purpose of this magazine is to provide all types of knowledge and information to the readers from present situations to past problems. There are few more sections in this magazine which provide different news about science, outside countries. “Star Magazine” also has cartoons for the entertainment of its youngest readers. The cartoon “Babu” written by Shahriar is very famous among the children. So, what *the Daily Star* or its magazine section does is that it provides everything that the readers might need to know. Starting from daily affairs to politics, trade and commerce, entertainment and education and life style- it covers everything. Whereas, the regular newspaper of Star called *the Daily Star* serves the purpose of presenting news to readers in a written tradition, “the Star magazine” makes it more interesting with sections like “Mad Genius”, “One Minute Please”, “Strange History” and “Write to Mita”.

It was very interesting to see all these process of news happening and be part of it. I wrote three features entitled “Public Transportation for Women”, “Stop Poisoning Us”

and “**A Window to Our Past through the Coins**”. In the first one I researched on the problems that women face during travelling in the public buses. “Stop Poisoning Us” is an interview based article where I talked about food adulteration, a common phenomena in Bangladesh. “A Window to Our Past through the Coins” was an interesting feature on currency museum that might interest many. I have also done some writing in “Mad Genius” and “Strange History”. While working on these segments, I applied some cultural theories and perspectives like Feminism⁸, which I learned from my studies.

It was really an interesting experience as I could never be bore. I had to think and research a lot on topics and had to look for ways to make the features interesting and easy read. Writing this features have not only helped shape my writing skills but they have also helped me to learn new things and re think things. “**Public Transportation for Women**” provided me with a chance to investigate gender sensitive issues which we rather not talk of and I could finally lend my own voice into a matter like this. Other articles have also helped me to think more critically and to become a good researcher. This was a self awakening stage for me as well. In trying to voice public awareness, I have come to be more aware of things around us then I was before.

3.2 Categories of Feature

While working with the team of the Star, I have come to know about different types and categories of features. This knowledge is important as this helps a feature writer to better understand the purpose of his/her article. Such as:

- **Human Interest:** Human Interest feature is very popular, common and best-known kind feature story. This feature story discusses issues through the experience of

⁸Feminism is a collection of movements and ideologies that aimed to establish women rights.

another person. "Stop Poisoning Us", one of my interview based article could be an example of this.

- **Profiles:** Profiles is that kind of feature story which talks about and reveals an individual character's lifestyle by collecting information through interview. By this readers will feel that they know the person by their different facets. Examples could include "One minute please" section contains this type of feature



(These pictures have been used in my articles) Picture no 1: Currency Museum of Bangladesh, Picture no 2: Public Transportation for Women in Dhaka, Picture no 3: Human chain against food adulteration in front of press club.

- **Seasonal Features:** This type of features covers highlights life, social cycle, cultural and business cycle in our society. Example of this type of feature could be "Cerebral Celebration" which was written on the occasion of Hay Festival 2014 by the Star Magazine.

- **Behind the Scenes:** Behind the Scenes is that type of feature which talks about the inside views of unusual occupations, issues and stories. It is like sharing the knowledge of something secret and private to the readers. Example of this feature could be “**Stop Poisoning Us**”, a feature I wrote on my third week which contained information about food adulteration.

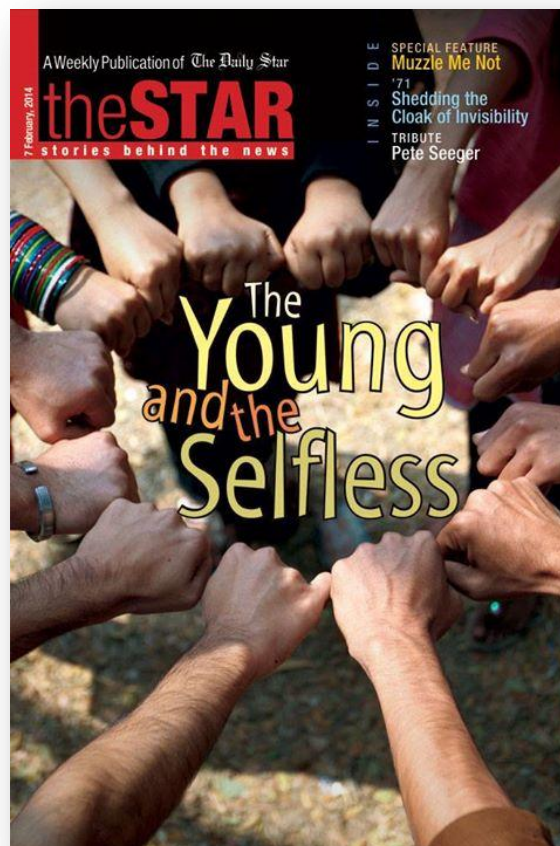
Beside all this types there are few more types of feature. Those types are:

