Interstellar (adjective): situated or occurring between the stars; conducted, or existing between two or more stars

**Star Educational Society**

**defending and promoting human rights**

A message from Habiba Sadeqi,
Director of Education and Cultural Development

Star Educational Society was proud to be a screening partner for the 3rd Afghanistan Human Rights Film Festival. Defending and promoting human rights is the most important responsibility of all educational institutes, schools, universities and centers. The 3rd Afghanistan Human Rights Film Festival (AHRFF) was held at a time when Afghanistan has witnessed one of its bloodiest years. During the festival last week, from among 40 movies made by international and national filmmakers, Star selected ten of the richest and most insightful films and conducted screenings for five consecutive days. According to the directors of the AHRFF, Star Educational Society had the highest number of participants among AHRFF’s ten other screening partners. Star considers this active cooperation and participation as one of its biggest achievements.

The ten movies selected by the Star Directing Board were based on themes that reflected some of the educational aspects of the human rights which could attract widespread attention and could prove to be very attractive among the young generation. Children rights, violation of women’s rights, the first taste of democracy in various countries, and the role of family and society in promulgating violence on children were some of the many themes in the films selected.

Despite international aid, and the claims of supporting human rights by national and international organizations, the situation of women and children in particular, is deteriorating and very disappointing in Afghanistan. Pictures talk. The 3rd Human Rights Film Festival clearly portrays some of the deepest tragedies of our era among Afghans inside and outside the country. Most of these movies reflect the realities of the last five years in different parts of the country. By watching these films, the youth and adults of the country who claim to be the future builders of our nation become more vigilant, make better decisions and find themselves more responsible. After watching these movies, the young pupils of Star, who are among the most deprived class of Afghan society, will seek solutions and will find a way to bring about change among their families.

By screening and in-depth analysis of these films, the Star Cultural Department feels the depth of the humanitarian and institutional responsibility. This event is intended to awaken human consciousness and encourage all of us to defend human rights. The Star community is mainly composed of students at either the high school or university level. By screening these films, we are following was to create a conducive discussion environment and involve the youth in addressing some of these sensitive and delicate matters by themselves. The courage to address these delicate topics, accepting the viewpoints of others and enhancing the level of tolerance among youth were some of the other important purposes of these films. Because the purpose at Star is not only educating but also development of the students, Star directors place great emphasis on ethics and ethical implications of Afghan youth. By screening and debating in such programs, it is intended to improve the quality of Afghan ethics and strengthening new cultural values.

Star Educational and Cultural Department, from its very establishment, has always endeavored to play an important role by conducting cultural programs intended to enhance acceptance of self and others and to elevate the spirit of mutual cooperation. Star, once again, will play its active role with regard to this specific end. Nonetheless, we must not forget that it is not only the responsibility of Star but every institute, school and university which claims to be involved in education. We must not forget to take part in this positive competition to address these humanitarian values.

-Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”
-Martin Luther King Jr
Getting out of the Cage

About the author: Zainab Yusofi is a Star alumsna and was previously a popular instructor both in A and B branches. She was the manager of B branch from 2006 to 2009. She graduated with High Honors from the College of Saint Elizabeth.

On a sunny day, I find myself sitting on a chair in a dark depressing room, scanning a book. My mind is filled with stress that shades my thoughts like a winter fog. Before my head becomes too heavy, I feel the urge to escape my room, to lighten my thoughts, and to breathe fresh air. For me, hiking in the wilderness and inhaling fresh air reduces stress. Nature is a significant part of my life that invigorates me. I love to touch the rain, and inhaling fresh air. For me, hiking in the wilderness, the fascination of nature, wildflowers, and human freedom. I could hear a yellow warbler, cedar waxwing and olive-sided flycatcher singing. Maybe because they were free. The leaves of the quaking aspen were vibrating with the breeze.

