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OF THE COLLABORATION LAB

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Joining Forces: CSOs and Media for Accountability in Bangladesh

Project implementing by:



**Happy
New Year 2025**



**Collaboration between
CSOs and Media**

WELCOME TO THE COLLABORATION LAB!



Welcome to the Collaboration Lab!

On behalf of Free Press Unlimited (FPU) and ARTICLE 19, we extend a warm welcome to all participants of the Collaboration Lab. We are thrilled to embark on this journey together and work towards impactful social change through effective collaboration.

We express our sincere gratitude to all participants who contributed significantly to the success of the first and second rounds of the Collaboration Lab.

The implementation phase for round 2 has officially begun, following the successful kick-off meeting held on October 30, 2024. This event served as a crucial platform for:

- Deepening our understanding of the program: Participants gained a comprehensive overview of the Collaboration Lab's objectives and methodology.
- Building valuable connections: The meeting fostered valuable relationships among participants and the project team.
- Laying the foundation for success: We collectively laid the groundwork for a productive and fruitful collaboration journey.

Our Vision

The Collaboration Lab aims to:

- Strengthen partnerships: Foster robust collaborations between media and civil society organizations.
- Drive innovation: Stimulate the development of creative and impactful solutions to address critical social issues.
- Facilitate knowledge sharing: Create a vibrant platform for the exchange of knowledge and best practices.

We aspire to build a dynamic network of ambitious organizations that can mutually support each other in advancing development and good governance.

Congratulations on Round 1!

We recognize and celebrate the remarkable progress made by the participating projects in the first round of the Collaboration Lab. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to all involved.

We hope you find this newsletter informative and engaging.

Round 3

We are delighted to announce that round 3 of the Collaboration Lab will commence soon.

Enjoy this newsletter!

In this newsletter you can expect:

A Warm Welcome

Participant Introductions
1st Round

Participant Introductions
2nd Round

Kick-Off Meeting
for Round 2

Write up from
Round 1

Upcoming
Trainings

Meet the Team

Notice Board

Introductions: meet the Collaboration Lab participants 1st Round

Six alliances were selected to participate in the first round of the Collaboration Lab. Because we would like to encourage knowledge exchange and mutual learning not only within but also across the alliances, let's introduce them here!

Bandhu Social Welfare Society and **The Daily Matobad** have teamed up to work on the social inclusion of SOGIESC communities using media as a tool in the Barishal division.

Center for Communication Action Bangladesh (C-CAB) has partnered with **Ajker Arban** to strengthen collaboration between CSOs and news media in the Mymensingh region, focusing on accountability and safety.

Community Welfare Foundation, Chinnomul Manob Kallayan Society and **The Daily Probaha** are working together to increase advocacy, awareness and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals and young women's rights in Khulna City Corporation.

South Asia Center for Media in Development (SACMID) and **Daily Gramer Kagoj** have initiated a collaborative initiative to connect communities and address the various socio-economic challenges faced by marginalised communities in Jashore District.

Satsanga Pallikallyan Samity, Daily Sangbad and **Dataful** are setting out to build the capacity of journalists in data-driven climate disaster reporting and scrutinise related government expenses.

SoMaSHTe and community radio stations **Radio Mahananda, Radio Pollikantha** and **Radio Nalta** will work together to promote the voice of and empower ethnic minorities in plainland Bangladesh across the Chapai Nawabganj, Maulvibazar and Satkhira districts through community-led radio programmes.

Introductions: meet the Collaboration Lab participants 2nd Round

Ten alliances were selected to participate in the 2nd round of the Collaboration Lab. Let's introduce them here!

ABALAMBAN and **IP News** have teamed up to establish the rights and dignity of ethnic minority people in Bangladesh by setting up a coordinated solidarity network, organizing advocacy dialogues, promoting cultural diversity and heritage and increasing visibility and access to information and resources about the rights of ethnic minority groups.

Badabon Sangho has partnered with **The Business Standard** are working to establish GBV reporting tool by engaging with vulnerable women and girls in Bangladesh. The reporting tool will work both at protection and response sides of GBV.

BetterStories Limited and **Journalist Union of Cox's Bazar** are working together to empower local voices in Cox's Bazar, aiming to ensure quality and responsible journalism around the key issues such as humanitarian development and climate- that are unique and important to Cox's Bazar.

Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) and **Daily Manabzamin** have teamed up to defend digital spaces and unite against misinformation in Bangladesh. The project aims to confront the challenge of misinformation in Bangladesh, a threat that undermines democratic processes and peace, echoing the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

Dataful have teamed up with **Daily Sangbad, United Theatre for Social Action** and **Daily Suprobhat** to expose VAW through open data & anonymous reporting. They will provide VAW trend analyses based on the compiled and historic data to support more effective reporting and advocacy.

Development Society, Vikrampur Chitra and Prokriti Songrokkhon and Unnoyon Songstha (PSUS) will work together to promote Citizen engagement for accessing health care services at the Upazila Health Complex of Serajdikhan, Munshiganj as a fundamental human right.

Light House and Daily Ajkaler Khobor will work together to empower communities for inclusive disaster resilience and as a partner with Media to protect safety of women and girls. This project aiming to activate CSOs and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) procedure with reliable and timely information to address the vulnerabilities and insecurities of women, adolescents, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) caused by climate change in poverty stricken and disaster-prone five Upazilas of kurigram district under Rangpur division.

Noboprobhaat Foundation, Association for Social Development of Bangladesh and Sakaler Kagoj are working together in the project "All Together Now". The project seeks to address the challenges faced by marginalized communities, particularly the LGBTIQ+ community, in Bangladesh by promoting inclusivity and safety. Through collaborative efforts between civil society organizations (CSOs) and media outlets.

Switch Bangladesh Foundation (SBF) and Broadcast Journalists Center (BJC) have initiated a collaborative initiative to implement the project named HELP (Harassment Elimination Literacy Program). HELP is a mobile application-based project designed to enhance the safety of women in public spaces in Dhaka.

VOICE (Voices for Interactive Choice and Empowerment) and The Daily Ittefaq will work together for promoting digital and civic space and combating gender disinformation. The project aims to safeguard DCS and counter GD by disseminating monitoring reports of violation cases, offering swift responses through a taskforce, implementing a tech-based mechanism.

Kick-Off Meeting for Round 2

On October 30, 2024, a kick-off meeting was held with the alliance members of the 2nd round of the Collaboration Lab at the Alok Conference Hall in Dhaka. The kick-off meeting was organized by ARTICLE19 with the support of Free Press Unlimited (FPU). Representatives from a total of 23 member organizations of 10 alliances participated in this kick-off meeting. A total of 38 participants attended the program. These participants represented 24 media and CSOs within 10 different alliances. The joint kick-off meeting offered the opportunity for 2nd round participants to network and learn more about these ten alliances and their projects. The goal of Kick-off meeting was to create an open platform for discussing ways to improve security measures for accountability through the media and CSOs in Bangladesh. It also aims to create an opportunity for mutual knowledge exchange and networking through this event. Future meetings, events and/or trainings will offer the opportunity for 1st and 2nd round participants to meet each other.

Some pictures of Kick-Off Meeting for Round 1



Some pictures of Kick-Off Meeting for Round 1



Some pictures of Kick-Off Meeting for Round 2



Some pictures of Kick-Off Meeting for Round 2



Write up from Round 1

“Above All, Humans”

Written by: Biplob Roy, Managing Editor, The daily Matobad

Project title: Social inclusion of SOGIESC communities through media Intervention

“Above All, Humans” The Hijra community has always been neglected, their pain and suffering largely unknown and unheard. People often judge them based on their appearance, dismissing them with disdain. However, they are someone’s child, someone’s sibling, and their bodies, too, are made of human blood. Highlighting their struggles, a theatrical play titled “Above All, Humans” was staged in Barishal on June 6, 2024 to celebrate the World Press Freedom Day 2024.

The play portrayed the indescribable hardships of the Hijra community, who, under societal pressure, have been forced to leave their homes and seek refuge under the care of a Guru Ma (community leader). Yet, even there, peace eludes them as they endure various forms of oppression and deprivation. The narrative explored why society cannot accept them, the familial rejection they face due to societal constraints, and the constant humiliation they suffer. The play also shed light on the aspirations and rights of the Hijra community, emphasizing their civil and human rights.



