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So You Want to Study in THE U.S.?
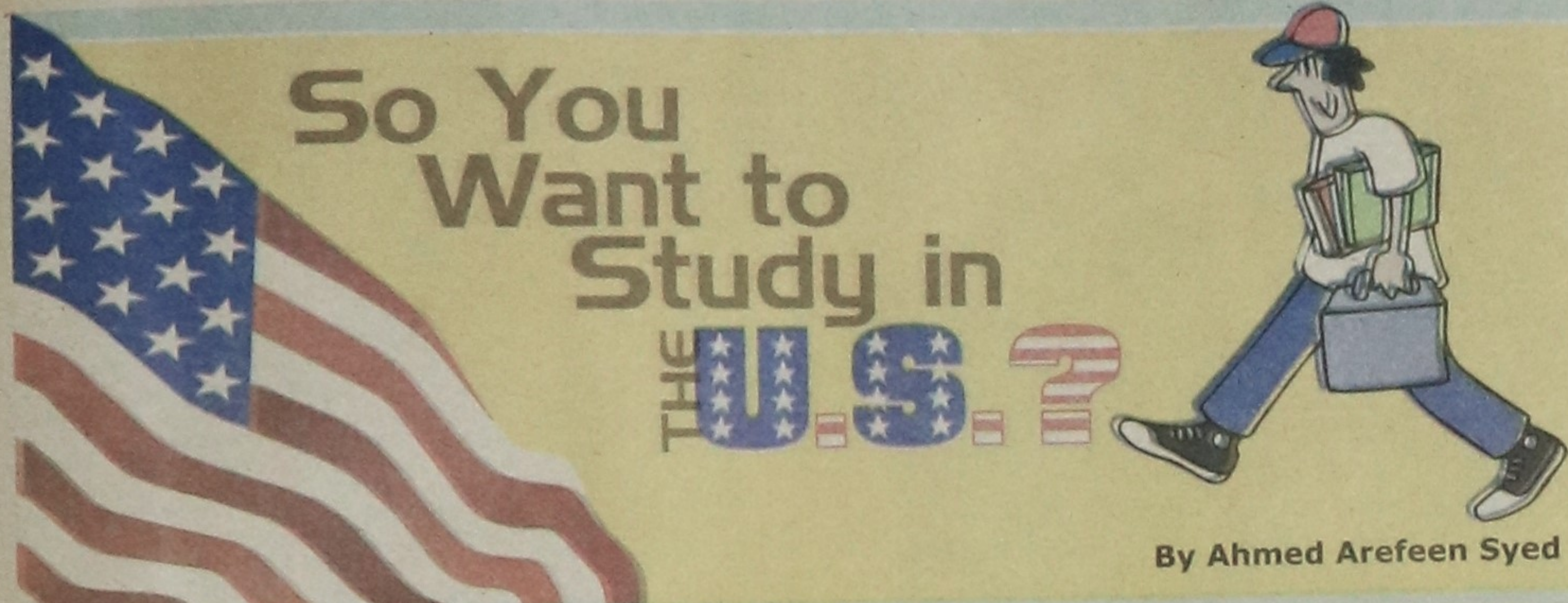
By Ahmed Arefeen Syed

This is an easy question only if you know the answer to it. I have come across students who are yet to be sure of what they really want to do: whether go abroad for their higher education or stay here and continue their personal pursuits. There is no point beating around the bush: focus on yourself-know what YOU want and converse frankly with your parents about topics like financial support. Only if you can pinpoint your strong and weak qualities, your merits and demerits of going abroad (for studying) and so on. After you have done that and know you are willing to apply to foreign (/American) universities, only then will the following article assist you in fulfilling your ultimate quest. However, I would like to clarify one simple fact: this article (mostly) provides the very basic information about applying to U.S. So it is not a substitute for the immense research that you (the undergraduate applicant) ought to do to prevail in your intentions. I do not intend to frighten you in the very beginning; the whole "admission process" can be quite interesting once you get the nag of it.

The Admissions Process: You should begin your 'admissions process' early in your Junior Year (class XI) of your high school. In this way, you will buy yourself enough time to make judicious decisions. Start preparing for the standardized tests like SAT I (take ideally no more than three times), SAT II (three subjects, one of which should preferably be writing) and the TOEFL early on. Not to mention, these scores are the first things that will meet the admissions committee's eyes. so you better try your best. The last date by which you should finish taking all these tests, for regular decision, is officially announced, by most universities/colleges, to be the January of year you are planning to join the class. For example, those who want to apply for the Fall session of 2001 must sit for these tests by Jan 2001. For early decision/early action, it is much earlier of course. However, due to the international mailing system (actually Bangladesh's , I mean), its safe to finish all of them by December 2000.

Sitting for these tests is not enough: You have to complete all formalities way before the deadline to ensure that the respective universities that you are applying to receive your test(s') scores on time. For more detailed information on "additional score reports", contact USIS @ 8813440-4.