- **News Features:** Usually written as follow-up or as a sidebar story that is linked to a breaking news event
- **Gonzo Journalism:** Gonzo journalism is a style of journalism where personal experiences and emotions are used to provide background information of the topic or event being covered.
- **Trend Stories:** A trend story examines people, things or organizations that are having an impact on fashion and trends within the society.
- **Follow-up or Spot Feature:** This feature stories produced on deadline that focus on a breaking news event.
- **Travel writing:** This feature is about the writers travelling experience.

3.3 How the Star Magazine Works:

There are some important steps to process a whole magazine. As “The Star” magazine publishes every week’s Friday and the deadline for submitting magazine is on Tuesday. First step to process magazine is on Wednesday. “The Star” magazine’s editor sits with every member of the group and discuss about the write ups for the next issue. In the meeting they fix on what topic and who will do the cover story. Sometimes it is very hard for them to decide the cover story. While deciding the cover story we need to keep few things in mind. Like the topic that we are deciding is suitable for the readers or not, is the topic is perfect

with the time or not. As example, they had done one cover story on ‘Zakat’ titled “The Philosophy of Giving” which was published within Ramadan time. The time was perfect as it is related with the Ramadan and also suitable for the readers. In the meeting they also decide other stories in the magazine. During this time they use their networks and connections for the interview. In the meeting everything is decided and everyone get their work.



Cover Page of “The Star Magazine”

The second step is everyone starts with their write-ups. We had to do research and interview with the related people regarding the topic. They sometimes do the interview in *The Daily Star* office or sometimes they went to the office or house to interview people. After that they do spot research on the topic. After their interview and spot research they start their write up. I want to add another thing that is all write-ups contains picture. So there is one

photographer member who went to the place related with the topic and take snaps for the articles. Saturday is the dead line for submitting regulars and Sundays and Mondays are the deadline for submitting feature writings. After submitting the feature writings the editor checks it and edits it. After editing the feature it goes to the graphics department. There everything sets up. Tuesday is the deadline for everything. Tuesday is the day when the magazine goes for printing. On Tuesday a final copy come from graphics department and the editor checks for any mistakes. Then the group checks for mistakes like typo mistakes, spelling mistakes, correction of the name etc and punctuations. After the checking, it goes to the printing press for printing and on Friday it is published all over Bangladesh.

3.4 Process of Feature Writing

Writing a feature is very difficult and one needs to do hard work to make it successful. There are many ways to write a feature article. According to Adam sally,” For the most complex articles it runs this way: Idea, Brief, Research, Interviewing, Plan, and Write” (49). In the Star magazine everybody follows a process to write feature. During my internship they taught me the process and I found similarities between the processes that Sally Adam writes in his book and the process that Star Magazine follows. This creative process could be framed as below:

- **Idea**

Idea is the first process of feature writing which will suit the publication and interest of the readership. At first, I had to brainstorm the ideas and share it with my editor. Always I had to keep two things in mind while brainstorming ideas that time and manageability is important. Time indicates how old and how new the incident or story is. Readers always want to read something new. I had to choose a topic that is newly and fresh and also the idea must suit the recent time. And another important factor that, I have to manage the ideas and think about the presentation of that idea to the readers, which is known as manageability.

