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YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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UNIFORM ADMISSION
TESTS
PG 3

THE GIFT OF TIME

PG 7

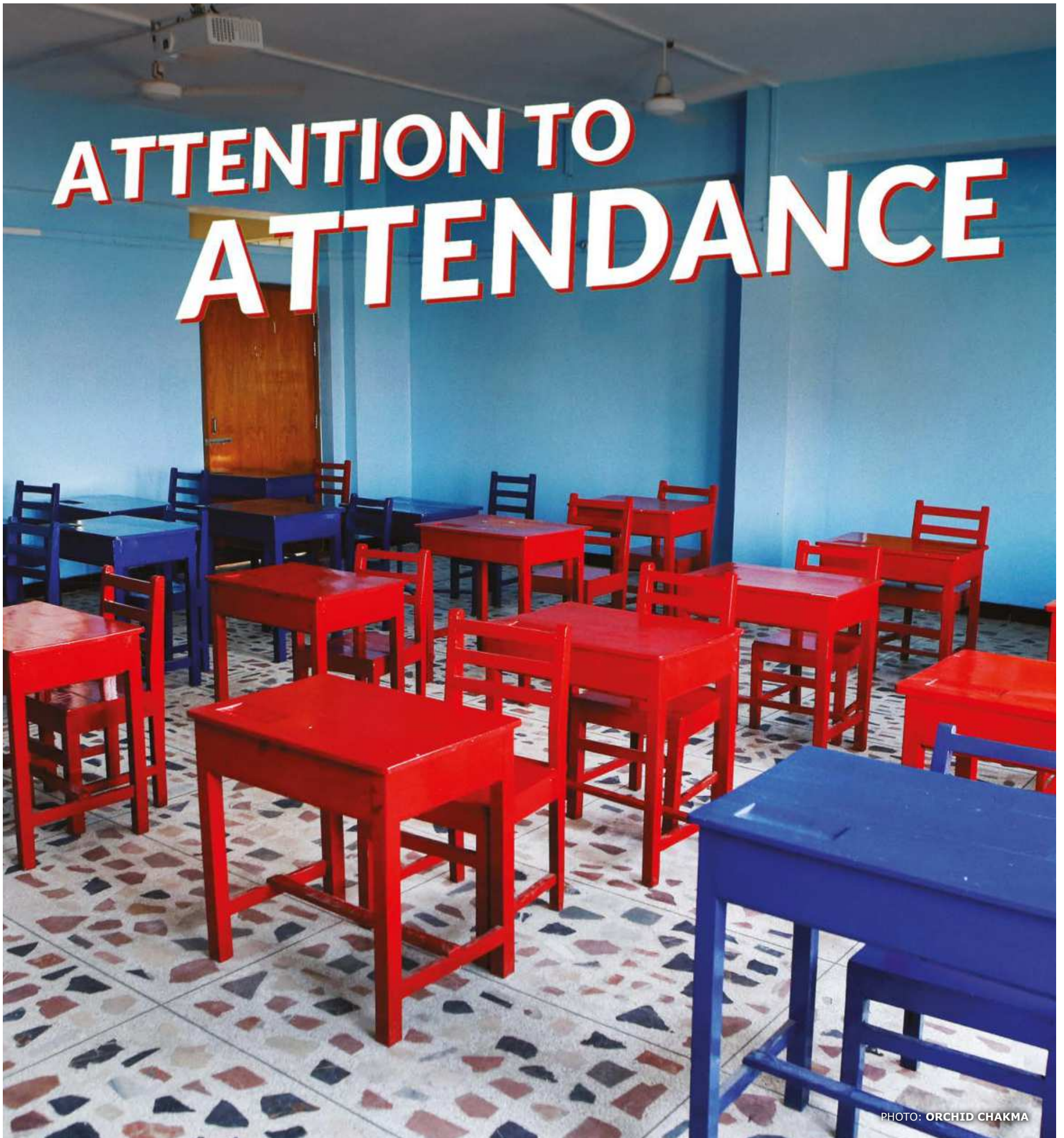


PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

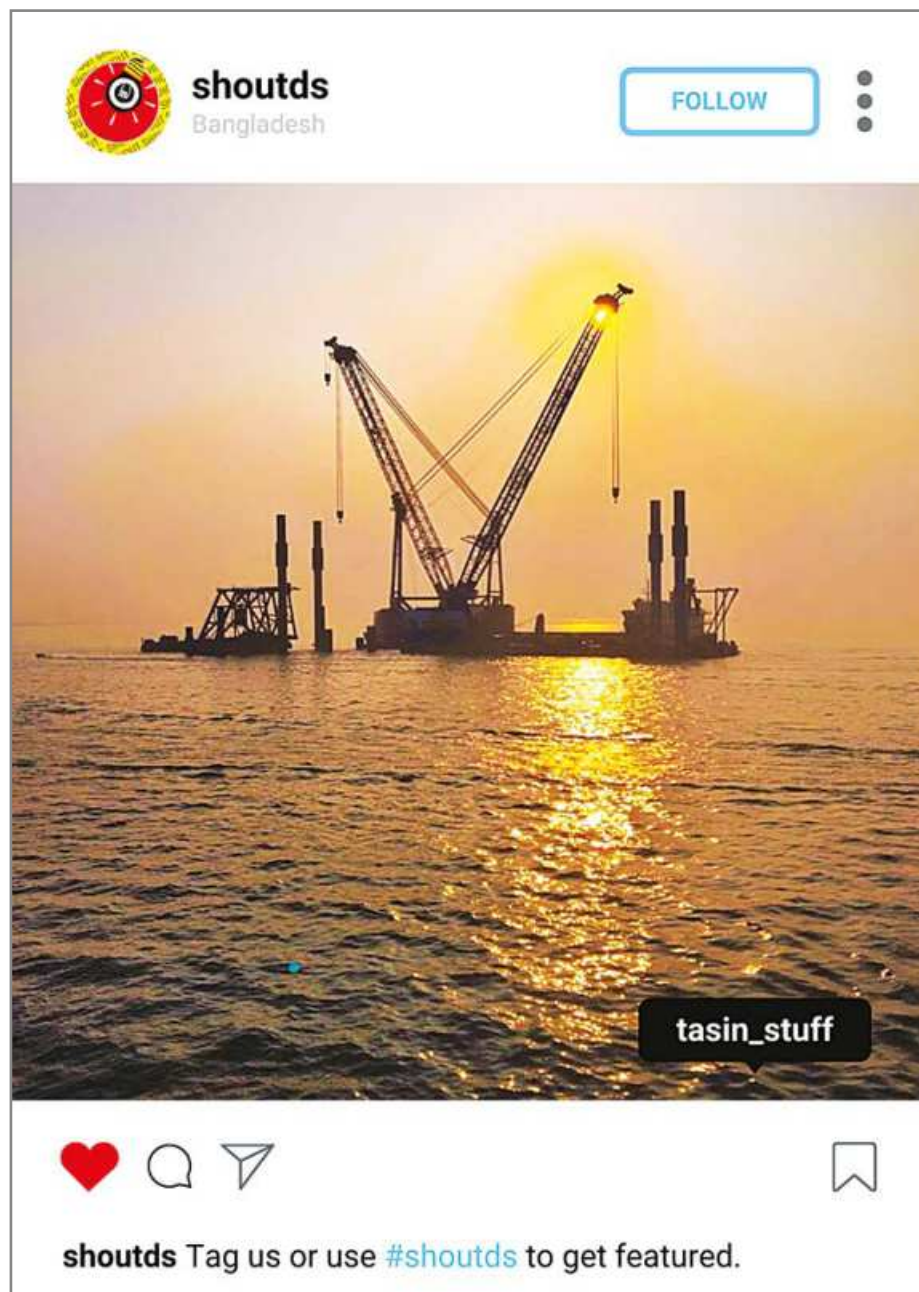
EDITORIAL

Spring is here. Or is it?

I could have written and published a research paper in the traffic jam en route Ekushey Boi Mela last week. Thanks to what seems like an open heart surgery on the roads of Dhaka, pollution beats its own records every day. We don't know if people wear face masks for the pollution or because of the virus outbreak; it's good that we do, though. The weather reports suggest a chance of rain. If we can actually call it "rain" is another thing to worry about. Big events, national and cultural, are lined up for the next few weeks. More occasions, more people, more of whatever happens in life. Looking forward? Only if the cloud of dust allows to.

Summer should be fine. I predict something hot.

– Kazi Akib Bin Asad, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH
 YOUTUBE CHANNEL REVIEW

Cool Channels for Cricket Children



AZMIN AZRAN

ROBELINDA2

A seemingly random YouTube channel, one might watch one of their videos and be forgiven for thinking that "robelinda2" is one of many innocuous channels that has the one useful video that somehow got viral. But this not-for-profit effort by a pleasant (or so I assume) Australian chap named Rob Moody is a treasure trove of old, new, classic, funny, and often random cricket clips. From Lasith Malinga's debut spell against Australia to a hilarious clip of a cricketer getting stuck in the boundary fence and losing his boot, robelinda2 will scratch most of your cricket itches. I'd