

THE DEFINITIVE  
**YOUTH**  
MAGAZINE  
**SHOUT**

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YOUR ZOOM WEDDING  
STARTS IN 10...

**PG 3**

AQUAMARINE  
**PG 7**



EDUCATION 101

**THE NEW NORMAL?**

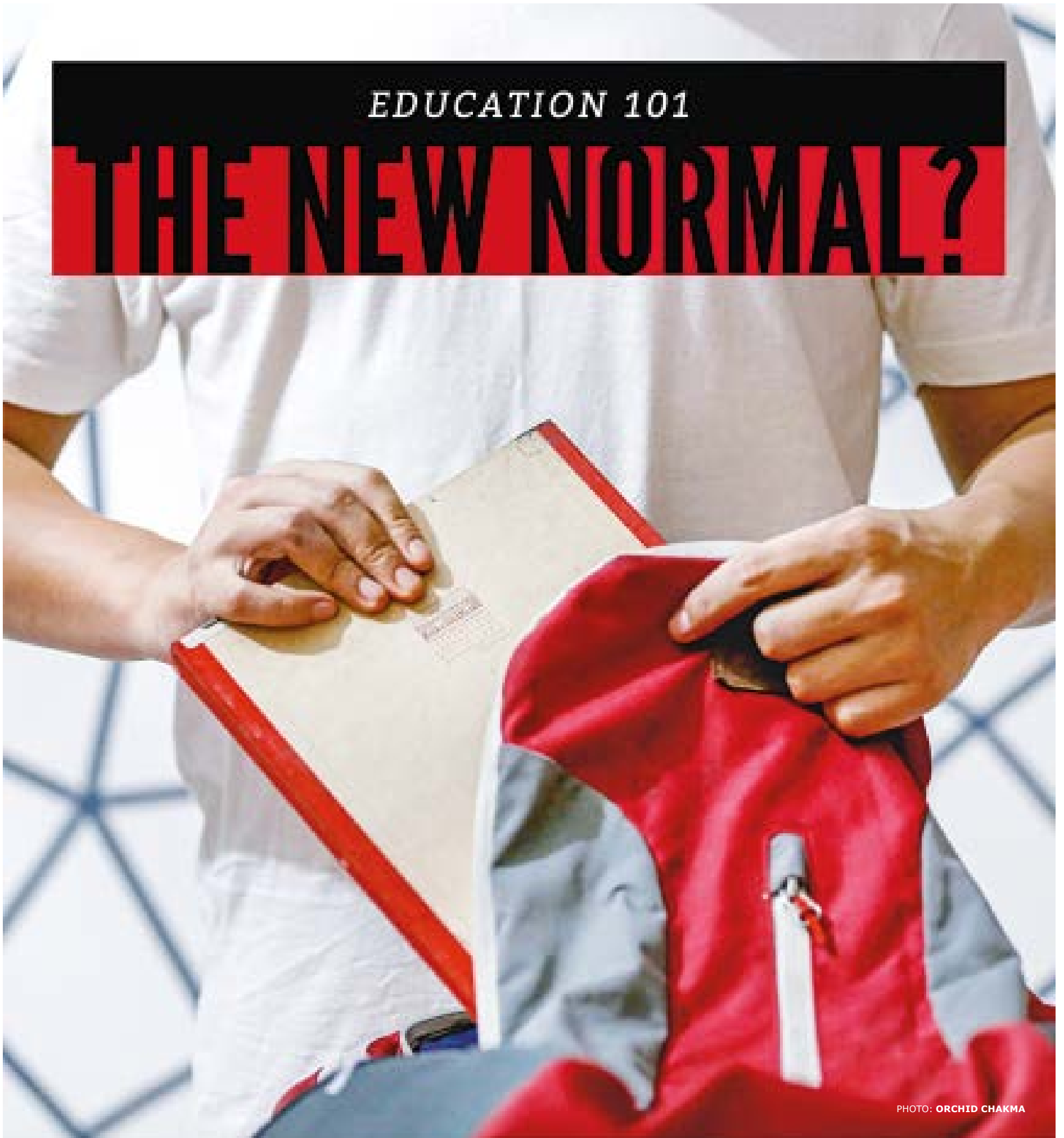


PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

# EDITORIAL

Imagine 2020 as a football match. We—the people—have conceded a million goals or more. Our opponents? You couldn't see them; they're all over the place and they're lightning fast. Bullied, ransacked, and fighting for our lives, we don't know what to do but to stay put. Like we are now at our homes.

What's worse? We have not reached half-time yet.

We live, in between the dichotomy of offices opening for business and specific areas of the capital heading into total lockdown. We live, raising our fists in protest against racism and discrimination in far off lands, while communities inside our own borders plead for equality. We live, in fear that the world we know of—all the hugs, high fives, and hand shakes—will never be the same.

