

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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THE INCLUSION OF GENDER STUDIES IN OUR NATIONAL CURRICULUM IS COMMENDABLE

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LIVRARIA LELLO: THE BOOKSTORE THAT INSPIRED FLOURISH AND BLOTTS

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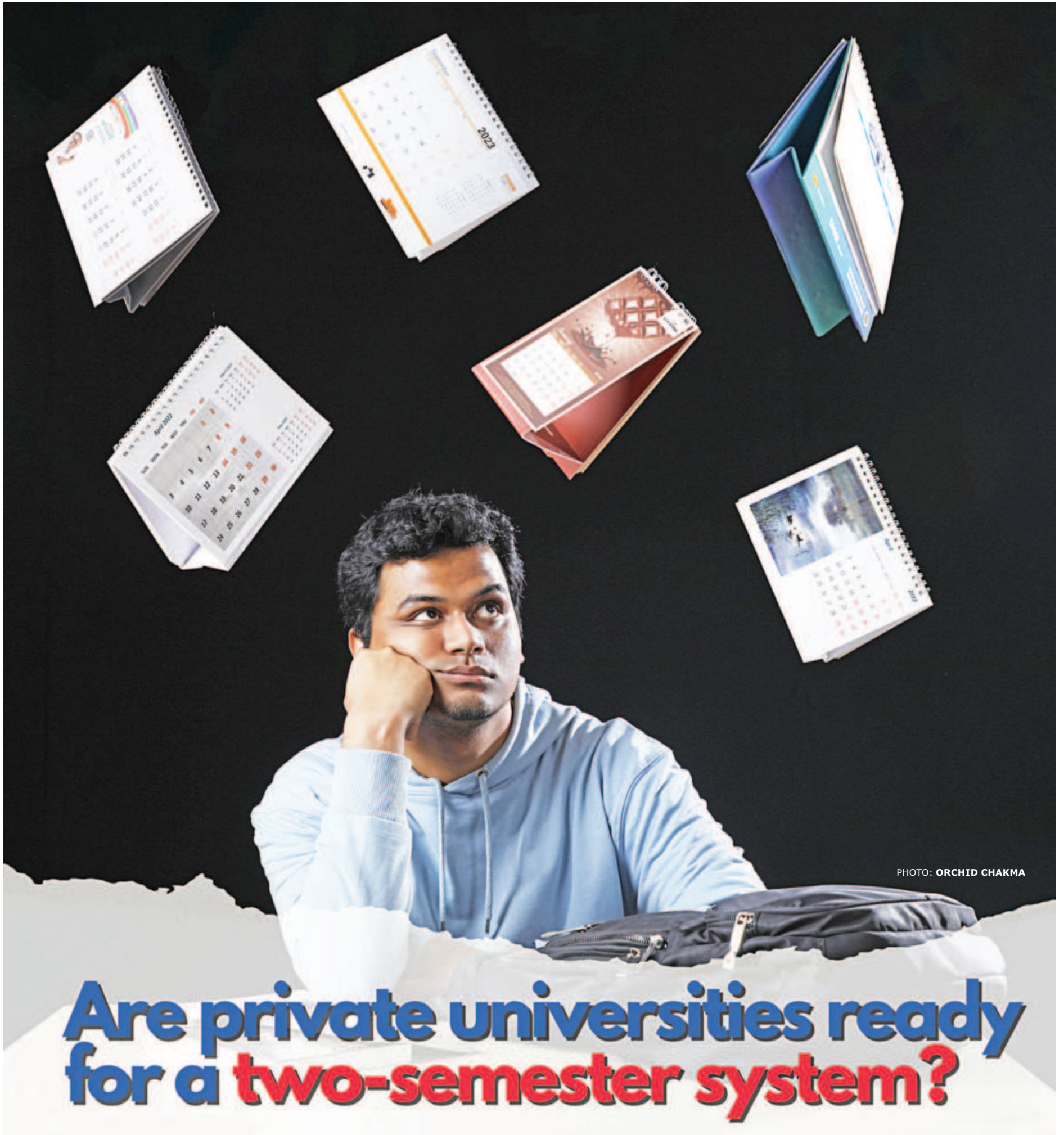


PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Are private universities ready for a **two-semester system?**