recommend any of the videos containing sledging from some of Australia's modern greats like Adam Gilchrist, or Mitchell Johnson. The Australian sense of humour really shows with the video titles, which do a great job of hooking you in with an Inzamam-ul-Haq runout, but making you stay for the Shane Warne legbreak that turns a mile.

FANTAIL

Fantail is a cricket equipment manufacturer based out of New Zealand. I don't play cricket and even if I did, I wouldn't get my bats from New Zealand, but what I love about Fantail is their YouTube content. They used

to upload regular videos of restoring busted up old bats, which had an odd calming effect on me that I keep going back for whenever I need it. They have videos of making custom bats to order for their fans, or making replicas of famous, more expensive bats by other manufacturers. The polite looking gentleman who runs the channel does an excellent job, and his Kiwi accent (with the buzz of a mechanical saw in the background) just adds to the atmosphere of calm these videos induce.

WECRICKET

This is a channel run by two cricket fans and amateur cricket players from England, who just like to have a bit of fun with the game of cricket. They don't like Virat Kohli, but appreciate his greatness, and they often have a go at bowling machines to see if they're any good. Dan and Kez have tried to play the video game *Cricket 19* blindfolded, done impressions of famous cricketers, played with a GBP 5 bat to see how it compares to GBP 450 one. Other than all the craziness, they do have videos where they just sit down and talk about the current issues in the world of cricket. These videos are not as fun, but the two channel-runners always look slightly underprepared and that adds to the entertainment.

UNIFORM ADMISSION TESTS

A simple solution with complex repercussions?