High School Transcripts: Since high school transcripts(/report cards) are an integral part of your admission, you are to maintain good grades throughout your high school, from classes 9 12. And that is one of the qualities that you should posses: to be able to juggle all the balls simultaneously, to the best of your capability, without dropping any one.

University Selection: Now the most crucial factor determining your acceptance at an American university/college is the right selection of the same at the right time. Many a time, students, under peer/sibling pressure, make the wrong decisions about choosing their academic institutions. As a result, those students who are otherwise worthy fail to meet up to their expectations. That is why this topic requires maximum research. With the advent of the Internet, this is no problem whatsoever. A few hours of educated surfing are all that would maximize your chances of reaching your goal! Sites like www. petersons.com, www.finaid.org and www.usnews.com are some of the innumerable ones that could be of much help.

When beginning your university search, keep these in mind (not necessarily in this order):
* know your total amount of financial support available.
* refer to the "financial-aid rankings" of universities to see which give more to international students.
* total annual cost of the colleges/universities.
* majors (subjects) available; do not automatically assume that a university will have the one you want.
* general/specific (academic) rankings published regularly by usnews.com.
* geographical location: for you would not like Chicago or Washington D.C. if you prefer warm climate. Similarly, you would be dreadful being in New York if you like small towns/cities.

In my opinion, 15 are a safe number of universities to apply to although there are no hard and fast rules as such. So if you want to increase the probability of your admission, you may, nevertheless, apply to more places. I have even seen some applying to awesome 40 universities! Concerning the financial-aid, you should bear in mind that it is extremely limited for international students. Hence, select colleges/universities that, owing to their large endowments, are more capable of providing aid to international students. However, when it comes to international applicants, your candidacy is not always judged on a need-blind basis! Meaning that all American students (irrespective of their financial-aid requirements) and those int'l students who tick off "NO" to financial-aid are examined for admission on the same strict procedures. But only those int'l students who want financial aid are subject to another level of scrutiny before they are accepted/rejected.

Acceptance Rates: Another issue that you may consider is the universities' acceptance rates (ac.r to be used hereafter). these can be found in the many reliable publications released by usnews.com. In my humble opinion,

The anatomy of a hacker

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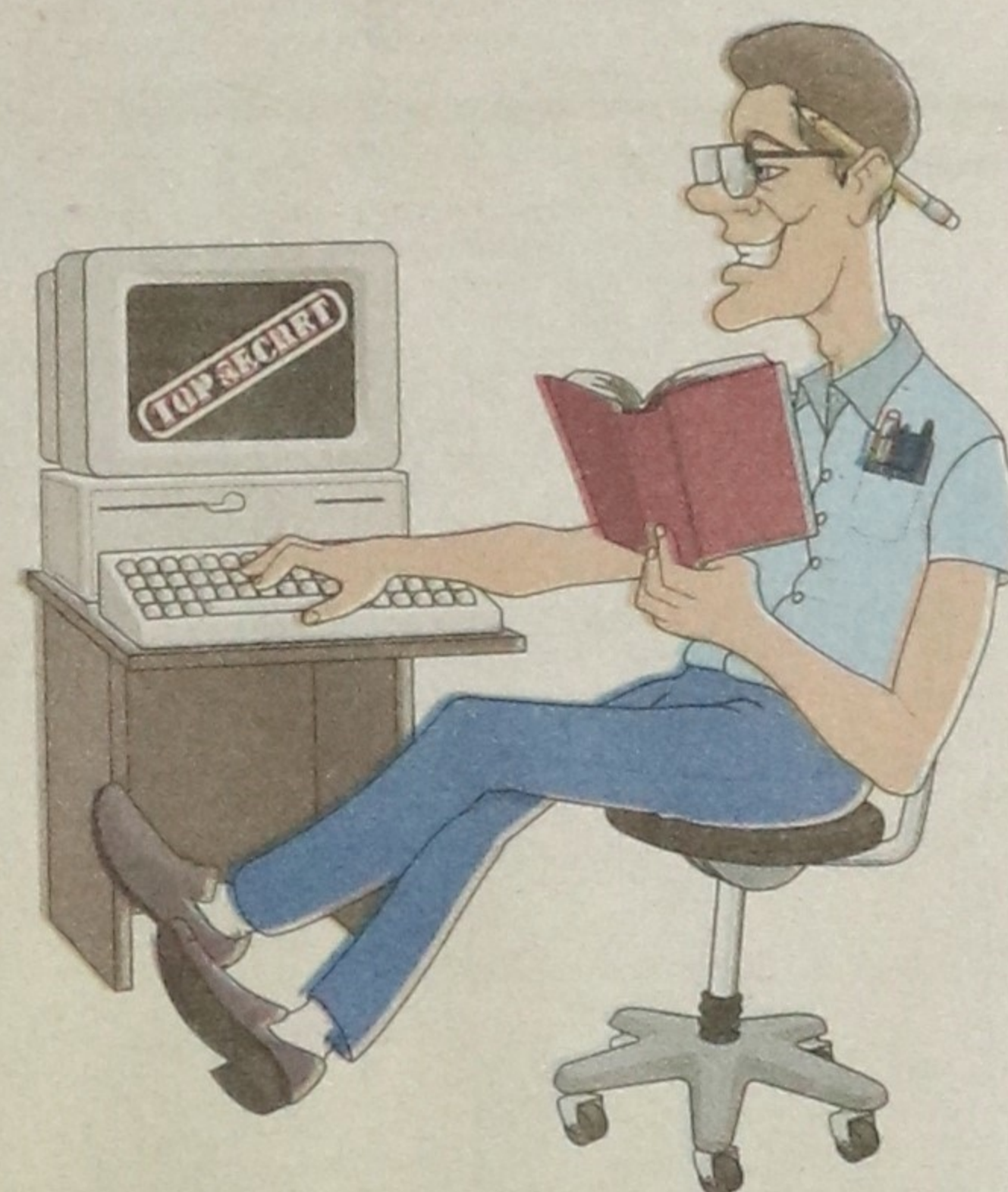
The Internet wasn't invented, but rather conceived by a department in the U.S. government called DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. ie. Now called ARPA). The internet resulted in a gross mutation of this small military project (called ARPAnet) which eventually spread out and was tested in universities. The project started in 1969 but was eventually taken over by the NSF(National Science Foundation) in 1983 for it's scientific value. The original network the NSF had started out with had grown out of hand and now there is no single owner of the Internet. The rapid growth of the network occurred due to those who played around with it. Nothing like this had ever occurred in the history of computers. Now we have a huge network with a life of it's own, that is continuously growing. We as hackers form a big part of this mutation engine and it's immune system. Many of you may disagree. I could run you down the history lane of the Internet but that's not what this article is about.