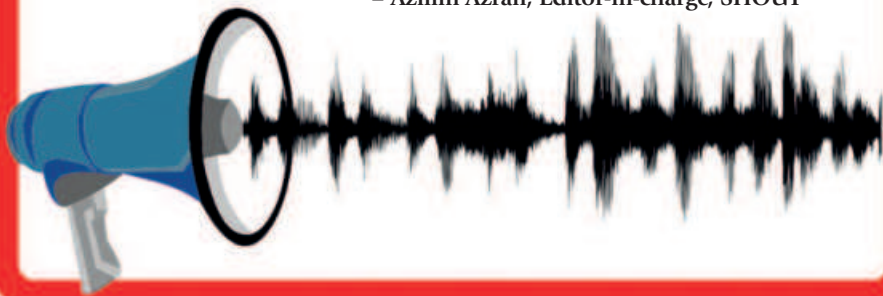
EDITORIAL

I would have been five years old the first time I played chess. A paper board came free with a jar of Horlicks, with plastic pieces that had jagged edges. My mom taught me the rules, and I played her and my sister a couple of times, but my attention span lasted only as long as the next Toonami hadn't aired on Cartoon Network. Eventually, one game led to a terrible fight with my sister and the chessboard suspiciously disappeared. To be honest, I don't think I noticed.

Last month, however, I was listening to a friend talk about Hans Niemann and Magnus Carlsen's feud. While I was fascinated by the drama, I don't think I thought about it much until I went home, went to my YouTube home page and witnessed the magic of the algorithm. Videos from GothamChess and GMHikaru started popping up. I clicked on one video, and then another.

Since then, I can say I have grown a new obsession. I play and lose to the bots on Chess.com for hours every day, watch YouTube content on chess and understand nothing, and I love it. For now.

— Azmin Azran, Editor-in-charge, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

MUSIC



Arctic Monkeys' stay true to themselves with *The Car*

ARYAH JAMIL

British rock band Arctic Monkeys build upon their 2018 hit album *Tranquility Base Hotel and Casino* with their seventh studio album *The Car*. While this was the first Arctic Monkeys album to not reach the number-one spot, it is a refined record and showcases their signature style. It is unfair to claim it any lesser than the previous album despite missing the top spot as it was kept at number two by Taylor Swift's record-shattering *Midnights*.

The Car is fairly cinematic in nature depicting themes surrounding media, the music industry, show business, and similar topics. The guitar-heavy tunes and the articulacy in the songwriting work together to bring this album to life.

While *The Car* is more mainstream and commercially attractive, it still creates new sounds and holds true to the rest of the band's discography. I would not call it a reinvention but an almost balletic reflection.

The Car is a short album with only ten tracks summing up to a tasteful 37 minutes. Lovesick, loungey sounds mark a slight transformation of the band. Fears, sharp observations, and eerie thoughts about the industry and show business are dispersed quite heavily-handedly throughout the album's tracks.

Drummer Matt Helders shines perhaps over the guitar and bass in almost every track. The half-baked, unfinished, and slightly distraught ideas throughout the songs add much richness and character. The more you listen to this album, the clearer its intentions get. This record draws from artists like Isaac

Hayes, Gloria Ann Taylor, Marvin Gaye, and David Bowie.

Not genre-bending or anything quite new, the Arctic Monkeys stay with their tried and tested formula of combining art rock, electronic music, soul, and funk. Going straight into the tracklist, all of it is not gold.

"Hello You" is an alright track at best. It gets a little lost in terms of execution and blends into the background. "Sculptures of Anything Goes" was underwhelming but the theatrics and gloomy environment of the song works quite well. "Perfect Sense" captures the best of rock and folk and creates a fantastic piece wrapping up the album smoothly.

The perhaps Zappa-inspired "Body Paint" was a great track with creative lyrics like "Do your time travelling through the tanning booth / So you don't let the sun catch you crying". For me, the clear favourite has to be "Jet Skis On The Moat". This sultry, kind-of slow song manages to charm listeners every time. "I Ain't Quite Where I Think I Am" was another standout with punchy lines like "Stackable party guests / To fill the awkward silences / The disco strobes in the stumbling blocks".