Another time, my American friends and I decided to go out for a long hike. While we were talking about the perfect weather and the sunshine of the day, one of my friends asked if I brought my raincoat. I remembered that I did not take anything for the hike. She asked, “What are you going to do if it rains?” My inner voice screamed, “I want to dance in the rain.” Cheer, excitement, and the joy of freeing my imprisoned soul in nature were dreams I carried from the Paghman, Afghanistan experience. My friends could not believe I forgot to bring a coat. All of a sudden, I realized that I also forgot my tennis shoes, thick socks, hiking shoes, sun glasses and water bottle, knowing that little safety precautions are necessary in U.S. culture. For me, the opportunity to walk alone in nature, to run in the wilderness without cultural restrictions, gender discrimination, where nature has its own value has become very significant. While hiking, a gopher snake was reclining on the trail next to kinnikinnick and grizzly-berry. At that moment, I noticed the importance of wearing the right shoes.

After hiking in the wilderness, I realized that nature refreshes me when I am stressed. Walking back inside, energy filled the atmosphere of my room. The color of the flowery carpet looked red like shiny dark pomegranate arils fallen on the ground. The design reminded me of the petals of red roses splashed by my mother to welcome me back home after my first U.S. voyage. The sweet fragrance of tiger lilies and twinflowers in my hand were freshening the new ambiance of the room. As my eyes touched the words in the book, knowledge reflected in my mind. As pen touched paper, words and sentences flickered as if metal sparked. Every word had a message and every tone had a meaning. The mind and body automatically synergized with thoughts while I was writing my essay. The energy seemed to bless me with ethereal joy. It was bliss having a day at home to study.

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Part 1

The Life and Death of Peoples Temple

Jonestown
The life and death of peoples Temple
A reflection on the film

About the author: Ali Reza Yasa is the founder and Chairman of Star Educational Society. He is the only instructor who has been teaching at Star for the past 17 years. He has an M.A. in Central Asian Studies from American University of Central Asia with a concentration in Anthropology. He also holds the Editor-in-Chief position of the Intersellar Bulletin, Star's Weekly.

Ali Reza Yasa

December 19th, 2015
A report on the Independent News' webpage discussed research on the reading of ebooks and its effect on children. A study for the National Literacy Trust reveals a significant improvement in reading ability among boys who do their reading online through ebooks. The researchers studied the boys' reading performance for an average of 4.2 months - and found that their reading age level improved by 8.4 months during that period. Girls also improved at a better rate than the norm - showing a 7.2 month improvement.

The article states that, "Researchers have come up with a solution to one of the thorniest problems in the education world - the poor reading standard of boys. The study went on to show the percentage of boys who found reading difficult halved from 28 per cent to 15.9 per cent. In addition, twice as many boys said at the end of the period that reading was 'cool' - 66.5 per cent compared with 34.4 per cent prior to the start of the study."

The report concludes: 'Finding ways to help children to enjoy reading more and encourage them to read more often has the potential to address longstanding achievement. A question had been asked why they preferred to read on screen, one of the pupil answered: 'When you read on paper, it's a bit boring, unless it's something you're really into and you might get into it. On a tablet, it feels more interesting - it reminds me of when I'm texting someone and I don't like reading so it makes it a bit more interesting.' Another added: 'I make the text bigger. I don't like reading books with small text which is why I don't read a lot of books. You can zoom in ... if you struggle with reading in a book your vision goes but on a screen you can scroll down how you'd like. The way the screen is lit can make it easier to read - and you can change the color of the background.' The study covered nearly 500 eight to sixteen-year-olds in 50 schools - and ran from between two to eight months. The research was one of the first and largest studies to explore the effect ebooks have on reading habits among children. A survey of 30,032 children alongside the study showed 88.6 per cent said they read using technology. It noted that the number of reading ebooks tripled between 2010 and 2014. In addition, 75.2 per cent said they enjoyed reading using technology compared with 56.7 per cent who said they enjoyed reading using print.

"The study clearly shows that the impact ebooks can have on reading enjoyment, particularly for boys, goes well beyond the novelty of a new reading format," said Irene Picton, research manager at the National Literacy Trust. "Our research found that technology can transform children's attitudes towards reading. Being seen reading on a tablet or smartphone is different to being seen with a book and this influences how much time pupils spend reading."

