

THE DEFINITIVE  
**YOUTH**  
MAGAZINE

# SHOUT

DHAKA THURSDAY FEBRUARY 20, 2020, FALGUN 7, 1426 BS

A PUBLICATION OF *The Daily Star*



THE BANGLA DICTIONARY  
WE WANT

PG 3

THE PINK TAX

PG 8



## A STUDY IN **BANGLA**

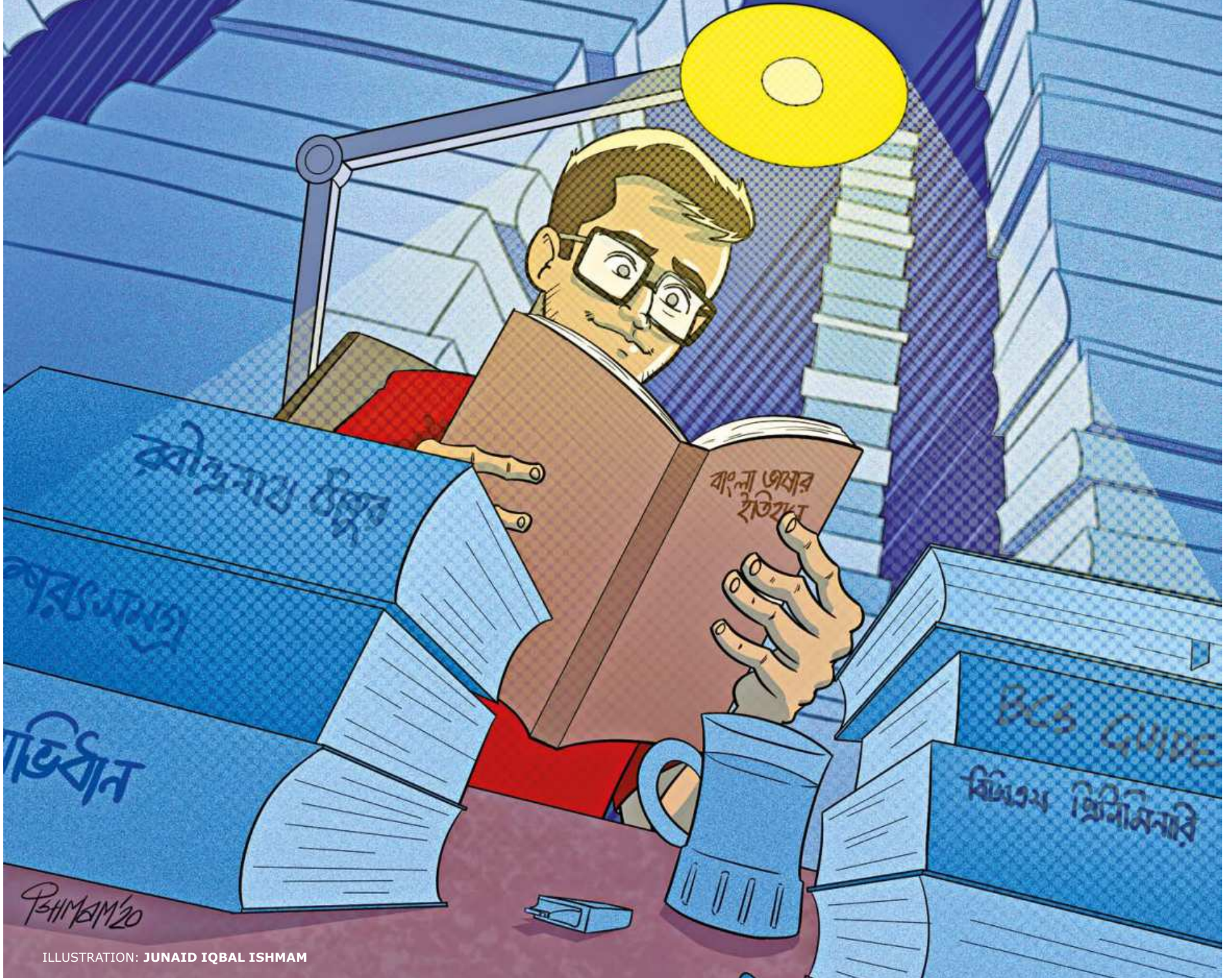


ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM

# EDITORIAL

This year was the first time I was able to attend the Dhaka Art Summit, and I had a great time. Far better than expected. The usual gallery experience in Dhaka is sterile, bland, and wrapped up quickly due to lack of, well, art. But not this. Dhaka Art Summit was fun, interesting, and incredibly interactive. A dossier that could put many galleries in far off, Instagram friendly cities to shame. It took up three whole floors and then some at the Shilpakala Academy and it was a good two hours before I made my way out. A space such as this is so rare in Dhaka. Unfortunately, as we all know, space is a luxury in this city and be it for art or sports or music, spaces are far and few between. DAS managed to draw large crowds and is an overall success. Hopefully there will be more spaces such as this in the future.

