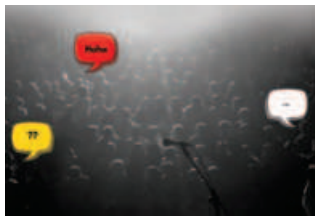
THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE

SHOUT

DHAKA THURSDAY FEBRUARY 9, 2023, *MAGH 26, 1429 BS* | A PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star



CAN BANGLADESHI COMEDIANS DO BETTER?
PG 3

TACKLING FRUSTRATIONS WITH NON-TECH SAVVY PARENTS
PG 6

ILLUSTRATION: **ANICA HOSSAIN**

EDITORIAL

I exist in a constant state of overwhelm. It is truly ironic how my job requires me to be attentive and aware of the tiniest of details for long stretches of time because I am never capable of putting my full attention to anything. For as long as I can remember, I have always had to prepare an atmosphere of controlled noise so that I can continue to work, study, or just read at an acceptable pace.

As I am writing this editorial today, I have been distracted at exactly seven instances, until now. Thrice from conversations being carried out by my colleagues, twice by the same people reading the words on their screens out loud, and once by an unsynchronised group performance of "happy birthday" at a distance, followed by a synchronised bout of laughter.

The noise around me invades my space at any and all points of my daily life, and it feels unfair that there is almost never anything I can do about it.

– Syeda Afrin Tarannum, Sub-Editor, SHOUT

A	B
Nothing Else Matters Metallica	It's Oh So Quiet Björk
Go Slowly Radiohead	NO Meghan Trainor
CHEERS SEVENTEEN	Loud Polyphia
SAYONARA Baby Fujii Kaze	Shout At The Devil Mötley Crüe

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

PLAYWATCH

MOVIE

Pinocchio in 2022: Same Story, Three Interpretations

RAIAN ABEDIN

In 2022, three different *Pinocchio* movies came out, much to my confusion. Hollywood's motive to churn out soulless films for revenue is not news to any of us, but what stands out to me in this particular case is how wildly different each of the movies are.

Be it in terms of the overarching story or their medium of adaptation, all three of these movies are decidedly different beasts.

So, out of sheer curiosity, I decided to watch all three. Judging each for its own worth, I discovered how even the same fundamental concept of a story can be laughably mediocre in the wrong hands while achieving new heights in animation excellence when placed in the hands of a passionate director.

Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio

This stop-motion animation project directed by Guillermo del Toro tells the story of Pinocchio and Geppetto in a roughly two-hour-long musical that is at once heart-breaking and dark, while still managing to contain all the charm required for a movie to be classified as a children's film. There is very little for me to say here that isn't overwhelmingly positive. Even the decision to have the story of an inanimate puppet come to life and be told through the medium where inanimate objects are filmed to be lifelike is simply brilliant.

The story itself begins with the backdrop of life in a fascist hellscape in World War 1 era Italy, which adds a very grim twist to an already grim tale covering themes of freedom of expression, of being, and of facing the moral consequences of your actions.

A masterpiece throughout, this is one movie I will recommend to everyone.

Disney's Pinocchio (2022)

When this film isn't busy being a more diluted live-action remake of the animated film from decades ago, it adds elements to the story that do very little to make any of the characters more engaging or the story more fun to experience overall. The story is almost unchanged from the animated version, yet every scene somehow seems to have lost all soul in the transition from animation to live-action.

Pinocchio (2022) feels dull and like a version of the movie where the story's weight is taken away for a cheap and quickly produced film that even children may have a hard time enjoying.

Pinocchio: A True Story

This 3D animated film was animated by a Russian company and doesn't look that bad. It's no Pixar production, but the visuals have some effort put into it that the rest of the movie simply lacks.

Apart from the names of Pinocchio and Geppetto, nothing in this movie even closely resembles the story of Pinocchio. The whole story is completely bizarre and nonsensical at times. Together with particularly horrendous voice acting, this movie is probably the strangest take on Pinocchio I have ever seen.

The only plus side is that there's a talking cat and all he does is shoot at people with his gun. Oh, and this one scene:

Geppetto: "You're evil."

Evil Person: "I'm not evil, I just didn't get enough sleep."