The generational talent of Alex Turner is beyond evident in *The Car* and this album not only pleases old fans but is a great intro to the Arctic Monkeys for new listeners. The album flows smoothly in a relaxed way without lacking intensity. While it may not be the British band's best work, it is still a wonderful addition to its discography.

Aryah Jamil is mediocre at everything except laughing at her own jokes. Tell her to stop talking at jamil.aryah@gmail.com



TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE

A	B
Kill Bill SZA	traitor Olivia Rodrigo
Two Is Better Than One Boys Like Girls (ft. Taylor Swift)	Space For Two Mr. Probz
WYD Now? Sadie Jean	Room For 2 Dua Lipa
You And Me Lifhouse	my ex's best friend Machine Gun Kelly (ft. blackbear)

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

OPINION

The inclusion of gender studies in our national curriculum is commendable

AYAAN SHAMS SIDDIQUEE

What do you think happens when a child is born and immediately swaddled into a blue or pink towel to denote their sex?

In most cases, they become stamped by a set of predetermined values and suppositions that they are expected to follow throughout their life. To an overwhelming majority of our populace, this is the norm, with any exploration outside of what was assigned being subject to immense taboo. This perpetuates a culture where kids are taught to conform to certain gender roles that they have no say in from an early age.

When faced with stereotypes that are completely ungrounded, we have to turn to our education system to talk about topics like gender studies. Since the information that is presented to children through textbooks can shape their impressionable minds, it is no surprise that the education system plays a major role in forming opinions regarding fundamental concepts.

And now, after years of reforms, the latest revision of the curricula brought about a wave of change that signals a step in the positive direction.

In class seven's History and Social Science coursebook, a section is dedicated to explaining how to identify communities, how they are formed, and how they operate. What caught me by surprise, however, was the introduction of the section "sex diversity, gender identities, and gender roles".

To put things into context, the lesson began with the introduction of a fictional character named Sharifa, a transgender woman. The plight of transgender people in Bangladesh was illustrated through her life story — from the way her family disowned her for acting "like a girl" during childhood to how she eventually found her footing in life.

Additionally, the lessons also talked about influential figures in the local hijra community, discussed gender stereotypes and encouraged being tolerant towards marginalised communities.

Keeping all the failures aside, I don't think anyone expected such a positive shift in our national curriculum. Introducing these topics will allow children to gain a more inclusive outlook, one that has been missing for as long as anyone can remember. It also has the ability to disperse taboos and allow for healthy conversations that may have been previously looked down on.

It will also aid in a rudimentary factor of learning — unlearning. Given how the textbook is structured, there is ample room for discourse that can help in unlearning certain biases that have been ingrained in households. Filtering our perception can go a long way in expanding our world view and leaving behind mentalities that may have been imposed on us by mass media, society, or our families.

Even though the government's efforts to include gender studies in the national curriculum is laudable, significant changes must still be made if real change is desired. It must be ensured that teachers are capable of relaying the intended information and messages to their students instead of skipping these topics entirely, which has always been observed in the case of teaching reproductive health in the Physical Education textbooks. Unless the relevant stakeholders are held accountable, the efficacy of this initiative will be watered down to nothing but mere lip-service.

Ayaan immerses himself in dinosaur comics and poorly-written manga. Recommend your least favourite reads at ayaan.shams@gmail.com



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Bangladeshi TV shows fail to cater to ageing audiences

AHMED NUZHA OISHEE

With the influx of paid digital platforms that allow us to choose from a sea of content without ad interruptions, modern viewers no longer strictly rely on cable/network television for entertainment and information.

But this metamorphosis of TV has created a dearth of deshi content catering to the older generation that still prefer cable channels over OTT services such as Hoichoi and Netflix.

Older audiences, like our parents or grandparents, share a history with television. It has been their major source of content throughout their lives, and they might not want to relinquish the familiarity of TV. Older audiences often lack time and tenacity to binge watch shows and prefer the scheduled nature of television. Moreover, whether or not they can even enjoy the advantages of streaming services will depend on how comfortable they are using such platforms.

Because audiences have evolved, our cable TV channels now focus more on live coverages. Although specials are still common during festive occasions, they are plagued by repetitive commercials. Often times, such commercials span longer than a show's runtime.