- **Brief**

Brief is the main part of the writing. It is also known as the main body of the feature writing. Brief includes the basic structure and the explanation of the topic. Brief usually includes deadline, length, the angle, tone, questions, answers, place or research, boxes, stat tables, pictures and illustrations. In this part, I had to embrace my article with the information to highlight and explain the main points of the issue. I also had to include clear, strong and attractive explanations of the topic. A brief provides the basic structure and lead to the next process.

- **Research**

Sally Adam in his book gives an advice for doing research. He says, “Capsule advice is: start early, think laterally, go to a reliable source and note sources. Stick with research. Make that extra phone call. Dig for that extra hour” (50). While my internship, I found this very helpful and it coincides with how Star Magazine works. Research is the most complicated and very hard process of the feature writing. It needs a lot of hard working. As a writer I have to have the clear ideas about the sources regarding the issue. I had to do lot of research to provide the correct information, while writing my articles. In recent time research is usually done by browsing internet or by visiting the place. I had to be very careful of a fact that there is dangerously and horrendous wrong information on the web. It can destroy the whole feature story and it is also against the ethics of journalism. So, to conduct the research I had to search relevant report, sources and interviews from the authentic and reliable sources.

- **Interviewing**

Interviewing is perhaps the most exciting and interesting part of the feature. Here I had to meet people related with the topic and interview them to find the truth. While taking interview it was necessary for me to be very active and polite towards the interviewers. Before jumping into the interviewing part I had to take preparations like carry pen, paper and

tape recorder and complete questionnaires. One problem of interviewing that I faced during the interview session was people do not want to answer the questions for security and privacy. So, first of all I had to give them assurance that I won't disclose their identity. It is important to be able to provide a sense of comfort and reliance in the interviewee. During my internship I learned about how to take interviews and how to collect correct information. I worked on an interview based article entitled "Stop Poisoning Us". A community group called "Stop Poisoning Us" organized a Human Chain against the uncontrolled food adulteration in front of Jatiya Press Club on 24th May, demanding for the poison free food and strict enforcement of food safety law to control the extensive food adulteration happening in Dhaka city. For my report I went to the place to take interview of the organizers and the participants. I asked them many questions regarding the human chain and food adulteration. I asked the organizers about their organization, their values, what they believe in and the reason for the human chain. I also asked the participants why they were participating in the human chain. I interviewed three organizers and ten participants. After collecting information from the people and organizers my next step was to do research on Food Adulteration. I did some research on above topic in internet. I also interviewed doctors, scientists and some health researchers of ICDDRDB to find the meaning of food adulteration, reason and effects. After gathering all the information, I started writing my paper titled "Stop Poisoning Us".

It was not very easy for me as it was my first time to write interview based article. One of the members of my group in "*The Daily Star*" helped me by giving guidelines and showing me the process. While I was working on my article, I got a chance to observe interviewing session. Two members of my group were writing an article regarding cartoonists of Bangladesh. While writing this article they followed some steps. First step was that they had to choose good, well- known and popular cartoonists of Bangladesh. After that they contact with them and fixed a date for interview.



A glimpse of Interview Based Article entitled “The Method behind the Madness”

While interviewing the cartoonists, they showed me the process and rules of interview. They asked many questions to the cartoonists regarding their article and took many cartoons from them for publishing. Before starting the interview; we have to take permission for recording and publishing their photo and cartoons from the fellow person. After the interviews and researches they gathered all the information and then they started the writing on the article titled “The Method behind the Madness”. This was very helpful for me because it helped me to structure my further questions of my next interviews.

3.5 Length of a Feature in the Star Magazine

Generally features are longer than hard news story. Because a feature goes through in-depth information and it expands the details rather than focusing on the key points. “The Star” Magazine usually uses the *Associated Press Stylebook* for the length and the length is-

- Newspaper Features the range is 500 to 2500 words
- Magazine feature’s range is 500 to 5000 words.
- Features on magazines and blogs generally range from 250 to 2500 words.

After joining The Daily Star for my internship, I have learned many interesting factors about newspaper magazine. As a reader I never imagined that for a magazine lot of efforts are needed. I never predicted that people who are working for the magazine works very hard for it. To me learning and observe the process of the magazine is very fun and very interesting.