FAISAL BIN IQBAL

In order to minimise the inconveniences students and their parents have to face during the admission season, the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) has decided to proceed with their plan of a uniform admission test from the 2020-21 academic year that covers all the public universities of the country.

A discussion regarding the entire initiative took place last month between the UGC and the Vice Chancellors of the public universities where both parties agreed that the new system can only be beneficial to admission seekers.

At first glance, the idea as a whole seems to be the perfect solution to all the problems people face during the time of the entrance exams. However, the more you think about it, more flaws seem to surface.

The uniform admission test will allow examinees to sit for the exam at a centre near their home or of their choice. It will save students from the hassles of travelling long distances to sit for the entrance exams at the public universities of their choice. A uniform admission test will also



PHOTO: STAR

shorten the time needed for students to enrol at a public university, which will help to minimise session backlog.

Now, no matter how you look at it, the system still has a few downsides to it, some of which need to be addressed and resolved before it gets too late.

The uniform tests will make the competition even

harder. Under the new system, you're not going to get a second chance, i.e. for example, previously, if you had failed the KUET entrance exam, you could always try your luck at RUET, CUET, and so on. This time, there's just one exam. Get it wrong, and you'll have lost your only opportunity. Sitting for the exam a second time may be allowed in the new system, but that hasn't been specified yet.

As seen before, such central exams that take place over the whole country (like the medical college entrance exams, and the SSC and HSC exams) are often plagued with numerous accusations, like the distribution of wrong question papers or the question papers being leaked. The central admission test will have to deal with the same risks. They also need to maintain the integrity of the system all over the country. In no way can they allow the misappropriation of authority during the time of the central exams. The idea of conducting a uniform admission test for all public universities is indeed a good initiative. But whether it is a flawless one or not can only be determined once the idea is brought to fruition.

PROS: Less travelling, increased accessibility, solution to session jam • **CONS:** Risk of question leaks, universities lose autonomy, increases pressure on students

Really? TV

MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

You're watching Bangladesh's first and only reality TV channel, Really?TV. Please watch our shows instead of TikTok videos.

6:00 PM PROJECT FUNWAY

Aspiring designers run around Chadni Chowk and occasionally pass out from heat stroke while trying to put together a look under BDT 250. Bargaining is a right and the meek won't make it far.

The judges are difficult to please but the pickpockets and lack of ventilation isn't making their lives any easier.

6:30 PM MATCHMAKERZ

Twenty-four singles from Dhaka compete to find their soulmates under the

watchful supervision of their parents and extended family. Each episode, contestants are randomly paired to go on a date with another contestant to fabulous locations such as a park or the same three restaurants as the last episode. Contestants must walk on eggshells so that their date doesn't do anything that might make the adults disapprove. The season finale will be hosted by the *kazi* and is the *akdh*.

7:30 PM P*MP MY RIDESHARE

Ride sharing bikers approach our host to spruce up their motorbikes to attract better reviews. Watch contestants paint, decorate and stylise their bikes but run out of budget before investing in sturdy helmets.

8:00 PM BATTLE OF MAESTROS

Twenty BBA graduates (unemployed, of course) fight for a management trainee position at a bank by living together in an abandoned property in Baridhara. The prize? Living alone on an abandoned property outside of the city for recommendation letters. Watch them secure influencers for social media campaigns and do SWOT analyses to save themselves from elimination.

8:40 PM THE UH-MAZING RACE

Thirty pairs of contestants are sent to Jabona Future Park and must navigate their way through the mall and find their way out. Maps with minimal details, multiple outlets of the same brand, and criminally unhelpful shop-

keepers serve as clues as our contestants race to the exit. So far five teams have gone missing, never to be heard from again.

9:30 PM DANCE MOMS

Watch innocent eight year olds being pitted against each other on the stage as their moms cheer on. Brought straight to the studio in between school and their coachings, these exhausted kids will twirl, jump and pirouette to avoid being yelled at by their moms while on camera.

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



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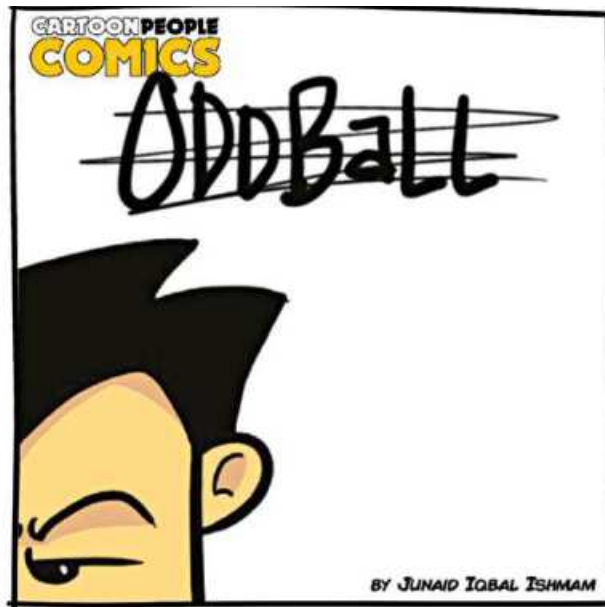
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Phone: 9020132-4, 9024266, 9024277, Website: www.bubt.edu.bd



ATTENTION TO ATTENDANCE

MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN & ZAMILUR RAHMAN SHUIVO

Any undergraduate student can relate to the curse of having to drag their body out of bed to attend an 8 AM class. Ironically, the motivating factor isn't their sense of urgency to learn something in class but the harsh consequences of losing attendance marks. High scores, exam performance or enthusiasm — nothing is enough to guarantee a good grade in university if they aren't coupled with attendance. While policies vary from university to university, most institutions penalise students heavily for missing classes by cutting marks, by not allowing them to sit for exams or even by asking them to report to the Registrar's Office, even when students have very good reasons for being absent.