Older audiences have always relied on TV for clean and engaging content reflective of our local lifestyle. But the quality of current family shows suffers due to recycled stories. Scriptwriters wield profanity as a comedic or emotional device and justify it as colloquialism of local dialects.

It's important to understand that not all Bangladeshi TV shows will appeal to older audiences like they do to us. After all, the older demographic of audience grew up accustomed to watching family-friendly shows which portrayed wholesome family dynamics. However, OTT platforms have opted to stray away from such traditional depictions. On the other hand, local TV channels are trying to catch up with OTT platforms. In the process, they have deviated away from producing what the older audience have grown up with.

For instance, *Punorjonmo* is an intriguing series and aptly deserving of recognition. But I would surely hold off watching thrillers based on dark themes with my parents or the elderly.

TV channels are hawkling content that can recover viewership. As a result, every channel is airing a mixture of the same kinds of shows — political analysts heckling on live talk shows, boring rip-offs of *Koffee with Karan*, underwhelming infotainment and oversaturated news coverage.

Our reality shows are underfunded, under promoted and unoriginal. Instead of highlighting talents of contestants, they focus on celebrity judges and their antics.

We need local channels devoted to niche interests like food, nature, lifestyle, and film relevant to modern Bangladeshi culture to ensure content suited to tastes of aging audiences are produced.

Although replacing cable subscription with streaming video services can make it easier for elderly audiences to experience internet and TV together, it has its limitations and expenses. Moreover, it's still unfeasible in rural areas with dodgy internet.

There was a time when we could look forward to shows like *Aaj Robibar*, *Rupnagar*, *420*, *Kothao Keu Nei* which depicted flawed human relationships through colourful and endearing characters, unique plots and subtle performances. The philosophy of those shows resonated with young and old audiences alike. While we can't expect modern shows to be cast in the same mould as these old, iconic ones, the lack of quality family content on TV is truly concerning.

Nuzha forgives people for pronouncing her name wrong and wallows in books and anxiety. Suggest her fiction at nuzhaoishee1256504@gmail.com



Are private universities ready for a two-semester system?

MASHIYAT NAYEEM & IRINA JAHAN

The higher education system of Bangladesh has long been the subject of scrutiny, and while private universities have remained unscathed for the most part, the chaos that is brewing from shifting their trimester system to a semester system (or a two-semester system as it is being called) has thrust them into the spotlight.

In early 2022, the University Grants Commission (UGC) had asked all private universities of the country to implement two six-month semesters in a bid to make the study period uniform for all public and private institutions. Ideally, such a major structural shift in institutions involving tens of thousands of students should be planned extensively and implementation should come after sufficient notice so that current and prospective students alike can mentally prepare and plan their education effectively.

Unfortunately, the scenario here has been nothing but rushed and confusing.

At the time of writing this article, North South University (NSU) and American International University, Bangladesh (AIUB) have announced the new system, effective immediately from the upcoming Spring session. The respective calendars consist of about five months of classes and exams with one break lasting two weeks and another break lasting one and a half months in which students have the option to enrol in a shorter semester if they wish to do so.

Students we have interviewed from Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB) and BRAC University (BracU) have informed that they are yet to be subjected to the new system.

This begs the question, why are some institutions rushing to implement the two-semester system, consequently impacting thousands of students, while others are taking their time?

Professor Shamsad Mortuza is a Special Advisor to the Board at University

of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh (ULAB). When asked about his institution's stance on this, he said, "Both trimesters and semesters are established international practices of dividing the academic calendar. Universities that offer semesters maintain a shorter summer term with longer teaching hours. I think universities should have the freedom to decide on their academic calendar. Previously UGC approved all university curricula in a trimester system. These curricula were vetted by UGC appointed overseas consultants under the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP). The need to shift to semesters from trimesters is unclear. Logistically, it will require additional manpower and classrooms, and teachers will be expected to give more teaching hours per week. Also running two parallel systems for old students and incoming students will be cumbersome. This is an instance of micromanagement which will unnecessarily unsettle a settled issue. Focus should be given on the quality of teaching."

At the time of writing this article, ULAB is still following a four-month semester.

