

**Working in a National Desk**

*At New Age*

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## Table of Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF NEW AGE</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. WORKING AT NEW AGE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. PRESS RELEASES</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5. EDITING</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6. ONLINE SOURCING</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>7. OBITUARIES</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>8. A PERSONAL ACCOUNT</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>9. CONCLUSION</b>	<b>22</b>

## 1. Introduction

News is newly received noteworthy information. News is a great source of knowledge. It is important in our lives because it keeps us updated with the current events and issues. Media is a vast field; print media is a particular sector of it. Newspaper gives us information about businessmen, politician, social issues, unemployed people, sports, games, international news, children, science, education, medicine, celebrities, fairs, festivals, technologies, etc. It is difficult to imagine life without a newspaper. It helps us in widening our knowledge and awareness about events taking place in the world.

I chose "Media and Cultural studies" as my concentration area because media has become very popular now-a-days. We want to know about various events of the world and media is the best medium to satisfy our curiosity. It is very useful for people from all walks of life. It tells us what is happening at home and abroad. I am intrigued by the media because it has control over everything. This paper will focus on the things I have done and learnt during my internship at *NewAge*.

In order to complete a Bachelor of Arts in English with a concentration in Media & Cultural Studies, I did my internship at *New Age* national desk. I was assigned to intern under Shahidul Islam Chowdhury, the Chief of Correspondent of *New Age*. I completed a wide variety of assignments including working on press releases, online sourcing, on field reporting, short report writing, translating. *New Age* gave me an opportunity to get an idea about a print media organization.

Moreover, I worked with some professional journalists and senior staff correspondents at *New Age*. By working with them I learnt lots of new words and terms of journalistic writing. I also became familiar with the structure/format of news articles. This is something I was initially introduced in the ENG 440 English for the Print Media.

## 2. A Brief History of *New Age*

New Age started its journey on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003. It is situated in Tejgoan. It is a well established news paper in Bangladesh. Enayetullah Khan was the founder Editor of the daily *New Age*. Nurul kabir is the present editor of *New Age*. He is an outspoken media personality in our country. New Age is a 20 page daily prepared by almost 150 reporters, columnist, subeditors, editor, page designers, sports editor and writers. Previously it was a 12- page newspaper. It also has some supplements. The paper is divided into different segments such National, International, Editorial, Op-ed, Business and Sports articles on recent events. It has two weekly magazines- *Trends* and *Extra*. *Trends* is distributed on Tuesdays and another one named *Xtra* that comes out on Fridays.

It provides a variety of special supplements on different occasions like Pohela Boishakh, the Ekushey February special, Valentine's Day special, Independence Day special and many more for different events. The slogan of *New Age* says everything about this newspaper. "Biased towards the people"- it means this newspaper is free from any kind of political influence. At *New Age*, the Chief of Correspondent allocates tasks to the reporters. Then the reporters then bring reports to the newsroom and those are checked in terms of authenticity by the Chief of Correspondent. All the journalists of *New Age* write their news stories in the first floor where the central desk is located.

The building of *New Age* is very old fashioned. It looks very seedy but it provides a good working environment. It has a rich library which is very helpful for the staffs. *New Age* always provides the true facts to the public.



### **3. Working at *New Age***

Interning at *New Age* was a great learning experience. Having a concentration in Media and Cultural Studies and interning at a newspaper office had a very positive effect on my writing. Interning at *New Age* was a practical experience, where I applied the theories that I learnt from my courses. Here I met different types of people and I had to deal with subeditors and senior journalists. It was quite difficult for me because in class learning and practical learning is different from one another.

My working hours at *New Age* were from 12pm to 8pm and all reporters had to submit their assignments and reports before 9 pm. The office remains calm before 4pm. The clattering of *New Age* starts after the senior reporters come to the office. Working in the national desk was not so easy. Each and every sections of an article has to maintain authenticity. Sometimes I had to call government officials for further information.

During my internship period, Manzurul Ahsan, Khadimul Islam and M Moneruzzaman the three leading news writers of *New Age* helped me a lot. They have vast knowledge of journalism as they have been working in *New Age* for last 15 years. I went there with the bookish knowledge of journalism but these three people helped me to understand professionalism. For example- the materials that were given in the classroom were helpful for my work. When I took the course ENG 440 English for Print Media, I learnt various forms of journalistic writing like editorial, obituary, product feature, profile feature, sports feature, op-ed, post-editorial, press releases etc. Our course instructor gave us samples of different forms of journalistic writing.

