

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

DHAKA THURSDAY APRIL 21, 2022, BAISHAKH 8, 1429 BS

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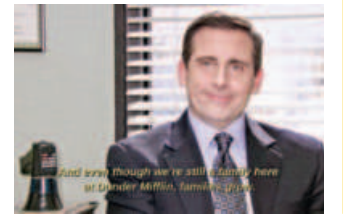


HOW TO LET FRIENDS
GO, GRACEFULLY

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WE ARE NOT "LIKE A
FAMILY" AT WORK

PG 4



TAKING A SECOND CHANCE AT EDUCATION

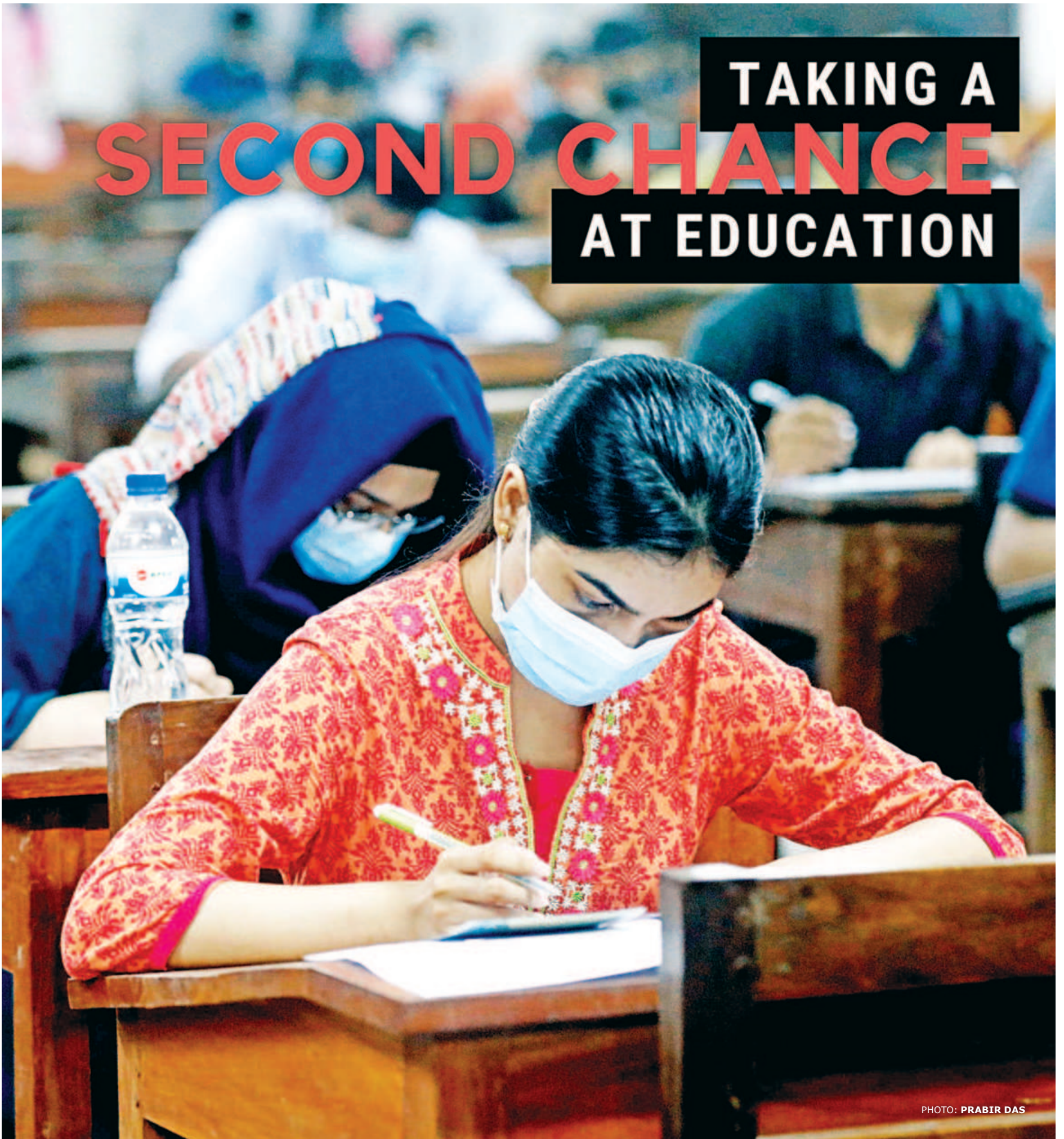


PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

EDITORIAL

Sitting through at least two hours of traffic on a regular basis with a heavy dose of motion sickness, it's often difficult for me to use that time to catch up on some reading or new episodes of shows I watch. So, I spend a lot of time staring out of the window, and I happen to observe certain things.

Today I realised how I haven't seen enough birds recently, and figured out why within the next hour.

I walked into what is probably one of the busiest roads of Dhaka city in the middle of the day today and amidst the pollution, the heat and the sheer volume of dust in the air, what was truly overwhelming was the noise.

At a point, I stopped in the middle of an overbridge and stared at the road as cars honked away, sirens played at a distance (though it felt as if it playing directly at my ears) and metals met and clanked at construction sites. Our city is devastatingly loud, and no wonder birds have left it. I hope they have found a better place to be, though it seems unlikely.

-- Syeda Afrin Tarannum, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

MANGA



Struggles of being an ongoing manga reader

AYAAN SHAMS SIDDIQUEE

When watching a show, the adrenaline rush associated with waiting for the next episode is almost incomparable, especially when the previous one ends with a cliffhanger.