Frankly, I'm just impressed they kept that in the script.

When Raian isn't sleeping, he is watching strange movies he finds on letterboxd or reading poems. Send him a poem on IG @raian_is_burning

PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

The deal with our love for bargaining

KOUSHIN UNBER

Every Bangladeshi has been exposed to the beauty of bargaining or *damadami* in some form or the other. The culture of bargaining here stands out because instead of trying to get a good deal at assets like cars, enterprise, or wholesale goods, as is normal for most western nations, people here practice bargaining for the smallest of goods, and they do so with apt skill and theatrics. At this point, it's fair to say bargaining has been ingrained into our culture, so much so, that it may even be considered an essential survival skill by some.

It is a pretty well-known fact that in Bangladesh you can haggle the price of almost anything, so long as they are informal goods sold at local shops, and no one does it better than our mothers. Knowing how to get a good deal automatically grants you a status of street-smartness.

According to an article by *CBS News,* we are chemically programmed to respond to lowered prices. When we see products on sale, successfully bargain something to a cheaper price, or even get a good deal for a thrifted item, hormones in our brain get activated. Dopamine is one of the biggest chemical rewards we have, which is why we keep coming back and feel inclined to bargain wherever we go.

We also get a type of adrenaline rush when getting a good bargain. The false last offers, the uncaring walk off, and the classic comparison with the other store that totally promised a much lower price, all seem to be part of an elaborate unspoken routine that seems very enticing to perform.

Due to its constant reward mechanism, bargaining can get addicting. You might even find yourself arguing over the price of a commodity not because the original asking price was too high, but just because you can. This can create leeway to a detrimental habit of over-haggling for every little thing. A lot of the informal goods we buy come from shops or vans on the sides of roads. One of the most common instances during which people bargain is while giving or setting rickshaw fares.

However, the addictive nature of price haggling often creates an unshakeable habit in people who then resort to putting their skills to practice wherever possible, even for the cheapest of goods.

It's important to remember that for a lot of us bargaining comes from a place of habit rather than an actual need to cut costs. So when we try to lower the prices of goods we buy from relatively less well-off people, we end up hurting their incomes. The money is of higher value to them than it is to us, and incessant bargaining can put them into a tough spot since these are often their only sources of income.

Haggling isn't supposed to be about taking advantage of someone, nor is it an opportunity to get away with goods at an unreasonable price and rob the seller of their money. It's a timeless survival skill that ensures sellers don't take advantage of you, not the other way around.

Reference:
CBS News. (December 15, 2013). *How a great sale affects your brain*

Koushin Unber is afraid that she might be peaking at eighteen and it's all downhill from here. Send obscure film theories to her at koushinunber27@gmail.com

Can Bangladeshi comedians do better?

BIPRA PRASUN DAS

Making people laugh is hard, especially at a time when many people's happiness is based on the premise that *things could have been a lot worse*. Comedians are artists in their own right, and with the meteoric rise of OTT platforms, this art of making people laugh is as popular now as ever.

I, personally, love watching comedy specials, especially those featuring Asian comedians. As a self-proclaimed comedy connoisseur, it is hard not to draw comparisons. The stand-up comedy scene in Bangladesh is still in its early stages, and with the arrival of young talents, the industry does show a lot of promise. Yet, many would agree that Bangladeshi comedians aren't quite up there with their other Asian counterparts.

Comedy specials are OTT platforms' bread and butter, and like everywhere else, OTT platforms are gaining extreme popularity in Bangladesh. Yet, comedy specials featuring Bangladeshi comedians on these OTT platforms are virtually non-existent. Are Bangladeshi comedians simply not good enough, or are there other reasons behind this absence of stand-up comedy shows?

Solely blaming the comedians would be pretty harsh. Given the lack of sponsors, venues and other limitations to monetising the art of making people laugh, young Bangladeshi comedians often struggle to gain ground, and newer talents hesitate to step into the scene.

However, despite the subjective nature of comedy, the common consensus is that Bangladeshi comedians can do better. While some have carved out a niche for themselves and have gained popularity, the Bangladeshi comedy scene is far from being as successful as it is in the rest of the world.

Bangladeshi comedians have developed a brand of comedy that is very punch-line-oriented. The punch lines generate some laughter, and that's pretty much it. It goes something like this:

Comedian: Roses are red, violets are blue, your phone is smart, why aren't you?

Audience: Hahaha

On the flip side, comedians elsewhere choose to tell stories, often personal, to keep the audience engaged. The story has multiple humorous sides, and the comedian delivers it in a way that makes it funnier than it originally would have been.

The jokes coming out of comedy specials are often more memorable since they make you draw from your experiences, and as a result, the audience relates better to these jokes. I was watching Indian comedian Vir Das's comedy special *Landing* on Netflix the other day. It was a pure roller-coaster ride, and I thoroughly enjoyed the entirety of it. It really was what made me think about how Bangladeshi stand-up comedy is different.

Comedy is subjective, but most would agree that Bangladeshi comedians have a lot of room for improvement. Stand-up comedy is a booming industry around the world. For comedy to become a full-fledged industry rather than a budding scene here in Bangladesh, comedians have to do better in terms of the quality and relatability of their content. Once we have objectively funnier jokes, the rest might as well fall into place.

Bipra Prasun Das cracks lame jokes and thinks he is funnier than most. Prove him wrong by sending him memes and puns at bipraprasun22@gmail.com

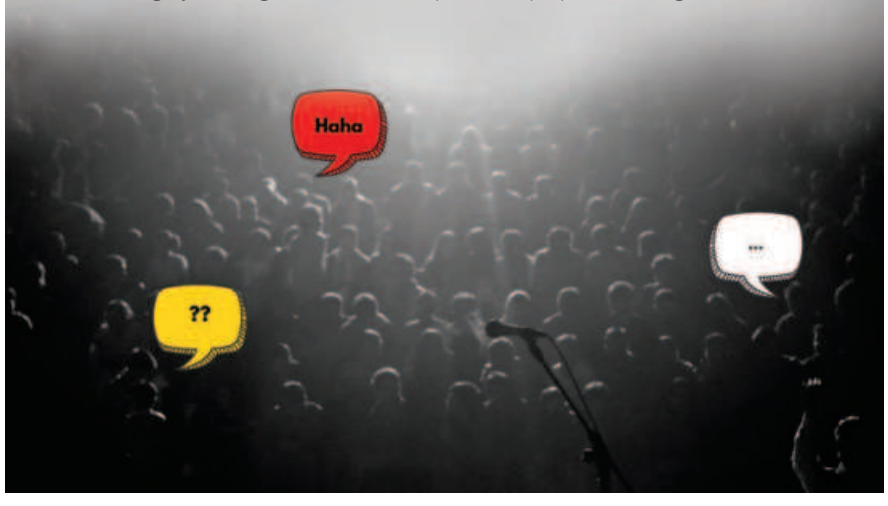


PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

The deafening reality of noise pollution

THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE
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HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

It was 2:30 AM and I was trying to concentrate on my Electronics lecture as I had my term final 2 days later. A congregation that had gathered beside my house had its loudspeaker pointed towards our apartment and blasted sound at a ridiculous volume. Neither could I concentrate on what I was reading, nor could I go to sleep. This went on for two days. I had to spend 52 hours without sleeping, days before my term final. My entire life halted and it was just me waiting for the noise to stop. I broke into tears on the 51st hour.

Such are the stories of almost every residential area in Bangladesh, which are plagued with deafening noise from construction sites, loudspeakers used in social occasions, seminars, public gatherings, and from horns and sirens. Somehow, as a society, we've learned how to tolerate the chaos and live with the commotion that has been so normalised around us.

Noise pollution is the highest in Dhaka among the 61 most populated cities in the world. A report by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on noise pollution stated that the average noise frequency in Dhaka is currently 119 decibels which is more than twice the tolerable standard. Rajshahi stood fourth globally with 103 decibels, right after the Pakistani capital of Islamabad.

Although the Environment Conservation Act and Noise Pollution (Control) Rules 2006 state guidelines on operating construction machines and other rules regarding infrastructural constructions, construction remains one of the major sources of noise pollution in the capital.