– Talat Ahmed, Sub-editor, SHOUT



**PLAYWATCH**  
 YOUTUBE CHANNEL REVIEW

# FOR THE LOVE OF WORDS



**ALIZA RAHMAN**

**BABEL**

Babel, the language learning app, has a channel on YouTube with 240 videos. But unlike many other YouTube videos that merely tell you how to say common words in different languages or focuses on a single language, Babel's videos explores varied ideas related to language covering interesting topics you might not have even thought of such as "How Did Hollywood Change The Way We Speak? | Ask a Linguist" to questions you always had but couldn't find a satisfactory answer to like in "Why Do Languages Have Grammatical Gender? | Ask a Linguist". While there are obviously basics that nearly all language channels have such as "How To Say Essential Phrases In 10 Languages", and "Learn Spanish In 60 Seconds", there are also more intriguing issues they make about such as "Untranslatable Words From Other Cultures" and "Why Revive A Dead Language? | Interview with Prof. Ghil'ad Zuckermann". Also included are videos showing challenges attempted by different people, tricky pronunciations in various languages, differences between languages, and others.

**NAME EXPLAIN**

If you're the kind of person yearning to learn about the history of words but find the idea of pouring over old books daunting, this channel might just be the one for you. This is the channel of

a person who, by his own admission, loves names. And a brief look at the videos on his channel shows just how much. From how different states in the world got the names they have to the weird name rules Facebook has, this channel basically has videos on all kinds of words. Moreover, it doesn't just cover topics related to the past but also current events as "10 Words Added To The Dictionary In 2019 Explained" and "Prince Harry's Title Change Explained" shows. In addition, even fictional worlds aren't left out, as is suggested by its videos titled "The Secret Meaning Behind The Names Of Harry Potter" and "How Tolkien Created Names".

**ELLEN BROCK**

A former head editor at Musa Publishing, now a full time freelance editor, with five years of experience, Ellen Brock has a lot of useful advice for those looking to publish their own book someday. She has videos discussing what makes characters believable including their motivations, flaws, goals, advice on writing scenes, tips for plotting, good ways to start, end, name chapters, etc. She also has videos going into details on what writers do that harm or help their writing and how they can improve such as "25 Mistakes that Peg You as an Amateur Writer", "7 Common Reasons for Terrible Similes", and "The Four Types of Novel Writers".

*Aliza is Matilda resurrected. Reach her at [aliza.hridula@gmail.com](mailto:aliza.hridula@gmail.com)*

# The Bangla dictionary we want

ALIZA RAHMAN

A search on Google for 'dictionary' gives us results for various dictionaries, each with its unique characteristics. Looking for Bangla dictionaries, however, yields far less satisfactory results. While there are many great Bangla dictionaries in print form, we are yet to have a Bangla dictionary that makes good use of all the different options we can explore online. Below are some suggestions for what features a good online Bangla dictionary could have:

## BASICS

You've likely seen plenty of online dictionaries already having these, but rarely are all of them in one site. The list includes things such as synonyms, antonyms, translations, etymologies, examples in a sentence, usage of words in famous speeches or quotes, pronunciation, information on how words came to have different meanings in different times, the option to ask questions, tips on how to remember a word, custom made quizzes to help you learn a group of words you keep forgetting, etc.

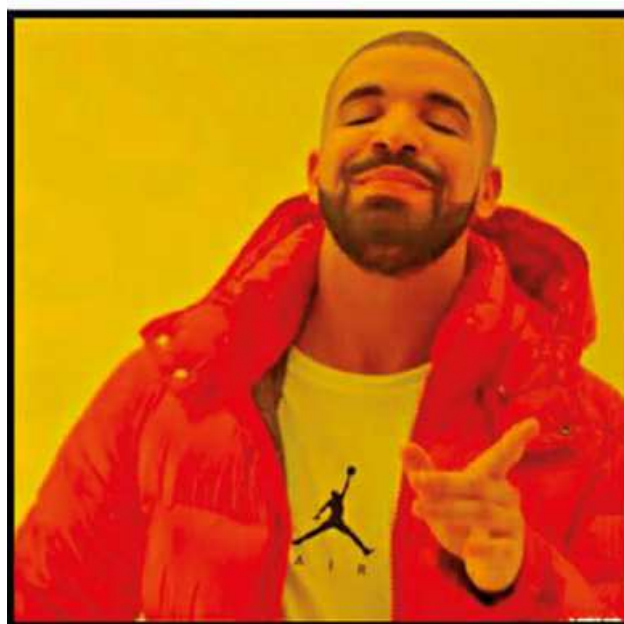
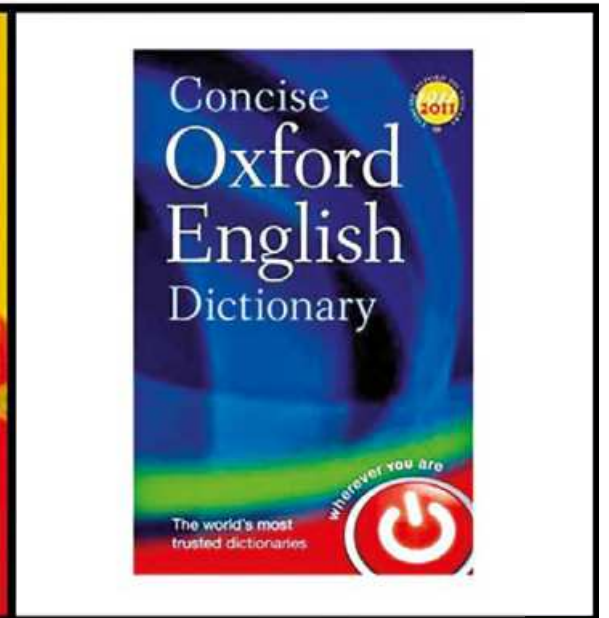
## DIAGRAMS AND LABELLED ILLUSTRATIONS

Remember when you had to learn about the formation of a hurricane for your 7th grade Geography class? Imagine how much more difficult that would be to study if you didn't have accompanying diagrams and pictures. Similarly, diagrams and labelled illustrations of everyday objects, machines, and even concepts, would not only make it easier for us to better understand a word, especially in science where one might need to know about the different parts of equipment among many other things, but would also make it more engaging and easier to remember.

## POPULAR WORDS OF TODAY

You'll often see online dictionaries have a section focusing on words that are trending. With the usage of social media, we frequently see new words being created and gaining popularity and old words having renewed significance or taking on a different meaning. It is therefore important that we pay attention to what words gain popularity at a particular time, not just because documenting these might be an important source for future generations studying us in the future but because learning about how and why certain words become popular might give us valuable information about our present times as well.

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# The Public Display of Grades

## An Odious Practice

ALIZA RAHMAN

This might be hard to believe, but there are schools which openly display the grades of students. The practice has harmful consequences. However, there are those who defend it.

One line of argument goes that good students get motivated when everyone else gets to see their grades and students who perform poorly also get motivated because they see that others did better than them. This thinking is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, it makes learning take a backseat and pushes students to focus instead on getting marks; secondly, it assumes that all students have the same abilities and opportunities, and so to improve, all students need to do is try harder.

Grades often do not reflect much about students themselves – yes, the student probably worked hard and could be adept at learning, but the reasons for getting good grades could also hinge on having parents and/or tutors who can provide extra help to the student (having tutors in turn depends on whether the family has the ability to pay for it), a stable and safe situation at home, and also the student having a learning style the teacher can address among many other things.



Additionally, grades homogenise students. It doesn't take into account their unique strengths and weaknesses nor does it consider the different aspirations and interests they may have.

Our childhood and adolescence is a period where there is massive change and development. Students should have the chance to explore their interests and learn by engaging in different activities during this time. However, students often

sacrifice their hobbies and extracurricular activities for good grades. They lose the chance to learn different things. Moreover, grades often miss out on the many different qualities and abilities a child has, and doesn't show all that a child has learned. Publicly displaying grades creates the pressure to attain better scores, often at the cost of everything else.

Furthermore, this practice causes students to feel ashamed. There are instances

of students falling ill from the stress, lying to friends and family, and using unethical means to get better grades. In short, unnecessary pain and stress is caused.

If you tell someone that the grades they got on a 1st grade math test determines what that their future will be, they might find that absurd, and rightly so, because grades at such a young age are nothing more than numbers on a paper. However, when everyone knows a child's grade, they judge that child based on that, often becoming blind to some of their other talents. This not only results in some parents and teachers attributing negative qualities like laziness and lack of desire to learn to a child if they perform poorly, it stops them from helping the child develop themselves in the field or subject they are interested in. They start acting as if nothing besides grades matter even though that is not true.

The paths our careers and lives take are not always linear, nor does it always proceed as planned. Therefore, it is better to let students explore and make mistakes without penalising them through humiliating practices such as publicly displaying grades.

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# A STUDY IN BANGLA

MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

With the changing nature of the job market and brand new majors being introduced in universities every few years, choosing a field of study becomes complicated and disorienting. While many options may be new or tempting, one option that is very close to home remains open to us — Bangla.

Although we study Bangla from an early age at school, not many think about continuing its study at university. This February, we decided to talk to students who are studying Bangla as their major, and to faculty members teaching Bangla about their experiences, hopes and challenges.

### WHY CHOOSE BANGLA?

Meghla Islam Urme, a third-year student in the Bangla Language and Literature program at Southeast University, says she gravitated towards Bangla because of her love for literature. She says, "Although my school background is in Science, writing is my passion and that's something I want to do in the future. I have hopes of becoming a journalist, and I know a degree in Bangla will help me do that."

When asked about her plans after graduation, Meghla says, "I want to go on to do my postgraduate and then work in the development sector or in journalism."

Mirza Mehjabin Hasan, currently studying for her master's degree at the University of Dhaka, says she studied Bangla because of her love for the language. "I take pride in our Bangla language. Bangla has a history to be proud of. Besides, I always wanted to be a poet."

"In the future, I want to go into teaching since it's a noble profession," she continues. "That would also give me the chance to do research on the language."

Third-year student at the University of Dhaka Sadat Nahid confesses, "I always wanted to study a pure subject like English or Bangla but my options were a little hindered by the entrance exam results as well."

When asked about his plans, Sadat says, "After graduation, I want to sit for the BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) exam since that'll bring in many opportunities. Teaching in colleges or universities is also an option."