One teacher who responded to the survey said: "23 out of 24 pupils made progress, some rapid and some steady. It has also been considerable in encouraging pupils to show a love of reading. The stigma of reading has been removed and the pupils are actually aiming their experiences with their friends across the school and creating somewhat of a 'reading frenzy' which is fantastic." The article states: "the gap between the performance of boys and girls can be seen as early as seven - and successive governments have plumbed millions of pounds into trying to solve the problem of boys' writing and reading standards, including launching a 'boos into books' scheme which introduced more fact-based books to read into the classroom and a 'reading champions' scheme in which Premier League footballers spoke to the schoolchildren about their favorite books."

The research, titled The Impact of ebooks on the Reading Motivation and Reading Skills of Young People: a study of schools using RM Books, is, says the National Literacy Trust, one of the first and largest studies to explore the effect of ebooks on reading habits among children.

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Conference tries to avert mayhem in Libya, 'the next emergency' after Syria

Summarization: Mohammad Reza Sharifi
Source: Washington Post

Secretary of State John E. Kerry joined 20 other diplomats from Europe, Africa and the Middle East to address mounting concerns about threats posed by the Islamic State militants in the chaos of Libya, Libya is now a bifurcated state, with an internationally recognized government in the capital of Tripoli, and the Middle East to address mounting concerns about threats posed by the Islamic State militants in the chaos of Libya. Secretary of State John E. Kerry, who, together with Italian Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini, co-chaired a summit aimed at stopping what their country back," said Secretary of State John E. Kerry, who said they read using technology. It noted that the number of reading ebooks tripled between 2010 and 2014. In addition, 75.2 per cent said they enjoyed reading using technology compared with 56.7 per cent who said they enjoyed reading using print.

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Children's reading 'improves faster with ebooks'

Summarized by: Emanuella Poyah
Source: The Independent News Website

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iPhone 7 may not have headphone port so it can be even thinner

According to reports, Apple could drop the headphone jack from the next iPhone so that it can get even thinner. Independent News reports that the iPhone 7 might have people plug their headphones into the charging port rather than the traditional 3.5mm hole, according to a rumour from MacOtakara. As well as allowing the phone to become much slimmer, the change could also bring new features to the headphones. The new headphones would be able to draw power so that they could include an amplifier, for instance, or send more detailed information back to phones such as a request to open specific apps. But it will also mean that owners of existing phones will have to buy adapters, which will be able to convert the old format to the new USB-C. According to the article on Independent News, the phone kept much of the same shape, but is slightly thinner. The current iPhone 6s is not much wider than the size of the 3.5mm slot, which is a standard port and so cannot be re-sized. MacOtakara has been the source of disproved rumours in the past, and it is apparently based only on leaks of the phone’s size. But Apple has been pushing to make the iPhones more and more thin, and that is thought to have been part of the reason that Apple dropped its old connector for the new and much thinner Lightning one. Other companies that make super-thin phones have already made the same move, using USB audio rather than the traditional input. Apple’s next major iPhone is expected to be released in September, a year after the current iPhone 6s.
Initially, the idea of transporting energy from Central Asia to South Asia through Afghanistan dates back to the 1980s. The project was promoted by the Armenian company, Bridas Corporation, and the U.S. company, Exxon, as a pilot project. The competition between the two consortia was affected by geopolitical issues that the United States and the Soviet Union had with the U.S. company. As a result, the contract was signed with the UNOCOL consortia in 1995. The shares of the stock companies in UNO- COL consortia consisted of UNOCOL 70%, Saudi oil company Delta 10%, Russian Gazprom 15% and 5% Turkmenistan's national oil company. Prior to any finalized agreements, Russian Gazprom withdrew from the consortium and the region's considerations and relinquished its 15% stake in the project. Subsequently, some companies from Japan and South Korea were willing to participate in this consortium in the late 1990s. But then the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated. The Taliban took over Afghanistan and during the Taliban regime there were no talks of such projects as TAPI. After the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001 and the establishment of a new government in Afghanistan, negotiations among the parties resumed. In 2005, the Asian Development Bank began a study on the plans of the implementation of the project. Before the Taliban regime, India was not interested to build this line, so the project was called "TAP" and was supposed to be constructed between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The term "TAPI" comes from the first letters of those countries. But in 2005 and 2006, India also expressed interest in the project and India's parliament approved India's participation in this project - they added at the end of the abbreviation TAP and the project became famous with the name TAPI. In 2008, the first meeting took place in Islamabad between the representatives of the project and was signed between the four countries. Some practical steps were taken in December 2010 between the parties. In 2010, the four governments signed an agreement, and prestigious companies from all four countries signed purchase and sale agreements on the clarification of International Gas Conference. After that, the parties had several meetings and sessions on the implementation of the project. The capacity will be 900 million cubic meters of natural gas per year of which 14 million cubic meters will be provided to Afghanistan daily and 38 million cubic meters to each Pakistan and India. 