However, on the opposite end of the spectrum lies the niche community of manga readers. While a series offers episodes ranging from 25 to 55 minutes or more in duration, manga readers are dealt with a much less. In most cases, a new manga chapter offers content that can be skimmed through within a few minutes at best, excluding a few exceptions here and there. The wait time, although, is vastly different.

Depending on the publishers in charge of each series, a reader may need to wait a week, a month, or even years for a new chapter.

Weekly publications are far more common in comparison to other publication structures. Popular titles like *One Piece*, *Jujutsu Kaisen*, *My Hero Academia*, etc. release new chapters every week, with occasional breaks in between. The biggest problem with weekly releases circles back to one overarching factor – mangakas (manga artists in Japanese) struggle to finish the massive amount of work in such short time, ultimately resulting in a dip in the series' quality.

When it comes to manga series which publish monthly, there's a grey area involved. That's because series without predetermined publication dates tend to be grouped under the monthly tag since they usually take two to four weeks to release new chapters.

The most widely known example

would be *One Punch Man*. Author Yusuke Murata reserves the freedom to publish chapters at his own pace. That puts the readers in a pickle, considering how no one knows how long to wait for. The waits, however, are never uncalled for since the series is laden with beautiful artwork, smart panelling, and rich story-telling.

At the very bottom of the rabbit hole lies the family of manga capable of inflicting the most emotional damage on the readers – manga on hiatus. Owing to the gruesome nature of the anime and manga industries in Japan, authors face various health problems and are forced into extended breaks to recover from a myriad of problems.

This leaves fans in perpetual anticipation as extended hiatuses can continue for decades. *Nana*, one of the most acclaimed shoujo manga in history, went on hiatus back in 2009 and has yet to release a new chapter since then. *Hunter x Hunter* shares a similar fate, with its latest chapter seeing the light of day back in late 2018. Both authors were forced into breaks due to their degrading health and have yet to recover fully. Whether or not these series will ever pick up from where they left off is shrouded in uncertainties to this day.

Being a fan of an ongoing manga series isn't a simple feat, but being able to witness a story arc wrap up after almost five years of serialisation makes the tiresome journey absolutely worth it.

Ayaan is always on the lookout for manga to add to his list and eventually forget about. Send him wholesome rom-com suggestions at ayaan.shams@gmail.com



TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE

A	B
Chinatown	When You're Gone
Bleachers	Shawn Mendes
Speakers	Chicken Lemon Rice
Alec Benjamin	Priya Ragu
Memories	Mind Mischief
Conan Gray	Tame Impala
Bam Bam	Falling
Camila Cabello	Trevor Daniel

Email us at shoutds@gmail.com with feedback, comments, and reader submissions within 500 words.

When friends leave you without closure

ANGELINA NODEE FRANCIS

When you're friends with someone, you start adoring them, love spending time with them, and end up trusting them. You feel the need to share details of how your day went and be there for them when they need you the most.

However, sometimes some friendships end in a very bitter manner, and friends leave without saying a word.

Questions often remain unanswered. Some days, you will blame yourself for things going wrong, leading you to send a series of long apology texts, even when you know they will remain unseen or unanswered.

Why do people enter our life suddenly, become an important part of it only to leave us one day, without so much as an explanation? How do they sleep at night knowing that the friend they used to share everything with, is shedding tears and staying up all night, drowning in an ocean of questions unable to find an answer to this deafening silence?

They shared everything with you, from the things that made them happy to the things that made them cry. During their most vulnerable moments, they might have told you something which nobody knew about, so why did they have to leave like this? To be quite honest, I still do not have a proper answer for that question. Sometimes, no matter how hard we try to hold on to certain people, they will leave.

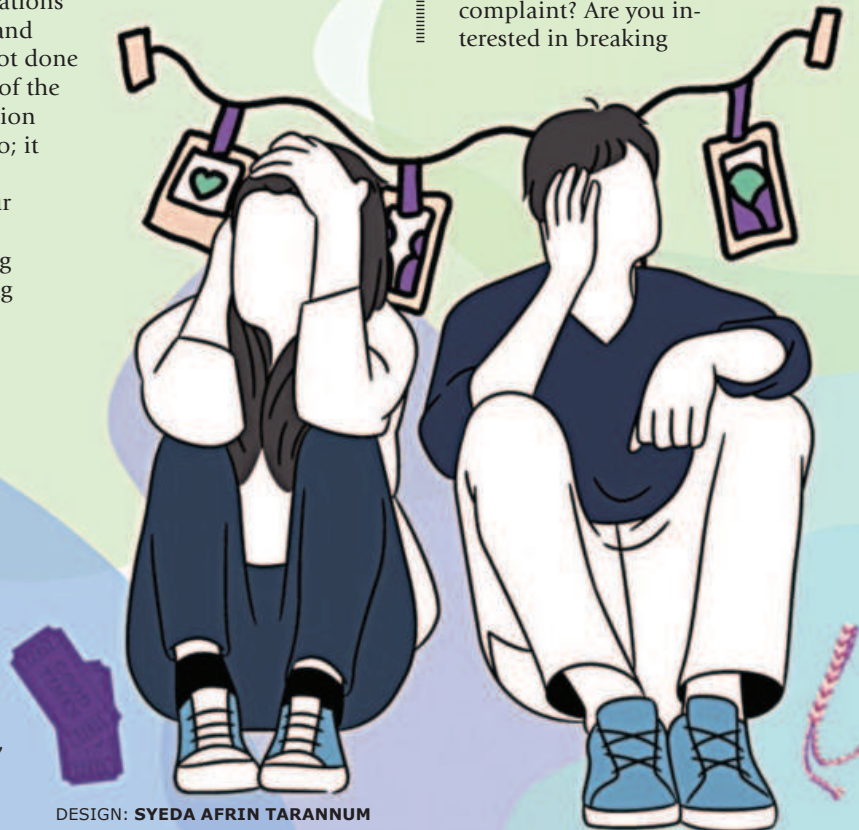
My friend of two years left me within a few minutes. I remember asking him what happened and why he pulled himself away like this. All I received as an answer was, "We shouldn't talk as much as we do now." It sent me into a state of shock because someone I used to talk to for hours, had devalued my friendship within minutes.