### WHAT TO EXPECT

Speaking about his experience studying Bangla at Jahangirnagar University, Rokibul Islam, a fourth-year student says, "My experience was different from my expectations. I chose Bangla because of my love for literature but I ended up getting to do a lot of research on language at university."

"I expected a lot of study on grammar," says Sadat, "But only about 10 percent of our study was on grammar. The rest was on Bangla literature. I definitely was unprepared to study ancient and medieval literature."

"I gained bookish knowledge well but I wish I gained more fundamental knowledge since a lot of reading was emphasised in our curriculum," says Mehjabin.

One of the few private universities that offer a degree in Bangla is Southeast University. Dr. Hamida Begum, Chairperson of the Department explains, "In addition to focusing on literature and language, we incorporate courses about English, IT and even foreign languages like French and Ger-



ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

man in our program to increase the value of our students' degrees."

### CAREER PROSPECTS

"From my observation, employment is a major fear for the students during their Honours program. And this is true for all other humanities majors like Philosophy or History and even core science subjects like pure Physics, Chemistry or Mathematics," says Prof. Syed Azizul Huq of the Department of Bengali at the University of Dhaka. "The emergence of career-focused majors and the lack of specialised jobs in both private and public sectors has worsened this problem. Out of these majors, Bangla actually has an advantage due to the many teaching positions available."

When asked where previous students of the department went on to work, he says, "Most opted for the civil services. Teaching is the most popular career path as Bangla is included as a subject in almost every sphere of the national academia. Many also applied in the banking sector."

Speaking for Southeast University, Dr. Hamida Begum says her students went on to work in diverse fields, "Our students now

work in publications, in the news, buying houses, in business, event management and other artistic disciplines."

### PERSPECTIVE OF FACULTY MEMBERS

Dr. Hamida Begum notes positive changes when asked how the scenario regarding Bangla learning has transformed over the years. "There are more students in our department now and they come for the love of the Bangla culture and language. These days, the youth has more cultural involvement in the many celebrations of our culture such as *Nobanno* and *Pohela Falgun*."

Prof. Huq observed that even for the certain group of students who aren't interested in their major, they usually come around. "The students familiarise themselves to the major by the first or second semester. By that time, around 10 to 15 percent of them grow a liking to the subject and become passionate about literature. The rest opt for a more career-oriented path, preparing for BCS and studying just enough to get a satisfactory grade in university. However, for getting a decent attendance score, they regularly attend the lectures, which, if attentive, exposes them to the many facets of literature and

actually helps them in moulding a better and more mature outlook and philosophy."

### REACHING BEYOND

Learning Bangla is not just restricted to Bangladeshi students anymore. "We have an exchange program where students from Yunnan Minzu University in China come to Bangladesh for two semesters and learn Bangla here. We have found that they enjoy learning Bangla and they actively participate in our cultural programs alongside Bangladeshi students. They learn Bangla songs and poems too while they're here," says Dr. Hamida Begum.

Every International Mother Language Day when we are reminded of the history and significance of our language, we realise the importance of upholding Bangla in all its glory. "There are surprisingly few people around us who use the correct spelling and grammar when writing Bangla," says Sadat. "In my opinion linguistics and grammar should be focused more in our curriculum."

Mrittika Anan Rahman is a daydreamer trying hard not to run into things while walking. Find her at [mrittika.anan@gmail.com](mailto:mrittika.anan@gmail.com)

# FOR THOSE WHO LIVE FOOTBALL

TALAT AHMED

As someone who's never quite had the skill and talent to play actual football, my own love for the game is a tad different from those who's fondest memories take place on the pitch. Rather than being one of the players, I (and I suspect those who also lack the physical prowess) dream of being the manager instead of the player. *Football Manager (FM)* lets me do just that.

Simulation games such as *Sims* or *Civilization* offer players the chance to vicariously live out many realities, and I would argue that *Football Manager* leaves those games in the dust when it comes to excruciating detail and is one of the most realistic games one could play. You can't control your players and spam rabonas with Lingard game in, game out like in *FIFA*. In *FM*, the players play the match and how they play depends entirely on you as manager.

You also have the option to attend press conferences, interact with the board when you want to hire one more goalkeeping coach, personally praise or chastise players for their performance. All novelties, that for the large part, you can sort of do in *FIFA* as well. But the best parts of the game, for me, are far more niche. As manager of a club,



you are in charge of devising training routines for the entire squad and individuals (both senior and various youth levels). Every single decision you or the CPU managers make affects the entire world of your game. A wrong response in a press conference can lead to a player brimming with confidence

or sulking, which in turn, can make or break the result of your next game. Any misstep you take will contribute to your club's overall performance, which makes actually winning trophies in *FM* far more like the real thing than *FIFA* or *PES*. The amount of satisfaction one gets when everything goes right is what

makes the game so great. It capitalises on the passion of football fans and it's safe to say no players are complaining. Believe me when I say that nothing quite compares to turning around a two-goal deficit at half-time to win 3-2 at full time because of tactical changes or an impassioned half-time team talk. The game relies entirely on data, and using this data, you will be tasked with forming the proper backroom staff, scouting network, and squad. I cannot even begin to explain how exciting it is when you unearth the next Batistuta, and how disappointing it is when they only end up playing for Derby County in the Championship.