Picture from the drama



Picture from the drama

The drama performed at the Euro Convention Hall in Barishal, the mesmerizing production was a collaborative effort under the Daily Motobad-Bondhu Collaboration Lab Project. The Seven actors brought the Hijras’ struggles to life with powerful performances. Many in the audience, including Hijras and others, were moved to tears. The play was staged three times under this project.

The event’s chief guest was the then Deputy Commissioner Shahidul Islam. Journalists, politicians, members of civil society, and individuals from various walks of life also attended and praised the play. They remarked that such productions should be staged frequently to involve people from all sections of society and reduce the negative attitudes toward the Hijra community.

They further noted that regular cultural activities like this are crucial to breaking stereotypes and building connections between marginalized groups and mainstream society.

Write up from Round 1

“Formation of Journalist Protection Committee (JPC) under Collaboration Lab Project: A Lifeline for Journalists”

Written by: CWF, CMKS & The Daily Probaha.

Project title: Joining Forces: Civil Society Organisations and Media for Accountability in Bangladesh

For journalists, the establishment of Bangladesh's first Journalist Protection Committee was seen as a lifeline. The JPC members claim that on 05/08/2024, “while Bangladesh achieved its second independence, Khulna journalists were granted their professional freedom thanks to funding from the European Union, Free Press Unlimited, and Article 19.” The CWF Alliance (CWF, CMKS & The Daily Probaha) began its intervention in Khulna City Corporation in January 2024. This is the first intervention of its kind with the ultimate purpose of promoting rights, ensuring safety and security, and increasing the societal acceptability of journalists, young women, and LGBTQIA+ populations in the region.

In Khulna, approximately 3,450 journalists are working across all media platforms. When these journalists face lawsuits or attacks during investigative reporting, media owners and editors absolve themselves of responsibility by labeling them as “so-called journalists” due to the lack of formal appointment letters. Furthermore, when investigative journalism results in the publication of a story, editors often accept benefits from the subjects of the investigation, leaving grassroots journalists to bear the brunt of retaliation, including lawsuits and attacks. Amid these challenges, CWF Alliance initiated the Collaboration Lab Project, focusing on 90 journalists from Khulna across online, print, and electronic media.

One of the project's primary objectives was to establish a Journalist Protect Committee (JPC). On 30/06/2024, a meeting was held to lay the foundation for this committee in Khulna. The project continued to align with its mission and



Picture of Journalist Protection Committee

objectives, and on August 19, a steering committee for the JPC was formed. On August 20, the formation of the Journalist Protect Committee was officially announced in Khulna and across various national media outlets.

After 05/08/2024, numerous reports of lawsuits, attacks, vandalism, harassment, and even killings of journalists were brought to the attention of the JPC. In this critical period, it became a beacon of hope for journalists, offering a vital platform for protection and support. The committee has since been working diligently, gathering data on attacks and lawsuits against journalists across the country and taking bold steps to address these issues. In continuation of this, the JPC initiated collecting information on attacks and lawsuits against journalists with a courageous role. Through such an unprecedented initiative, journalists in Khulna are now seeing a ray of hope. The committee has made such an impact that at its recent annual general meeting and picnic held on 28/12/2024, the President and General Secretary of the Khulna Press Club, and all press clubs from nine upazilas of Khulna, were present

Write up from Round 1

along with representatives from the Collaboration Lab Project. On that day, the constitution and the full committee were approved by general members.

The executive members of the Bangladesh Journalist Protection Committee are as follows:

- President: Kaushik Dey, Reporter, Daily Kaler Kantho
- General Secretary: Anisur Rahman Kabir, Regional Head, Global Television, Khulna
- Vice Presidents: Md. Nuruzzaman, Daily Probaho; Abhijit Pal, Independent TV; Rakibul Islam Moti, SA TV
- Joint Secretary: Shishir Ranjan Mallik, My TV
- Organizing Secretary: Mehdi Masud Khan, News Editor, Daily Probaho
- Office Secretary: Tarikul Islam Dalim, Bangla TV
- Treasurer: Mosleh Uddin Tuhin, Daily Khulnanchal
- Publicity Secretary: Md. Shamim Hossain, Probaho News TV
- Members: Md. Habibur Rahman, The Daily Star; Md. Mamun Hachan, Daily Banglar Doot; SM Mahbubur Rahman, Daily Bhorer Dak.