My work was mostly about writing news story based on press releases, obituaries and translating as well. The course ENG 465 Translation Studies helped me a lot while translating a press release and obituaries from Bangla to English. Sometimes I had to edit some news story and the course ENG 401 Editing was helpful for writing photo captions. On the desk I learnt three things: double checking, cross referencing and fact finding. One thing I want to mention here that all news stories follow the 'Inverted Pyramid' structure.

#### **4. Press Releases**

While working at *New Age* I had to work on press releases. In a newspaper office lots of press releases come every day through fax. I was instructed by my supervisor to keep press releases short. It is better to complete the report within 150-200 words.

I learnt a lot from my supervisor. When I joined *New Age* my instructor gave me time to understand the work place and demonstrated me how to write in a professional environment. The writing techniques were not new to me as I had completed ENG 404 Copywriting and ENG 401 Editing courses. I was able to deal with these things professionally. Under the supervisor's supervision, I wrote many reports based on press releases. Most of the press releases were full of spelling mistakes. Sometimes I found some vague sentences which were difficult to understand.

Here are some of my reports that I wrote from press releases.

#### **Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury's 27th death anniversary today**

Staff correspondent

Today is the 27<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of former president Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury.

A prayer session will be held at Nagbari mosque in Tangail today.

Justice Chowdhury resigned as vice Chancellor of Dhaka University on March 15, 1971 in protest of killing of two students in the campus by the Pakistani Occupation Army.

Later he played a significant role in mobilizing world opinion for the cause of Bangladesh as special envoy of the provisional government. In 1985, Justice Chowdhury was unanimously elected Chairman of U.N. Human Rights Commission. In the eighties he was functional in the anti-autocracy movement.

He authored four books, “Probashe Muktijuddher Dinguli”, “Manobadhikar”, “Muslim Family Law in the English Courts” and ‘Human Rights in the Twenty Century’.

His family has requested all to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

## **20 trafficking youths rescued in Joypurhat**

Staff Correspondent

20 youths were rescued early today in Joypurhat when local detective police made two separate expeditions in the city and arrested one perpetrator.

Officer in charge of Detective Branch Mahfuzur Rahman informed that the victims were from Narshingdi and Gaibandha district kept by the traffickers in two residential hotels named Prithibi Complex and Hotel Sourav in the town.

During the expedition one accused named Lablu Akondo got arrested.

The victims were identified as Sourav(20), Al Amin(25), Polash, Najmul, Meraj , Khokon Miah, Nurul, Kabir and Zakir Hossain, Kajol were rescued from Hotel Prithibi Complex.

While Zakaria(27), Jahidul Islam(28) Faruk Mia, Mosaddek Hossain, Manik Miah(20), Hanif(35) and Al Amin(23) were rescued from Hotel Sourav.

Police Super Molla Najrul Islam informed that these organized traffickers allured these innocent youths and tried to smuggle them in Nepal.

Two separate cases were filled regarding this, he added.

### **Non-govt teacher and employees under the MPO demand inclusion in new pay scale**

Staff correspondent

Bangladesh Shikkhok Samity held a meeting at their central office in the capital today.

Non-government teachers and employees under the MPO demand their inclusion in the new pay scale. Leaders said that the government is creating discrimination among teachers depriving non-government teachers and employees from the upgraded pay scale.

They also demand the withdrawal of income tax for non-government teachers and employees.

The meeting was presided over by Bangladesh Shikkhok Samity president MD. Abu Bakar Siddiqi. Presidium member Ranjit Kumar Saha, Md.Bajlur Rahman Miah, Sheikh Fazlul Karim, Joint secretary Md. Kawser Ali Sheikh was the spokesperson at the meeting.

## **Human Chain demands due share of Teesta**

Staff Correspondent

National Awami Party president Mostak Vashani on Thursday said we are yet deprived of getting equal share of water in Teesta treaty with India.

Addressing at a human chain, he also urged the West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee to ensure our right as her objection against the land swap and water sharing between the two countries, made a reported delay.

Nadi Sanskar Panishashan and Babohar Sangram Parishad Bangladesh organised the human chain in front National Press Club at 10.30am.

Presiding over the human chain, NSPBSP president SM Sahadat Hossain said, we welcome Mamata as she arrived in Dhaka for a high-profile visit.

‘I request on her to consider the matter as we are deprived of water that now flowing at a lower level’, he said.

He also urged Mamata to cancel the Tipaimukh dam project ensuring the free water flow in the country.

NSPBSP deputy convener Mohammad Mesher Ali Khandakar, leader Bibekananda Baroi, among others, spoke at the human chain.

## **Garment Workers Demand Wages and Festive Allowances by 20<sup>th</sup> Ramadan**

Staff Correspondent

Garment Workers' Union Centre organized a rally in front of National Press Club demanding their wages and all the dues should be clear up by the factory owners within 20<sup>th</sup> Ramadan.

Vice-President of Garment Workers' Union Centre Ziaul Kabi Khokon chaired the conference.

The leaders alleged that many owners are now delaying over the payment of salaries and allowances. The industry owners pocket all profit they make from their business but they make different excuses by giving misinformation of labor law.

Vice-President of Garment Workers' Union Centre Ziaul Kabi Khokon chaired the conference.

General Secretary of Garments Sramik Trade Union Kendra Kazi Ruh Amin, Joli Talukder, M A Shahin were the spokesperson at the conference.

## **Protest against Price Hike on 17<sup>th</sup> June by CPB-BASHOD**

Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Communist Party along with Bangladesher Somajtantrik Dol is going to organize a protest rally against price hike in Ramadan on 17<sup>th</sup> June in the capital.

Rising price of daily commodities has become a regular trend in every year. Poor and middle class becomes the victim of price hike.

CPB's president Comrade Mujahidul Islam urged the government to take steps to control soaring essential prices before Ramadan comes.

He also called for initiatives by the people to control the prices and check adulteration of food and use of formalin in treating fruits and food item. They claim that we should step up against price hike and food adulteration. Leaders call on Dhaka dwellers to make their procession successful.



## 5. Editing

“Editing should be, especially in the case of old writers, a counseling rather than a collaborating task. The tendency of the writer-editor to collaborate is natural, but he should say to himself, ‘How can I help this writer to say it better in his own style?’ and avoid ‘How can I show him how I would write it, if it were my piece?’”- James Thurber

I took an ENG 401 Editing course as it is a part of my concentration courses, where I was taught to edit a copy by using various symbols. The course emphasizes the understanding of words, accuracy, style and the essentials of English language. In the classroom, we edited news stories, features and editorials from various newspapers and articles, magazines and also wrote headlines and designed pages. In the beginning of my internship at the *New Age* I faced difficulties while editing because every time I had to take suggestions from my supervisor about my editing tasks. While interning at the *New Age*, sometimes I faced some difficulties while dealing with the rural correspondents as they cannot speak English fluently.

The role of the subeditor at *New Age* is very significant. He does the initial editing, then the editor of the department checks the edited copy. Creativity and a good command over language are the most important qualities that an editor has to have. An editor should maintain accuracy in his/her work, since a reporter writes a report within a short time; he/she can make lots of silly mistakes. The main purpose of editing is to correct these mistakes and make the copy error free.

Previously, proof reading was done by using symbols but now we can automatically correct the mistakes with the help of Microsoft office. Page design and layout can be done easily with the help of different software, which makes the work easy to do. At present, proof reading with the symbols has become an obsolete idea. *New Age* has software which is used for proof reading.

## 5. Online Sourcing

Every newspaper has to rely on foreign websites and international news agencies for getting international news. *New Age* also subscribes to international news agencies. Most of the times, the news paper authority cannot send reporters abroad. That is why they have to depend on online sources. *New Age* is dependent on Reuters, online press releases, AP Associated Press etc. Subscribing to news from agencies like Associated Press is always reliable. The news that local newspaper readers are accessing are the same news that readers from the other countries are getting access to. In that sense, it is always good that the local readers are getting the taste of international write-ups like the readers of other countries.

For nation news we do not need foreign online sources, but for international and sports news we have to access the foreign online sources. For example- Authentic sports information is available on ESPN website. It is the main source of international cricket and international football leagues. ESPN provides the latest news, commentaries and scorecards. Agence France- Presse is a French news agency and it is the oldest in the world. AFP is widely used for the coverage of international sports stories. *New Age* uses AFP for sports stories as well photos related to Tennis and Football. English Premier League is very popular in Bangladesh and AFP provides everything that any sports editor would need to edit sports news.