THE PLIGHT OF STUDENTS

Maliha Rahmat took a lab course for Environmental Science at North South University (NSU). She shares, "The course had seven or eight days of classes but there were no exams or tests and no marks for any practical work. The only work we were marked on was a group lab report. All the other marks came simply from attendance. My groupmates who got the same mark in our report ended up with a better grade than I did because I had missed one or two days of class. I missed those classes because of unrest on the roads. When I explained this to the faculty member, she didn't really care."

Maliha's case isn't rare. "A tenth of the marks in our university are allocated for class attendance and activities, so missing out on classes due to unavoidable circumstances means missing out on a considerable proportion of marks that will be added to your grades," states Afrid Hossain, a student of a public engineering university. "You can do everything right yet the system will come back to haunt you."

Afrid continues, "Last semester when I missed out on a couple weeks of class due to dengue fever, I was reassured by my instructor that despite my attendance being below the requirements, I wouldn't have any problem attending my finals and that he would give me an average mark for the class activities I had missed. I was shell shocked when I later saw my name on the list of defaulters. To salt up the wound, I received no marks at all for the class activities!"

Raida Zerín, a student of Economics at NSU, believes this policy is very restrictive towards students. "What if I get sick? One shouldn't be punished for circumstances beyond their control, especially when in some courses, I have to take the initiative to teach myself using the internet because the teacher isn't adequate. I shouldn't be forced to attend such classes if I have nothing to gain."

"In one course this semester, a classmate got the pox but he was severely berated for it and got no makeup midterm. That wasn't fair at all," Raida remembers.

DIFFERENT GOALS, DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Tawhid Mahmud Azan, who studies Marketing at the University of Dhaka (DU), thinks attendance policies rarely accomplish what they are supposed to. "There are a lot of students who would rather do other things that interest them instead of spending that time in class. Sometimes the book-based knowledge offered in classes just doesn't do it for them. Only a handful of students study for an above average CGPA. The rest have different career plans for which they won't need high grades. So setting the bar of mandatory attendance as high as 75 percent hurts those who are more prone to exploring what's outside of the class," he says.

"Most students who study in public universities come from a background that lacks financial solvency," Fahmina Ahmed, a business student at DU, points out. "Many have to work part time or even give five-six tuitions a day to support themselves. The attendance system makes it hard for students to balance academic life and becoming financially independent."

Meanwhile Mohammad Mastak Al Amin, Assistant Professor at the Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at BRAC University, says of private university students, "Many undergraduate students here are not mature enough to make decisions and are not aware of many things related to their courses and curriculum. Most are dependent on their families. Students abroad tend to be very serious but here many students are not. We can consider the attendance issue a weakness of our education system."

BEYOND BANGLADESH

Mushfik Rahman, however, currently in his second year of undergrad in University of Calgary in Canada, mentions that the system is different over there. He says, "We don't have any official attendance policy. Things are flexible around here and students can be a no-show for the entire semester and still won't have to

face consequences for it. That is reasonable because as undergraduate students, we are mature enough to take our own decisions while fully understanding the consequences that come with it."

A part of the reason why this system works may be how the courses there are designed. "Our faculty members design the program focusing on how to make courses engaging enough so that students attend classes willingly. They take class quizzes every now and then. Mostly, classes are a form of interactive group discussions," Mushfik explains.

Moneesha R Kalamder, University of Waterloo graduate, says, "In my experience, the university doesn't care if the students attended classes or not. If they can teach themselves well enough to pass the course, so be it." Some teachers use different methods of evaluation to encourage participation. Moneesha adds, "A lot of courses are discussion based, and you get marked on the level of your contribution. Even if you don't contribute, you get a basic minimum for just being present in class. If you're absent, you get no marks for participation, and I imagine you might fail a course due to that."

WHAT CAN DRAW STUDENTS TO CLASSES?

When speaking with students from different universities, it became evident that fruitful discourse between students and teachers and real life application of content can all be strong incentives for students to attend classes.

Sumiya Kazi Nipa, a student of Marketing from a reputed public university, thinks improving engagement in class is the key. "One of my instructors this semester tries to make sure that the classes are not dull and boring, but interactive and entertaining. He never calls for attendance yet all of his classes are full, even the ones at 8 AM, because students feel that they can actually learn something by showing up."

Sharing the perspective of a faculty member, Masnoon Khair, lecturer at the Department of Economics and Social Sciences of BRAC University, says, "I think



PRESENT,
TEEEAACHEERRR!

one of the biggest reasons why many people miss classes is not because they are lazy; it's because they feel like they should do something else because there's no incentive for coming to that class. I think good, interactive classes that are positive and helpful can increase participation and productivity — people will look forward to coming to those classes even if the course is easy. However, our system is deeply flawed and operates mostly on grades and CGPA, rather than learning and skills."

Addressing the quality of education, Khair continues, "A lot of universities now have more students and more teachers, and the quality of both has deteriorated overall since everyone only cares about results."