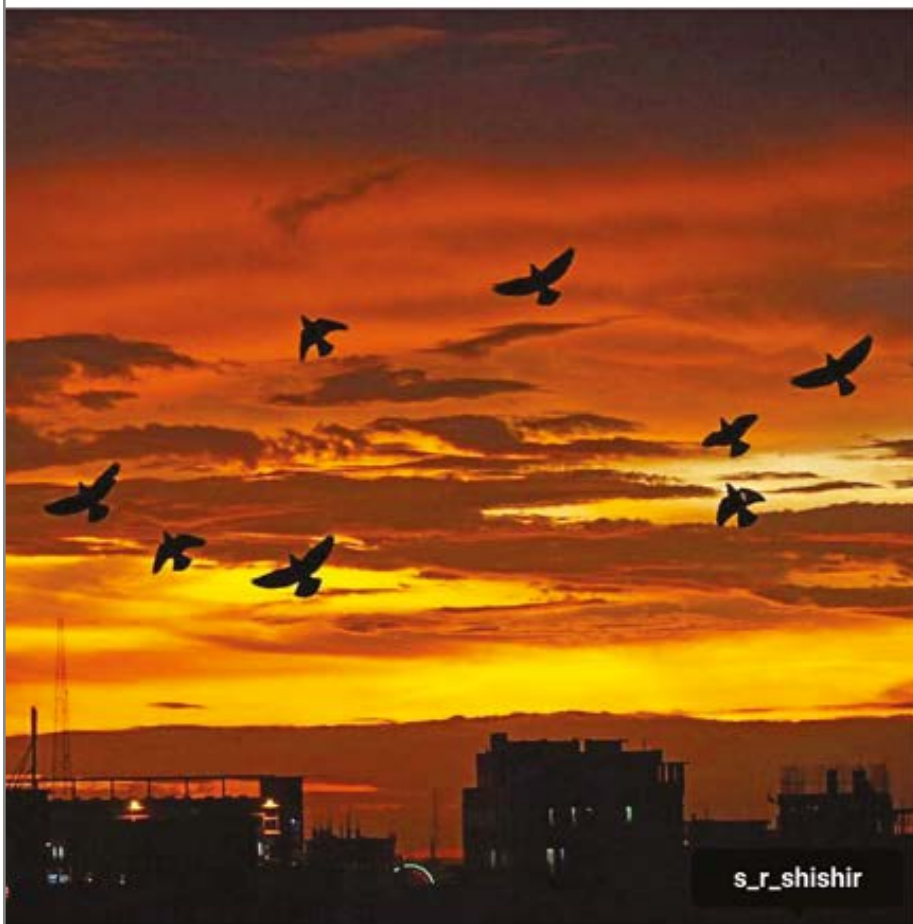
The worst part? There is no additional time.

— Kazi Akib Bin Asad, Sub-editor, SHOUT



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## PLAYWATCH

### ANIME REVIEW



# Long anime series you can finally enjoy

## H. RAINAK KHAN REAL

To relax and relieve stress from Covid-19, it's necessary for us to calm our minds and divert our attention away from all the negativity. That's where the appeal of anime comes in.

Here are some long (by number of episodes) anime series to keep yourself busy during this time of crisis.

### BLEACH, 366 episodes

Plenty of action, iconic soundtracks, and badass antagonists makes *Bleach* one of the most popular anime of all time. Set in a world where the Shinigami (soul reapers) are constantly in battle with Hollows (ugly creatures which are actually corrupted spirits), the anime portrays a heartwarming plot focusing on friendship, and a bit of romance. However, over-emphasis on "power of friendship", and "the only characters who ever die are the bad ones", may seem annoying at times.

### GINTAMA, 367 episodes (in all seasons)

*Gintama* should be on top of your list for comedy, as the sole purpose of the series is to make the audience burst into laughter, going to lengths such as making parodies of super popular anime like *Naruto*, *One Piece*, *Dragon Ball Z*, *Attack on Titan*, and many more. Not every day do you get to see an anime with a silvery-blue haired protagonist, well-crafted parodies, and sudden but timely changes in facial expressions of characters and background music to fit the comedy.

### DETECTIVE CONAN, 837 episodes and counting

This series is a wholesome package of mystery, comedy, romance, and slice of life. While the animation style might seem old (after all, it started airing in 1996), it keeps getting better. Shinichi Kudo, a talented high school detective, solves a variety of crimes under the alias Conan Edogawa. What will keep you hooked to this series are the deductions and utter cleverness of solutions given by Conan, buildup of hype, satisfaction after a crime is solved, and the touch of comedy and romance thoughtfully executed by the mangaka. If you're into *Sherlock Holmes*, you're definitely going to love *Detective Conan*.

### ONE PIECE, 926 episodes and counting

*One Piece* is one of the longest running and most popular shounen anime series out there, where pirates roam the seas in search of the legendary treasure "One Piece". The protagonist Luffy and his crew set sail across the unknown seas hoping to find this legendary treasure. Though slow paced, the plot as well as the character designs are unique. The anime vividly portrays the bond of friendship, which may seem overly dramatic at times.

I wanted to write "a few honorable mentions" but Giren, Itachi and Zeref asked me not to.

*H. Rainak Khan Real is on a quest to find the elixir of eternal youth. Send him clues or simply wish him luck at rainakkhanreal@gmail.com*



# YOUR ZOOM WEDDING STARTS IN 10...



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

## ROSHNI SHAMIM

PLEASE WAIT FOR A FEW MINUTES. THE HOST WILL LET YOU IN SOON.

I adjust my bangles, probably for the 100th time. Sigh. You'd expect this wedding ceremony to go smoother, what with the digital upgrade to this marriage. Well, some things never change. It's okay though, I remind myself; this is a minor issue. At least, this virtual wedding won't be witnessing any of the sillier obstacles you face when you're getting married for real, real.

I consider calling my betrothed to get an update on their virtual ETA but I am frankly too mad. How can they be late to a virtual wedding ceremony? What are they busy with, adorning the Wi-Fi router? I am interrupted from planning out the incoming arguments in my mind by the sudden cheer of everyone around me. I peek at the screen through my wool-thick red veil and see we are finally in the Zoom meeting—I mean, wedding—but the setting isn't right. Someone from the groom's side is sharing the screen and—oh no. We are now watching the music video of *Desi Boyz*.

YOUR INTERNET CONNECTION IS UNSTABLE.

The pop-up flashes on my laptop. This really makes it worse because the half-naked boys, who are the *Desi Boyz*, are still dancing on screen. The video keeps freezing so we have currently only been able to pick up "Make....noise...boys!" Miraculously, both the screen sharing and music are abruptly stopped as I hear a voice say, "Chachu! That is not what we meant by grand entrance!" I hear more chuckles from the

other side. Inevitably, a small smile escapes my lips too.

The virtual background is changed once again, and we are now looking at a bunch of people dressed in *sherwanis* and *lehengas*, sitting in front of... a virtual beach? Hmm. I did want to get married at a beach. Oh well, virtual life, fancy dreams.

My to-be is finally sitting on the other side, his face just as concealed as mine, except his is with the traditional *sehra*. I would have preferred to glance a few more times at him had the chat notification on Zoom not *tinged* just then. "You look

lovely..." I feel myself stifle a big smile, thinking how romantic my Mr. To-be is!

Hah, if only. The next chat notification comes in, this time from my sister, replying, "Thanks, Zayd!"

...wait a minute.

Zayd, my brother-in-law, is seriously attempting to flirt with my sister on a ZOOM VIDEO CALL? Everyone is too busy to notice the romance blossoming in the chat, save for my sister who soon catches my evil eye and immediately stops typing.

The *qazi* is now brought to the video call hurriedly, amidst many phone flashlights

going off from all sides. The *dua* is recited, followed by the *qazi's* distorted voice now asking me for my consent in accepting the holy matrimony. I think the fact that I'm seated so far from the laptop has caused some sort of panic to the *qazi*, who has covered the entire screen now with his zoomed-in face. Not exactly the vision to have while I am about to say the final words.

Just as the "*kobul*" is about to be uttered from my mouth for the third time, the shrill ringtone from my dad's phone steals the spotlight. Inexplicably, it is my dad's old neighbour's aunt's daughter who is calling. We are all baffled, and naturally uneasy, given the current situation's pattern of hurling unexpected bad news. Panicked, my dad picks up quickly and speaks, "*Salaam apa*, all okay?" We wait in bated breath, waiting for the person on the other end to speak up. After an eternity of WhatsApp reconnecting, we hear her say, "Well, well, well. Forgot to invite your closest people, eh?"

My dad looks up, confused, just as the *qazi* coughs in a not-so-subtle manner, prompting me to finish the less important task at hand than dealing with the *apa*.

Heart beating fast, I am finally about to utter yes, one final time. And just as I am about to—

The electricity goes away.

Roshni likes to travel in her mind and explore different writing streams. Mail her your thoughts on other prompts you'd like to read at [roshni.shamim@gmail.com](mailto:roshni.shamim@gmail.com)





# EDUCATION 101: *The New Normal?*

## Freshman year under the shadow of a pandemic

### SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI

As coronavirus cases soar across the country battering the conventions of a “normal” life for many, those with enough privilege have to make do with being cooped up in the confines of their homes. And students are left with no option but to do their classes and assignments from home.

While that is a predicament varying in degrees for various age groups, freshmen—who just started university late last year or this year on a hopeful note—have to grapple with this seismic shift in a wobbly manner. After all, freshman year is when students expect to navigate through the untouched terrains of a new environment and educational system. It is also considered a time when academic pressure is the least as compared with the remaining years of a university education.

“Like any other university freshman, I too, was excited for this new chapter of my life. I was looking forward to making new friends and observing the world through a new lens. But since the pandemic started, all those desires started to seem far-fetched. Doing online courses and engaging in extracurricular activities may seem like an escape plan from boredom, but that can never measure up to the stuff we could be learning while traveling around. I feel like we are missing out on one of the most happening phases of our

lives,” says Kamil Jalal\*, a BBA student from IBA, Dhaka University, about missing out on all the expected freshman experiences.