Conclusion

The internship in *The Daily Star* was a great opportunity for me to taste the professional atmosphere. This experience at *The Daily Star* was without a doubt very memorable and a productive one for me. I have not only learnt about feature writing and working with a team but I have developed a sense of professionalism and a keen interest in becoming one. But most importantly, I have found an ardent spirit and enthusiasm in me for journalism which will guide me towards achieving great things. But it would have been quite impossible for me if the other members of my team in the Star Magazine did not help me learn the procedures and helped me in every step during my internship. I have met new people, scholars and celebrities which have broaden my horizon. Moreover, I always heard about the strength of unity but after starting internship at “Star Magazine” I found it to be true. I have also learnt the value of professional communication and have made a few connections which will help me as I start my professional life. It was a great journey with many exciting ups and downs and it was simply the best days of my life.

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APPENDIX

Articles written during the internship at “Star Magazine” are attached in this section for review.

Foreigners Don't want to Go

Better WIFI connection making them stay

Special Correspondent

Fifty five foreigners were detained yesterday in the capital. They were detained while browsing internet illegally in front of the Parliament Building. All fifty five were found to be holding foreign passports; none of them had any Bangladeshi visa or passport. Every year hundreds of people from the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada are illegally entering Bangladesh. Almost 90 percent of them do not have any visa or permanent resident permit. The reason behind this unusual trend that seems to defy logic is the lure of powerful, cheap internet and WIFI even in the remotest areas of the country. As only Bangladesh provides the best internet and WIFI service for its citizens, foreigners from all over the world are entering illegally into Bangladesh for its super fast internet and WIFI, which is also the cheapest in the world.



"It's just so fast, it is hard to go back to my country to a life of slow internet connections and weak wifi" said Stacy Cameback, an American software programmer from Silicon Valley and one of the detainees. The detainees face up to 7 years imprisonment or community service at Hemayetpur Mental Hospital for the same period.

SCIENCE AND FICTION

The Star

MAD GENIUS

ERWIN SCHRODINGER

Erwin Schrodinger (1897 – 1961) was a theoretical physicist. He was known as the father of quantum mechanics. He received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1933 for the significant contributions in physics. In 1935 he proposed the "Schrodinger's Cat" experiment corresponding with his personal friend Albert Einstein.



Sketch: Yafiq Siddiqui

"An animal that embarks on forming states without greatly restricting egoism will perish.

For a solitary animal egoism is a virtue that tends to preserve and improve the species; in any kind of community it becomes a destructive vice.

The present is the only things that have no end.

Consciousness cannot be accounted for in physical terms. For consciousness is absolutely fundamental. It cannot be accounted for in terms of anything else.

Plato was the first to envisage the idea of timeless existence and to emphasize it—against reason—as a reality, more [real] than our actual experience...



If a man never contradicts himself, the reason must be that he virtually never says anything at all."

Published: 12:00 am Friday, May 02, 2014

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“A Window to Our Past through the Coins”

History seems boring to most of the people but entering to the world of currencies history suddenly becomes more interesting. Currencies are the vehicle for you to travel in the past. Exchanging good with currencies are very old process which people follow from the ancient time. If we study history then we can see that many rulers from different country had ruled us. They introduced different type of currencies with Indian sub-continent. Evolution of currencies from different ruling period represents the picture of different era's time, situation, religion and the ruler. History becomes more interesting for you as you are going to witness that time through currencies.

You must be thinking about the place where you can witness the coins and currencies. Maybe you are thinking that it is impossible to observe the coins in one place. Bangladesh Bank has taken an impressive initiative to help you to witness the coins in one place and enjoy the history which is called “Taka Jadughar” or “Currency Museum”. The museum, situated at the Bangladesh Bank Training Academy in Mirpur 2, is a first of its kind museum in the country, digitalized with new technology and innovations. The museum, was inaugurated last year, and well organized with paintings that describe the history of trading in Bangladesh adorning its walls.