WHAT KIND OF POLICY IS RIGHT?

When asked to speak about the policies from an administrative standpoint, Dr. Engr. A. K. M. Fazlul Hoque, Registrar

of Daffodil International University (DIU), says, "Policies greatly vary from university to university. At DIU, for instance, students are required to attend only seven percent of all classes in a course. There could be some sort of uniform policy for all university students based on what is right."

Masnoon Khair suggests, "I think an entire absence of any policy would make things worse, because then no one would show up. However, these policies definitely need to be slightly flexible. Many have health, familial, or personal reasons for not attending class, and if their overall performance in other areas is satisfactory, they should be given some sort of leeway. If the student is doing well overall, I see no reason to punish them since they have achieved what was required of them."

Another very exciting possibility is the implementation of e-learning into academic curriculum. Md. Rafiuddin, Associate Professor at the Department of Marketing, DU, thinks that we need to shift our medium of learning to the digital platform. "I myself conduct most of my classes on Google Classroom. I invite my students to enrol into the class at the start of each semester. We hold constructive discussions and share content on the digital platform. I try to upload all the materials I cover in class in person. This way, those who want to learn won't be left out just because they couldn't show up. I believe we need more frequent execution of this practice as it helps all of us get over our dependency on the attendance policy."

"Attendance definitely acts a mental pressure for students," adds Fazlul Hoque.

An opinion that may not be popular is that students actually want to learn. They want to learn new and interesting things that will excite them to go out and take on the real world. But the classes need to be practical and relevant. Students don't just want to know what the 4 P's of Marketing mean. They want to know about their practical executions. They want their teachers to meet them halfway, offering fresh new content and prospects relevant to our time. If teachers can manage not to use the attendance policy as a smoking gun, those who are willing to learn may actually in droves.

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কে বলে দুধ বোরিং?

আমি তো নিজেই তৈরি করে খাই!

নিউপ্রিনটা নিয়ে যখন নো টেনশন, তখন দুধটা ওদেরকে ওদের মতো করেই খেতে দিন। এলো নিউপ্রিনফাইভ মিল্ক পেস্ট কাউ মাস্টার। এর প্রিন্সিপাল, ক্যালসিয়াম, আয়রন, প্রোটিন আর ভিটামিন দেয় প্রয়োজনীয় নিউপ্রিন প্রতিদিন।

বেড কাউ মাস্টার না খেলে চলে?



BUBT English Department arranges book exhibition

In memory of the martyrs of the Language Movement, The Readers' Circle, a book-reading forum of English Department of BUBT arranged a book exhibition in Room 401 of the department to promote the passion of reading among students.

Mostly classics, translations, and fiction in Bangla and English along with a number of books written on the Liberation War and Language Movement were displayed.

"We have arranged this for the first time in the department, but we are going to arrange such exhibitions regularly in the future years in a wider space," said the Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Prof. Syed Anwarul Huq.

Prof. Mian Lutfar Rahman, Adviser, Student Affairs and Chief Coordinator, BUBT Extracurricular Activities, Prof. Santi N. Ghosh, Director, Research and IQAC, Proctor, and the Chairman of English Department were present in the opening ceremony.

STAR Labs opens doors to students and researchers



On February 21, 2020, Dhaka's first community lab opened its doors to everyone from students to researchers, from artists to hobbyists and more. The open house continued until February 22, 2020.

The aim of the open house was to introduce the space and facilities to interested individuals for events such as seminars, workshops and even projects. STAR Labs, which stands for Science, Technology, Arts and Research, is located at Road 7 of Block F, Banani. Special sessions by scientist and artist Erik Zepka were one of the key happenings along with different kinds of workshops focusing on open and citizen science initiative.

Participants were introduced to the concepts and challenges regarding the biosphere followed by brainstorming sessions and how the solutions can be devised as models. Participants also engaged in hands-on project modelling and critical analysis to improve these solutions. Panel discussions on philosophy and arts were held as well.

IUB welcomes spring with Boshonto Boron Utshob

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) put on a festive look on first day of *boshonto*. They celebrated the first day of Bengali month Falgun with several socio-cultural programmes at their own premises on February 13, 2020.

The main event started at 11 AM inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Milan Pagon, VC (Acting) of IUB followed by many mesmerising performances. IUB Theatre Club staged a beautiful drama at the event. Besides, there was also a special segment of baul song where Arif Baul brought the joy of spring air in the campus. With the amazing anchoring of Mazed Makki and Salman Azmir, the whole programme turned out to be enchanting and engaging. IUB in-house bands performed at the concert segment. Nemesis (sponsored by Banglalink) was the special attraction of the event that brought the curtain down.

Division of Student Affairs (DoSA) put their full effort to organise the *boshonto* celebrations. IUB Art Club was responsible for decorating the campus.



The Sriejok Foundation hosts art competition

The Sriejok Foundation, for the second time, organised a children and adolescent art competition on February 21, 2020 at Tejgaon University College premises.

The art competition was inaugurated by Chairman of The Sriejok Foundation Equishe Ullash. The children took part in five groups ranging from Play Group to Class Ten. Judges Toimur Hannan and Sunonda Borman, Shahadat Hossain Rubel, Treasurer, Sriejok Foundation, Shajib Ghosh, Member, The Sriejok Foundation and many more guests were present during the programme.

The event was sponsored by Onnorokom Biggyanabaksho, Berger Paints Bangladesh Ltd, Burger King, and Josephite Canteen.