The sheer scope of the game is another massive factor. You can manage any team from the heights of the English Premier League to a third division side in Indonesia. If the league database doesn't come pre-loaded, there's a very good chance that the mod community has you covered. While the Bangladesh football pyramid isn't pre-packaged as a playable league, the database for players and clubs such as Abahani, Brothers Union, Sheikh Jamal, etc. do exist and you can even manage the Bangladesh national side and maybe take them to the World Cup. But probably not, because the game is just that realistic.

## EDU hosts National Debate Championship

The National Debate Competition organised by the East Delta University Debating Society (EDUDS) ended up on February 9, 2020. The champion of this three-day festival was Dhaka University Debating Society (DUDS), and runner-up was the International Islamic University Chittagong Debtors Community (IIUCDC).

Internationally renowned debater and media personality Dr. Abdun Noor Tushar was the guest of honour. EDU Treasurer Prof. Shams ud-Doha presided over the prize-giving ceremony. VC Prof. Sekandar Khan addressed as the chief guest that the practice of debate enlightens people. In a greeting, EDU founder Vice Chairman Sayeed Al Noman congratulated all the participants, including the winners and runner-up, and said, "We are working to make East Delta University a centre of learning."

Kishwan Group, Drishty Chittagong and Ranks FC Properties assisted in organising the festival, which began with the inauguration ceremony on February 7.

Twenty-eight universities of the country participated in the contest. Registrar Sajal Kanti Barua; Development and Planning Director Shafayet Kabir Chowdhury; Associate Dean of Liberal Arts Shahidul Islam Chowdhury; Director of Student Activities ATM Mahmudur Rahman; and Proctor Ananya Nandi were present at the programme.

## DPS STS School Dhaka organises 4th DPSMUN

DPS STS School Dhaka organized the 4th DPS Model United Nation (DPSMUN IV) conference from February 13-15, 2020, in the Senior School for students to become delegates and to give them the opportunity to put into practice their knowledge of the MUN world.

A total of 413 students from 33 renowned schools participated in this mega event of DPSMUN IV conference. Among the 13 committees, 109 delegates were from DPS STS School. At the plenary session, Principal & Vice Principal of the school encouraged the delegates to connect with others and form alliances that would benefit all. The chief guest Andrew Homden, CEO of Consilium Education and Educational Advisor at DPS STS School Dhaka was welcomed by the school; he shared experiences of his early MUN days in high school. Baby Rani Karmakar, Deputy Secretary, The Economic Relations Division attended the event as the special guest.

Through this conference, the students were able to learn about diplomacy, international relations, and the United Nations (UN). It had also taught the students in speaking, debating, and writing skills, in addition to critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership abilities.

On this occasion, Vice Principal Madhu Wal said, "This conference gives students real-life experience in leadership, writing, teamwork and persuasive skills, and greater knowledge of global issues. No other programme offers young people an opportunity like MUN, to develop the kind of skill set and the understanding of the world that they need to be active and contributing citizens."

## NSU celebrates Boshonto Utshob 1426

North South University (NSU) celebrated "Boshonto Utshob 1426" February 16, 2020 in its own campus in Bashundhara.

The daylong celebration included procession, dance, circus, fair and *jatrapala* organised by the North South University Shangkritik Shangathan. In the morning, a colourful procession was erected on the university campus.

A K M Enamul Haque Shamim MP, Deputy Minister of Water Resources, was present as the chief guest during the programme. Freedom fighter Lion Benajir Ahmed, Chairman, BOT, NSU was present as special guest. Prof. Atiqul Islam, VC of NSU presided over the programme.

Speaking as the chief guest, A K M Enamul Haque Shamim MP said, "As spring comes into our lives, winter comes, storms also comes, we do not have to sit idle, we have to bring spring for ourselves, for people around us, for the country and for the nation. During this time, he thanked North South University authority for organising such events to protect Bengali culture."

Benajir Ahmed said, "At North South University, we celebrate all kinds of Bengali cultural programmes in a glorious way." He urged the students to celebrate the spring festival in a festive atmosphere and to devote themselves to the service of the country.

Prof. Atiqul Islam, "I wish everyone's mind blooms like spring flower petals. Let our students be more thorough in following the Bengali culture."



## SUB and British Council jointly organise workshop on English language proficiency

British Council and State University of Bangladesh (SUB) jointly organised a workshop titled "English Language Proficiency for Teaching & Higher Studies" at SUB campus in its Scholars Inn auditorium on February 15, 2020. The workshop was presided over by Prof. M. Shahjahan Mina, VC of SUB. Among others, the workshop was addressed by Pro-VC Dr. M. Anwarul Kabir, Director (CDC) Abu Taher Khan, Sarwat Reza, Head of Business, and Umme Aisha Masjuda, Business Pursuit Officer of British Council. The programme was attended by Prof. Dr. Nawzia Yasmin, Prof. Dr. Shaker Ahmed, Prof. Anis Alam Siddiqui, and Prof. Md. Asgar Ali.

