

The flying stuntman of Netrokona

ZARIF FAIAZ

You're standing on a raised wooden platform that's meant to be a gallery, with hundreds of others who are cheering and applauding, for they are about to witness a stunt unlike any they've ever seen before. In front of you lies a steep vertical runway made of wood, almost perpendicular, that ends in the ground below where an old Maruti 800 and a contraption of a motorcycle is parked. The clock's ticking. The applaud gets louder, as a man in a brown jacket and a faded jean, walks in through a trapdoor below and stands in the middle. The crowd goes silent. The show's about to begin. Welcome to the game of danger.



THE WALL OF DEATH

In other parts of the world, it's known by many names; the wall of death, metrodome, silodrome or the well of death. Our protagonist Rashed and his merry band of showrunners, however, prefer to call theirs "The game of danger".

Their stunt, like the wall of death stunts all over the world, is a carnival roadshow featuring a barrel-shaped wooden cylinder made of wooden planks, inside which motorcyclists and drivers, and in our case, Rashed, ride along the vertical walls and perform stunts, held in place by friction and centrifugal force. For those, who

have never seen such a stunt up close, it's indeed a show of a lifetime.



RASHED, THE DAREDEVIL

Rashed's "The game of Danger" travels all over the country, performing in carnivals big and small in local towns and villages. I caught him by chance while I was on a weekend getaway in Netrokona, searching for some sort of local nightlife when I came upon this carnival where they were performing. A ticket price of 20 takas was money well spent considering the stunts I witnessed that night.

Rashed, our stuntman, started at the bottom with his motorcycle. After two rounds, he started ascending, first on an initial ramped section and then on to riding vertically once he attained enough speed. Twice, thrice, he kept going on in a circle. The makeshift wooden floor beneath our feet trembling. And just when I thought it couldn't get any better, he lets go of the handlebar. Loud awe from the crowd followed by louder cheers. He wouldn't stop there. He decides to pull up his legs and sit in a crossed position while riding vertically on the ramps! The stunt went on for 3-4 minutes until

he slowed down and went back to the ground. He got down from the bike and waved at the crowd. A round of applause. It was time for the car.

Just as with the bike, he started going slowly with the car, first on an initial ramp, then on the vertical ones. The wooden platforms started to tremble heavily now with the car running over them. A couple of rounds like that for 2-3 minutes until he decides to finally call it off and go down. Obviously, he gets down from the car to a hero's welcome; loud cheers and claps.



HOW THE STUNT WORKS

The physics of the trick lies in centripetal and centrifugal forces; the forces that act on an object when moving in a circular path. With enough speed, significant forces are generated and the centripetal force acts on the motorcycle of the car inward and centrifugal, outward. Together they balance out each other and keeps them in their position and stops them from falling.

At the apex, riders often experience "greying-out", an impermanent loss of vision and sometimes, vertigo.

A FLYING DREAM

I caught up with Rashed two months



later, while I was writing this article amid a countrywide lockdown. Tracking him down with the phone number which he displays in large and bold fonts outside his stage wasn't exactly rocket science. He told me that in his 20 years of career as a carnival stuntman, this was the first time someone had reached out to him to write about his stunts. An honour I was glad to bestow upon myself. According to him, he started performing stunts when he was 15 and he learned it from his father, who was a stuntman at BFDC. At a young age, he had to start earning and education was a luxury he couldn't afford at that time. But he has no regrets, for he does the things he loves the most; putting up a good show and travel all over the country. When asked if he knows how exactly the stunt works, he says that he does not really know the science behind it in technical terms, but he knows his tricks and that God watches over him.

Before I put the phone down, I asked him if he ever wishes to become a professional stuntman in the movies like his father, to which he replied, quite dramatically, "No. I wish to become a hero".

(PHOTOS: ZARIF FAIAZ)

Burnouts during a Pandemic: Where do we focus?

SAIM AHMED SHIFAT

The WHO defines burnout as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed and is characterized by three dimensions viz; feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and reduced professional efficacy. Although millions of people are now in lockdown due to the COVID-19 outbreak, burnouts are still very much around. However, things are a bit different this time. Many of us are suddenly finding ourselves without jobs, those who are lucky enough to retain their jobs now have to do so while juggling several additional dilemmas — Is it safe to go out for groceries? How much food should I buy? How do I stay in shape indoors? How do I build and maintain a healthy routine for the kids now that they are indoors and don't go to school? Can I hug them occasionally or should I maintain distance for everyone's safety?



While facing away from all these decisions and dilemmas, we run into a plethora of social media content telling us how to get the best out of us, how to stay productive indoors, how it is the best idea to throw ourselves into that unfinished project as we finally have the time and can stay within our households longer than we generally are. As a result, many of us are feeling exhausted as burnouts have morphed into something more household during this pandemic. Now, let's talk about the factors at play causing such burnouts. The Decision Fatigue

We now have to make more decisions during an average day than we used to. And most of them have to be changed and modified daily depending on the situation of a pandemic, the likes of which we have not faced ever. Many of us

are not used to this level of psychological stress. It might be difficult to prioritize our daily tasks with so many factors as to our health, education, and employment out of our control. It is tough to cope with a new house-setup that is functioning as a sanctuary, classroom and office. Hence, it is quite normal if anyone is still trying to figure out how to structure the daily routine and prioritize tasks. The decision fatigue, coupled with the additional pressure we are putting on ourselves to find the smartest and safest choice while taking every decision can lead to a morphed household-burnout. Stress of Unwinding

Dealing with too many decisions is not new for many people. While dealing with some emotional exhaustion and anxiety is expected during such a crisis,


the problem for many lies in the fact that they can't rely on the usual coping mechanisms — going to the gym, taking an art class etc — as they used to due to the current situation. At this stage, trying to find and adopt a new activity might make things worse for many. While trying to cope with this new reality, many are getting more stressed doing things they do not actually love but think is necessary. Those social media posts about boosting productivity and making every second in quarantine count are not for everybody and we should only act on those if that is what we actually find to be stress-relieving and peaceful for us. The approach needs to be individualized. The Way Out

According to Rubaiya Khan, a psychosocial counsellor, "We can follow three simple steps — Awareness, Accept and Allow — to save ourselves from being overwhelmed by everything going on around us. Staying aware is important however it is also necessary to make sure that the sources are reliable. We are living with unknown fear constantly, which can make us anxious. It is important to accept this fear. It is normal to feel anxious and no one is alone in this. And lastly, we need to allow ourselves to heal, feel safe and unwind".

She further added that it is not necessary to become the most productive person out there and is okay to let go. However, it is important to maintain a routine in order to stay fit mentally and physically. It can be exercising, cooking, watching movies, listening to music or anything that brings us joy. If not anything else, we can always go for that childhood hobby that we could never make time for. The approach has to be very individualized and can't be only based on online content or word-of-mouth influence. This too shall Pass

Many of us are currently in financial fears, concerned about older parents, disappointed about cancelled plans, and at a loss about what the future holds. While it is usual to get engulfed in all these things, it is always a more peaceful option to look at the bigger picture. Coming out of the pandemic, we will have better abilities to manage and cope with changing situations at work or home. According to experts, things are going to get much easier for us while going about our normal lives because we will have accomplished something very challenging.

Staying sane is more important than "getting things done". It is unrealistic to expect that we can perform above and beyond just because we have abundant time at home. Staying indoors itself is doing a lot for the community. And with every day we do that, we get one day closer to the other side of this pandemic.



MAKE SURE TO PROPERLY DISINFECT YOUR VEHICLE BEFORE HEADING OUT AND AFTER RETURNING HOME.

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