"The construction work near our dormitories started a few years back. It's been going on for some four years now," said Azmain Arnob, a resident student of the Islamic University of Technology (IUT) in Gazipur.

"We have to stay up nights to study and work on projects. So, after we come back to our dorms from consecutive morning classes and labs, we need our afternoon sleep. But due to the shrilling noise of the construction site, that's not an option. I grew up in a quiet neighbourhood and so I'm having a very hard time managing my sleep cycle and my studies. Last semester, the construction went on until 12:30 at the night! How can construction take 4 years to complete? And why are there no regulations regarding noise control, especially since you have a university right beside the construction site?" he said.

The permitted noise level for residential areas is 55 decibels during the day and 45 decibels at night. However, the rules do not apply to religious events in mosques or temples and can be excused for national and local election campaigns.

According to Rezwana Saima, a resident of Shantibagh, the mosque near her house breaks all regulations of noise pollution regularly, "The mosque sometimes arranges mehfils that go on the entire month with mics blasting at every corner in the neighbourhood. It goes on the entire night until the dawn. We can't sleep properly and neither can we concentrate on our studies during the exams. We've got old people, babies, and students in the neighbourhood and their entire sleep schedule gets completely ruined."

"My sound sensitivity has skyrocketed the past couple of years," Saima spoke of the physical discomforts she's been facing owing to the constant exposure to loud noises, "I can't tolerate the smallest of noises. My migraine gets triggered every time they start blasting their loudspeakers and it just keeps getting worse."

In a directive issued by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs of Saudi Arabia in May 2021, mosques were instructed to restrict the volume of their loudspeakers to one-third of the maximum limit. The Ministry also stipulated that using loudspeakers was to be restricted to calls to prayers only. Indonesia has a new, similar guideline which introduced a volume limit for loudspeakers in mosques for the first time, setting it at 100 decibels. Right now, Bangladesh has not enacted any equivalent regulations.

However, the problem of noise pollution jumps over the boundaries between cultural, social, and religious activities and exists in all facets of urban life in Dhaka.

"There was a musical program in our hall that started at 4 PM one day. After tuition, when I came back at 9 PM, the noise from the loudspeakers and the music was still there," said Mohammad Fahadul Islam, an undergraduate student at BUET, "I somehow managed to get to sleep at 11 PM. Around 1 AM, I suddenly woke up owing to the exorbitantly loud music from the loudspeakers. I was furious, yet I had no other option but to wait for the noise to end. I couldn't sleep until the noise stopped around 4 AM."

The Noise Pollution Rules 2006 state that in locations designated as silent areas (hospitals, educational institutions, offices and surrounding areas within 100 meters), the noise level is to be kept at its lowest, which is 50 decibels during the day and 40 decibels at night. Although in case of social, cultural, or political events, the rules can be excused if prior permissions are taken. However, no such permission is to be allowed for more than five hours and the time extension can only be up to 10 PM.

Schedule-2 of the Rules state a definite range for vehicular noise and the use of horns in residential areas is also completely prohibited. The volume level of hydraulic horns used in motor vehicles can reach up to 120 decibels and exposure to such levels for longer than 60 seconds can cause hearing injuries. In order to mitigate the issue, the High Court banned the use of hydraulic horns in motor vehicles in 2017. However, lack of implementation has turned vehicular horns into one of the biggest sources of noise pollution in major cities in Bangladesh. A study carried out by the Center for Atmospheric Pollution Studies of Stamford University found proof that almost 30 percent of all vehicles in the capital use government-banned hydraulic horns.