**TAPI: from Dream to Reality**

Written by: Ishaq Farahmand
Translated by: Jumakhan Rahyab
Source: Etalaat Roz Daily

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Qamaruddin Shenwari, a senior advisor of president said that at least 200 students who carried the ISIS, Taliban and Islamic Party flags in a rally are linked to terrorist groups. On November 07, 2015, hundreds of University students from Nangarhar University carried the Taliban, ISIS and Islamic Party flags in a protest movement. According to BBC, Mr. Shenwari was assigned by the president to investigate the case in Jalalabad, center of Nangarhar province. "According to some information, there are some professors accused in this movement as well," Mr. Shenwari said about the involvement of professors in this case. He added: "Some students said that they were forced by other students and participated because of fear they had." In November 17, 2015, NDS said that 27 students are accused of raising ISIS, Taliban and Islamic Party flags in their protest. 27 students were arrested due to this issue, some of whom are under prosecution and some of them are not identified yet." Mr. Shenwari said. Experts believe that a number of organizations and extremist groups, particularly Hizb ut-Talibar may be involved in provoking the students to carry the flags. In the meantime, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, chief executive officer of the NUG, said on Monday meeting of the cabinet that Hizb ut-Talibar encourage the young generation to terrorist activities. Raising the ISIS' flag in Nangarhar is not something new in Afghanistan. Last year, photos from the protest of Kabul University students shared on Social Media showed that a number of students were carrying the flags of the Taliban. To sum up, there are serious concerns about the motivation of extremism in Universities. The commission which was assigned by the president to investigate the recent events in Nangarhar confirmed that they will submit their report by next two days.

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**Which stage of the project are we at?**

Projects indicate that this project should become operational by 2018. But the deadlines are very close and the practical work has not started yet. Recently, the President of Turkmenistan came to Kabul and discussed this issue followed by a recent visit of President Ashraf Ghani to Turkmenistan to inaugurate the project is a step forward. The project is announced by the Afghan Ministry of Mines, Afghanistan receives $508 million income from its transit rights annually, and the right to buy an average of 1.5 billion cubic meters of gas annually as well.

**Note:** According to data published by the Ministry of Mines, Afghanistan receives $500 million income from its transit rights annually, and the right to buy an average of 1.5 billion cubic meters of gas annually as well.

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More than 200 University students linked with ISIS, Taliban and Islamic Party in Nangarhar

Summarization: Zahra Wahidi
Source: Etalaat Roz
D

uring five days last week, in coordination with different organizations across the world, the 3rd Afghanistan International Human Rights Film Festival was held under the motto “moving forward towards lasting change!” The well-organized program included film screenings at Star Educational Society in addition to nine different organizations across the country including the Science Hall of the Ministry of Education where the opening ceremonies took place. Ma-
lik Shafi’s, Secretary and founder of the Afghanistan International Human Rights Film Festival (AHR Film Festival), explained that 220 international films were submitted from around the world. Thirty-nine of them were ultimately chosen to be screened during the festival. Twenty-two of the thirty-nine films included Dari and English subtitles.

Singer Sahar Arian opened the program with an anti-violence song. Engineer Latif, former president of the AHR Film Festival encouraged civil society activists and others to stand up for human rights. He said, “As active members of society, some days ago you organized a big protest and it is the responsibility of the Independent Commission for Human Rights to support you.”

Star Educational Society was one of the screening partners of the AHR Film Festival. Star teachers, Faiza Nasery and Emran Poya, selected the best and most appropriate films for Star audiences. On the first day of the AHR Film Festival, the program at Star started with a short speech and welcoming remarks by Ali Reza Yasa, the founder and chairman of Star Educa-
tional Society. He stated his wishes that everyone in Afghanistan have access to their basic rights and be respected in full dignity as a human, and that Afghanistan would become a land where human dignity would not be challenged.