Prof. M. Shahjahan Mina mentioned that the main objective of arranging this workshop is to attain English language skill and efficiency of the faculty members of SUB. He expressed his opinion with the words that no quality graduates may be produced without quality teacher. He extended his thanks to British Council for conducting a useful and effective workshop at SUB campus. Sarwat Reza, Head of Business of British Council assured that the IELTS examination centre of British Council will be set up in SUB Campus soon.

The workshop was attended by 85 Assistant Professors and Lecturers of SUB.



## PU celebrates 'Rong-er Boshonto o Pitha Utshob 2020'

Presidency University (PU) cultural club welcomed the first day of Falgun with the event 'Rong-er Boshonto o Pitha Utshob 2020'.

Students from different departments took part in the festivities. Rokia Afzal Rahman, chairperson of BoT, PU; Prof. Dr. Matiur Rahman, VC, PU; Prof. Dr. Mohammed Muniruzzaman, Pro-VC, PU; and Maj Gen Kazi Ashfaq Ahmed (Retd.), Advisor, PU were present during the event. Deans, heads of departments and teachers were also present.

## EWU hosts 19th Convocation ceremony

East West University (EWU) organised its 19th Convocation on February 17, 2020 at the EWU Campus in Aftabnagar, Dhaka. This convocation is dedicated to the memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his birth anniversary. Education Minister Dr. Dipu Moni MP conferred degrees among students. A total number of 2111 graduates in both undergraduate and graduate levels received certificates. Besides, three students were awarded the prestigious Gold Medal for their excellent academic performances.

Prof. Dr. Kazi Shahidullah, Chairman, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh was present at the Convocation as the special guest. Barrister M. Amir-Ul Islam, senior lawyer in Bangladesh Supreme Court, was the convocation speaker. Syed Manzur Elahi, Chairperson, BOT, EWU, Prof. Dr. Mohammed Farashuddin, Chief Advisor of EWU, and Prof. Dr. M. M. Shahidul Hassan, VC, EWU also gave speeches on the occasion.

Members of the BOT, Pro-VC, Treasurer, Deans, department chairpersons, faculty members, officers, staff, graduates and their guardians participated in the convocation.

## IUB student clinches Best Presenter Award

Md. Aziz Rahman, student of the Department of Accounting, School of Business at IUB grabbed the Best Presenter Award at the ACBSP Region 10 Conference held at United International University (UIU) on February 8, 2020. He is also the executive body member of Independent Accounting Association (IAA).

Rahman will now be representing Region 10 at the ACBSP Annual Conference to be held in Chicago in June 2020. This comes by invitation from ACBSP as part of his being bestowed with the Best Presenter Award in the Start Up Tank 2020 competition of ACBSP's Region 10 Conference. By virtue of this, Rahman is going to be the first-ever student from Bangladesh to be invited to the ACBSP Annual Conference for regional representation.

# Fly, little boat

MATILDA

On a wintry day,  
At a lightless bay,  
A boat floats on an ice-still sea.  
The waters part,  
The stars a chart,  
Directions in a world of melancholy.  
As one looks on,  
It starts to dawn,  
The boat's sunk into invisibility.  
You think it'll rise,  
Fly into the skies,  
For a second, abandoning rationality.



# New Market to Nimiso

HIYA ISLAM

There is a deep-rooted charm to this part of Dhaka, at New Market, a bustling zone of hawkers, shops and people, of all sorts. It is here where “fixed price” is a fallacy, the world is your oyster and you can get your hands on virtually everything as long as you can bargain.

If the heart doesn't get what it wants, walk to the neighboring turf, *Gausia*. Tees for fifty, shoes for a hundred more. Pitch in a few more hundred for a pair of pants and decent accessories and you would have a complete outfit. Hashtag OOTD. Post.

*“160 taka apa, niben?!”*

Naomi looked back abruptly, annoyed at the hoarseness of his voice; he was too close. She was not the *apa* the seller called out to yet she turned to see what could be so cheap. But the object in question remained out of sight.

*“120, diley den”,* a woman in her mid-twenties haggled back, turning away from the shop.

As Naomi counted change in the rickshaw, a boy popped into sight. A boy dressed better than most paupers, selling candies. She was not the one for sweet tooth but felt compelled to hand him a ten-taka note anyway.

Suffering from the pangs of existential crisis en route, a man in his 40's, with a missing-hand came across at a signal. His held out his left hand murmuring gibberish. Feeling estranged, she dug into her pockets but the rickshaw took off quickly as the lights turned green.

Next stop, Nimiso- home to unnecessary items schemed to melt hearts and tagged to break the bank. She picked up a keyring dangling from a hook hang of phone cases. A stranger's second thoughts turned fluke. It was a miniature version of the life-sized Pink Panther grinning at the window. Then, she headed to the stationary aisle at the far end of the store. She stood in front of the rack shelved with notebooks, in a haze. After 15 gruelling minutes, it came down to 3 spiral A5's, none worth abandoning.

At the cashier, her eyes wandered to a neat sign that said “Buy one, get one” that pointed to a line-up of nail polishes. Instinctively, she picked bottles for cherry red and nude brown.

