



RADICAL PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

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PHOTO: AKIF HAMID

The year is 1989 and Toyota unquestionably has the biggest ace up its sleeves in a game of poker against Mercedes and BMW. Enter Lexus, Toyota's very own agent built to subdue—after rivalling and surpassing—the Germans at their own game. Toyota swayed the consumer's opinion on Japanese craftsmanship under the guise of the American Dream with Lexus premiering the LS 400 (badged as the Toyota Celsior in Japan). The rest as they say it is history.

Fast forward two decades, and Lexus steps into the spotlight again

with the only saving grace being the harmonious naturally aspirated 5-litre V8 firepower while its rivals went down the forced induction route—a sight (and sound) for the sore eyes, even to this day as Lexus is holding on the big obsolescent, archaic V8, au contraire to AMG downsizing.

The lumbering weight did not seem to matter any more on the road though, as the RCF translated to just another big V8 cruiser with a fantastic interior devoid of gimmicks, typical of Lexus past and present. Since the "Radical



with the fantastic LFA supercar, which is nothing short of an opera on wheels deserving of every positive superlative in the English language beyond my very small lexicon. However, Lexus couldn't pull off the same trick for the third time in a row, with the Lexus RCF, against the bold AMG and the tri-coloured M. The biggest Achilles heel being the lumbering weight,

Coupe" was based on Lexus's LF-LC design study, it inherited much of its genes from the LFA, the playful dash cluster being the most distinguishable trait. The exterior, by the words of the world's most professional car ballet instructor known otherwise as Chris Harris, belongs in a three-panel Manga, although it screams Predator from the movies if you ask me.

Interestingly enough, in ways I can't fathom, The RC came with an optional hybrid trim; The RC 300h, powered by a modest 2.5 litre inline 4 with a mild-hybrid assist from a 105 kW electric motor.

Jamir Hossain is the proud owner of this infrared 2016 RC 300h F-Sport. Importing a car from Japan almost always guarantees a few aftermarket goodies, and in this case, the 20 inch BBS wheels were the cherries on top. The RC has served him well since 2017, and in his words, "The car as a whole cuts its suit more sharply than its German rivals". Beauty without the touch of aggression is the best I could come up with while going through the photos as all that torque would have been futile on Bangladeshi roads. Therefore, the RC 300h should make perfect sense here on our soil, as it translates to the big V8 coupe experience, minus the big V8, minus the penchant for unavailable high octane in our pumps, plus all the luxury and esteem associated with a Lexus.

How the pandemic and online learning has affected school students

SAMILA SOBHAN

The perennial pandemic has taken a heavy toll on all of our lives. School-going children are not spared from this atrocity either. The invisible enemy has stolen their livelihood and childhood. With the closure of academic institutions since March last year, the education system had a bumpy shift to online methods.

Students, ranging from preschool to high school, now have to rely on gadgets to acquire their education to keep up with their global peers. This overdependence on electronic devices has given rise to an unhealthy amount of screen time, which is detrimental to young eyes and restricts their social and psychological development.

Adding to the adversity, teenagers who spend most of their time in front of screens, more often than not, fall victim to the bullying in the virtual space and thus suffer from mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, inferiority complexes and so on. As a result of these unconventional and novel education methods, students spend most of their time either sitting or lying down. Coupled with unable to indulge in outdoor activities, courtesy of the lockdown, this is the cornerstone to obesity and other health issues like dorsal pain, insomnia, and coronary diseases.

The pandemic has narrowed down recreational activities to almost zilch. Refrained from playing outside, young adults and children seek asylum in online games, movies, TV shows, and other online-based communal activities, looping towards more screen-time.

Atandriha Saha, a student of S. F. X. Greenherald International School, says, "I can neither meet my friends and cousins

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nor participate in extracurricular activities or sports. Students my age have to pass their time on phones and laptops, thus becoming dependent."

"Concentrating on studies and the sense of competition is tough on us. Many suffer from economic issues and cannot afford updated gadgets to support classes. There are good sides, too. People not habituated with technology are learning how to use digital platforms like Zoom that can be beneficial in the future," she adds.

The fundamentals of education are taught at school at a primary tier. Students

making it through the pandemic have an arduous time grasping the basics of teachings because many things demand exclusive attention, such as mathematical principles or scientific-practical experiments that require laboratory apparatus, which is often not pragmatic through online classes.

Moreover, in the light of social distancing, all national and international board examinations were cancelled. This hinders students' chance at a fair evaluation of their quotient. Many schools have opted out for assignments as a substitute to holding exams to avoid questioning honesty as it is no sweat to adopt below the belt measures in this era of internet and available resources.

Md. Ashik Uz Zaman Raj, a professional tutor, outlines how teaching has drifted away from conventional techniques. "Online-based teaching was exceptionally new to me. Being an educator, collaborating with students motivates me to carry the lesson forward, so it was quite difficult to deliver lectures for hours without having any live interaction. Additionally, it took a great deal of time to figure out effective teaching strategies and with online classes, I have to try harder to keep students focussed to bring out the best in them which, at the end of the day, is my responsibility," he says.