The Sriejok Foundation was established in 2013 for social and cultural development. The Sriejok Foundation is currently engaging on four aspects – human rights; nature and environment; history and culture; enhancement of knowledge and creativity.



MDIC hosts interschool badminton tournament

Manarat Dhaka International School & College (MDIC) organised the fourth interschool badminton tournament for girls on February 13-14, 2020 where six English medium schools and colleges took part. It was inaugurated by Fatima Jemaima Rahman, Vice Principal of MDIC.

The following schools participated in the tournament: MDIC, Bangladesh International School & College (BISC), Word Bridge School, Playpen, American Standard International School, and Islamic International School & College.

Taslima Akhter, Assistant Director of Sports in National Sports Council and Member, Bangladesh Badminton Federation was present as chief guest.

The competitions were held in four categories: Junior Singles, Junior Doubles, Senior Singles, and Senior Doubles.

In Junior Singles, Tasnim Sumaiya from BISC clinched the champion's trophy. In Junior Doubles, Tasnim Sumaiya and Tahia Farah from BISC became champions. In Senior Singles, Sakura Takahashi from MDIC became champion and in Senior Doubles, Sakura Takahashi and Zarin Tousin from MDIC clinched the champion's trophy. Tasnim Sumaiya and Sakura Takahashi were declared the best players of the tournament.

Fatima Jemaima Rahman, Vice Principal of MDIC, was in overall supervision. Sajeda Akter, convener of the tournament and national badminton champion Alina Sultana, Coach of MDIC and Nazmunnahar, manager of the tournament were also present.

NSU holds discussion session on International Mother Language Day 2020

North South University (NSU) organised a discussion session on "International Mother Language Day 2020" on February 24, 2020 in its own campus in Bashundhara.

Bangabandhu Chair Professor Shamsuzzaman Khan, former Director General of Bangla Academy was present as chief guest. Abed Khan, Editor of the Daily Jagoron and Chairman of the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) was present as keynote speaker. Freedom fighter Lion Benajir Ahmed, Chairman, BOT, NSU was present as special guest. Prof. Atiqul Islam, VC of NSU will preside over the session. The discussion session was moderated by Jamil Ahmed, Director, Public Relations Office.

Speaking as the chief guest, Bangabandhu Chair Professor Shamsuzzaman Khan said, "Bangla language is a language much favoured by science and there can be no better medium than the Bangla language in expressing the emotions and feelings of our mind."

Among others, M. A. Kashem, Member of Board of Trustees, NSU, Deans of different schools, Directors of various departments, Brigadier General Md. Saber (Retd.), Executive Director of Administration, Department Heads, senior officials, teachers and students were also present at the programme.

THE GIFT OF TIME

NOX

I woke up to the sound of my phone's alarm. Squinting at the screen, I swiped my finger across the surface which read: 6:00 AM. Groggily, I made my way to the bathroom. My bags had already been packed since last night, and I had breakfast ready in a container, determined to save every precious minute of time in the morning. I was in my car at 7:00 AM, sharp. If the roads weren't absolute hell, I would hopefully get home early enough for the day's plans to go smoothly. Knowing Dhaka however, I should have probably expected a few curveballs.

Halfway along the Dhaka-Chattoogram Highway, a bus broke down. Of course that led to the entire road clogging up. It's so ridiculously easy to find a hundred people to gather at any scene in this country that one is almost left to wonder whether they might be the same group of unemployed bystanders whose only job is to not mind their own business. How do people have so much time on their hands? I can barely manage to keep my job and my personal affairs afloat simultaneously. Every time I try to pay attention to one, the other seemed to go up in flames.

I waited impatiently in my car, legs shaking rhythmically, neck craning to spot any movement up ahead. I couldn't believe I had gotten stuck in this traffic despite all my planning. If I didn't get to the site in time all kinds of chaos could ensue. The caterers could delay the cooking, the decorators could arrange something completely different from what my sister envisioned, and my parents could cook up all kinds of trouble with everyone, from our extended family to the hired photographers. The entire responsibility of this event rested on my shoulders, and here I was stuck in this traffic that looked like it had no intention of letting up anytime soon.

Around 9 in the morning, my phone started vibrating in my pocket. It was my boss. What was he doing calling me today?

"Hello?"

"Hello Russel, where are you?" I heard my boss ask.

"Uh... Sir I'm headed out of Dhaka," I said.

"Out of Dhaka? What do you mean out of Dhaka? Why aren't you at the office?!"

he yelled into the phone.

"Sir, I'm going home to my family. I talked to you about this last week? My sister's getting married so I requested a holiday from the 1st of March?" I replied, confused at why he had called me on an off day.

"Yes, you requested a holiday from March, so why aren't you here today?"

"Sir, what do you mean?"

"It's the 29th of February today. Your holiday starts tomorrow!"

I was left dumbstruck. Incredulous, I quickly checked the date on my phone which I hadn't paid any heed to in all my hurry to be on time. I must have looked at that clock at least fifty times today. How did I miss the date written just below it?

I quickly got back into the conversation with my boss.

"Sir, I am extremely sorry. I mistook today's date. Could I-"

"No. This is ridiculous. Are you trying to say a grown man just forgot his work days?! You want me to believe this? Ridiculous! This is probably just some ploy to get an extra day off. You must have thought you could pull one over on me!" said my boss, sounding like he'd just clued in on some great conspiracy against him and the enormous corporation he represented.