I used to go through our old conversations right after he left me, and read each and every text, just to ensure that I had not done something wrong. Reaching the end of the conversation had led me to a realisation though: There was nothing I could do; it was not my responsibility.

Here is the takeaway: it is not your business anymore. To ask how that person is doing, to ask them anything at all. You don't have to keep blaming yourself for their actions, the burden is not for your shoulders. It will hurt and you might not be able to trust someone else for a while. Every time you befriend someone, you will wonder if they will hurt you the same way. Take your time to come to terms with it, it's not easy to let someone go with all those questions circulating in your mind.

Good news is, if you have made it this far without that friend, you will probably make it further.

Angelina Nodee Francis enjoys cracking self-deprecating jokes and running away from her problems. Send her memes at angelinafrancis004@gmail.com



DESIGN: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

How to let friends go, gracefully

FABIHA AFIFA

While going through old photos, I found a picture of a toddler me cuddling with a fellow toddler friend on our old sofa. Keeping the nostalgia aside, I realised: while I was taught to build and maintain friendships before I could even fully comprehend the world around me, never in my 18 years of life have I been guided on how to end them.

Over the years, like most people, I have lost plenty of friends and in most cases, the process was unnecessarily ugly. Some friendships have perished in icy silence, others in fiery feuds. However, from each of these experiences, I have picked up a lesson or two so if you're someone wanting a graceful exit from a friendship, read on.

Know your reason(s).

Sometimes, you just know it's time to say goodbye. At other times, you're not so sure and that's when it's best to take a step back and ask yourself some questions.

Have you communicated your issue to your friend? Is the issue actually important enough to make you want to terminate the friendship? What has their response been to your complaint? Are you interested in breaking

up with them altogether or do you just want a break?

Revising your situation thoroughly will give you the clarity and confidence to make up your mind and follow through with your decision.

Tell them the right way.

Depending on how close you and your soon-to-be ex-friend were, and the gravity of your circumstances, pick a suitable way to break the news to them. If you're looking to avoid confrontations and need time to compose your thoughts, you can tell them via text or maybe even a letter. Call or meet them if you want to gauge their reaction and want a live conversation.

Hear them out.

Even if you think they are in the wrong, remember that they reserve the right to defend themselves. Try your best to avoid accusatory language that could only prolong your strife. However, if you feel that you're being gaslit or that your views are being disregarded, feel free to politely call an end to the conversation.

Be ready to miss them.

It is only natural to mourn the demise of a friendship that once meant a lot to you. What you need to keep in mind, however, is that it would be unfair to yourself to stay in a friendship in which you feel disrespected. In case you find yourself second-guessing your decision to call it quits, now is the time to keep reminding yourself of the reasons you brainstormed.

At the end of the day, you're the only friend you'll have forever so it's your wellbeing that matters the most. Anyone thinking or making you think otherwise must go.

Fabiha is sick of "malding" and considering shaving her head. Send her hair regrowth tips before it's too late at: afifafabiha01@gmail.com

We are not “like a family” at work

AFIA IBNAT

Many organisations these days boast about treating their employees like family. At first, this seems like a fruitful practice that encourages a close knit bond between employees and employers.

Since we spend a major part of our lives around our co-workers, it's only natural that we come to build close relationships with them. However, the line between professional and personal lives can often get blurry. If we casually compare our co-workers and bosses to family, our brains start associating certain familial traits with them that should not be normal in a transactional professional environment.

When we think about family, we envision selfless sacrifices, unshakeable loyalty, and meeting the needs of our family members while putting our own ones aside. As you can imagine, these familial notions can subconsciously bleed into the workplace if the prevalent language includes phrases such as “We're all family here.” You may unwittingly start viewing your boss as a familial authority figure in your life rather than a professional mentor.

Why is this detrimental? It is much easier to rebel against traditional authority, yet significantly more difficult when the authority is your “family”. You'll have a harder time advocating for yourself and become more likely to put up with unrea-



sonable expectations from your employer, while inadvertently making yourself more vulnerable to burnout, exploitation and job dissatisfaction. You may even start overlooking certain things that bother you in the workplace and have trouble standing up for yourself.

The problem is not limited to just formal companies either. With the rise of youth organisations and clubs, many

school and university students end up volunteering their time, energy and effort to them. While this can be a great opportunity for portfolio building, it also opens up the sinister gates of exploitation to people who have not yet learned to identify subtle yet damaging norms that create an environment of pressure and coercion.