The first film played in Star Educational Society was Please Vote for Me, a documentary film that depicts a first-time election for the 3rd grade class monitor in a school in Wuhan, China. The teacher of the class teaches about democracy and voting with a practical strategy by involving the students in an election. Students competed against each other to control the class. One of them, however, gave gifts to his fellow students and that resulted in his success. The movie was appreciated warmly by the audience as evidenced by their applause. There was a very interesting discussion among audience members as they shared different ideas. The audience members shared their remarks and expressed their appreciation toward the organizers who took part in holding the festival.

On the second day of the festival, a beautiful film directed by former Star student, Mohammad Ranjbar, entitled A Mother’s Gift was screened at Star Educational Society in the presence of Mr. Shafi, the secretary of the festival. The film was a reflection of the rights and circumstances of Rahima, a woman who was forced at the age of thirteen to marry a warlord in Bamyan, a central province in Afghanistan. After her husband killed her brother, she decided to leave him and seek a divorce. As a result, she experienced many limitations and sexual harassment. Following the film, commentary by Star teacher Murtaza Qasemi’s and Shafi’s insightful speech motivated the audience members to engage in a lively discussion.

On Tuesday, the third day of the festival, Star screened two short, but meaningful films, Gul Begoom, directed by Soltan Ali Nazari and In Circle, directed by Masooma Ibrahimi. There are many similarities between the two films. Gul Begoom is a short movie which depicts the difficulties for girls living in a small village in Afghanistan. Gul Begoom is an eleven-year-old girl who lives in a small village. She had lost her father and has a sick mother. While going to moun-
tain for herbal medicine, a hunter wants to rape her. Wishing for a good future is the only thing she can do. In the film In Cir-
cle, a poor girl, who wants to change her life, changes her bag four times with four people. Then she realizes that every bag has its own problems. At the end, she gets her own bag and begins trying to solve her problems. The film’s deep message en-
gaged audience members and challenged them to understand that having problems is a part of life. In order to succeed, one must be passionate and work toward solving problems.

The fifth and last day of the AHR Film Festival in honor of Human Right’s week began with a speech and wel-
coming by Sir Mustafa Hussaini, the Chief Executive Officer of Star Educational So-
ciety. The final film screened was Angelus Novus, directed by Abuzar Amini. The film is about a small family emigrated from Af-
ghanistan to Turkey. The film focuses on the lives of the children and reflects how their childhoods are ruined. Audience members, Tamana, who was a refugee in Iran, said the responsibility of government is to protect the rights of all their residents, and that was the start of another long dis-
cussion between audience members.

The closing ceremony was held in Maleka Suraya Palace, where the salon was full of guests. The program started with the beautiful melody of a violin and guitar. The winners of the films were an-
ounced and awards were presented by special guests. Angelus Novus was award-
ed Best Film of the festival. The festival was a great success and allowed viewers to have witness social justice films, par-
ticipate in the promotion of human rights and to encourage filmmakers to docu-
ment society’s struggles against discrimi-
nation, injustice and violence.
There was no power
Through her powerless tresses I put my hand on the buttons
The exposed wires of her hair sparkled
Her dress got tighter as her breasts rose
When her heart beat like a drum
The buttons popped to the air
And the red and green lights fell down from the marquee
But where did my hands flee?

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Sharif Saeedi
Grand contemporary poet
of Afghanistan

Mohammad Sharif Saeedi
(born 1970, Jaghoori) is a poet from Afghanistan. Saeedi lost his father at the age of four. He emigrated alone from Afghanistan to Pakistan and then to Iran when he was a teenager. He studied for four years at the Zulfiqar School in Isfahan and then went on to study in Qom. He studied Arabic language and Literature and Islamic Studies, English Language, and Political Science at different universities in Iran. In 2001 he moved to Sweden and obtained degrees in International Relations and another degree in department of Oriental Studies in Persian Language and Literature. Saeedi began poetry in his childhood. During his time in Iran, his appreciation for literature, especially poetry, grew. His first poems were published when he was 19 years old and continued to be published in different journals and Iranian media. He spent eight years as a poetry critique with the Tales and Poetry Forum of city of Qom. During these eight years of teaching in this forum, around 800 students took lessons on poetry critique and story writing and graduated successfully.

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Working for a brighter future for his children

An interview with Khan Ali Mirzada, the guard of Star’s B Branch

Tell us more about your children - their ages, their jobs or schooling and their plans for the future. My youngest sons are in Star School in the 3rd grade and the two older ones are in grades 7 and 12 in the High School. My two oldest daughters are illiterate. They didn’t want to go to school and they are 20 and 18 years old. They are busy doing house chores and they are caretakers. They rejected going school because of the bad culture within our relatives and lack of motivation. Furthermore, many families do not encourage their daughters to get knowledge, they always encourage their sons. Fortunately, my other daughters are going to school and now they are in the 1st and 7th grades in school. I hope they can successfully finish their school and university. I don’t want my sons and daughters to have the same life as me. I want them to change their lives by studying.

How many years have you been working with Star? I am really happy that I am working in an educational area. I have been working at Star since 2007. I come here from early morning at 4:00 and work until 7:00 in the evening.

Do you like your job? Sure, because it is an educational area. I feel happy when I open the doors of Star’s school to students and kind teachers. I am thankful from the Star family especially Ustad Changez and his family. They are kind and hospitable to strangers. My sons and daughters are all studying at Star School and Star English classes for free and it is valuable that Star always works and donates to help poor people and others to get knowledge.

What kinds of changes have you noticed at Star or in the population of Star students and teachers since you began working here in 2007? I see some positive changes in Star in these eight years. Star’s weekly newspaper is a big success for all students and teachers.

Are you literate? I wish I could read and write but unfortunately I can’t. When I was young, going to school was not important or valued as strongly. On the other hand, when I wanted to study, poverty and economic problems did not allow me to study because my older brother and I were responsible to work and find money for the family, so we went to Iran.

Are you interested to start taking a literacy course? Yes, I like to learn reading and writing in Persian and English during my job. I know some English words because teachers talk in English and I learn just by hearing their voices. For instance, they ask me to give them water so I learn the words water, bread, book, and pen. I wish, besides seeing advertisement’s pictures around Barchi, I also could read the titles and texts.

When you were younger, what dreams did you have about the future? I had many wishes for my future but unfortunately I couldn’t reach those dreams. I wanted to be an engineer and a rich person. Therefore, I want all my children to study hard and make their future better than mine. I want them to choose their favorite fields. Moreover, I want my daughters to study hard and make their future so that they can be like famous female leaders such as Dr. Sima Samar.

What are some of the social issues that concern you the most? Nowadays insecurity, bomb blasts, unemployment, and poverty in Afghanistan hurts me a lot. Like many other Afghans, every month I worry how I will be able to cover our costs for food, clothing for my children, paying the electricity bill and other things. I am fortunate that I have a job. When I see many young drug addicts in Pole Sukhta, it is very painful. I hope that one day I will not see any drug addicts under Pole Sukhta Bridge. Besides, we have seen many people getting killed in the provinces and even in provinces near the Kabul capital of Afghanistan schools are being blocked by the Taliban. Day by day the Taliban is improving and the young generation leaves Afghanistan because of unemployment and insecurity.

Tell me about one of your strongest memories? Let me tell you a story from the times of the Taliban government. One day when I was in the car with my mother and some other female relatives, we were going to my brother’s engagement party in Sari Pol in Dash-e Barchi. Suddenly a group of Talibs stopped the car and demanded money. Because I was the only man in the car and they thought that I was a spy, they disturbed me a lot. The hit back with gun. My mother cried and gave them only enough money for their breakfast. It was a bad situation that I have never forgotten. It was during the dark days of the Taliban regime.

Tell us more about yourself and family? My name is Khan Ali Mirzada. I am 53 years old. I am working in Star Educational Society B Branch as a guard and shopkeeper of Star’s canteen. I have four daughters and four sons. I live in Se Bangi, Dasht-e Barchi.

Can you tell me about your marriage story? Yeah, sure. I got married differently. When I was about sixteen years old and working in Iran with my older brother, one day my mother contacted us and told me that she found a bride for me and I was totally shocked because she was only ten years old. I could not argue because the Nikah had already been done and I had to accept her. Now she is a good woman, we have a respectful relationships and I love her.