When asked a similar question, David Dowland, Registrar of BracU said, "Brac University welcomes the guidance to transfer to a two semester structure. Such a change requires significant planning and consultation. We shall move to a new campus within

the next months as well. We shall work with students and faculty members to enable a smooth transition and to maintain our distinctive residential semester for undergraduate students."

"BracU is immediately adopting a two-semester structure for the School of Law. The School of Pharmacy already

operates within two semesters. We are in discussion about the model to be adopted for other schools and to move effectively to a new structure," he added.

Private universities have historically provided respite from the notorious session jams found in their public counterparts, but under the new system, almost all current students, especially those nearing the end of their degree will be subjected to delays in their degree completion.

"It is honestly quite frustrating for those near the end of our degree. According to the previous system, I was set to graduate this April but now I have to wait an extra two months. It also doesn't help that we need to be doing internships by the end of all of this, more so because we still have not been informed of the exact details," said Nakib Sheikh Zaman, who is a final year BBA student at a private university.

Another student, Neera Sultana*, studying Architecture at AIUB, shared similar concerns, "Some courses, such as sub-studios, might not be offered during the optional semester which is only ten weeks long so the time frame is not sufficient for the course to achieve its objective or for us to finish the projects. Consequently, my plan of finishing my undergrads within five years may end up into taking around six years."

The situation is even more disheartening for those who were planning their higher studies abroad. Typically, universities abroad will expect students applying for their Master's degree to send in their application at least nine to ten months prior to the start of the graduate program. Under the new system students have to go through a longer waiting period before their applications can be sent out, thus missing their intended cohort.

While an academic year consisting of two halves has its merits, much of it depends on the structural implementation of it.

Typically, around the world, universities conduct their academic activities over a period of four months and provide lengthy summer breaks to encourage



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

research and internship activities. In the public universities of Bangladesh, the semesters span much longer, with two week breaks in between and a few weeks of preparatory leave incorporated into the semester.

"With a lengthier system, we expected to get reading weeks or preparatory leave before the midterms and finals as we will be taking more credits at a time," shared Tasin Tazdid, an engineering student at NSU. However, no such updates have been noticed in the announcement circulated by Tasin's university.

For some, the shorter semester break in between two lengthy semesters is a cause of disappointment.

"This came as a shock to me honestly, because even with trimesters we got a decent amount of break. Now because of the sudden change I am forced to drop this semester because of long standing travel plans and family engagements," lamented Tasin Tayeba Khan, a third-year student of NSU.

As many students work full time or live away from their hometowns, semester breaks are the only downtime they get and thus make plans keeping the academic calendar in mind.

The additional two or three courses that the average student will have to juggle under this system, will cause more problems than just time management inconveniences. For example, students of NSU have reported that non-tuition fees have increased by 1.5 times to make up for the lost term, and for students who are staying back to retake a few courses, this adds an extra financial burden on top of the already crippling anxiety of