You may be asked to work unreasonable hours and take on more than you

can handle on your plate, all under the guise of a family culture where putting the organisation's needs above your own is the status quo. What's more is that it will seem counterintuitive to protest when the narrative is set in a familial context – you yourself will try to justify your own exploitation.

Does this mean that employers should draw lines in the sand and start being rude to their employees? Not at all. However, it is important to acknowledge that our relationship with our work is transactional no matter how passionate we are about our jobs.

We are improving our portfolios, getting monetary compensation, or both, in return for our efforts. Our workplaces should be respectful communities centred on shared values, rather than a pseudo-family that expects us to conform to a culture that asks us to give more than we signed up for.

Afia Ibnat thinks it's a tragedy that she eats dragon fruits, yet still remains a human. Tell her about more tragedies at afiaibnat09@gmail.com

What not to tell someone who just quit their job

SHIMIN MUSHSHARAT

Quitting my previous job was a tough decision. The questions and comments I received for this were harrowing, to say the least. While they may have come from a place of concern, the good intention did nothing to lessen my apprehension. It only added to the pressure I felt after making such a big decision.

Here's a list of things better left unsaid to someone who just quit their job. Truth be told, if they wanted to talk about it, they would have told you already.

WHAT HAPPENED? WHY DID YOU QUIT?

There can be multitudes of reasons for leaving (e.g. workload, remuneration, and environment). It is also possible that the person had different goals in mind that would not align with the pathway this workplace had to offer. If we assume that something unfavourable did happen, they are probably not ready to speak about it at this time. Additionally, it is an impolite question to ask.

WHERE ARE YOU JOINING? GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR NEW JOB!

Do not assume that they have been offered a different, (even worse: better) job. The idea of constantly pushing forward, doing something bigger and better sounds appealing in theory. In reality, it is not sustainable. It can eat away your productivity, lead to a burnout and affect your physical and mental health. As for the answer, maybe they have not decided yet.

ARE YOU MOVING BACK TO YOUR HOMETOWN?

Whatever the answer, this question is just plain rude. It's condescending, pointless, and distressing to respond to. Say nothing instead. That is much better.



WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN CREATING FREE CONTENT FOR MY START-UP?

No, the answer is always no. It often comes from new startups. It is disrespectful to ask someone to offer their time, energy and creativity for free. If you cannot pay for a service, try to do it yourself or keep it aside for the moment.

ANYTHING RELATED TO MONEY

I will never not find this one shocking. I was sometimes asked about money while I was working. The questions came from acquaintances and strangers and even from a doctor, once. Money is a sensitive topic for most people. Asking someone about their personal finances is not a good idea and it is an even worse idea when they just quit.

These questions are inappropriate in various degrees. They make people feel discouraged and result in residual resentment.

Allow me to give you a guide to the things you can say to them instead.

“HOW ARE YOU DOING NOW?”

“Would you like to talk about it? I am here to listen.”

“You did a great job there. I'm sure you will do amazing in the future as well.”

The rule of thumb here is to be kind and hold space for them to share what they want.

Shimin reads everything she can find, talks to cats, and writes a lot of letters. Send her a book at shim.mush@gmail.com

Taking a Second Chance at Education

RAYA MEHNAZ

“The pandemic started just days before my HSC. It was hard for me to decide whether I should study for the HSC or the admission test,” reflects Samira Mortuza*, a medical college aspirant studying for the second-time admission tests this year, on her first admission cycle.

She explains, “Despite everything, I never expected to not get the chance to go to medical college. I thought I almost made it because I gave my best effort. Perhaps there was something lacking, perhaps it was luck.”

Samira's story is one of many. Every year, students from all over the country join the grueling battle to get admitted into their desired institutions for their undergraduate studies. In Bangladesh, there's very limited infrastructure to accommodate so many students. In this cutthroat environment, dreams get shattered for momentary mistakes, especially considering the fact that for many institutions, students can only sit for the admissions test only once.

In most public universities, admission candidates are made of students who passed the HSC and equivalent examination of that past year. However, most public universities until 2015 allowed HSC and equivalent graduates from two years prior, creating opportunities for students to appear in the exam for a second time. The group of second-time admission candidates are made of those who did not get admitted to a university or those who got into the university but not into their desired subject – who want to compete once more for a seat with the first-time candidates.

There are good reasons why most public universities, most notably the University of Dhaka (DU), have stopped providing second-time opportunities. Reasons range from administrative complications to the ensuing seat vacuum that follows when previously admitted students leave their institutions after getting admitted to a desired university or a desired subject. These reasons all contribute to seat mismanagement in universities that already had very limited seats, which is why most public universities have stopped offering this opportunity.

However, despite the stigma, the lack of second chances in admissions has its own dire implications. After all, aren't admissions hard enough as it is without us putting these hypothetical no-take-back signs on a student's academic future?

Salma Anika, a second-time candidate who got admitted to DU's Department of Applied Chemistry in 2015, shares, “There

are certain expectations people have about a student. When you cannot avail that, and you try for the second time, you feel this pressure on you. Everybody wants to know that you got a second chance in your struggle, but nobody wants to understand why it didn't happen the first time.”

Now finishing her Master's in Applied Chemistry at DU, Salma recalls her admission woes from the first time around, “My father passed away two weeks before my HSC results. I was so traumatised that, for a while, I could neither study nor prepare for the admission. Understandably, I couldn't succeed.

When you have a mental breakdown the way I had, you cannot participate in that exhausting race anymore, because everyone

when it comes to higher education. Public universities, with their low-cost and often high-quality educational facilities, act as oases for these students. The fact that they have increasingly stopped allowing second-time candidates makes things doubly difficult for these already struggling students.

