



ECHOES BY
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TWO SIDES OF DORM LIFE

I Arun and Barun came from two different parts of Bangladesh, and from two different social backgrounds. There was a public university in both of their districts. Their parents repeatedly requested them to enroll there. The two were looking at a larger landscape. They wanted to get enrolled in one of the “big four”: Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong, or Jahangirnagar. A university is not confined to studies alone. A university itself is an experience. Their hard work paid off. They both enrolled in the same department of one of the “big four”.

Arun and Barun became friends on the first day of class. After the class, all students went to the cafeteria to get to know each other. It did not take much time for the class to become friends. In public universities, the class-size and class members remain almost unchanged. Whether one likes it or not, this was the cohort one would have to live with for the next half decade, or even more.

It was now time to go to the dormitory.

The moment the two friends went to their dorm (hall), they realised supply and demand never meet. There were sufficient halls of residences in their university, with sufficient seats. Sadly, because multiple



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

batches were waiting for their terminal exam, the university had no choice but to send new entrants to a *gonoroom* packed with other students.

This is where the story starts.

Arun's parents were rich and socially influential. Barun's parents came from a humble background. Nevertheless, Arun would stand by Barun in time of a financial

crisis. Barun taught Arun many things that a village boy would take for granted.

Together, the two experienced uncertainties in life like student unrest; accidents of friends; a sudden news of the death of a friend's parent; attending wedding ceremonies of friends in distant places of Bangladesh, and everything in between.

The whole class was like any other

family. There were exciting people, and not so exciting people. People learned about others and adapted. If you didn't get along well with somebody, you would tolerate and live with them.

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Arun and Barun experienced dorm life like everybody else. They learned to be on their own. They learned to live with others. They learned to be responsible. They learned to have empathy. They became tough and yet soft in later life.

Experience can also go the other way round. Those who failed to absorb the pressure of dorm life found themselves seeing their life go past them; or have their potential under-utilised.

When we talk about dorm life, we must take the “bitter with the sweet”. Dorm life has the potential to prepare a person for life. It can also take away all the hope of life. We can only wish that friends in the cohort come forward with a helping hand. Sadly, sometimes that is not the case.

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The bitter relationship between English version students and board exams

AYAAN SHAMS SIDDIQUEE

Before sitting for my Junior School Certificate (JSC) exams in 2019, a few of my seniors warned me about the quality of English version questions in board exams. While I assumed that they were talking about the difficulty of these exams, they were actually warning me about the abysmal state of the translated English version questions.

Surely enough, most of the exams had questions full of inconsistent sentence formations and spelling errors.

One could argue that this was a one-off instance. However, a report by Prothom Alo in 2017 hinted at recurring trends. It stated that English version questions in board exams often contain errors since the translators are grossly underskilled.

These errors affect examinees in two distinct ways.

Firstly, the grammatical mistakes and poor syntax make it difficult to compre-



PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS

hend the given questions properly, turning it into an unneeded time-sink. As a result, students face a dire situation as the duration of the exams hardly allows for such complications to be faced efficiently.

Jawaadul Islam, an SSC 2019 candidate from St. Joseph

Higher Secondary School, shared his experience of dealing with a similar predicament during his SSC exams.

“While most of the subjects had their fair share of errors, our Islam and Moral Education exam was particularly notewor-

thy,” said Jawaadul. “Most of the creative questions (CQs) were incomprehensible due to substandard translations. This compromised the rhetoric of the provided stems, giving everyone a hard time figuring out what the questions even meant.”

The second and bigger problem with translated English version questions is that, sometimes, entire words or phrases are replaced with incorrect ones, altering the original question completely.

Adib Rahman, an SSC 2021 candidate from St. Joseph, faced this issue during his SSC Physics exam.

“One of the CQs from the ‘Motion’ chapter had a significant translation error,” he said. “The phrase ‘change of motion’ got replaced with ‘change of direction’, even though the entire question had no mention of the body's direction. And since our invigilators were just as clueless as we were, it made the entire fiasco even more perplexing.”

Samiha Medha, who completed her HSC exams from Viqarunnisa Noon School & College in 2021, shared a similar fate.

“The two creative questions that came from the ‘Straight Line’ chapter were filled with translation errors, making it next

to impossible to answer them,” she said. “We couldn't even ask for a Bangla version of the question paper to make sense of it since our exam centre only hosted English version students. As a result, the ones who planned on answering questions from that chapter had their preparations made completely null and void.”

This issue has been a cause of perpetual worry for English-version students for many years now. Despite that, the situation has barely improved. Even when educational institutions were closed at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the government-issued assignments for students did not include the translated English version of the questions.

As we continue to be handed the shorter end of the straw, we have to ask ourselves – don't we deserve better?

Reference:

Prothom Alo (November 24, 2017). *Sorry state of public exams*

Ayaan is an SSC 2022 candidate who loves to read dinosaur comics and poorly-written manga. Send him thoughts and prayers at ayaan.shams@gmail.com