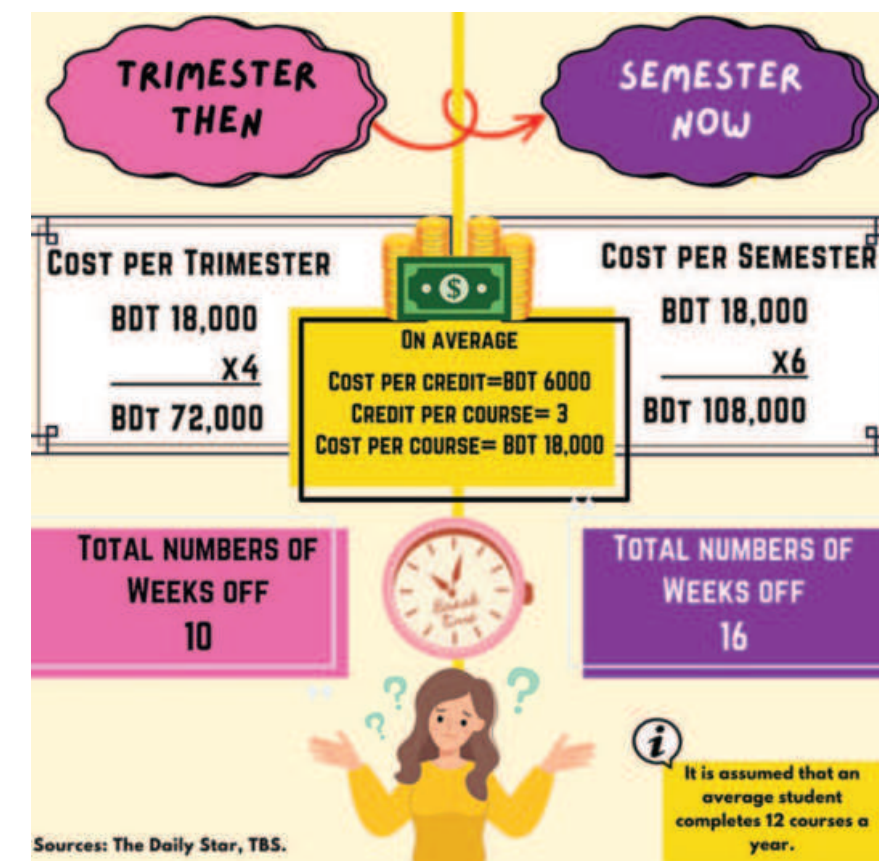


ILLUSTRATION: AAQIB HASIB

graduating late.

On the other hand, the longer duration holds the potential to be of some good for the student's academic life. For instance, the class duration will be shortened, giving students the much-needed break from the monotony of a 90-minute-long class.

Furthermore, the increase in the num-

ber of classes throughout the session will leave more room for a course to be taught more elaborately as they often should be. Oftentimes the momentum at which students begin to learn certain subjects is disrupted due to time constraints of a four-month semester. Capstone projects can also be completed with higher quality output as the longer duration will enable

better research and more build time.

While not a lot can be said about the students' view on this, teachers seem hopeful so far.

Dr Tapash Kumar Paul, a senior lecturer at NSU had this to say regarding the implementation of the new academic semester, "I do expect that the introduction of the bi-semester will benefit both students and faculties. Students would be able to be more productive and focused and get time to acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding of a subject."

"UGC has made it mandatory for all private universities to start the new system from January this year. After a series of meetings, we have decided to implement it immediately," explained Ahmed Tazmeen, Registrar of North South University, when we reached out to him for his comment.

He also added, "We have kept a six-week break in between the semesters, which we are calling 'intersession'. Faculty members can use it for research and any other academic activities. Courses may or may not be offered during this time. We all are new to this so we are figuring out things as we go along."

Until the end of 2023, little can be said with actual certainty about the full impact of this change. However, there seems to be no turning back with the decision and so students must rely on making the right choices and having a good strategy. Taking the steps to establish what would be a good personalised course map and re-evaluating one's priorities will make all the difference.

*Names have been changed upon request



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

I hate online classes, here's why

ZAHEEN TASFIA ZUHAIR

"But online classes let you stay at home!"

This is the usual response I get when I express my distaste for online classes. While it is true that there were no alternatives to online classes during the pandemic, and it even helped students save commute time as well as cut down costs, the drawbacks of online classes trump its advantages.

So, why do I feel this way in the era of Digital Bangladesh? Because technological advancement is not in sync with tech literacy of our teachers. Just because we can do Zoom classes, doesn't mean teachers can leverage the advantages of Zoom.

During one of our online classes, a person impersonating to be a student joined the lecture, and proceeded to play the worst kind of music. The consequences, inevitably, had to be borne by my classmate and not the imposter. The teacher was oblivious to the fact that there were two people of the same name in the lecture. The students had to explain the situation to him. It took the teacher ten minutes to kick out the imposter. Ideally, removing a participant should take a few seconds.

Incidents like these are annoyingly common. A teacher's literacy in tech largely defines the experience of one's online classes. But can we blame teachers for lacking in this regard? Our older teachers



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

may be very good at their jobs, but inefficient with digital learning tools. They may be the best people to facilitate learning, but they have been trained in physical classroom environments. Forcing them to adapt to digital classes impedes on their ability to do their work properly.

These aren't the only factors limiting the efficiency of online classes. During on-campus classes, teachers can read

the students' faces and explain topics more thoroughly when needed. Students are also more responsive in physical classrooms. These greatly improve the effectiveness of on-campus classrooms, but digital classes miss out on benefits like this.