“I remember once for my second-time admission, I didn't have enough money to fill out admission test forms, nor could I get admitted to coaching centres. My father fell sick before my first admission cycle and our family was understandably struggling during those times. I could finally start my preparation after my friends and high school teachers came forward to help,” recalls Faiyaz Mahi, a third-year Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) student who got into on his second try in 2020, about navigating the financial constraints.

“In fact, I lived alone in Bogura when preparing for my second-time admissions, as my father was receiving medical treatment in Dhaka. When I visited my father in hospital, I used to study in front of his dialysis room because I had to make use of the opportunity. I had to be resilient

hind my back. These things end up being unbelievably hurtful,” she shares.

But Samira believes that it's important to study for something we're passionate about, “I know what it feels like to not get what you want. I know how much passion matters. So, there is absolutely no shame in trying again.”

Similarly, Taskin Tanha reflects on her second-time admission test. She had enrolled in Khulna University's (KU) Department of Sociology in 2019 after the first admission test. Taskin says, “I got a chance to study Sociology, but I couldn't relate with the subject. I felt I wouldn't be able to do anything career-wise in it. I was also living outside of Dhaka, where I grew up, in an environment I couldn't cope in. I remember crying every day because it got so incredibly hard for me.”

Taskin studies International Relations at BUP now, something she always wanted to study. She says, “I used to feel guilty thinking I wasted a seat in my previous university. In a way, didn't I break someone else's dream?”

However, she clarifies how important it is to study what we're passionate about, “Our education system is – university first, subject later. But now I know that choice of subject matters so much more.”

When asked if the second admission test gave her any unfair advantages as most of the discourse on is centred on this issue, she vehemently disagrees. “No-body studies the entire year. Even if there's any extra advantages, it gets lost in social and familial pressures. You constantly feel lost and unsure of your place and your worth,” she defends.

Likewise, Ibrahim Medical College student Parsha Saiyara Ankita, says there are no extra advantages. Speaking from her own experience, she explains, “There's advantage in knowing the environment and experiencing the exam beforehand, but otherwise, you can't predict questions or succeed in the exams. Medical admissions also deduct 5 marks for appearing in the exams for the second time, so the advantages that you get from time, gets neutralised.”

When considering these perspectives, it stands to reason why second chances, or lack thereof, are vital in our admissions struggle. In a system where one mistake makes or breaks a student's entire future, it seems almost too cruel to take away the option to even try again. Our human potential cannot be distinguished in 2 hours of examination, nor can it be understood.

As said best by Faiyaz, “There can be people who were unlucky like me, or those who had a misfortune on the day of the exam. When making the decision to take away a second chance, what are we subjecting those people to?”

This is a question universities around the country need to contemplate.

*Names have been changed for privacy

Find Raya at fb.com/raya.mehnaz



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE SHOUT



ECHOES BY
 ASRAR CHOWDHURY

Have you become disenchanted with university?



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

I Which school and college we go to are important decisions in our lives. The school decision lays our foundation. The high school and college decisions determine in what competitive environment we sit for our SSC/HSC or O/A Levels.

Our parents will probably determine the answers to the above questions. They would probably have contingency plans, too, should something go wrong.

The challenge starts when we enter the next stage in life. Which university, and which subject or discipline do we choose? At the age of 18, the society makes us believe that we have become adults. Thus, we can decide on our own.

II We are influenced by many factors when deciding which university and what discipline to go for. We look at the quality of the university and the value of the discipline in that university. We look at how effective these indicators will be on the job market. The location of the university influences us. Do we leave our homes? If yes, what type of accommodation is available? Can we adapt?

We are also influenced by the choice of our friends.

III Before day one at university, we are divided into two streams. Some belong to the stream who got the first choice in their ranking preference. Others, not that fortunate. They came to their university and discipline not by choice, but from circumstances. The parents may have decided a university or discipline not to their liking. The choice could be one at or near their hometown.

When the first year has finished, one group will enter the second year with good results. Another group will enter

with grades beyond repair. No matter how much they try, that CGPA cannot be fixed.

We have some serious grumpy faces in midstream.

IV The disenchanted can neither go back, nor do they find the mental strength to go forward. One group channels out preparing themselves for various competitive exams in the job market. You see their tables stacked with guide books much more than texts. Sadly, the libraries of many universities have become a place for group study of competitive exams, not course exams.

The other disenchanted groups go through the motions. There is uncertainty everywhere.

V What do you do when you are disenchanted, when you realise you cannot adapt to your university? You can join the Joneses above, or you can experiment in alternative areas. Only you know what you are good at, and what you can be good at if you try.

Legendary actor Humayun Faridi was an alumnus of Economics at Jahangirnagar University. Shykh Seraj studied Geography at Dhaka University. They did not pursue a career in their subjects, but they did stick to what they loved, and they loved what they did.

If you feel disenchanted in midstream, take a leaf from Faridi, Seraj, and others. There is always an outlet that makes you breathe air, and feel the sunshine. You have to find it out.

Asrar Chowdhury is a professor of economics. He follows Test cricket, listens to music, and spins vinyls when he has free time. Email: asrarul@juniv.edu or asrarul@gmail.com

Acne! What to do about it?

ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

There is little in a teenager's life that causes as much anxiety as acne. Nothing compares to the overwhelming burden of dealing with the insecurities that come with this skin condition.

In our society, there appears to be an unearned bias against acne and scarring. In fact, research shows that individuals suffering from acne are perceived as being less likely to succeed in professional and social capacities.

Prone to acne and post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, I have been on the receiving end of countless unsolicited opinions on my skin, what remedy is effective, and the necessity of drinking plenty of water. Not only are such comments criminally unhelpful, they can have had an extremely detrimental impact on my self-image. People commenting on my skin has ruined my body image and left me incapable of thinking of much else than how bad my skin looks.

Over time, I have come to the realisation that perhaps my relationship with my skin would not be as warped if people did not choose to see acne in such a negative light. It is unfortunate that something as natural as acne is considered a disease, resulting from one's own shortcoming in taking care of their skin, despite the fact that hygiene and diet are not the only factors contributing to acne. As much as 90 percent of the population suffers from the condition at one point or another. The prejudice against acne and scarring can only be described as bizarre in comparison.

It is quite possible that the desperation to achieve a perfect skin and escape the throes of criticism can drive one to find remedies online. YouTube and TikTok are playgrounds of beauty gurus and aestheticians claiming to have discovered the ultimate cure. As tempting as the home remedies are, they are often ill informed and do much more harm than good.

Tea tree oil has a high chance of causing irritation when used in high concentrations, as does lime juice; baking soda does little else than ruin the skin's pH. Most of these remedies have little scientific evidence behind them and it is probably better for your skin barrier if you don't fall for the natural skincare hack bandwagon.

As fatigued as it may sound, a visit to the dermatologist's office is the best solution to combating acne. A skilled professional can properly diagnose the type and reasons behind acne and prescribe appropriate medication. However, there are over-the-counter products that can be quite useful.

Despite whatever method you choose to adopt, patience really is the key to success. It may take six months to a year or even longer, and it may get worse before it gets better but succumbing to criticism of your skin and giving up is not a choice.

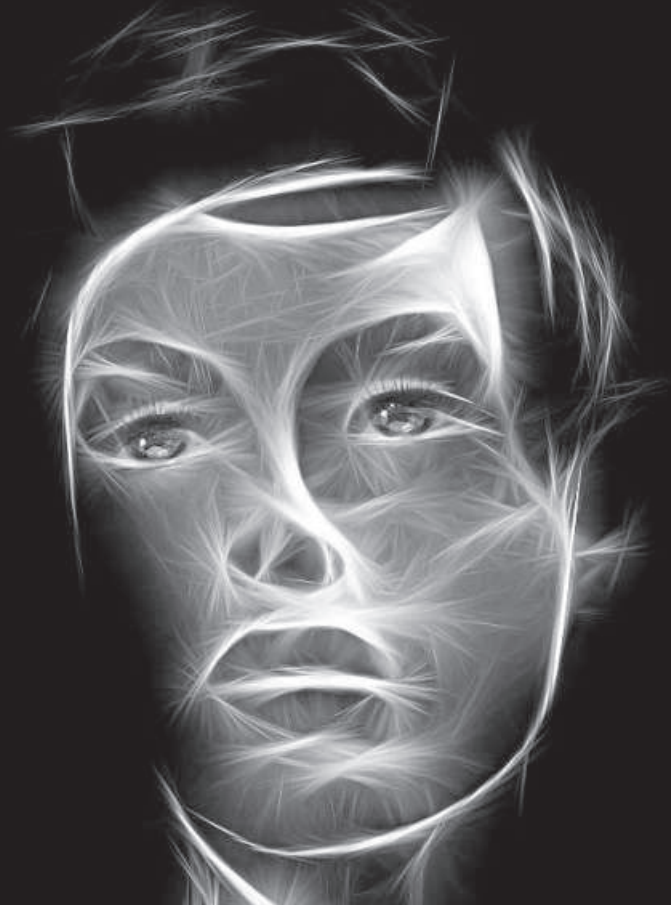
Reference

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Zaima is a fake poet with a serious problem against anything that resembles seriousness. Send her your sympathies at zaima2004adrita@gmail.com



LOST AND NEVER FOUND



MAISHA NAZIFA KAMAL

Bright, yellow skies gave away nothing about how awful Yana's week is going to be. She was just living her ordinary, mundane life when she lost her Childhood Capsule.

If you're someone who's living in the Present World, you'd know what the Childhood Capsule is. One of the most prized possessions of humans, it was a small, floating capsule of the size of an egg of a dinosaur that contained a variety of souvenirs from one of the best parts of the past, the childhood. Everyone was given their Childhood Capsules when they reached a certain age. The human attention span and memory capacity had decreased to such an extent that to cope up with everything, humans came up with capsules that stored trinkets that would trigger memories (only when you looked at them) that were ritually erased at a definite age to make space for new information. The brain was in fact, periodically manipulated to be erased and then filled up to be erased again.

As paradoxical as it might seem, not a lot of people were at odds with this. Everyone had accepted that the human race is fashionably falling behind and they were always coming up with ways to compensate for it. Nobody even knew what year they were living in. Humans had decided that anything tagged with numbers was unnecessary and so each year was just called the Present World. History therefore was pretty much extinct.

Yana was baffled at first. The capsule was just with her and it vanished into thin air when she left it for a while. Lately she had been checking the capsules quite fre-

quently. Everyone could choose the items to be stored in their capsules. And Yana was coming back to the capsule more often than usual. The capsule helped her to forget her daily stress a bit and she had been carrying it everywhere.