The journalists now have a wide platform thanks to this committee, which is the first of its type in Bangladesh. It is anticipated that the organization's operations will not only grow stronger and achieve more success in the future,

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বাংলাদেশ জার্নালিস্ট প্রটেক্টর'র পূর্ণাঙ্গ কমিটি গঠন।



সিডনি-ইএফ'র পরিচালক মোহাম্মদ নাসিমুল হক, ডায়মন্ড'র নির্বাহী পরিচালক মোহাম্মদ আবুল হোসেন।

১৫ সদস্যের কমিটির অপর নেতৃত্বদান হলেন সহ-সভাপতি দৈনিক প্রবাহের চীফ রিপোর্টার মোঃ মুক্জাম্মান, ইনডিপেন্ডেন্ট টিভির প্রতিনিধি অভিজিৎ পাল, এস এ টিভির রক্তিমুল ইসলাম মতি, যুগ্ম সম্পাদক মাইটিভির শিশির রঞ্জন মল্লিক, দত্তর সম্পাদক বাংলা টিভির তরিকুল ইসলাম জালিম, প্রচার সম্পাদক প্রবাহের মোঃ শাহীম হোসেন, নির্বাহী সদস্য মাছরাছা টেলিভিশনের বিশেষ প্রতিনিধি আবু হেনা মোস্তফা জামাল পপপু, ডেইলি স্টারের মোঃ হাবিবুর রহমান, দৈনিক প্রবাহের বার্তা সম্পাদক মেহেদী মাসুদ খান, দৈনিক বাংলার দূত পত্রিকার বিশেষ প্রতিনিধি মোঃ মামুন হাচান, ভোরের ডাকের এস এম মাহবুবুর রহমান। অপর এক সদস্যকে পরবর্তী মিটিংয়ে কো-অপট করা হবে।

নতুনভাবে পূর্ণাঙ্গ কমিটি গঠন করেছে বাংলাদেশ জার্নালিস্ট প্রটেক্টর কমিটি। বার্ষিক সাধারণ সভায় এ কমিটি গঠন করা হয়। কমিটিতে কালের কণ্ঠের নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক কৌশিক দে সভাপতি, গ্লোবাল টেলিভিশনের খুলনা বিভাগীয় প্রধান আমিনুল রহমান কবির সাধারণ সম্পাদক ও দৈনিক খুলনাঞ্চলের মোসলেহ উদ্দিন তুহিন কোষাধ্যক্ষ নির্বাচিত হয়েছেন।

শনিবার (২৮ ডিসেম্বর) দিনব্যাপী বার্ষিক সাধারণ সভা ও মনোভাজনে এ কমিটি নির্বাচিত হয়। খুলনা বিভাগভিত্তিক পার্কে এ অনুষ্ঠানে সভাপতিত্ব করেন আহ্বায়ক কৌশিক দে। প্রধান অতিথি ছিলেন খুলনা প্রেসক্লাবের আহ্বায়ক এনামুল হক। অতিথি ছিলেন খুলনা প্রেসক্লাবের সদস্য সচিব রফিকুল ইসলাম টুটুল।

এ সময় অন্যান্যদের মধ্যে উপস্থিত ছিলেন দৈনিক নয়া দিগন্ত পত্রিকার নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক শামসুদ্দীন সোহা ,

অনুষ্ঠানে খুলনা প্রেসক্লাবের আহ্বায়ক ও সদস্য সচিবসহ অতিথিদের সম্মাননা স্মারক প্রদান করা হয়। সাধারণ সভায় সংগঠনের গঠনতন্ত্র ও অনুমোদন করা হয়।

সাংবাদিকদের সুরক্ষারসহ বিভিন্ন সাহায্য, সহযোগিতা ও একত্রে কাজের মাধ্যমে সচেতন করার লক্ষ্যে সিডনি-ইএফ এলায়েন্স (সিডনি-ইএফ, সি এম কে এস, ও দৈনিক প্রবাহ)র সার্বিক ব্যবস্থাপনায়, দাতা সংস্থা দ্য ইউরোপিয়ান ইউনিয়ন এর অর্থায়নে, ফ্রি প্রেস আন্দোলনসিডনি, আর্টিকেল19 এর সহযোগিতায় বাংলাদেশ জার্নালিস্ট প্রটেক্টর কমিটি নামক সংগঠনটি গঠন করা হয়।