Bangladesh Bank has tried to represent the history from the ancient Uari Bateswar era to the present time. There are over three thousand coins and paper notes from the Pala, Sena, Gupta, Sultani, Mughal and British periods. Not only Bangladeshi currencies but currencies from the United States, England, Spain, Switzerland and other countries are also displayed at the museum. Many well known and famous artists, architects, historians, anthropologists of our country have worked for the museum. They worked together to collect local and foreign coins and banknotes to develop the museum.

“Bangladesh Bank official’s got full support from currency collectors while seeking currencies for the museum,” says the curator of the museum.

Bangladesh Bank has collected more than 100 coins of different eras from Bangladesh Numismatic Collectors Society (BNCS). BNCS is an organization which unites different coin and paper note collectors in one place. They arrange meetings and discussion on coin and paper note collection and time to time they do exhibitions. Many currency collectors from home and abroad have donated their coins and banknotes from their collection. Ganandra Nath Mohontto is one such donor who donated 72 currencies from the Pakistani period.



Taka Museum situated at Bangladesh Bank Training Academy

“She always learnt about the currencies in the history books. She never imagined that she will be able to see the currencies of Mughal period,” says Sabrina Bushra a student of BRAC University.

The main purpose of setting this museum is to introduce the people and the new generation to the history of Bangladesh. This museum highlights the history of ancient currency of the Indian sub-continent and the evolution of the Bangladeshi currency. “I was never interested in history and it always seemed boring to me, especially the ancient eras,”

says Sabiha Sabreen, a student of Holy Cross School. “But I was wrong and after visiting the museum I have become interested in history, after seeing the currencies I felt like I am watching the history as it is happening in front of me.”, she adds.

The exhibit of the museum gives an idea about the culture, education, lifestyle and different phases of human civilization through currencies of different periods. The Bangladesh Bank is trying to preserve the rich culture of Bangladesh through the currencies.

The museum has been able to attract foreign visitors as well. Tanoj Dulal, a visiting university student from Nepal, is highly impressed with the museum stating that the currency museum is a “very good initiative to introduce the history of a culture to its people,” he remarks.

This museum is the first digitalized currency museum in Bangladesh. It has introduced new technologies like Sky Touch Digital Signage system. This system is a quick information platform where you can get all the information about the currencies easily. It is very unique for the people of our country as they are getting all the information and the brief history from this system within one touch. The museum has been established with new technologies to attract visitors especially the young people, informs the curator of the museum. Bangladesh Bank has installed touch screens; LCD monitors, 3D television and projectors to present a modern, information and technology based museum to its visitors. A brief history of the currencies is given beside each display, and there is a code number for every currency. By using the code number a visitor can find the full history of the currency on a digital dashboard. Visitors will have the opportunity to take print outs with their picture on souvenir banknotes. The high digitalized security system provides the safety of the museum and its belongings.

By displaying these rare coins along with their history, Bangladesh Bank has taken an innovative step to explain the evolution of coins and currencies of the Indian sub-continent. The officials of Bangladesh Bank are thinking of expanding the museum by introducing other innovative technologies to make their exhibits more attractive to the public. They are also trying to collect more coins and banknotes to enrich the collection of the museum. It is a great initiative to tell about the history. The background soft music and the surroundings of the museum will lead you to a beautiful and relaxing environment. It is a place where you will completely mix yourself with the history and you will start to like the history.

The Taka Museum will be open for all from 11am to 5pm from Saturday to Wednesday. On Friday, it will open from 4pm to 7pm.

"Stop Poisoning Us"

Adulteration of food with toxic and cocktail chemicals has reached in uncontrolled situation with serious health issue and the burning problem in Bangladesh. It is very difficult to find a food which is free from adulteration. There are approximately 150 food items in the country which is contaminated with chemicals. From vegetables to fruits, milk and milk products to meat, fish and processed food- everything is contaminated. Formalin, Carbide, Cocktail chemicals, Textile Colors, Urea, Artificial Sweeteners, Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) etc is used widely for this purpose. Food adulteration is happening in the country because of the greed of extra super profit and moral deprivation among the food traders. The overgrowing and unplanned industries and their toxic wastes, The Hybrid System and most importantly no knowledge of the farmers about the amount of using chemicals and pesticides are the key factors for this alarming situation. A community group called "Stop Poisoning Us" organized a Human Chain against the uncontrolled food adulteration in front of Jatiya Press Club on 24th May, demanding for the poisonous free food and strict enforcement of food safety law to control the extensive food adulteration happening in Dhaka city. A few hundred people stood there from 3:00 to 4:00 pm holding lots of banners and reciting "Stop poisoning us" "We want safe food now" "No more adulterated food".