She was in the neighbourhood gym when she lost it. The security cameras were checked and Yana put up digital posters on every platform she knew. People patted her back, told her she'd find it soon. But they never meant it. They knew that once you lost your childhood capsule it was gone forever. Because it was the beacon of light that kept people going. People now couldn't dial to a warm memory whenever they wanted. They now never felt any wave of nostalgia, they lived bleak lives which they combatted with capsules that worked like happy pills whenever they felt disturbed or stressed. Marriages were taped in and continued whenever the couples had a fight and went back to the In Love capsule that made them remember momentarily how it felt to be in love. Friends had those capsules as mementos that kept them bonded. Every human relationship depended on the numerous capsules they were given time to time. So losing one meant you're permanently deprived of those memories. For nobody else knew or could remember what were inside those capsules including yourself. Yana had been looking inside her Childhood Capsule quite frequently for a while yet when she lost it, she couldn't remember anything, even when she tried to. Her desperate attempts were only met with hazy, fleeting images. Her frustration was building but she was adamant in finding it.

She even poured her savings in putting

up digital check-posts on all social platforms.

But it was all futile. Slowly, Yana's face lost its radiance. Her hair was unruly when she showed up at her commitments, her nails chipped. At every gathering, she lost her appetite. She couldn't connect with anyone because she felt like a piece of her soul is missing, the most crucial one that was summoned whenever she had a breakdown. But now there was a huge void there. It was her only capsule and without it, she didn't know how to tune into all her beautiful memories whenever she had a bad day. Her eyes were growing to be hollow and red all the time, her sleep more restless even when she took medications. People saw the pallor and gauntness in her face yet everyone kept quiet. They didn't know how to console her. They didn't have the capacity to think about her.

Yana had been walking back to her home one day when the battery of her phone died. People relied on the maps on their phones and Yana was not an exception to it. But lately, she even forgot to take her essentials with her just like her power bank and so was left to find her way back home herself. She cursed the human race whenever she felt vulnerable like this. There were digital maps at the sidewalks but Yana decided that she simply didn't care at this point and started walking straight.

The roads were all heavily lit with stark white bubble-like lights. They were so blinding that you couldn't even see the sky overhead. There was an array of paraphernalia – machines that beeped whenever you threw something on the ground, bite-sized traffic lights panel, a

giant umbrella like structure that spritzed air fresheners across the streets. Everything was so developed and polished that Yana, who had been travelling these roads since birth, suddenly felt eerily foreign here.

She moved to the next alley and stopped in her tracks.

The alley was a vivid contrast to the road she walked few seconds ago. It looked as if it had passed the test of time and looked stubbornly ancient. There were no lights, except some broken lamp posts where flies buzzed. Tin cans lay littered around, packets were strewn on the ground and there was a huddle of people sitting on the bare street.

The people looked appropriate in this setting, unlike Yana. But what was alien were their heartfelt smiles. They were all talking among themselves, ladling soup to dirty bowls and passing them on.

These were the people who couldn't afford to get capsules and so The System simply decided they weren't fit for anything. They were called the Discards, the ones who were deemed to be not fit for the strategic information gaining process. None of their memories were erased, they learned nothing new. They didn't have access to capsules like the one Yana lost. They only knew how to survive in the cold streets, barren lands and lightless scapes unlike Yana and the people she grew up with.

Yet, Yana wasn't the one smiling. But they definitely, quite broadly, were.

Maisha Nazifa Kamal has lost track of time and is living in a world where she never existed. Break her reverie at 01shreshtha7@gmail.com

Refresh and rejuvenate with iftar drink recipes

AYRA AREEBA ABID

One thing which remains constant on the iftar table during Ramadan is refreshing drinks, usually served cold, and preferably not Rooh Afza.

I tried my hand at making a few beverages and worked on the recipes, and here are three that you can try.



GUR ER SHORBOT

This is a common drink my grandmother, or “Bubu” as I call her, used to have during iftar in her childhood. My grandparents’ side of the family always used to have gur in their food instead of white sugar.

For *gur er shorbot*, take a block of *akh er gur* (sugar-cane jaggery) and chop finely. In a blender, add the chopped gur and half a teaspoon each of rock salt, black salt, and table salt. Add one teaspoon of tamarind chutney (measure depending on how acidulated you want your drink to be), and 5 cups of water

with ice cubes. Add in 2 or 3 slices of ginger (a must) and the juice of one lemon. Blend it all.

Note that these are measurements for one glass, multiply your measurements according to the needed portion.

HWACHAE

In South Korea, *hwachae*, pronounced hwa-chey, is a simple fruit punch enjoyed during the summer. I made *subak hwachae*, or watermelon fruit punch, but you can add just about any fruit in your drink.

Scoop out watermelon or cut them into bite-size pieces. Into a bowl, add a colourless soda. To it, mix in milk. Ensure the milk and drink are in appropriate ratio, roughly 4 parts milk to 3 parts soda. Now, add 4 tablespoons of brown sugar. Add in your watermelon and fruits such as thinly sliced apples, and serve chilled.

Hwachae is super refreshing and similar to the flavour and concept of *falooda* –between a drink and *dessert* and meant to be devoured with a spoon.

DATE MILKSHAKE WITH CHOCOLATE

This is a three-ingredient drink,

emblematic of Ramadan. You need approximately 20 pitted dates, 7 cardamom pods, and 3/4 cup of milk.