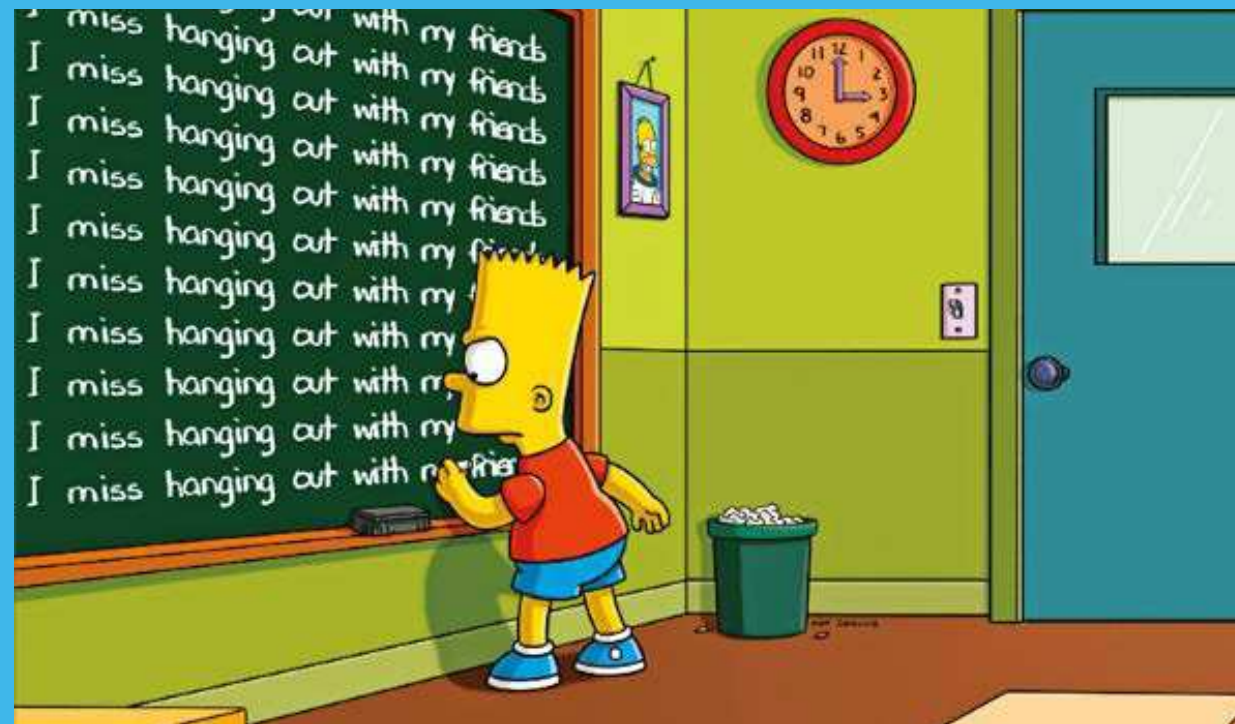
“Usually, freshman year is the most lenient in terms of academics. This is when people get the chance to be devote time to clubs and extracurricular activities, to creating life-long friendships,” says Farhan Ahmed\*, a first-year student from Islamic University of Technology in Gazipur.

According to Labonno Hayat, a fresher at Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), gathering new experiences in that first year is crucial to learning the ropes of adjusting to university life so that the remaining years flow smoothly. But now, that seems somewhat distant.

“I do feel like I’m missing out on opportunities to join clubs and to make friends, both of which could be integral parts of university life,” states Fatima Jahan Ena, a first-year North South University (NSU) student, in this regard.

For students who were supposed to start university in Summer 2020 semester (or after), the excitement of starting university seems to have been dampened by the unrelenting situation.

Syed Khan\*, a student already lagging behind a semester, was supposed to enter university in the summer session. However, the admission tests got delayed twice. For students like him, the enduring period of uncertainty is proving



bothersome, although he tells me that the sense of solidarity is reassuring.

“So far it’s been the fear of lagging behind while my friends have already completed a semester elsewhere and I still haven’t begun university,” says another student, Samiha Islam from BRAC University. Students like her, she says, have been staying at home for almost a year and the current situation has made it more exasperating.

“It would be nothing like sitting in an actual university class. One of the benefits of a Liberal Arts education that I was looking forward to was building a personal connection with my professors, something that online classes are never going to be able to offer. With that in mind, and other logistical difficulties in obtaining a visa, I’d rather start university at a later time with less uncertainty than start university at home,” says a Sima Shamsie\*, who was bound for Dickinson College in Pennsylvania, USA this August but chose to defer their enrolment to January.

Many students and teachers believe that while digitalisation is a necessity in other aspects of an education, it cannot fully be the norm.

Regarding the sudden and hurried digitalisation of education, Sajid Hossain\*, a lecturer of Philosophy at a public university, opines that the most important thing he misses in online class is eye contact with students. “It gives me the signal how you are impressed with new ideas. Another thing I miss is vivid interaction regarding a topic. There are arguments and counter arguments in real class. But online, I hardly find it,” he comments.

Shaila Solaiman, an Assistant Professor at Bangladesh University of Professionals, states that online teaching is not the same as classroom teaching. “No eye contact means I can’t read their facial expressions. A physical classroom environment is more effective than online learning. Moreover, things like the lack of mental preparations of students, poor internet connection, lack of equal access to the internet and of reading materials exist,” she tells us.

Shiropa Shahreen, a freshman student at The College

of Wooster, USA, thinks that even though professors try their best to help and are very lenient with everything, she does not do well without an in-class setting. “If next semester continues to be online as well, I know I’ll be struggling,” she mentions. “I personally learn better with someone explaining things to me rather than learning from reading myself. I also prefer studying in a group, which I can’t really with online classes.”

Besides, the digitalisation of education also illuminates the matters of income inequality and varying degrees of socioeconomic conditions across different households. Although a country-specific report on how online education is contributing to the disparity in accessing opportunities is yet to come, one report by Vox suggests that the shift to online learning could worsen educational inequality.

According to an article focused on the scene in Khulna, disadvantaged students from remote areas or even in the city are missing out on online class because of having no access to digital devices. Abdul Huq\*, a freshman from a public university, told us that being in a middle-class family, they couldn’t buy a computer or laptop immediately after joining classes. As a result, attending classes and completing assignments seem nightmarish to them. They had to borrow a laptop to complete their university work. “Income sources are squeezed in every sector. My

father lost his job two days back, and although I am not pressurised financially yet, I am worried,” the student expresses.