“The main purpose of this program is to ensure food safety for our next generation,” stated Azra Selim one of the organizers. Food is adulterated to increase the quantity and make more profit. The food totally lost its nutrients and the place where the food is grown is often contaminated with many dangerous chemicals. Experts of Bangladesh discovered that 80% of food is mixed with different types of chemicals and very harmful for a human body. “It is a very sad and dangerous situation for the Bangladeshi people that they are having poisonous food everyday and destroying their and their family's future. We are taking initiatives to save

this people from the paw of food adulteration and ensure the food safety for all.” said Biju, an American student from John Hopkins University who is doing his PhD in Bangladesh and another organizer of the human chain.

Lack of food security is a serious issue today in our country. More or less every citizen of Bangladesh knows about food adulteration. The aim of the community is to raise awareness amongst the consumers and suppliers and remove food adulteration from the market. Rising stomach diseases and even deaths are attributed to this slow poisoning through adulterated food. "I am supporting this human chain. We don't know whether it will be helpful or not but I want to feed my family safe foods and give them a bright future." said Salim who was present in the human chain.



Human Chain to attract government's attention to provide poison free food

Chemicals and poisons using in foods are the main cause for cancer and damage vital human organs like liver, kidney and heart. It has worst impact on children's mental and physical growth and destroys women's fertility system. According to ICCDRB formalin used

in fish, fruit, meat, and milk causes throat cancer, blood cancer, childhood asthma, and skin diseases. Poisonous coloring for brightness, coloring and freshness damages liver and kidney which is the main cause for stomach cancer, asthma, and bladder cancer. Erythrosine another coloring agent used in spices, sauces, juices, lentils, and oils causing cancer, allergy, and respiratory problem. Hormone used in cauliflower causes infertility of women. Rye flour leads to miscarriage. Nervous system damages because of Urea used in puffed rice (muri). Sulphuric acid used in milk causes cardiac problems. This is very alarming problem and very serious issue in our country. Government has created food court to stop this adulteration. There is no doubt in food court works but this is not sufficient to stop this problem. Government is not concern about the food safety of people and not taking any serious and fast action to stop this. "Food Adulteration is a very old and dangerous issue which is not hidden to our government. But they are not taking any initiatives against it. There is no strict food safety law that's why suppliers are supplying poisonous food in our society without any fear." said another supporter for this initiative.

Many well known organizations and many famous personalities have supported this program and committed to support this cause on TV and Radio Shows. The human chain was the starting initiative by SPU community. Beside the Human Chain initiative SPU already submitted written statement to Bangladeshi Government and uploaded online petition to the Food Ministry. They are going to expand the program through different TV talk shows, awareness raising advertisements.

“Public Transportation for Women in Dhaka”

“Women keep quiet because of their reputation and this is the reason they are harassed by people in public bus” Public buses in Dhaka city are inadequate in numbers and always remain over-crowded which is not accessible for women. In recent days women are active in participating in many social, cultural and economic activities and most of them travel by public transport like bus to meet up the daily necessities. While inadequate bus services affect everybody in the society specially it affect the women commuters and female students. The transport services provided by bus are not secured for women. There are deprived by the very few existing facilities due to extreme over- crowded buses. Women bus riders have to face and undergo with groping and verbal abuses every day. Not only this but also they face problems to compete with other passengers and grab a sit or standing with the other passengers especially when it is overcrowded. Sometimes some people sit on the seats which are booked for women and they treat very badly if a girl wants to grab that seat. Women usually face sexual harassment or lack of personal security because of the over crowded, ill treatment from bus drivers, conductors, co passengers, groping or touching indecently by the drivers, male passengers and buss conductors. Sometime conductors and drivers avoid women because of their safety, seats and harassments issue.