Back at home, the day's shopping piled over the stack from yesterday and the day before. Curtains pulled, trash full of take-out and the laptop still plugged in at yellow. Naomi has been out of work since the past eight months or so. The one-year internship was to be renewed into a full-time job, presumably. But it is not always that we get what we want. She lost count of the firms she had applied. Besides, she never heard back from them. She felt as if her career ended before it could even take off.

But it is alright. It is okay to drain the savings a little, to feel a lot better. She pulled open a drawer full of overdue bills and scavenged out skin care for depressive episodes.

*Apply the mask on clean, washed skin generously. Massage over face and neck and leave on overnight. Rinse off with lukewarm water in the morning.*

She tore open a pack of sleeping mask, put it on and went to bed at 4:38 PM.

*Hiya texts back faster than light and that is just how everyone should be, in her opinion. Find her at hiyaislam.11@gmail.com*

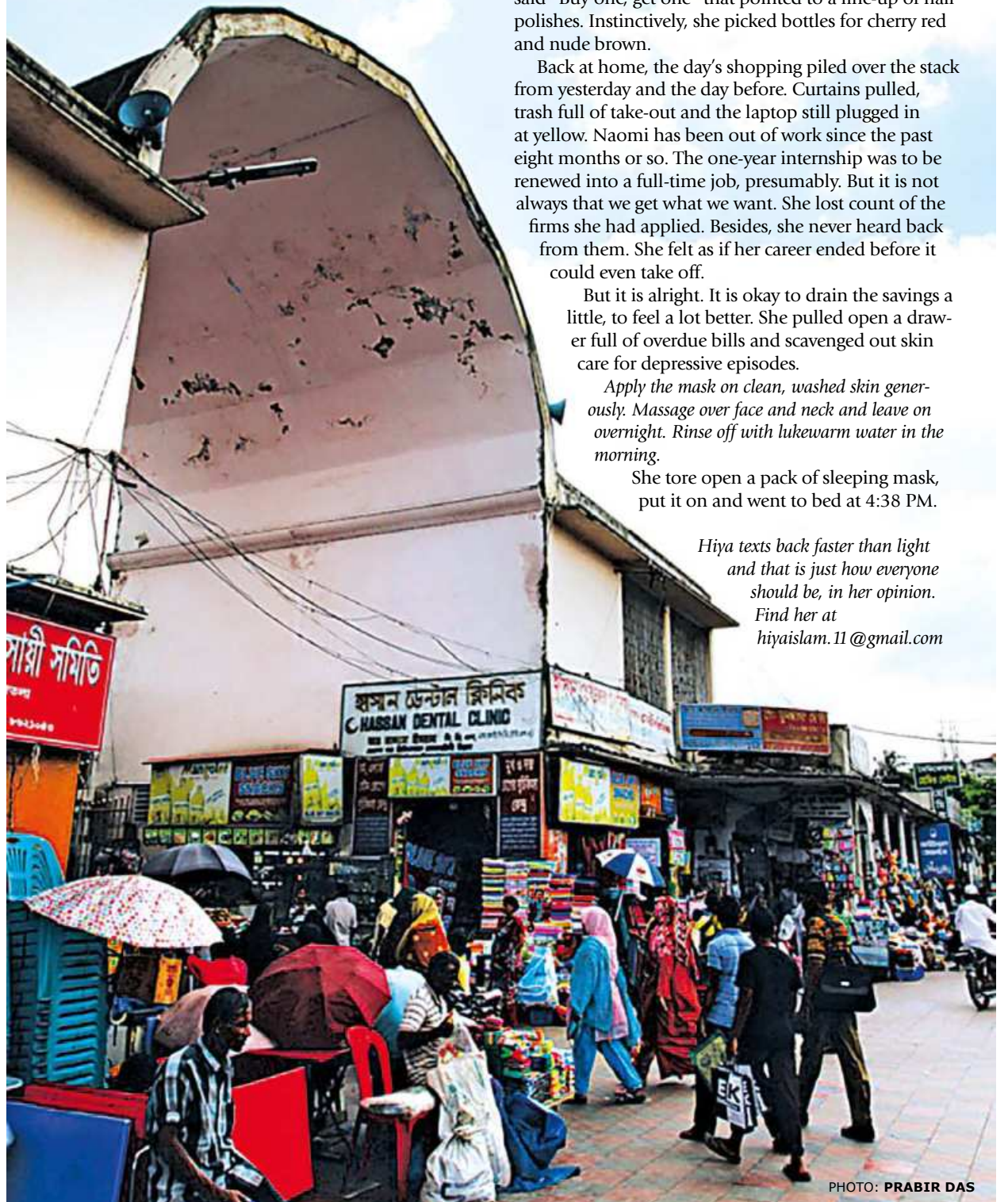


PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# The Pink tax: Why women pay more for everything

HIYA ISLAM

Pink tax lurks in the corners of every supermarket and affects half of the global consumers, with the vast majority being grossly unaware. It is not charged by the government as per any other tax such as sales or income. Rather, it is a phrase used to describe the inflated prices on products or services targeted at women compared with the equivalent sold to men. It is real and regrettably, unavoidable.