Among other pressing issues that staying home in this period of inactivity and stillness for a long period invites are those related to mental health. An article by *The Guardian* suggests that the lockdown is taking a toll on mental health, since it is depriving people of their regular routines and social engagements. For students, this challenge can affect how they perform academically. Labonno, from BUP, says, “Mentally, I am at my most vulnerable place right now. My concentration level has dropped and it is traumatising. The depression that I have been fighting for long was going away because I could involve myself physically in things. The pandemic stopped that opportunity, putting me on stop like the old days.”

“I think a lot of us are suffering (in varying degrees) because of our universities adapting to this drastic change. There’s been a lot of confusion and stress about what parts of our curriculum will be assessed. Recently they added the requirement of final assessment assignments which could have been avoided if the student body had opted for alternatives. All of this combined with the mental strain of coping during a pandemic has taken a toll on mental health in general,” Fatima from NSU says about the challenges she faces.

While first-year students are having to grapple with the complexities of a rocky start, those who are yet to sit for their HSC exams and university admission tests are gripped by an overwhelming unease.

Mirza Raqib\*, an HSC candidate from Notre Dame Col-

lege, tells me that they are unsure of the exam date and the probable routine. “Many students have lost their rhythm, including myself, and forgotten a lot of things they had prepared for. I’m worried about how stressful it is going to be in late September (everyone is marking September as a probable time) because we will have finished our HSC exams by then and have to sit for university admission tests with a preparation of only 30 to 40 days,” he concludes.

With no solid, logical reassurance in sight, recently admitted university students and the prospective ones are having to see their expectations cut short.

*\*Names have been changed for privacy*

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Shah Tazrian Ashrafi is a writer and a freshman at Bangladesh University of Professionals.

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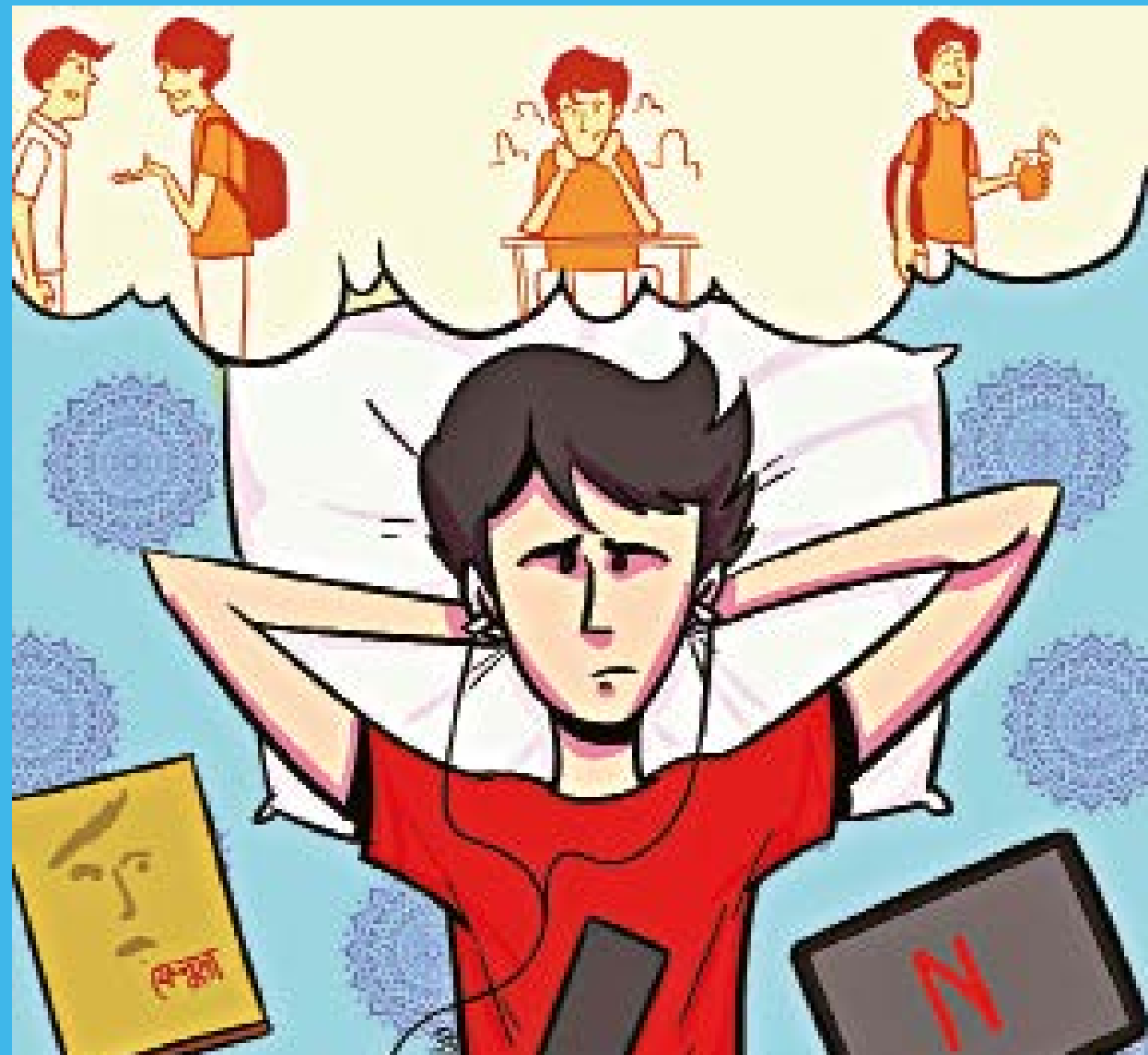


ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM





# People vs The Shutdown

## When defence is perhaps your best offence

**HIYA ISLAM**

As the country reopens to life pre-pandemic in a strange turn of events, what should you be expecting? The restrictions have eased but the threat still remains out there lurking on surfaces or multiplying in humans. Since businesses are permitted to resume, there are some things you need to look out for. At this point, there would be numerous sources of transmission; being judicious about your well-being is the least you could do to protect yourself and those around you.