“Girls are harassed almost every day while they are travelling by public bus. It happens mostly when they are standing in the crowd and trying to get on the bus. There are some people who love to harass women and tease them in various ways.” said Sabrina a student from BRAC University who travels in public bus from Mohakahli to Mirpur. Another students from same university said that it is quite challenging for her while travelling by a public bus. Because most of the time public buses are overcrowded and the most important thing is for her is she is a girl and it is very hesitating situation for her to stand among 15 men who mostly do not show any respect towards the female travelers or fight with others to grab

a seat and she is always scared of pick pocketing or any kind of exploitation. She added that despite of this there are some public buses which strictly maintain their seating regulations and often help the female passengers to travel but those buses are very rare in Dhaka city.



Women are being harassed while boarding the public bus.

Bangladesh Road Transportation Corporation (BRTA) started “Women- Only” bus service which is a unique example of privilege and honor of women but this service is very rare in Dhaka city. Not only rare but also it is very dangerous for the women to travel on those buses. Due to poor seat condition, poor air circulation, overloaded bus, water falls from the roof of the bus and sometimes it stops on the busy road because of technical or mechanical problems. 6 public buses only for women are launched by BRTA in Mirpur-Gulistan route and Khilgaon Taltola-Gulistan route. In recent time women’s are the one big source for Bangladesh’s economy growth. A survey shows that 35 % women are depended on the public bus for travelling. And they are the one who are treated very badly in public buses.

As they are the key of Bangladesh's economy there must be some solutions against all the problems which they face while travelling by a public bus. It is duty of governments to ensure the safety of women while they are travelling by a public bus. The number of public buses must be increased and there must be queue while departure the bus. There must be two different queues for men and women as it will stop harassments while departure the bus. There should be a law and fine system for bus conductors, bus drivers and co-passengers bad behavior and sexual harassment. It is not possible for the government to control or reduce this problem if there is no public conscience.

Government can create advertisements on this issue and create public awareness. The number of Women- Only" bus should be increased with well seating arrangements, good air circulation system. All this changes will only work when people will change their point of view and learn to honor and give respect to women.

“What’s left of Humanity?”

It was a lovely evening with a soothing breeze; I was having cold coffee with my father on our balcony. Suddenly people started to run after a man, everyone was screaming “Chor” “Chor”. As it was an overcrowded area the thief was caught very easily. The scene after he was caught was unbelievable and disturbing that I was compelled to ask myself that “Are we humans?” Those people were beating him mercilessly. We the so-called good and hard working humans totally forgot that the person whom we are beating is also human who must have some reasons to steal.

We never ever think that he can be changed, that he can be a great asset for our society, we never judge whether what we doing is wrong or right which is why we never hesitate to beat a fellow-human so brutally. The main fact is we do not have the courage to face the main culprits of our society who kill people publicly or pour acid on a girl or beat a housewife for dowry. All we can do is show our anger to an unarmed and helpless thief. Instead of being so harsh on less harmful individuals shouldn't we try to cleanse our society of those who are really harmful?

“Mother’s Day”

I was going through my face book home page and the most interesting thing was everyone was changing their cover photos and profile pictures with their mother. Then it knocked in my head that today is “Mothers Day”. This is the day when we make cards for our mother, we cook for her, and we sing a song for her and do many things for her to make her feel that she is special for us and treat her like a queen. By seeing everyone’s profile pictures and cover photo I also changed my cover photo with my mother. “Do I have to show everyone that I love my mother?” “Do I need to express my love and thank my mother only for one day?” All this questions in my mind started to poke me.

My mother is taking care of me, loving me and doing everything whatever I want every day. And instead of all her caring, loving and sharing sometimes I yelled at her, talked very rudely and sometimes I did not listen to her. If she is doing everything for me everyday then why I cannot show my respect, take care of her, do what she want me to do for her every day? Even sometimes we do not understand her importance in our life. It is my duty to listen her, loving her taking care of her, treat her as a queen each and every day. Why I have to wait for this specific day called “Mothers Day” to show that I love her?