The environment of physical classrooms is also important to learning. When you are in a traditional classroom,

you are incentivised to focus. After all, your teacher is right in front of you. In addition, your device is tucked away, out of sight.

As for online classes, cat videos are just a few clicks away. Your teacher can't check whether you're focusing or not (even with your camera on). After all, your phone is buzzing with notifications, and your siblings might be arguing in the next room. Your environment discourages deep focus. A lot of your energy is used up just trying to pay attention, and after the ordeal is over, you have little motivation left in you.

There's another problem with digital classrooms we need to talk more about. When you attend classes on campus, you interact with people in real life. Between classes, and even during classes, we sneak in conversations. This is fundamentally good for us because we are social creatures.

Deep conversations have a greater impact in real life, and small talk is good for our sanity. Such interactions fulfil us in a way messaging apps simply cannot replicate. This is the most important reason as to why I am such an ardent advocate for on-campus classes.

Zaheen equates watching productivity videos to actually getting work done. Send help at [instagram.com/tasfiazuhair](https://www.instagram.com/tasfiazuhair)

READER SUBMISSION

Livraria Lello: the bookstore that inspired Flourish and Blotts

MAFI ISLAM

"This Christmas and new year, I will be visiting Portugal," I told my Portuguese friend, Elisa.

"That's really amazing! In which city?" she asked.

"Lisbon and Porto," I replied.

I received long travel guidelines from Elisa before I left for Portugal on the eve of the new year in 2023. However, I could not read everything she wrote, but I remembered the name Livraria Lello, which is the bookshop from where J.K. Rowling allegedly received inspiration for architectural elements in *Harry Potter*.

In 1991, Rowling visited Livraria Lello while working on the first *Harry Potter* book. It is a popular theory that Livraria Lello inspired the interiors for Hogwarts as well as Flourish and Blotts, the wizarding bookshop, in the *Harry Potter* universe. The bookstore also revealed that she bought a book and spent several hours there. This is why many *Harry Potter* fans, including myself, make a point of visiting Livraria Lello when they are in Porto.



PHOTO: AUTHOR

On my first morning in Porto, I rushed out of my room in search of the bookstore, which is located in Rua das Carmelitas, surrounded by cafes, restaurants, and shops. The streets around the bookstore

are typically narrow and winding and are lined with traditional Portuguese buildings and cobblestone streets, giving it a captivating atmosphere. The area is relatively pedestrian-friendly, making it easy to explore on foot.

In front of the bookstore, there's a narrow street that might be a bit crowded but it's also a pleasant spot to take a stroll or sit down in one of the street-side cafes to enjoy a drink. Many tourists can be spotted walking around, taking photos of the beautiful architecture, trying to capture the charming atmosphere of the area.

Livraria Lello was designed by brothers José and António Lello, who owned the store, and was built in 1906. It is considered one of the most aesthetically pleasing bookstores in the world, and upon seeing the interior, I realised the claims were not exaggerated.

The interior features ornate wooden shelves, stained glass windows, and a grand staircase that winds its way up through the middle of the store, which instantly transports fans to the fictional Flourish and Blotts. In the interior, you will notice a vaulted ceiling decorated

with frescoes and illuminated by skylight. The bookstore's design is reminiscent of Art Nouveau, a style that was popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Livraria Lello carries a wide range of books in various languages, such as Portuguese, Spanish, French, English, alongside German, Italian, and more. Their collection is incredibly diverse, offering a selection of fiction and non-fiction titles, including literature, poetry, history, science, philosophy, and children's books. In addition to books, visitors to Livraria Lello can purchase a variety of items including souvenirs, stationery items, posters, art prints and many more.

While it may not be confirmed that Rowling did indeed take inspiration from Livraria Lello for Flourish and Blotts, visiting the bookstore was an amazing experience nonetheless. In this case, I owe it all to my friend Maria Elisa Dias de Freitas.

Mafi Islam is a Bangladeshi journalist studying International Media and Cultural Work at Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences in Germany.

Wondrous Woes

SULTANUL AREFEEN

Being remembered by someone is
 Probably the best thing that
 Can happen to one.

