

A much-awaited return to campus

INQIAD BIN ALI

The last couple of weeks have been incredible in many ways. Since returning to physical schooling, we had an outpouring of joy and emotions as old friends reunited and bonded after a long separation. We were all relieved as we went about playing football and visiting the canteen or library to spend our free classes.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The change in our mentality after the break was evident. Many, including myself, found ourselves forming new friendships with people who we didn't get along with before the school closure. As we came to know each other more, it became apparent that we have grown and matured somehow and many of the social rules of the past such as who would sit with whom didn't apply anymore. Our social interactions undoubtedly improved as we had new perspectives.

As classroom learning slowly resumes, we now feel like we belong here after the somewhat soulless experience of online learning. Seeing the teachers again was

akin to being reunited with our parents after a long time. We were thrilled to see the gateman *mama* and *khalas* who we previously used to escape from.

However, not everything is as rosy as it seems. Despite the authority's best efforts, social distancing measures in many schools have been said to be wanting at times. This was perhaps expected, as students were bound to become emotional and hug their friends after such a long time. Nevertheless, it increases the risk of Covid-19, which despite its current drop, hasn't gone away yet.

Another unnerving thing is the fact that time has passed, despite it seemingly being

at a standstill for us. Our batch went home as carefree eighth graders. Now, we will turn 18 a few months later and are the seniors to whom the school looks up to with our O Level exams on the horizon. With limited time, we really have a huge job to both perform well in our exams and be a shining example to our juniors.

The *bhel puri* and *ghal muri* *mamas* were mainstays of our post-school *addas*. So, we were very sad to see they had left town during the lockdowns. We had so many good memories of munching their food and having the time of our lives at their stalls. We can only hope they return to the city soon.

There is also this subconscious insecurity which is nagging me. We students are still mostly unvaccinated, and the little pathogens don't discriminate on who it infects. Fortunately, vaccines have been promised for school students, easing my insecurity a bit. Slowly but surely, both students and teachers are getting up to speed with their old roles.

Now, my hope is the world will be healed soon and we can enjoy school just like the good old times.

Inqiad Bin Ali, despite his insecurity, is glad schools have opened. Keep him distracted from mocks at inqiadali007@gmail.com

Are individual awards in football being given the right way?

TAMJIDUL HOQUE

With the voting for Ballon d'Or concluding last month, the football world is divided over who should win this time. With candidates like Lewandowski, Benzema and Messi, people appear to be voting for who they like personally rather than voting on certain criteria or a system.

Individual awards such as UEFA Player of the Year (POTY), Ballon d'Or, and others are typically given based on votes or the judgment of a panel appointed by the awards committee. Currently, however, football is evolving and perhaps it is time for the award selection process to evolve as well.

There have always been issues with the traditional method of awarding prizes. The most notable issue is that it is prone to bias. Campaigning may also be used to try to influence the outcome. Players who participate in the process tend to vote for their teammates or close friends rather than the best individual performer. Popularity also has a significant impact on the decision, and a deserving candidate may be denied nomination due to their lack of it.

The awards do have their own set of criteria. The Ballon d'Or, for example, specifies criteria such as individual performance that year, overall career, and player class. The problem is that criteria like "player class" is extremely ambiguous; different voters interpret the criteria differently, and some voters ignore the criteria entirely.

Even though these issues existed, they went unnoticed

in the last decade due to the dominance of Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi. But nothing lasts forever, and with age, their reign is coming to an end. As a result, more players are now in contention to win the awards. This ultimately made flaws in the award system more apparent.

So, what is the "right" way? That cannot be said at the moment because no other process has been tested, but with data analysis being more influential than ever in football today, there is potential for it to be used in determining the winner. This is not completely unproven; many clubs use data as well as an algorithm-based system to analyse players and this approach has been very successful.

One might argue total dependence on statistics will not show what you can see through the "eye test" and that wouldn't be wrong. There should be a system in place that takes into account the influence of data along with the expertise of professionals to determine the winner more accurately.

It is very unlikely the traditional method is going to be changed anytime soon, and any attempt to change it will face a lot of opposition from many sides due to various reasons but in an ever-changing sport like football, this aspect of football should evolve too.

Tamjidul Hoque likes to talk about football and checks his emails from time to time, you can contact him at tamjidulh@gmail.com



THE PRESSURE TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP

SYEDA ERUM NOOR

"What does my happiness have to do with finding a partner?" asks Nibrash Kazi Subah, a computer science and engineering student from Independent University, Bangladesh. Well, I'm glad he asked.

The world will tell you that "happiness" and "finding a partner" are mutually exclusive. That you're never truly happy until you've found *the one*.