## 7. Obituaries

“I wake up every morning at nine and grab for the morning paper. Then I look at the obituary page. If my name is not on it, I get up.”- Benjamin Franklin

“Live so that when the final summons comes you will leave something more behind you than an epitaph on a tombstone or an obituary in a newspaper.”- Billy Sunday

Writing obituaries in the classroom and writing obituaries at *New Age* is different from one another. I will like to mention a small part about the obituary itself before getting into the details about my experience of writing obituaries at *New Age*.

While doing ENG 440 English for the Print Media, I was taught how to write an obituary and also given tasks to write them. The task was to condense an obituary of six to seven hundred words between hundred to one-fifty. It was a challenge to write about the deceased person only in a hundred words and provide all the information like birthplace, school, family, achievements in his/her life, cause of the person's death and the time, date and location of the funeral.

Writing obituaries in the newsroom was different than writing them in the class. When I was given obituaries to write, I had to write it within one to two hundred words. My supervisor used to give me Bangla obituaries, which came in the form of press releases. First I had to translate them into English, and then I had to write the obituary so that it fit the newspaper

format which was between 100-150 words. While doing this I faced a lot of difficulties while translating the words, because the words were not used in our everyday life. Cropping the information about the deceased person was a very difficult task. For example, when an owner of an organization died, the organization gave us details of the achievements of the deceased, how long he/she worked with them, who would be coming to show condolence at the funeral, where the funeral would be held, its timing etc. And families would provide information about how he/she died, where the funeral would take place, what time the janaja would be held. They also provided information about the deceased's wife/husband, father, mother, brother, sister, son or daughter and would finally ask the relatives and friends to attend the funeral.

In one hundred words I could not include all the information that the organization or the family would provide because I had a word limitation within which to write the obituary. For writing an obituary I had to include only the important information about the deceased like his/her birth place, academic qualifications, achievements, family and death place. Obituaries of political figures and academic personalities of our country are usually published in the front page of the newspaper.

## **8. A Personal Account**

I enjoyed my internship period at the *New Age* a lot. Communicating with different people in the office about various issues, and gaining an invaluable experience by interning at *New Age* was really helpful.

As I mentioned earlier, my work was mostly about writing obituaries and news stories from press releases. I also edited some news stories, translated press releases and obituaries from Bangla to English and wrote some photo captions. At *New Age* I worked with the team that deals with the news of the National section. I learnt how the news stories about government and the news stories of non government are written in an unbiased way.

At *New Age*, I was subscribed to some International news agencies likes IPIS, Reuters and Economists so that I was able to get all the latest news of the world by sitting at *New Age's* office. It helped me a lot by keeping me up to date about all the latest news around the world. My supervisor also instructed me to attend several meetings and press conferences where the latest issues of our country were discussed. Every day there was a news planning discussion at the editor's room. At *New Age* I saw how news stories go from the journalist to the sub-editor and finally the editor before the newspaper gets published. This was a whole new level of experience.

While doing my internship, I took two other courses along with it. It had been some really busy days. Throughout my internship period I gained a lot of insight about print media, and it was my pleasure that I had the opportunity to intern at a reputed newspaper like *New Age*. I understand that investigation is an important factor in journalism. It takes lot of time and resources. I learnt how journalists follow ethics in news reporting as in confidentiality of sources is protected during investigations. Our country has excessive politics, crime and corruption. Preserving ethics in media is essential, but in the context of Bangladesh it is very difficult to maintain. In our country, most newspaper companies are owned by rich and influential people, large corporations and powerful political parties.

## **9. Conclusion**

Interning at *New Age* was a great experience for me. It has enriched my knowledge about news writing and the newspaper industry. During my internship I have seen the practical applications of concepts like proof reading, sense for sense and word for word translation, organizing press releases in an 'Inverted Pyramid' structure that I learnt in my media courses. It has enhanced my theoretical knowledge; it has also given me real life exposure to print media journalism. I have learnt how to get adjusted in a work place. The thing that I liked most about the job of a newspaper reporter is that the work is not tedious. It is because the reporter has to deal with various topics which are very interesting and challenging. I want to conclude by saying that my internship ended very nicely as I got a nice environment to work in. Whenever I faced any difficulty with my writing, my senior colleagues helped me.



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