We cannot revert back to life BC (Before Corona) in a snap of a finger. This is the “new normal” and it is high time we follow the health code drummed on our ears. So, do not throw away the masks and gloves. Wipe off counters, desks, door knobs, switches, keyboards or anything that requires contact, before use. Nonetheless, do not forget to wash hands throughout the day—the ultimate save.

It may be enticing to travel given cheaper fare rates. However, the prime reason why the virus has spread globally is travel, along with the fact that transmission is very much possible via asymptomatic individuals which brings us to people showing symptoms of undiagnosed disease. Hence, postpone any plans to travel whether it is within the country or beyond. The last thing you want is catching the virus and getting quarantined in an unknown land.

It is also emphasised to not mingle in large crowds or social gatherings. It is prudent to not go visit your friend or an elderly relative just yet. And it goes without saying



PHOTO: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

that parties (even home parties) are a no-no. Non-essential businesses such as malls, gyms, salons etc. are expected to get back on track. It is best advised to avoid these places for now. If living without these has been possible up till now, find alternatives and make do for a few more months. Restaurants, on the other hand, might allow customers to dine in small groups. However, the

risk is still huge as there is no evidence of transmission via ventilation systems in closed spaces.

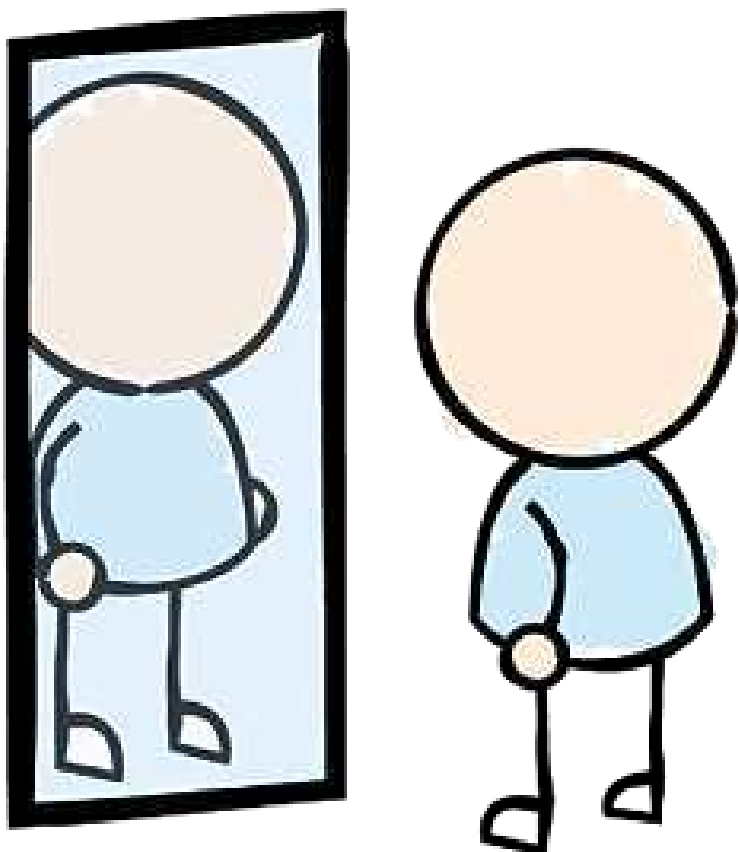
Reoperation of organisations implies commute. Stick to your personal mode of transport. Do not carpool. Public buses are to reinforce social distancing by blocking out seats as unavailable. Walk the distance, if possible. Take care of personal hygiene all the while. Some organisations have decided to let employees work in the premises for a set number of days. As before, temperature checks will be done. Perhaps, disinfecting stalls will be installed as well.

In other parts of the world, countries are opening up gradually in planned stages. Most plans intend to resume small businesses with limited opening hours. Some have chosen to keep recreational spots like theatres, parks and such closed while others have adapted strict guidelines regarding social distance by putting up shields, boundaries and opting minimal capacity. Social gatherings are prohibited. In stages, all businesses are to open, moderate gatherings will be allowed and physical distancing is to be maintained, especially for elderly citizens who have been in shelter prior to this stage. Educational institutions are likely to continue online.

In the end, it boils down to survival. Weigh the pros and cons before you make a move. It may be absolutely essential for you to step out. But this only means you adapt to an even stricter hygiene code in any ingenious way possible.

*Hiya finally has time to catch up with her book-reading goals. Suggest her something at [hiyaislam.11@gmail.com](mailto:hiyaislam.11@gmail.com)*

# A TIME FOR REFLECTION



**MAISHA NAZIFA KAMAL**

Secluded at our homes, we can take this time to reflect upon the things we might have missed thinking about when we were so engrossed in our daily lives.