A recent study carried out by the Department of Consumer Affairs in New York city revealed a great deal of shocking statistics focusing on 800 products with male and female versions. The study found a children's vehicle in two different colours, red and pink at a popular supermarket. The red scooter aimed for boys came with a tag of \$24.99 while the pink one costed \$49.99.

In the local scenario, 250 ml shower gels by a well-known brand are being sold at Tk. 375 and Tk. 420, the latter

for women. Heading over to the toys section, Barbie and Ken are tagged with a price of Tk. 2680 and Tk. 2480. Between an Avengers-themed backpack and one with unicorn horn and glitter ears, a Tk. 100 difference was seen. The pricier being, you guessed it right, the pink bag, "for girls". It is to note that both bags were of similar quality and size. It goes on. Two infant dolls. The girl with brown hair having a price of Tk. 25 more than the boy wearing a cap. Discrepancies exist, in low and high a number.

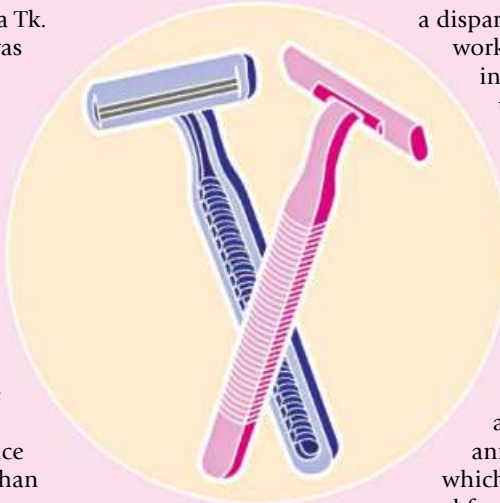
This is the cost of being a female. Women on average, live longer than

men. However, they do pay more for everything and get paid less in the current world. Although the gender wage gap is closing in to zero in some countries like, Luxembourg at a disparity of 3 %, more work needs to be done in developed countries such as, the United States and Canada which roughly have an 18 % gap. With that in mind, women are actually paying more than men 42 % of the time. This amounts to \$1,300 annually, a figure which could have been saved for better purposes.

Nonetheless, the fact that pink tax is rampant across stores has to do with consumers giving in to deceptive campaigns. Believing that ordinary,

gender-neutral products like, razors, deodorant are specially concocted to suit the feminine body is one example. It is typical for companies to opt for "pink" packaging and use terms like, soft, delicate, for women to promote the idea. Often, services and brands try to justify a higher price tag on female products. The reasoning is misleading most of the times yet very well-received by buyers. These reasons must be carefully investigated upon and reported if necessary. However, it is important for females to be conscious while shopping and decide if a costlier item is worth the money and what ramifications are there with an increasing purchase of the said brand. That is, support companies which take a stand against the issue. Choose women-owned products, buy in bulk. Make sure the expense is sensible as per personal need and budget.

*Hiya is currently struggling to reach her book-reading goals. Find her at hiyaislam.11@gmail.com*



# FOUR STRINGS ATTACHED

## *The tragic tale of a washed up ukulele*

MOHUA MOULI

I woke up with dust in my mouth. The streets hadn't been kind since last Christmas.

It's been almost two years since my career went down the drain, and my long-time collaborator and lover, Michelle Osama, dumped me for my cousin Giveson. She said she wasn't feeling it anymore, told me I lacked depth and didn't have enough stamina. Those words still echo in the hollow of my chest.

She was starstruck every time she saw Giveson with his sturdy strap, his baritone voice and his perfectly chiselled physique. Some days she would come back home late at night, gushing over how he showed her some cool new chord that I could never replicate.

Last I heard, they were cruising around the town doing shows at our old joints. The other night while I was playing our once fan-favourite cover of *Can't Help Falling in Love*, down at the corner of Lounge Com- mode, I could hear teenagers screaming "Michelle and Giveson! Michelle and Giveson!" as they started playing the same song. All I could do was sigh and lament over what once was.

I am now spending my days scavenging for money, playing outside the same places where I used to be welcomed as a star. I live

in a shabby old music store down at Commerce Lab. My landlord often berates me with unkind remarks like, "You aren't even good looking enough to get any gigs." Sigh.

Sometimes he would throw me out for a few days after he realised I was using all the varnish he sells in the store. Those nights I would wander around the streets, playing a few songs, making a few bucks, just to get a little bit of shoe polish from the local shoe-shiner. Then I would keep varnishing until I passed out.

I awoke that morning to a rancid taste of dust flying around this unforgiving city. Before I could gather my belongings and get up, the sky turned dark, as a bony figure emerged from the periphery. He picked me up and I struggled to breathe as he smelled like a heavy dose of AXEL body spray. He then said in a squeaky voice, "You're coming with me."

The rest of that day is a haze. I am now a forced associate of a man named Jamshed, who spends his afternoons loitering around Eve College, trying to pick up a date by playing the first half of *Ore Nil Doriya*.

He provides me with an ample supply of varnish, as payment for my services. He told me I often cry out "Michelle, my belle!" in my sleep and suggested I stop doing that or he'll throw me out too. I take another heavy dose of varnish and try to comply.