Peel the cardamom pods and finely grind the seeds into a powder, using mortar and pestle. Blend the pitted dates, powdered cardamom, milk, with a few ice cubes. Add in the milk part by part to get the right consistency. As the dates are already sweet, adding sugar is optional.

You can roughly decorate the walls of the glass you will serve in with chocolate syrup or sauce before pouring your drink. You can also decorate with shaved milk or semi dark chocolate on top. Date milkshake is a hearty, healthy drink which will definitely make you happy.

Whether it’s good old *lebur shorbot*, *kacha aam er shorbot* or any other mouth-watering drink, it is important to stay hydrated this month, especially considering the weather and how we are always on the run.

Ayra Areeba Abid’s favourite word is serendipity and she’s a Sociology geek. Connect with her at areeba.ayra@gmail.com

THE DARK SIDE OF RAMADAN BUFFETS

SHANUM SARKAR

Ramadan is a time of abstinence, reflection and self-control. It is a time to be empathetic and understand the hardships of the disadvantaged. Yet, this month has become a time for overindulgence in food, thanks partly to numerous iftar offers and deals.

Yet do you, like many people, believe that feasting in these buffets never actually feel satisfying? Here are a few possible reasons why.

QUALITY CONTROL

Food served at buffets during Ramadan is usually cooked beforehand to accommodate swarms of people coming in. Expecting the food to be perfectly clean and fresh at a place where hundreds break their fast together is quite optimistic. Due to the heavy workload on restaurant staff during iftar, who need to break their fast as well, the food may sometimes be late, cold, or under or overcooked.

FOOD WASTE

These buffets are particularly irresponsible because of the large amounts of food that is wasted. People usually pile different items until every inch of their plate is cov-

ered, if not toppling over with food, but they are unlikely to finish much of it.

Feasting on these absurd amounts to the very last bite is in no way physically or spiritually healthy. If you are attending one of these buffets, make sure you have just the right amount on your plate. A solid tip? Do not overestimate your hunger on an empty stomach.

You may argue that you’ve eaten all 24 slices of pizza, but did you eat the crust? What about half the slice you left along with the crust just to go up the ridiculous ladder, mmhmm?

VALUE FOR MONEY

Ramadan buffets aren’t exactly the most reasonably priced at most places. Spending a fortune on food when you can hardly finish everything they are offering (you’ve probably tried and failed) is usually a waste of your money. Some people force more food down than they can, or should, in order to make it worth the price they paid.

Perhaps an alternative are the buy one get one offers. Then again, while you think you might be getting a good deal on the 100+ dishes on offer, remember that the food waste and lack of quality control are still on the menu.

OVEREATING

Fasting comes with a great deal of health benefits. However, not breaking your fast modestly can backfire, resulting in weight gain and more serious medical conditions.

From a health point

of view, feasting defeats the purpose of fasting altogether, and goes against the spirit of Ramadan. Stuffing your mouth until you’re riding on a food coma is not something to be proud of.

Given the consequences of stuffing yourselves in such buffets, you’re better off cooking at home, ordering in iftar or even going out to eat and doing so in a rational and sensible manner with your loved ones. Sounds radical? I know.

Yet another friend has invited Shanum to an iftar buffet despite having passed out two days ago.

Send peer pressure survival tips at shanumsarkar18@gmail.com

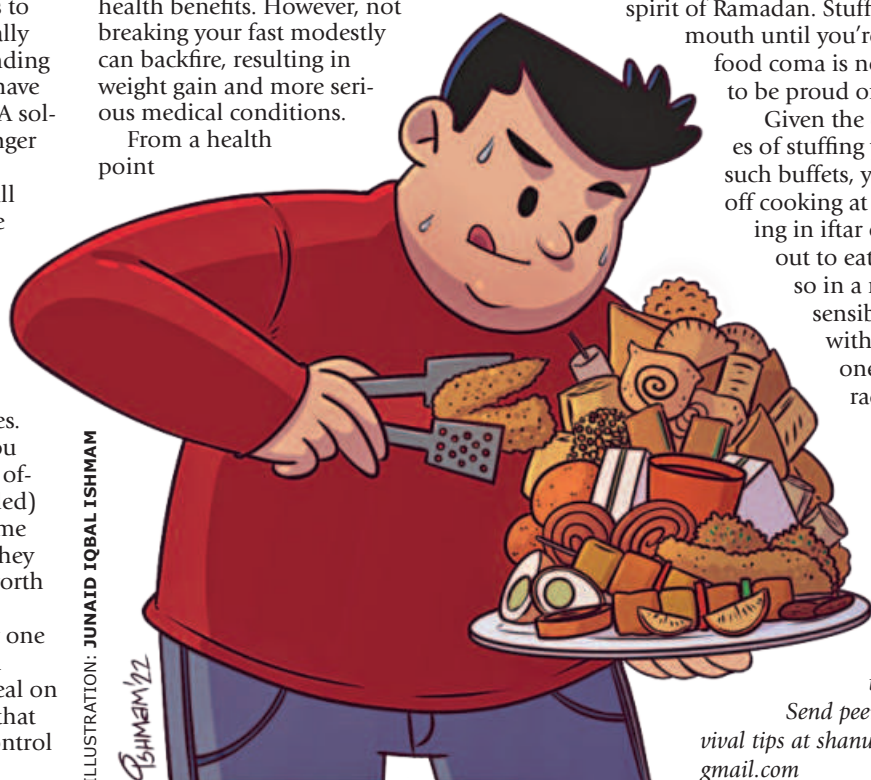


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