ভারপ্রাপ্ত সম্পাদক: মোঃ মামুন হাচান। মফস্বল সম্পাদক: শেখ মাহবুব আলম। বার্তা সম্পাদক: এম এম হাচান। উপসভা হাবিবুর রহমান। সহকারী বার্তা সম্পাদক: ঐশ্বরী জুয়েল রানা। খুলনা অফিস: মুজিবুদ্দীন খালিদপুর খুলনা। নড়াইল অফিস: নড়াগাতী থানা পূর্বপাড়া বাজার, নড়াগাতী, নড়াইল যোগাযোগ: 01728-060690, 01933-200080, 01715422025 , ইমেইল: naragatisangbad@gmail.com

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Picture of published news regarding formation of Journalist Protection Committee

but also transcend national boundaries and be carried out internationally with the ongoing backing of the European Union, Free Press Unlimited, and Article 19.

Write up from Round 1

“Empowering Hijra Voices: Media and Digital Literacy Training”

Written by: Rakin Muhtadee Shihab, Deputy Manager-PR Communication & Documentation, Bandhu
Project title: Social inclusion of SOGIESC communities through media Intervention

Amidst the vibrant bustle of Barisal Division, a transformative set of events unfolded, The Media and Digital Literacy Training, a flagship initiative of the "Social Inclusion of Hijra Communities through Media Intervention" project, united Hijra participants from Barisal, Patuakhali, Barguna, and Pirojpur districts in an empowering journey.

A Revolution in Learning

Through hands-on workshops, participants unlocked the secrets of digital advocacy, learned to craft compelling narratives, and armed themselves against cyber threats. Stories of transformation echoed across the hall, as many shared newfound confidence and determination to challenge stereotypes.

The Power of Community Storytelling

From crafting narratives that resonate to mastering AI tools for identifying misinformation, the training unveiled a world of possibilities. Testimonials bore witness to its impact:

"I can now tell my story with confidence and pride."

"Understanding digital safety has changed how I interact online."

A Future Redefined

This following initiative not only equipped participants with tools but also ignited a movement—one where their voices will echo far beyond the confines of society.

From Margins to Mainstream: Round Table Sparks a New Era for Hijra Livelihoods

On October 19, 2024, Barisal became a stage for change. A dynamic roundtable, titled "Livelihoods of the Hijra Community: Responsibilities of the State and Society," brought together voices from every corner of influence—administrators, activists, judiciary members, and the Hijra community themselves. This event was more than a discussion—it was a call to arms, a promise to transform words into action.

Stories That Stirred the Room

Amid discussions, personal stories emerged—tales of resilience and exclusion, of dreams deferred and the yearning for acceptance. A drama, raw and poignant, laid bare the hardships of Hijra lives, leaving no heart untouched.

Game-Changing Takeaways

The government allowance for Hijra individuals has come under scrutiny, with increasing calls for its prompt and fair distribution to ensure financial dignity. At the same time, housing discrimination has highlighted the urgent need for inclusive policies that address the specific challenges faced by this marginalized community. Despite receiving training, Hijra individuals continue to face rejection, though learning about various government and private initiatives has offered a glimmer of hope. Groundbreaking dialogues are also connecting cultural practices with the need for change, fostering faith and acceptance. However, a critical gap remains in the lack of accurate data on the Hijra population, which impedes effective policymaking and support.

Through these initiatives, the hijra community is scripting a new chapter—one where inclusion isn't an aspiration but a reality. The journey is long, but the destination promises a society enriched by its diversity and strengthened by its shared humanity.

Write up from Round 1

"Fellowship for the Journalists of Jashore": SACMID's Effort through CSO-Media Collaboration

Written by: Md. Shahinur Islam & Abu Sufian, Program Officers, South Asia Center for Media in Development
Project title: Connecting Community, Strengthening Voices through CSOMedia Alliance in Jashore District

The South Asia Center for Media in Development (SACMID) has successfully implemented the "Fellowship for the Journalists of Jashore" to empower local journalists in investigative reporting. Collaborating with local CSOs, the fellows uncovered five stories published in 23 series in local dailies, bringing the voices of local communities in Jashore to light for further action.

