

## Bangladesh wins 50th International Letter-Writing Competition



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The winner of the Universal Postal Union's 2021 International Letter-Writing Competition (ILWC) was announced at a special event on 27 August on the final day of Congress in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. Nubaysha Islam, a 14-year-old girl from Sylhet in Bangladesh, has taken the top prize for her letter to her baby sister Amal.

The heartfelt letter, which was written following the 2021 ILWC theme to "write a letter to a family member about your experience with Covid-19", documents Nubaysha's struggles during the global Covid-19 pandemic and reminds her younger sister to never lose hope.

The letter was written before the birth of Amal and talks about Nubaysha's fears during the pandemic. She writes, "I wasn't jealous of all the attention you'll get when mom and dad told me I was going to have a little sister. Not even when they bought a crib for you where I spent the first two years of my life sleeping on a floor mattress. But I did envy you when I realized you had a protective womb shielding from the deadly outside world and I didn't."

The letter notes how the Covid-19 lockdown went from a "two week much needed mid-spring break" for Nubaysha to an "incessant imprisonment at our very own home." She outlines how her life took a "u-turn" in a matter of weeks.

Writing to her sister, she says, "You must know what I'm talking about. You must have books lined up with the struggles of a million others like me. But this is my story; sister to sister, never to be known by anyone else."

Nubaysha questions whether the Covid-19 virus was spread by Mother Nature as punishment for the human race wrecking the world. "Maybe she's ushering us to our senses; making us realize our mindless wrongdoings," the letter states. But Nubaysha also stresses that even though the virus is deadly, so is losing hope.

The letter outlines the heartbreak Nubaysha and her family went through during the pandemic, with her mum suffering from depression and the loss of her aunt to Covid-19. Nubaysha writes about her struggles dealing with her mum's depression. "I didn't know what to do when mom sank into depression. I just stood there motionless as she kept struggling with sleep and appetite."

Nubaysha also writes about the death of her aunt and describes the situation as "unimaginable". "A little ill at the morning, grasping for life in the evening, and gone by night - that's what Covid-19 does to you," she writes. Nubaysha tells her sister all about aunt Phuppi and how she was a great person and how she was so excited to meet Amal.

"Once my third grade English teacher had asked what I feared most. I remember answering thunderstorms and spiders. But now I'd say, it is death as well as the fear of losing someone," she writes.

Concluding, the letter encourages Amal to fight through the unfortunate times with trust and patience. "I may have lost Phuppi but I still got the hopes of meeting you soon. Your name means 'hope' Amal. And that is what's unique to you. You've been fuelling my hopes for better times," she writes.