Parents are equal victims of these challenging circumstances. Tahmina Mahmud, a mother of two and a businesswoman herself, finds it difficult to focus on her business. She says, "My kids have different, unrealistic schedules and since everything is online, I have to solely take care of their classwork and

homework as devices are cumbersome for young kids. It has been over a year since they attended school; therefore, they miss out on making new friends."

She is worried about her children's mental health as well. "They miss out on interactive classes and recess that encourage them. Their and our mental health are in shambles as there is very little time for ourselves since we mothers manage this extra load without a break tirelessly," adds she.

Fariha Tasnim, Assistant Professor at Jagannath University and a concerned mother, thinks the evaluation system is a misrepresentation of merit. "Instead of holding exams that might display dishonesty, if there is a daily evaluation based on the discussions/short quizzes of the class content, students will be obliged to concentrate," she says.

"Physical classes assure full concentration and routine. Lackadaisical students often miss classes, something which is strenuous on their academics. Teachers cannot keep track whether an individual student is distracted," she adds. However, she firmly believes online classes are the lone option available in these unusual times and we have to make the best out of it.

To escape this sedentary lifestyle, most experts recommend cultivating offline reading habits, befriending old board games, focusing on hobbies like painting or trying hand at learning something new. Platforms like Coursera have done a tremendous job in this pandemic to bring about online courses which help build skills and extracurriculars, some of which are worth checking out in free time.

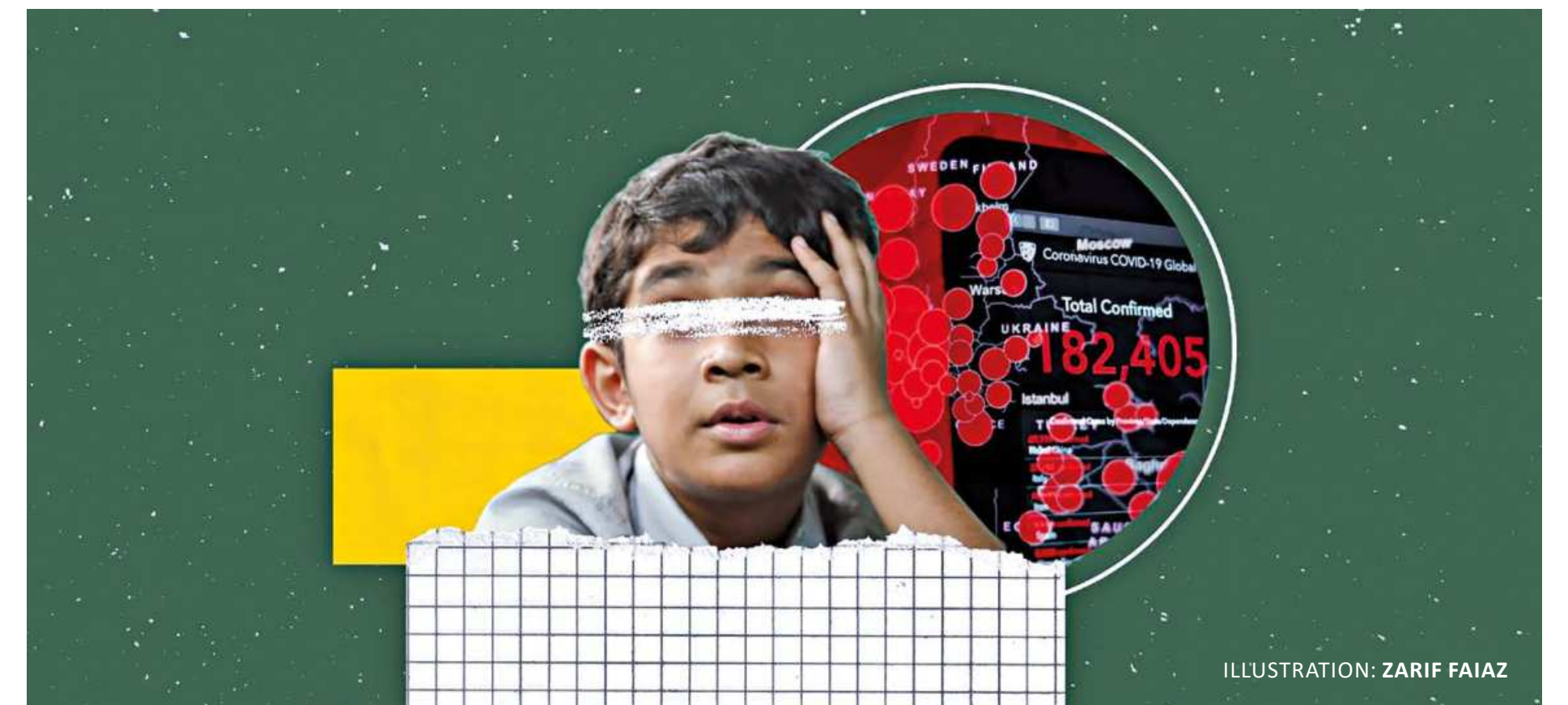


ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