"Now imagine a guy in the middle of the night with only the light of his computer on his face and his hands busily attacking the keyboard. It seems that he is trying to gain illegal access and after a few seconds, boom! He's in!." This is a badly stereotyped image of a modern hacker. It's very bad actually. In the movies the hero cracks the FBI Database on the second or third try. This is a pathetic projection that makes hackers look like terrorists, (Well we can be if we know too much.) and that hacking a huge database is simple. Well hacking into a server is not easy and we're not all terrorists. (Example of a terrorist: G-Force from Pakistan), but there are those who use hacking for good(improving security measures etc.) and there are those who use hacking for evil! Now I'm a Bangladeshi-American. I was born and brought up in America and was exposed to this neat box called the computer in 1995. I soon got myself connected to Internet and studied different texts, and now I'm what some people term as a hacker. I wouldn't exactly call myself a 'hotmail hacker' (despite the fact hotmail security is pretty trashy). I've been residing in Bangladesh for two years because my father is working with some NGOs on a medical project (My father is a doctor in the US) and I've been around. Every teen I meet who knows anything about computers claims that he is a hacker and they know everything about win98/95, and when he shows me what he can do, he defaces his start up images. Well here's news for you hacker wannabes: Nothing can be achieved through windows98. You can do some cheap tricks like breaking into Window's boxes with shares enabled on the Internet, and completely mess up the Windows registry. It's very simple actually. To do some real damage you need UNIX and a vast knowledge of C++ and TCP/IP protocols (not hacker books, but actual manuals that teach you Unix and C++, etc). You can do some hacking from windows but if you want to be like Carolyn Meinel (the female fatal hacker) or like G-Force Pakinstan then get yourself UNIX and trash windows (or you can keep windows with a dual boot option). A uberhacker (the greatest type of a hacker) were literally born with a UNIX manual in one hand and a TCP/IP book in the other. If you want to be a hacker, you must do some serious reading and must be able to risk the fact that you will be busted for breaking into yahoo's website. (By the Way: what happened to yahoo last year was not a hack, but actually they (the hackers) irritated yahoo by pinging them a million times and requesting server info, which caused it to crash. Also that article in the Daily Star last Thursday mentioned hackers who went fishing for passwords and emails. This was not a hacker either, but someone who had the right tools and destroyed some person's email box) Now this brings me to my next topic. The term hacker is really misunderstood amongst the Bangladeshi public. It seems that anyone who can do damage to a computer or change some critical configurations on a computer is termed a hacker. Now this is very insulting to us hackers. The term 'hacker' comes from the word 'hack', like chopping or busting in. Hacking really means to mercilessly beat on a server. A hacker is someone who gains illegal access to a computer whether it being a server or windows/UNIX box. What was printed in the newspaper on Thursday was NOT A HACK nor THE WORK OF HACKERS! It seems that Bangladesh's mass media is confused over the word itself. So all of you who want to be *real* hackers or something close then get yourself UNIX and TCP/IP books!(Although some pretty harmless hacking can be done from windows!)

(The purpose of this article is to clear up the mishap between a hacker and person who thinks he knows windows and hacking)

Glossary

UNIX- An Operating System which most internet hosts use. Generics include widely used Linux and Solaris.
TCP/IP - Protocols which every computer connected to the internet follows.
Carolyn Meinel- The greatest female hacker who has good intentions and a wide range of knowledge.
C++ - A medium level program language.