### NO MORE REGRETS

Before the shutdown, I wasn't giving time to anybody at all; I was so busy. Now sitting idle, I regret not spending more time with my friends. If I knew there would be so much time to sleep now, I wouldn't have ditched some of the plans just to get some good sleep. Come to think of it, we always had a vague tomorrow in our mind putting off the todays. Yes, we are interacting via social media but a group chat is not the same as sitting with a whole bunch of people. Real life communication is much more important than a virtual one. And we should have prioritised the former than the latter while we had the chance to. Taking the company of people for granted is a huge regret.

### BE YOUR OWN EVALUATOR

Being quarantined, I also realised that this is a good time to reflect upon our behaviour. While we might be against toxicity in all its manifestations, it is also plausible that we might possess some of the toxic

traits without even intending to. So, this is quite a period for us to weed out the traits which might be problematic to others. Self assessment is always a good option. However, it doesn't mean that we have to become solipsistic; it's more of a routine check-up of our mental health to achieve that higher level of equanimity.

### YOUR HEALTH MATTERS

Earlier we were so tapped into our busy lives that we might not have had the time to maintain a healthy diet or lifestyle for that matter. Well, now is the time to follow that health routine you made a few weeks back but never followed. Build up healthy habits and let go of the detrimental ones. Try cutting off that extra caffeine from your lives that you've been meaning to, workout a bit and just take some time to do what you love.

In short, in this quarantine, let's take a step back and allow ourselves to look back. In hindsight when we see ourselves, we can find the loopholes and all the shortcomings we have and work on that, acquiring that great sense of satisfaction we wanted.

*You can reach out to Maisha Nazifa Kamal for any thoughts on this article at [01shreshtha7@gmail.com](mailto:01shreshtha7@gmail.com)*



# ACCESS TO THE REFRIGERATOR

SABRINA SAMREEN

We must have grown pretty close,  
Since you've given me access to the refrigerator.  
Even then, I hesitate,  
To devour,  
The yogurt you got three days before,  
Might be your favourite kind.  
I like yogurt, too.  
I guess I'll make do,  
With bread, marmalade and leftover chicken stew.  
I've always been the kind to not ask for more.  
Plus, it's good to ration.  
We can all benefit if we just eat,  
As much as we need.  
Hell's broken loose and this dire situation.  
I kind of feel weird to not even go out, do groceries,  
I have some money saved up, ready to be used, if you please.  
There you are, working hard, laboring, night and day.  
While I just eat, consume, not producing, all I do is stay  
At home, eating warm meals at home, "your home".  
Mind if I use some,  
Mozzarella cheese?  
Sprinkle it on the garlic bread I'm baking,  
It's a luxury, I know you won't flinch,  
But food's all we got, it's worth faking.  
Everything's good, and the meals are our disguise.  
I see the milk bottles in your refrigerator, untouched,  
So I hunt and make recipes that use more milk, less eggs or flour,  
Plus you know it's going to turn sour?  
Until I stay,  
I guess I'll just cook, use the ingredients to cater,  
To your taste bud.  
I need to thank you for your hospitality.  
I know you've given me access to the refrigerator.  
But I'd still look for signs of exasperation.  
I hope I don't tread into forbidden territory.  
Be thankful for this abode and food for free.  
One raised eyebrow, one shrug, one nod, one question,  
And then I'd capitulate,  
My privileges to your refrigerator.



ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

# Aquamarine

UPOMA AZIZ

Every time I look at you, I am reminded how moot a promise *forever* is.

On the days it rains and on ones it doesn't, a girl walks into the toy store. On rainy days she treads carefully; much unlike a child her age, perhaps in the fear of not being allowed inside the shop with her mud-caked pumps. On her way out, she squish-squish-squishes delightfully, splashing more than usual or necessary, going out of her way to make up for the puddles she missed on her way to the shop.

She doesn't check every aisle or nag for every toy she lays her eyes on – she knows the exact number of turns and steps it takes from the door to the doll she visits. All her hesitation evaporates and her face lights up in relief as she realises the doll is still there. Standing tall at four feet something, she doesn't try to reach the doll up on the six-foot shelf, she pours all the love and longing her heart can conjure up into her eyes and stares at the doll.

And I don't see the girl, because I see myself.

I don't know what the girl is called and yet I believe she has come the closest to feeling what I feel when I look at you. The girl goes back everyday just for a glance of something she cannot afford to have – she doesn't know for sure till she makes that last turn in the shop that her doll is still there. Isn't uncertainty beautiful?

There will come a day when someone will eventually take her doll away. On that day as she weeps and holds her sister, complaining that her doll is gone, she will realise – the doll was never hers, not in the ways that laws dictate,

but love is a weird thing and it comes at strange times with its own set of regulations. I daresay the person who will own the doll will never love it as much as this girl does, and she knows it too. You can see it in her eyes that she is scared. But she cannot stop either, she keeps going back everyday.

I really wasn't ever the kind of person to count the blessings of life – to be very honest, I still don't. Every time I start counting, you are the first thing to come to my mind and that is also where I stop, because that is all the blessing I need for the time being; no one said a temporary gift is not a real one. You are very much real to me and so shall you be till the day you finally slip like sand through my fingers.

You've seen the raindrops on the glass from the inside of a car right? Each time it rains I place my hands on my side of the window and see the droplets remain untouched, unscathed on the other side. The space between us allowed me to see you, but you have always been on the other side of the glass window; intangible and therefore a little unreal.

