was no designated official to handle this task. Sadiq and a friend, neither of whom had ever met Rafi, volunteered to take him. By the time they arrived, about 30 minutes had elapsed since Rafi had been recovered from the pool.

That Rafi was not rescued immediately after his botched dive was probably the largest contributing factor to his death. And it is shocking that there were no resources or trained officials to respond to this emergency. Why did it become necessary for Sadiq, who has never received CPR training, to perform it? And who was the swimmer who took Rafi's pulse? Sadiq had assumed he was a doctor but found out later this wasn't so.

I spoke to my classmate from Yale University, who was on the diving team, and she agreed that it's critical for lifeguards to be on duty at all times. Two basic requirements for lifeguards in US University pools are that they be able to swim down to the deepest part to retrieve a person and that they be able to perform CPR. They should also have enough training to take charge in emergency situations and determine the course of action. Is it unreasonable to hold Dhaka University to the same standards?

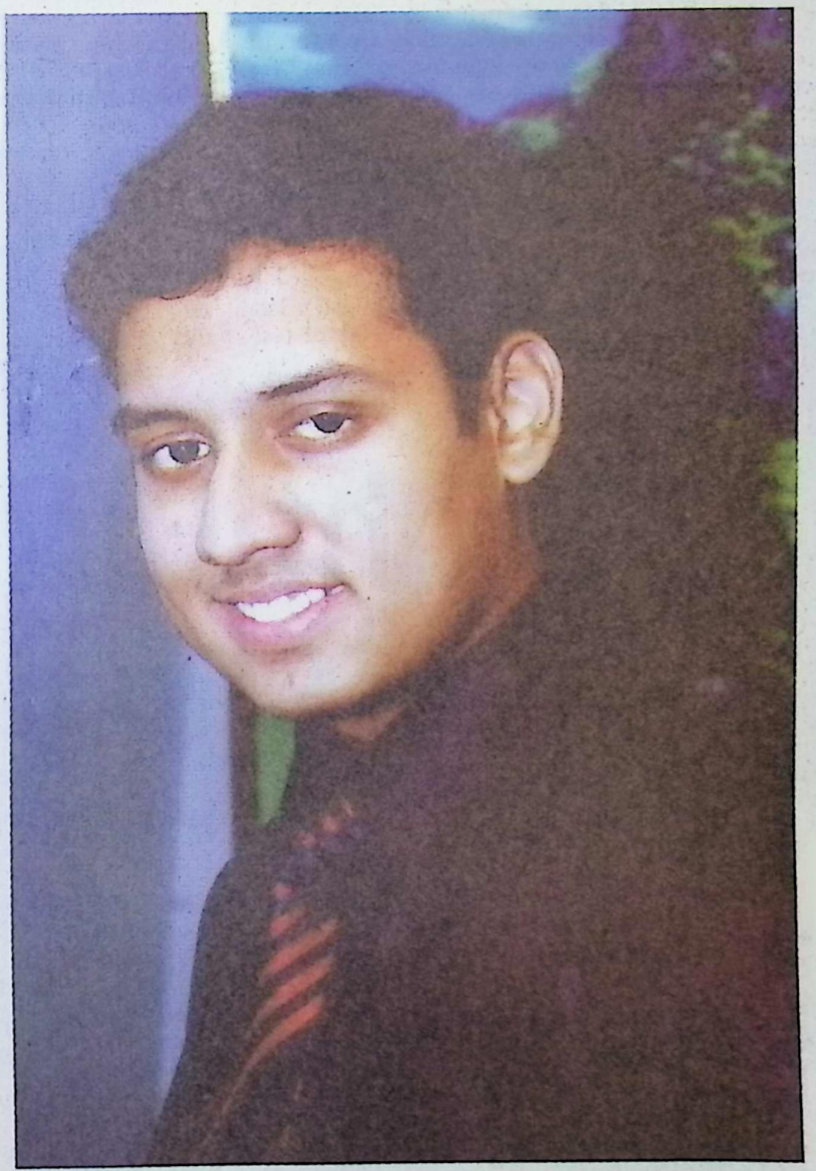
The staff at the Emergency Ward of Dhaka Medical College Hospital initially told Sadiq he would have to purchase a token for Rafi before he would be seen, even though Rafi's critical condition was evident and Sadiq promised to handle the payment. They only expedited the process after Sadiq made a scene. What was at work here, callousness or sheer incompetence? By the time someone examined Rafi, he was declared dead. That's how his mother found him when she arrived at the hospital 15 minutes later.

Ultimately, one comes away from this story with a feeling that this was an avoidable death. Rafi was let down by the institutions meant to protect him. There is no word in the dictionary for a living parent who has lost a child perhaps because it is a fate so terrible. And yet Mr and Mrs Chowdhury are left without a beloved son who held so much promise.

An accident like this could happen to any of us. I write to shine light on this topic as a concerned citizen, not as an expert. I sincerely hope this incident will serve as a wake-up call, not only to Dhaka University, but to all such institutions in our country. It is critical that they take the steps necessary to ensure our safety.

It is our responsibility to demand nothing less. We owe it to the memory of Rafi to help ensure that such an accident does not occur again.

The writer is a graduate of Yale University.



Fahim Shahriar Chowdhury (Rafi), 1994 – 2013.