The vivid imagery of your existence,
 Formed in between the cells of
 Someone's hippocampus,
 Igniting a spark in their hearts,
 While they beat rhythmically
 To the everlasting
 Thoughts of you.

Ah, the festivity of recollecting these
 Warm bits, while hiding behind

The flesh of a martyr, is
 Nothing short of
 Celebrations.

Being remembered by someone is
 Probably the best thing, that
 Can happen to one.

The only thing that disregards
 Is that you won't be there to
 See it, when it's really
 Happening to you.

The writer is a student of Independent University, Bangladesh.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

WAITING ROOM

ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

"This is why I tell you never to go out alone."

My eyes were heavy, my mind even more so. But who was I to avoid a question from her? The box creaked as I turned around to face her.

There was no light in the waiting room. The hour was beyond late and the usually cacophonous place, packed with impatient parents whiling their time away by chattering with each other as they waited for their ever-so needy, pre-pubescent children to step out of their classrooms, was empty. Empty, except for the two of us and Kimchi.

The darkness allowed her features to evade me even as my eyes squinted with all their might at the face framed by the voluminous, coarse waves of her hair. Much like his partner in crime, Kimchi was using his luxuriant white coat of fur and ability to curl up into a ball to escape my scrutiny.

I sighed.

"I don't know what you want me to say really."

There was a fly on the wall. The buzzing sound of its wings as it rose and settled back on the wall and then reiterated this ritual was driving me to the edge of insanity just as its constant rhythm was retaining my sanity together.

The reminder of this living organism, this pathetic thing that lived in dirt – was trapped in the same space as me and her – was my only source of irritation.

Every time the fly buzzed, it caused an itch, deep within my throat to arise. And I couldn't scratch that itch away. I

wanted to and I didn't want to scratch it away.

"What happened this time?"

As she said this, the last streak of light in the room spent itself getting caught in the movement of her chapped, thin lips darkened from nicotine.

"I don't know. Nothing. I suppose it was something but it wasn't much. He was shouting. I couldn't sleep and when I did, he was there. Shouting. I felt angry and upset and I wanted to say something but of course I couldn't. How could I?"

I let out a breath. My lungs ached

with the effort of exhaling. A sharp knife-like sensation. Everything hurt, most of all, my scrapped knee. Idly, my fingers reached out to the bruised elbow and ran a phantom caress over it.

"Why do I feel like this? How is any of this fair? I don't think fear should be an emotion a daughter should harbour towards her father. I don't think it is fair that every time I hear his voice, every time he says something from a room across the house, every time he opens his mouth, I flinch. And I cower and I run."

The sound of a chest tautly expanding as air flowed into healthy lungs followed by the whimper of a tom-cat with a thick coat of white fur followed by the buzz

of a fly on the wall of a school waiting room were the non-verbal responses.

The verbal one came after a long pause. A pause that seemed filled with discomfort than thoughtfulness.

"Is that what you did? You ran?"

"No, not immediately. I showered with the lavender soap that he got me last week in the bathroom of the house he bought last year, ate the breakfast made of the bread and filling his wife purchased with his money yesterday. I took the fare for the rickshaw from his hands and I stepped out of the door that he bought from Keraniganj, wearing shoes and clothes that I bought out of his salary. And then I ran."

The darkness still lingered. The light still evaded her face. But I didn't really need light to tell me what I knew her face was saying. It said nothing. A blank canvas waiting to be filled by the words and emotions and gestures I would use to articulate how much I resented the man whose Y chromosome I inherited.

"You ran and ran till you had to be stopped."

"Precisely."

"Did the guy apologise?"

"Of course, he did. A teenaged girl in a school uniform hit by a motorcyclist in broad daylight in a road busier than a tree full of bees during spring. It was either an apology or being trampled and hit to death by the fast-forming crowd."

Zaima is a struggling student, a failed guitarist and a poet in need of better poetic ideas. Send her your sympathies at zaima2004adrita@gmail.com



ILLUSTRATION:
ABIR HOSSAIN



TANGENT

Light and shade are two sides
Of the same coin
Flipping through mid-air, however,
It all bleeds through.

PHOTOS: FATIMA JAHAN ENA
TEXT: AZMIN AZRAN
CURATED BY: ORCHID CHAKMA