Under the project "Connecting Community, Strengthening Voices through CSO-Media Alliance in Jashore District," funded by the European Union and administered by Free Press Unlimited and Article 19, and co-partnered with the Daily Gramer Kagoj, SACMID implemented this initiative from August to December 2024. Situated just beside neighboring India, Jashore faces numerous challenges, including human trafficking, issues faced by residents around Baors (Oxbow Lakes) and Bills (Natural Water Reservoirs), medical and health concerns, alongside the initiatives of local women entrepreneurs combating these issues. SACMID's fellowship provided guidelines, mentorship, and financial support with continuous updates.

A hallmark event was the publication of investigative reports on the front pages of Daily Gramer Kagoj and Daily Runner from 1-19 December 2024. After this, the best three teams out of five teams were awarded money and crests at an awarding ceremony held in Jashore on 19 December 2024. All fellows received certificates, showcasing their dedicated work and drawing widespread attention to pressing local issues. The CSOs and journalists were enthusiastic about the success and potential of the CSO-Media Alliance, expressing their eagerness to contribute further and acknowledging its positive impact.



Picture of Award-Giving-Ceremony Banner and published investigative report under the Fellowship

This fellowship has highlighted the transformative power of local journalism. Participants (fellows) gained invaluable skills and expressed interest in continuing this work. Recognizing outstanding reports and compiling them into a book will further elevate their impact. SACMID is working on the book, aimed to be published by this January. By empowering local journalists and amplifying the voices of local communities, this fellowship has significantly enhanced journalistic excellence bridging the journalists and CSOs that shed light on critical issues in the Jashore district. The project celebrates journalistic achievements and paves the way for future endeavors advocating for information and inclusion.

Upcoming Trainings

As a participant of the Collaboration Lab you will have access to a series of workshops and trainings. These will include the following:

- Financial reporting workshop
- (Online) digital security courses, covering topics such as phishing attacks, secure devices, protecting your sources, and more.
- Gender and inclusion mainstreaming training

Besides this, we will together develop a coaching trajectory based on each organization's needs.

Meet the Team

Aysha Akter Afri

Afri is Programme Officer at ARTICLE 19 in Bangladesh and supports the general local coordination and management of the Joining Forces project. She has been working at ARTICLE 19 since 2017, among others on emergency support to journalists.

Jannatul Ferdous

Jannat is the Collaboration Lab's Compliance Coach, also based in Dhaka. She has been working at ARTICLE 19 since 2022, has a background in Law, and in her current role she will primarily be supporting the coaching trajectories.

Hans Nieuwenhuijse

Hans is based in Amsterdam, The Netherlands as the Programme Coordinator of the Joining Forces project for FPU. He oversees the project and supports where needed. Hans has many years of experience in international development all over the world.

Marlies Klinkenberg

Marlies is the project and compliance officer, and supports the management of the Collaboration Lab and Joining Forces project as a whole. She has been with FPU since 2022 and is based in Amsterdam, The Netherlands as well.

Notice Board

EXCITING NEWS FOR ROUND -1!

We will be publishing February 2025 edition of the newsletter, and we would love for you to contribute. Your project is nearing its completion, and it's been a year filled with incredible achievements and activities. We believe there are many inspiring stories, best practices, and successes that you'd want to share with others. This is a fantastic opportunity to do so!

We invite you to submit a write-up for the newsletter, focusing on one or more of the following topics:

Success Stories

- Share inspiring success stories, Highlighted case studies or individual/community impact stories from your project

Significant Event

- Provide a report on a significant event, which event has the greatest impact on the project

Challenges and Solutions

- Challenges and solutions or strategies you used to overcome those challenges you've faced during the project

Recommendations and Feedback for the Future

- Offer recommendations or Provide feedback

You can contribute to any or all of these topics! Please keep your write-up to a maximum of 500 words. Feel free to include pictures to complement your story, or you can send them to me separately. Kindly submit your contributions by 30 January 2025.

Thank you for reading!

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