Unbeknownst to you, this bizarre concept is bred within from early on. It started as early as your first Disney movie. The prince, on his white horse, would appear and rescue the princess in distress, usually in an abandoned tower or lost in an enchanted forest, ultimately finding "the girl of his dreams." (Disclaimer: No hate. I love Tangled.)

For the longest time, the world told us that the only way to be complete, is to be with your other half. It creates an inexplicable, yet very real pressure on all of us.

It is so real, in fact, that professor of philosophy Elizabeth Brake coined the term "amatonormativity", and defines it as "the widespread assumption that everyone is better off in an exclusive, romantic, long-term coupled relationship, and that everyone is seeking such a relationship."

It's an assumption we're all meant to abide by.

"It took me a while to realise that I am a very private person. I don't really want to be in a relationship," explains university student Ramim Rahman*.

As if figuring out our own lives wasn't hard enough, we're constantly reminded and pushed into getting a partner. The idea is presented to us as though it's the only solution to all our problems.

Once we get a little older, already

riddled with false narratives of true love from fairy tales and white knights, relationships are the talk of the town or the schools, at least. New in puberty and high on hormones, teenagers decide the next step to move up the ladder of society and grow up, is to date.

"I was 15 when I started dating," adds Ramim. "Everyone around me was already in a relationship. I ended up dating someone I didn't get along with. And it didn't end there because this pressure persisted and I kept dating girls I never truly liked enough."

"It seemed like everyone was in a relationship, but me," recalls Shahrin Mahmud, a student of dentistry. "I felt that in order to keep up that's what I had to do as well."

Not everyone agrees, but it becomes the standard and so once again, putting aside the more important individual growth that one needs, people rush into relationships. Little did we know, this may have pushed us towards unhappiness, stress, and anxiety in the present as well as deciding what our relationships may look like in the future.

In the next stage of life, we're young adults, dealing with the awfully difficult transition from being a teenager to a grown-up. We have a million things to worry about as we try to find our place in the world; college, grades, jobs, finances, social life, family life, and figuring out how taxes work.

"A relationship requires time and energy and most importantly, meeting someone who's worth all putting in all that effort," says university student Farhana Rahman*. "It's a commitment and it requires dedication that you have to have the capacity to give."

Suddenly, home doesn't feel like

home. Time feels borrowed. For every second that you spend not actively finding someone to settle down with, your parents and family members are stressed. Yesterday, the very parents who told you not to talk to the boy from down the street because he didn't "look right", want you to find a suitable partner, get to know them, and get married at the earliest.

"It's such a sudden shift in gears," Farhana adds. "It edges on emotional blackmail in some ways, constantly being reminded that my place is not my own and that I am incomplete until I've found someone else and married them. Do my achievements mean nothing?"

It seems that everyone at home is fixated on when we can settle down. *Settle down*. When did that become a term meaning if we had a significant other? Why is it that settling down doesn't mean being comfortable in your own skin or having a stable job? What about being happy with who you are and where you are in life?

In an attempt to keep up with society and its ever-changing trends, and in spite of its strange fixation on romance and relationships, we grow up in a blur of "Are you seeing anyone right now?" and "Oh, you're single? Let me set you up!"

Let me clarify. Wanting a relationship or being in one is not wrong. It's perfectly normal and if you're in one, congratulations. However, rushing into one because the world said so? Not the best thing to do.

"Relationships aren't something that should be forced. It is something that should happen naturally," comments Shahrin.

Love and intimacy are deeply personal matters. Unfortunately, societal pressure

often leads to these rushed relationships that ultimately fail. Truth is, nobody will usually offer help when it comes to dealing with the hurt and trauma from a broken relationship, the very people who had rushed you will turn their backs and scrutinise the failure.

There are many reasons for one to feel like they are not in the right place to be in a relationship. Maybe they do not feel ready to make a commitment, or feel like they want to focus on themselves, their careers or other relationships they already have. Being in a relationship takes effort and time, and it is okay to not be in the mental state to provide that for someone else at a particular time. It is crucial to understand that these reasons, or any others one may have, are all valid.

Involving someone else in your life when there isn't any space makes both parties miserable. You might end up building habits that will take time to break, and build patterns that'll do you harm in the long run. It'll create stress, keep you unhappy and hinder any chances of personal growth because you're stuck trying to handle a relationship with someone you're not quite ready for. Making a promise you weren't prepared to make, makes it a task.

Being in a relationship needs work but it is not a full-time job. It is not a requirement and there is no designated time for it. So, how can you tell when you're ready?

Simple. It's when you decide you're ready.

**Names have been changed for privacy.*

Syeda Erum Noor is dangerously oblivious and has no sense of time. Send help at erum.noor1998@gmail.com



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA