



PHOTO: SHAKIB MAHMUD AYON

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Right beside the central cafeteria on the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) campus, a huge wall shines ever so vibrant. Students, alumni and outsiders gather to take pictures with it. But if you look closely past the colours on a brick wall, it's more than just another mural. Each brick on the wall tells a story of this campus.

The rag wall is just one of the many walls in BUET. There's the Abrar Fahad wall commemorating his sacrifice. The Hogwarts House wall beside the cafeteria is also widely popular among the students. The premises of the Department of Architecture and the rest of the campus is filled up with walls, each one with a story of its own, as they spread colours of joy in the land of the living that is BUET.

On the left, you see a darker picture of BUET in its past. Puppets are being forced to bow down to an authoritative figure while another one is being forced down into a pit of fire. This grimy part of the mural portrays the older BUET, one where rag culture and student politics leeches off the campus like a parasite. Just a tad bit to the right, one of the puppets is being pulled out of this perdition and into a much more vibrant and joyful world. Students enjoying a concert

together, chatting on the half wall with their friends, celebrating the World Cup together on campus – the mural represents the long lost freedom of the students of BUET and celebrates their victory in achieving it.

Rag walls have been a part of BUET's tradition for a while now. The final-year undergraduate students undertake the responsibility of painting the wall beside the central cafeteria and leaving their mark on the campus. However, the tradition didn't originate overnight. Back in the '90s, final year batches would paint slogans or caricatures on the walls related to their batch which might have acted as a precursor to the tradition.

However, the "Canvas '06" batch was the first one to paint their logo on the yard in front of the central cafeteria, as far back as I could find. "Lubhdok '07" followed their predecessors and painted the wall beside the central cafeteria with their logo, which is now known as the "Rag Wall" to the students of BUET. With time, the designs on the rag wall became more detailed and now the wall paintings of BUET have reached its zenith.

However, this year's rag wall painted by "Onushurjo '17" stands out from its predecessors not only owing to the design or the quality of art, but also the story it intends to tell. The design team consisted of students from Batch '17 of BUET,

the graduating batch this year. It was led by Benzadid M Gani and Rafid Nahian of the Department of Architecture and brought to fruition by many participants from all departments who spent sleepless nights finishing the painting in time.

"The subject matter of this year's rag wall dealt with something that is sentimental not only to this year's graduating batch of BUET but also to the junior and alumni batches. It tells the story of how enforced authority, political suppression, and toxic rag culture were finally uprooted from the campus grounds to traverse into a new era of BUET where an amiable environment and healthy interaction between senior and junior batches exist," said Benzadid M Gani and Rafid Nahian, "All this was possible owing to the sacrifice of Abrar Fahad, who was of Batch '17 himself."

"Over the years, the previous batches dealt with the rag wall designs with a more cheerful approach and would add their respective exuberant highlights," Benzadid and Rafid discussed the planning behind the wall painting and the challenges they faced, "Our design isn't so different in that aspect, except for adding an entirely new atmosphere to the painting that signified the dark ages of BUET. Blending the two was a challenge since we were concerned about whether the two subject matters would

be communicated properly. We were able to counter this issue by imposing vibrant bands which were carefully placed to separate the canvases to tell different stories. The design process took more than a month whereas the final painting took about a week to complete before it was unveiled to the world."

Depicting BUET's gloomy phase and the transition to a cheerful campus was an ambitious goal to attain, according to Benzadid. The wall painting also had some concurrent references such as the FIFA World Cup fever and the newly constructed BUET gate. Despite the initial concerns, the design and painting team received rave reviews from the current students and alumni, and from outside the campus as well.

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St. Joseph and Scholastica Uttara win at Scholastica Interschool Debate Tournament

A CORRESPONDENT

On January 6, Scholastica Debate Club returned with their flagship event "Scholastica Interschool Debate Tournament (SIDT)".

SIDT is a long-running annual venture of the Scholastica Debate Club and has made a name for itself in the Bangladeshi debate circuit. This year, it returned after a two-year hiatus caused by the pandemic. A total of 40 teams from 23 institutions participated in the tournament this year.

The tournament was held over the course of two days, with four preliminary rounds, after which the 12 qualified teams (the teams with the highest combined speaker scores) proceeded to the out rounds. The breaking teams got to celebrate by breaking large blocks of ice with a mallet as per long-winded SDC tradition. The break announcements were made at the end of the first day, the break night.

In the grand finals, JDCI from St. Joseph Higher Secondary School was crowned the Open champions and WDAI from Sir John Wilson School ranked as the Open runners-up. In the novice finals, SDCI from Scholastica Uttara was crowned the Novice champion while DGBDS 313 from Dhanmondi Government Boys' High School became the runners-up.

The top five Open speakers and top three Novice



PHOTO: COURTESY

speakers were also awarded crests with the overall best speaker title awarded to Sahib Rahman Khan from NDDC I (Notre Dame College, Dhaka).

The event started off with a festive opening ceremony and the winners were announced in the closing ceremony, where the club's faculty advisor Majed Mohd. Abdurrahman delivered a speech to inspire the young debaters, adjudicators, and organisation committee.

The title sponsor of the event was Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). The event was co-sponsored by Radiant Pharmaceuticals Ltd. and powered by Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd. Associate sponsors of the event included Unilever Horlicks and Prime Bank, food was sponsored by Well Food, and the media partners were SHOUT and Samakal.

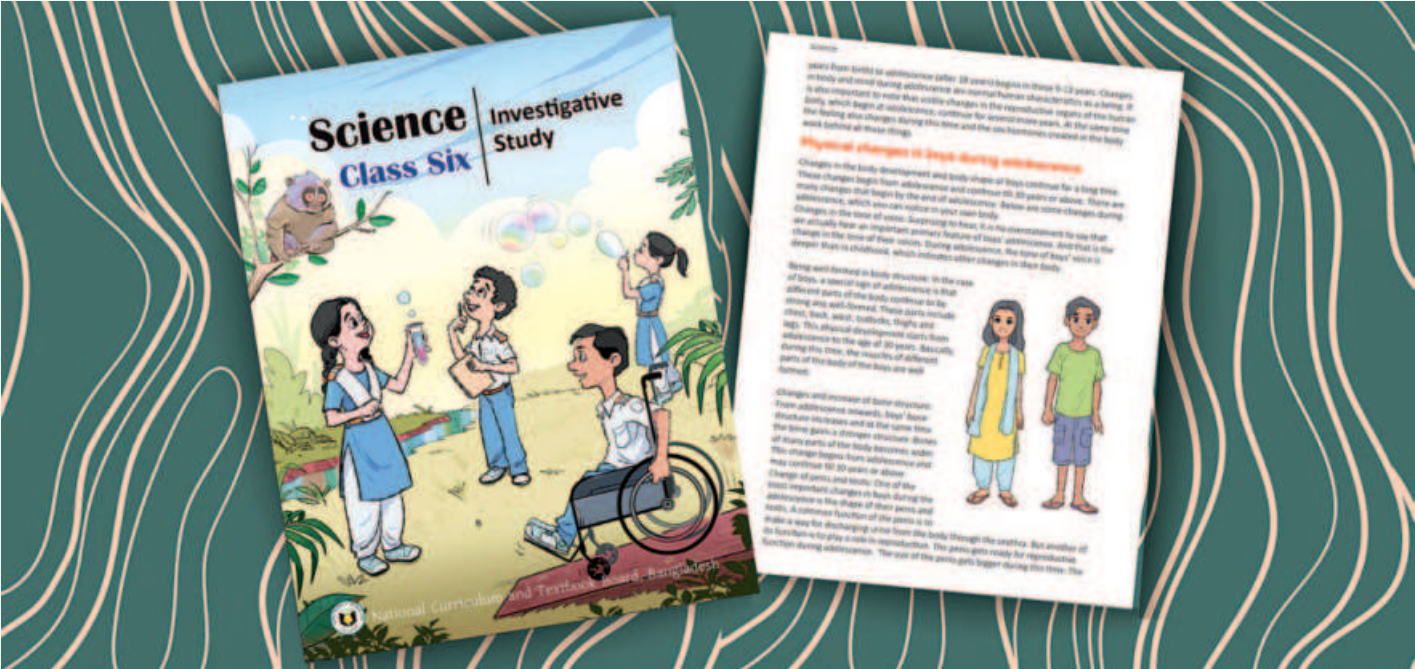
Including reproductive health in the NCTB curriculum is a step in the right direction

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

This year, the National Curriculum & Textbook Board (NCTB) has brought about some major changes to their textbooks, including the Science Investigative Reading textbook for class six. It differs from the books of the preceding years in many ways, but a particular portion of the content has been garnering some attention. In particular, a section on adolescence focusing on the physical changes children undergo during puberty has been generating discourse online.

While the detailed nature of the text may feel unsettling at first, it's quite evident that the content seeks to be purely informative without any underlying agenda. The section in question falls under the chapter Manob Shorir or "The Human Body". Physical changes during puberty fall under the territory of basic human anatomy, which is exactly what you would expect from a chapter with that title.

Previous editions of NCTB Science books of the same class were either devoid of such information, or chose to gloss over the topic. As a result, many of us didn't have a reliable source of information about what puberty is, and what it entails while growing up. While we eventually acquire knowledge on these topics from various sources and experiences, many misconceptions about puberty and sexual health are still prevalent among today's youths. As such, NCTB's decision to include a straightforward and



informative overview of adolescence is a step towards establishing proper sex education.

The national curriculum's textbooks tackling the topic of adolescence is nothing new. NCTB's Physical Education and Health book for class nine and ten contained a chapter on puberty and reproductive health long before this change in the Science book of class six was implemented. Incorporating it in the studies of class six

is commendable nonetheless, as children tend to hit puberty around that age.

The discussion of reproductive health is still considered a taboo in our society, which is why parents seldom take the initiative to educate their children about their physical changes. The stigma around the topic also bars them from expressing their concerns to a grownup, who maybe able to provide some guidance.

As such, children seeking answers

often end up searching in wrong places, which is a lot more likely in this day and age. Uninformed children are also more susceptible to reproductive diseases, sexual violence, etc.

Educational institutions are to provide children with well-rounded education, so having reproductive health on the curriculum can help in the long run to accommodate a better understanding of their own bodies.

However, the implementation of the study of adolescence and reproductive health caused quite a stir on social media – proving that a huge chunk of people consider sex-ed to be inherently immoral. The contents in the book matter-of-factly describe the process of puberty along with the proper scientific terminologies for it.

Yet, the perception of the general population is such that the content is vulgar and deserves no place in the textbook. Many share the opinion that topics like these being openly discussed may lead children astray, even though it's highly effective in creating self-awareness.

The entire reason simple sex education feels out of place in textbooks is because of the scarcity of it. Be that as it may, puberty and reproductive changes are both natural phenomena, and stigmatising them does more harm than good. The vilification of sex education perpetuates the idea that any discussion on reproductive health is pornographic in nature, when in reality, it's crucial to the physical and mental well-being of our adolescents.

So, while we can't expect society's preconceived notions to change overnight due to a few textbook articles, NCTB's decision to include adolescence in the syllabus will definitely help in destigmatising the conversation around reproductive health in the long run.

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