

bullying women so she called the police, her bridegroom was arrested and he is now in prison. There is a law against asking for dowry in India - as there is in Bangladesh - but usually no one uses it. She used it. All her family and friends are supporting her. Visiting her home are Members of Parliament, human rights activists and Bollywood film stars who have all said, "Well done, Nisha!" She has become a heroine. A lot of young women are copying her. They are losing their fear and getting angry with these greedy young men and their families. Dowry is a kind of terrorism and a group called the Anti-Terrorist Front have given her a prize for having the courage to fight the dowry system. Now many men want to marry her but she says that, for now, she will continue with her studies.

Those against dowry in India estimate that one woman dies every 10 minutes because of the dowry system. They are burnt to death because their husbands and their families think a new wife should bring them a lot of money and are angry if she doesn't. One woman dying every 10 minutes is a lot of suffering and the practice will continue among the poor, unless the more educated and enlightened women and their families use the law to set an example for everyone.

One day, you too, both girls and boys, will have to decide whether to participate in this dowry business and thus ignore the laws of your country and ignore your best religious teachers - or whether you too, like Nisha, and more and more people, will see it as an evil part of your culture and fight it courageously, setting an example to all. Whatever you do, may God bless you.



CABINET MEETINGS

Assembly 76 – May 27th 2003

My country, the UK, is rightly famous for having developed a way of government called 'parliamentary democracy'. This is the sort of government that Bangladesh is trying to have also, but it is very difficult to get right and all of us have to work hard to make it work properly. You can have a government like this with a king or queen, like the UK, or without a king or queen, like Bangladesh.

In this sort of government, the Prime Minister chooses a special group of people called a Cabinet. These are the people who run various departments called ministries – like Minister of Health and Minister of Education and Minister of Commerce and so forth. It is in this group, the Cabinet, where a lot of the big decisions are made, although it should always be Parliament where the big decisions are agreed upon.

In the government of your life and mine, we too have a kind of Cabinet – and, for each one of us, our Real Self is the Prime Minister that has to keep them all in order and in balance. Each one represents important and different parts of our lives that we are responsible for and we should try and keep them in balance. If you like, you can think of them as your Ministers, sitting round a table in the Cabinet Office of your life and you have to listen to them all and judge between them because they all want their own way. You have your Minister for Health. We are all attached to bodies that have to be cared for. Our bodies need proper sleep and food and exercise. If things go wrong, everything else in our lives can stop working properly. It is right that we listen to what our bodies are telling us but we have to be careful because, sometimes, our bodies want to sit down and do nothing – except eating or sleeping. We also have a Minister for Schooling. It is

right for you to take advantage of the school to develop your brains and get good examination results. We have a Minister for Economic Affairs who keeps saying, "Have you got enough money for that?" We have a Minister for Skills and Hobbies who encourages us to develop in interesting ways. We have a Minister of Religious Affairs who keeps reminding us of the great and ultimate questions of life and meaning. We have a Minister for Fun and Games and that minister is always shouting, "Boring! Boring! I want more of your time!" - but he too is very important because every human being needs *some* fun and games. We also have a Minister for Family and Other Relationships who keeps reminding us that we are not just ME ME ME - we are part of a human family and society that needs our time and relationship skills. All these different parts of our lives are important and, when our lives are governed properly then, like a nation, all matters in our lives have the correct *level* of importance.

In a way, it is another way of looking at this poster. Each one of us is made up of different interests and relationships and feelings. There are times when we can feel great tension between different parts of ourselves. Life is full of difficult decisions when we have to decide which member of our Cabinet has to be listened to most. Maybe you have an important job but a member of your family is suddenly ill or in distress. You have to decide how you can get these two parts of your life to work together - what are your priorities. It is not easy. But most of you can begin to be aware of the importance of listening to the different sections of your life and realize that they all have to learn to work together well because 'None of us is as smart as all of us'.

God bless you.



**'ALL WORK AND NO PLAY MAKES JACK
A DULL BOY.'**

Assembly 77 - May 28th 2003

Recently, the Junior School took home a letter which encouraged your parents to plan some sort of routine for you all when you get home from school - not such a strict one of course, but still some pattern for you to follow that includes a healthy balance of work and play.

I am concerned that some parents in Bangladesh think that the only thing a schoolboy or girl should be doing when they get home from school is hours and hours of study and extra coaching. If some of you have parents like that, there is an English saying which you may like to quote, "All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy." Can you say that? (*Repeat*) It also applies to girls too, of course. You must have some time for rest when you get home - to wash and eat and even go to sleep for a time. Then it is very nice if you can do some activities that are in a different gear to your school work. Maybe you dance or play the guitar or another musical instrument. Maybe you like drawing and painting. Maybe you like playing chess or other board games. These things can refresh you after your school day. Then you must have time for your homework but this should not go on for ever. And it certainly should not be done with one eye on the television or stopping to play computer games. Go somewhere quiet and fully concentrate for the amount of time that you need and then close your school books, pack your bag for the next day and do something else. I hope all of you have time, at the end of the day, maybe, for some reading for pleasure - a good storybook in Bengali or English.