"Sir, of course not. I know this reflects badly on me, but I'm telling the truth."

"I don't want to hear it," he said in a definitive voice, "The Ilish Corps deal goes through today. If you aren't here in the office in the next hour you might as well not come back at all."

"But Sir! I'm halfway out of Dhaka! I can't make it back in one hour!"

"I don't know anything. I can't trust anything you're telling me at this point. Are you even outside your home? Why don't I hear car noises? All I know is that you need to be here. Turn your car around if need be."

I looked around helplessly. There was a sea of cars around me. All stationary. All turned off. There

wasn't even an inch of space to turn my car around.

"Sir, please believe me. A bus has broken

down up ahead. The entire road is jam-packed. I can't turn my car around even if I wanted to," I pleaded desperately. There was sweat dripping down my forehead and a deep fear gripping my heart.

"Oh? So now a bus has broken down? After a minute you'll say your grandmother has died. Save these excuses for your school homework. After this you might have to go back."

"But Sir!"

"I didn't expect such behaviour from you Russel. You had promise. I'm sad to see you go like this," he said, before hanging up abruptly.

I couldn't believe what had just transpired. I had gotten fired. Simply because I had forgotten that 2020 was a leap year. That one extra day of February had just turned my life upside down. I checked my watch. It was 9:20 AM. That was when I realised, I had nowhere to be. My family was not expecting me until tomorrow. I was not running late anymore. I stared at my dashboard for a few minutes, a whirlwind of thoughts passing through my mind. What would I tell my family? How would I pay for the furniture I had to present my sister's in-laws with? How would I pay my own rent?

I couldn't sit still in my car any longer. I took a deep breath and got out. I closed the door shut behind me. The road on both sides of me was now gridlocked. As I turned my head this way and that I noticed a man selling *daab* on the sidewalk. I made my way towards him.

"Mama, ekta daab diben."

I waited while he prepared it, and then handed it to me. As I sipped on the coconut water I saw that the road ahead had let up. The cars had started moving forward.

I made no move towards my car. Instead, I went towards a fence behind the *daabwala* and leaned against it. I watched the traffic clearing up slowly. My car left stranded in the middle of the road as other cars veered

around it. I was in no hurry to move it. After all, I had all day.

Nox endlessly worries about hostile alien surveillance. Increase this paranoid person's online footprint with feedback at thewriter@gmail.com