You're so precious, my Aquamarine. It's like I have you on a mortgage I know I can never pay off, and when the time comes I know I will have to hand you over. You will take away a huge part of me and I will never be the same again, but for the time that I have, I will not hold back. I will keep coming for you. I will stare into the horizon long after your train leaves.

*Upoma Aziz is a walking-talking-ticking time bomb going off at random detonators. Poke her at your own risk at [fb.com/upoma.aziz](https://fb.com/upoma.aziz)*



# THE YOUTH WILL NOT BE SILENCED

**ALIYA FARZAN**

As the rest of the world watches the unrest going on in the United States of America, one does begin to wonder—will these protests finally precipitate change this time? We've seen the youth revolt before, we've seen the uproar in our own streets demanding change, demanding safety. But with most riots and protests, the young are branded reckless, lawless, immature and sometimes just too young to know much about actual politics.

*But, are youth uprisings really that pointless?*

When the youth raise their voices against matters of the state, their collective angst and passion make it increasingly difficult to tone down the very legitimate problems they bring to light. As people watch their children struggle and fight for justice, the state is pushed to take action—any action. And oftentimes, it results in objectively mediocre consolations to pacify the public. Take, for example, the road safety laws. A year has passed but the due implementation is yet to be seen.

Youth uprisings are portrayed to be violent, deemed unnecessary and pointless, and attempted to be silenced. This silencing is often achieved through the use of brutal force and elevated

violence—images of rubber bullets and tear gas from the USA reaching us through social media only go on to show the stark reality of what the reaction to the “voices of the future” is all across the world.



Throughout history, change has been made by students that risked all they had to give. Young people are instrumental in civil rights and safety movements, as evident from our very own Language Movement and Liberation War to Tiananmen Square and the Civil Rights Movement, young protestors amass to fight for their futures.

To some, protests are inconvenient. However, Martin Luther King Jr. remarked, “A riot is the voice of the unheard.” Women vote freely now but the suffragettes were ridiculed for even suggesting that voting must be equal; an independent nation is something we take for granted today but our ancestors had to fight a war to achieve it. Youth uprisings happen for legitimate reasons and until the change they crave truly arrives, they will continue to sprout.

Discouraging this generation's need for change discourages their concerns and hopes for the future. The protests have broken out all over because the younger generation believe things can change. Amidst a worldwide pandemic, protestors are willing to risk their health to have their voices heard. If they can mobilise themselves with such urgency, why do the adults continue to undermine and silence youth uprisings?

# Interpreting art as a noob

**SARAH WASIFA**

“This is art,” I remember telling myself as I stared at a stack of inflated aluminium cubes. To me, they were just that: much like a barrier, pretty on the eyes. I remember it was called *Mirror Barricade*. I took a few pictures. That's it.

To me, its significance lay only in its face value. A brochure informed me that the exhibition was meant to revisit examples of the use of inflatables as devices of disruption in art and politics (hence the barricade). There was a giant pink bunny, a white one and a few Ghiblian creatures. I saw them, I liked them. But the same cannot be said about the people with me that day. One of them, Person A, said, “We have helium balloons at home.”

Maybe their interpretations had been different, maybe it was a generational gap, but a number of rooms with nothing but giant pneumatic creations certainly wasn't their cup of tea. It wasn't until we reached the giant moon that they finally smiled. A giant moon. Projected onto a spherical screen, with lounge chairs, not unlike a space deck. This made me ask myself, was it personal significance that they were looking for in art?

Perhaps more to their taste would be a certain piece named *Comedian*. Media: Banana and duct tape. Made to be a true critique of the strangeness of capitalism and art, yet, inadvertently became part of the problem. Person B, when faced with the question, however, was not impressed.

I decided to skip out the money part.

Art is an extremely fluid notion. Keeping in

mind that everyone's mind is a vessel of a different shape, the big picture once the colours coalesce is also different to each set of eyes. Nobody gets to define what isn't art, even though contemporary art ventures far beyond what

most people would accept to be priceless. Take that eyeglasses incident, for example, there is nothing

people won't accept as art. So when

making plans for a visit to a very recent exhibition, I decided on a small experiment. I would 'drop' a piece of glass with beads embedded, and a small card with the name and a few lines of

text, and stand at a reasonable distance to see the reaction. We didn't eventually carry it out, but let's speculate. This social-turned-thought experiment could have gone either of two ways: I would be apprehended on vandalism grounds, or I could get my point proven and end the experiment with a phone call that went like, “Nah Ammu, the traffic is insane today. I didn't get lost at the museum.”

The truth is, regardless of what this experiment would prove, there's an incredible richness to the world of visual art, regardless of how you interpret it. I believe it is because a lot of modern art does not have easily recognisable subject matter, or the subject matter is more symbolic than literal, making it harder for us to compartmentalise. With this in mind, you can approach each work of art like a scientific discovery: what does this work do that nobody has done before, and how does its form reveal the motivations of its creator(s)? Or maybe, don't approach art with expectations. Modern art doesn't work well that way. It needs purely to be observed. Look at it. Think about what you like and what you don't like about it. Pay attention to the strokes and shades.

Truth is, it still may do nothing for you. And that's okay.

*Sarah Wasifa sees life as a math equation: problematic, perhaps with a solution, and maybe sometimes with a sign to tear off a page and start over again. Help her find 'y' at sarah-wf77@gmail.com*



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