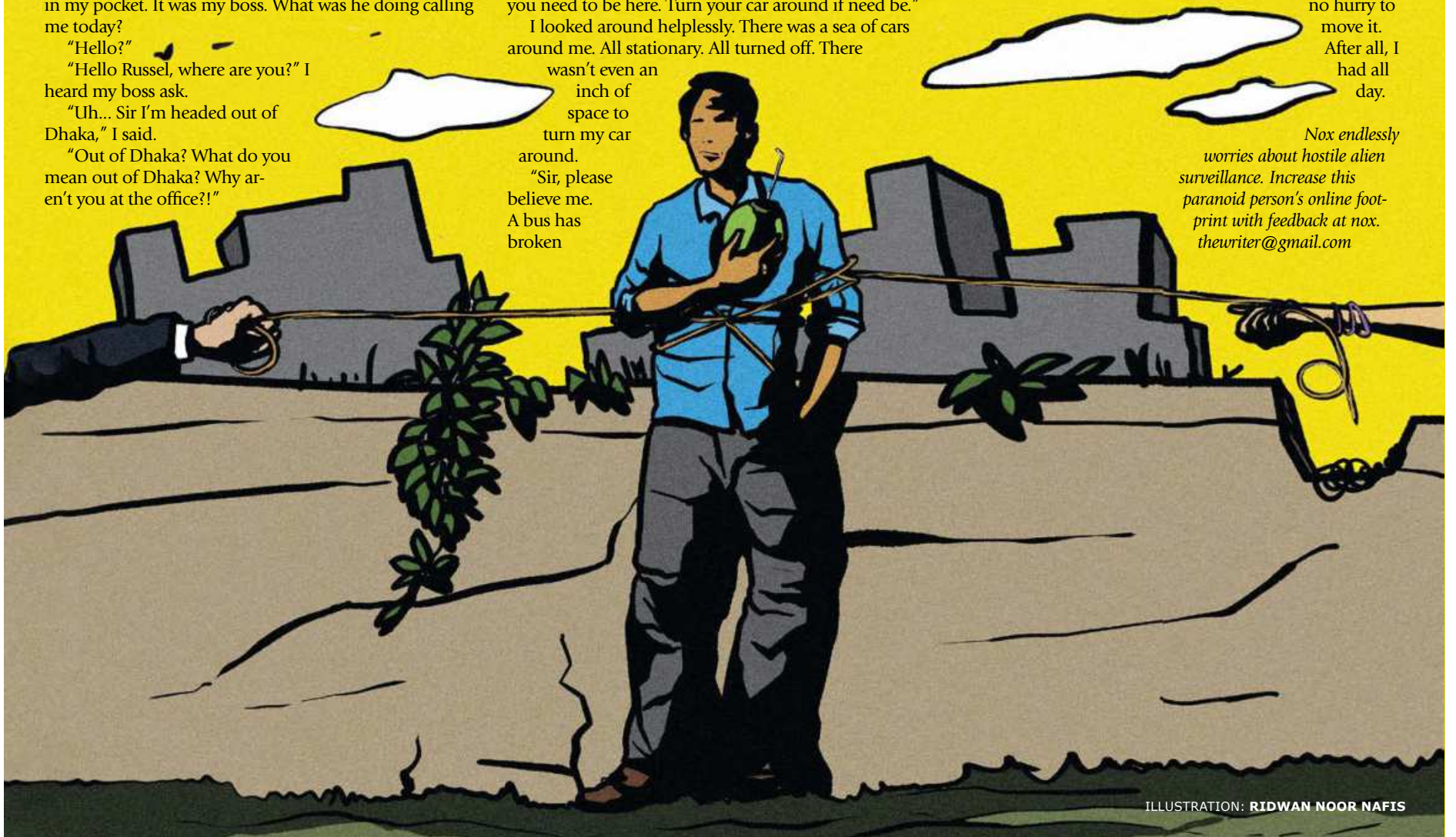


ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

A Song of Water, Earth, Fire and Air

FATIMA JAHAN ENA

It's been 15 years since *Avatar: The Last Airbender* made its debut on Nickelodeon. Co-created by Bryan Konietzko and Michael Dante DiMartino, *Avatar* has been critically acclaimed and has also amassed incredibly positive reviews from audiences of all ages.

One of the most distinctive achievements of *Avatar* would be its extraordinary character development. Considering the fact that its target audience was children, the show managed to deliver some of the most memorable character arcs in its short run of three seasons.

Aang, the protagonist, starts out as a 12-year-old boy burdened with the literal weight of the world on his shoulders. By the end of the series, he displays incredible levels of kindness, maturity, personal growth, and awesome power. Existing on the other side of the coin, the greatest arc definitely belongs to the once-banished prince of the Fire Nation, Zuko. Zuko had been abused and banished from his homeland by his father, the ruthless Fire Lord Ozai, and was sent on a seemingly futile quest to capture the Avatar, who had disappeared a hundred years ago. With the backdrop of a raging war, complicated relationships, and misguided adventures, Zuko sheds his past self as an angry prince desperate to please his wicked father and ultimately embraces a path

of kindness and self-respect. The wonderful character development of the show contributes to its uniqueness and sets it apart from its contemporaries.

Another distinguishing aspect of *Avatar* would be its way of handling complicated issues that we face in real life. From the very first episode, the brute imperialism of the Fire Nation is evident and looming. Apart from that, the progression of the story also tackles the loss of loved, the phasing out of misogynistic views, overcoming physical disabilities and prejudice, and familial abuse. It's still incredibly refreshing to see a show talk about these complex issues in a way that exercises sensitivity and respect.

Along similar lines, an underappreciated facet of the show would be its implementation of different real cultures into the narrative. The most prominent example of this would be the bending as each nation has a distinct style based on real forms of Chinese martial arts. Apart from this, the world-building of the show expertly navigated taking inspiration from real cultures without resorting to appropriation.

These are just a few examples as to why *Avatar* is so universally loved. There is no doubt that the core essence of the show will still retain its timelessness, so why not revisit it in celebration?



ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM

The One Where We Don't Know What to Expect

IZMA ANWAR

As classic TV series *Friends* celebrates its 25th anniversary, the creators with its six megastars have reunited, confirming an unscripted one-off special that will be released with the official launch of the new streaming service HBO Max in May 2020.

The stars posted a goofy cast picture on Instagram with caption "It's happening...", leaving fans clinging onto the edge of their seats. After decades, *Friends* deals with issues that are relevant and relatable even today. Facing various circumstances, meeting new people, getting in and out of relationships, encountering obstacles and personal growth are all aspects of our lives that are satirised through the six characters, making them easy to fall in love with. However, having rewatched it in recent years, certain plots, situations and characters in the show come off as highly problematic, with their underlying tones of sexism, prejudice and a lack of diversity.

Although there is ambiguity surrounding the type of show we are going to get, here are a few things worth anticipating, and a few worth moving past.

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO

Our favourite characters: The raw humour and chemistry between cast members



is probably what we are most excited about, the familiarity, like old times, a real treat.

Backstories: We hope to see well-established, strong backstories for each character in the time between where the show left off and where it would start

again, supporting a smooth transition and fully developed storylines.

Unexpected plot-twists: Fans are speculating stirring plot-twists such as Joey having an unexpected romantic partner, Rachel choosing to pursue her dreams instead of Ross, and an Ugly Naked Guy

face reveal, to name a few.

THINGS TO LEAVE BEHIND

Fragile masculinity and sexism: All ten seasons of the show were laced with sexist jokes, continuous objectification of women and instances of fragile masculinity. Ross's disapproval of the male nanny, the guys' poking fun at Joey's new purse are some examples that demonstrate the rigid, critique-worthy standards of "manliness".

Lack of diversity and inclusivity: In terms of casting, *Friends* severely lacked diversity. The only people of colour who appeared on the show were Julie and Charlie, two of Ross' love interests. Furthermore, many were displeased by the poor treatment of Susan and Carol, and Chandler's father, the former's relationship often mocked while the character of Charles Bing was vastly misrepresented.

Controversial content: Monica's relationship with Richard, Ross dating a student and a flawed understanding of both consent and cultural appropriation were all controversial matters that were disturbing and uncomfortable for viewers.

Izma Anwar has a talent for spraining her ankles. Send prayers at izmaanwar@gmail.com