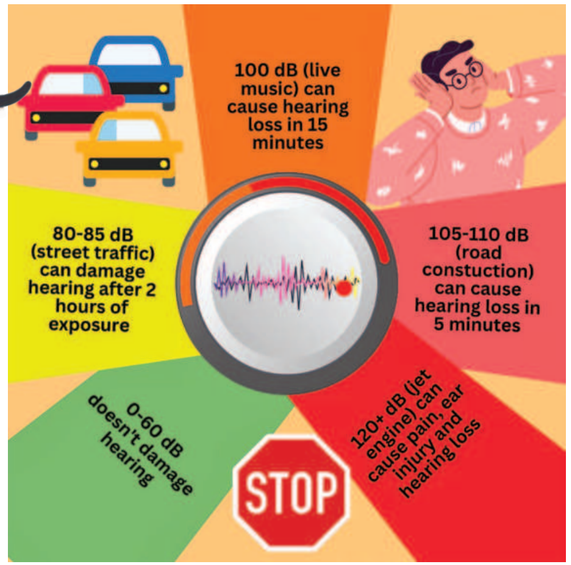
"Our dorm is near the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway," said Farhan Shahriar, a resident student at IUT, "At night, trucks go by these roads blaring their horns. I often wake up in the middle of the night owing to the screeching sound from these trucks. Especially if there's a long traffic jam or a traffic gridlock, which is often the case in these highways, the vehicles just keep blaring their horns right beside the residential halls."

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), constant exposure to sounds above 60 decibels can cause temporary deafness, which can transition to permanent deafness if the noise level is beyond 100 decibels.

Firdous Quader, a doctor and associate professor specialising in ENT (ears, nose and throat), spoke to us about her experience of treating patients who have suffered from noise pollution.

"While practising in Savar area, I saw many patients with hearing problems who work in loud spaces like different factories. Usually they say it starts with headache and also intolerance to loud noise. They themselves don't realise the hearing loss till later stage, as they get used to talking loudly and others also answer them loudly," she said.

On the risk of hearing loss posed by loud noises, she said, "Being exposed to loud sound all the time can lead to chronic hearing loss. The patient may also develop other symptoms like head ache, tinnitus, they may have disturbed sleep, especially among young children and pregnant women as they are very sensitive to sound. If not treated properly, this can lead to permanent deafness."



DESIGN: **AAQIB HASIB**

> *"There was a musical program in our hall that started at 4 PM one day. After tuition, when I came back at 9 PM, the noise from the loudspeakers and the music was still there," said Mohammad Fahadul Islam, an undergraduate student at BUET, "I somehow managed to get to sleep at 11 PM. Around 1 AM, I suddenly woke up owing to the exorbitantly loud music from the loudspeakers. I was furious, yet I had no other option but to wait for the noise to end. I couldn't sleep until the noise stopped around 4 AM."*

On New Year's Eve of 2021, a post on Facebook may have reached the newsfeeds of many. Tanzim Umayer, a four-month-old infant who'd been suffering from heart disease since birth, died after being terrified by the loud noise from the fireworks, as per claims from the family. Restless all night, Tanzim was shaking continuously at the sound of the fireworks, until he finally passed away.

How long do we need before noise pollution becomes a concern serious enough for our authorities to care about? Not only are the laws insufficient, but their implementation is also limited. As the population increases and cities get more rapidly urbanised than ever before, the noise pollution around us is bound to go out of control. It's up to the lawmakers to start prioritising noise pollution and amend the laws accordingly before the chaos gets too loud to handle.

References:
1. The Daily Star (December 31, 2019). *Looking into the Noise Pollution (Control) Rules.*
2. Prothom Alo (March 28,2022). *Dhaka tops the noise pollution index too.*

Remind Ifti to be quieter at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com

Tackling frustrations with non-tech savvy parents

AZRA HUMAYRA

"Dipa! Come here!"

"I can hear you from here, ammu."

"I told you to come here, so come."

"All right, what happened?"

"Why is the keyboard typing gibberish?"

"Because you kept the Bijoy Classic on. I told you how to change this a million times before."

"I am old, I can't remember all these things now."

"YouTube is a click away, ammu."

"Why would I need YouTube when I have you to teach me?"

If we are sure about one thing, it is that our parents are not early adopters. They are what American sociologist Everett Rogers calls the "late majority" or even "laggards". This simply means that we, the early majority, are expected to bear certain responsibilities in disseminating technology-related knowledge to them. This is noble and salient, but it often entails being frustrated when they do not retain the information well.

Numerous studies have shown that as people grow older, the brain requires more time to learn new facts. This is because the function of the brain responsible for receiving, processing, and relaying information becomes less effective due to ageing and decreased activity. Hence, when teaching your parents new technology, it is important to approach the task with patience and compassion.

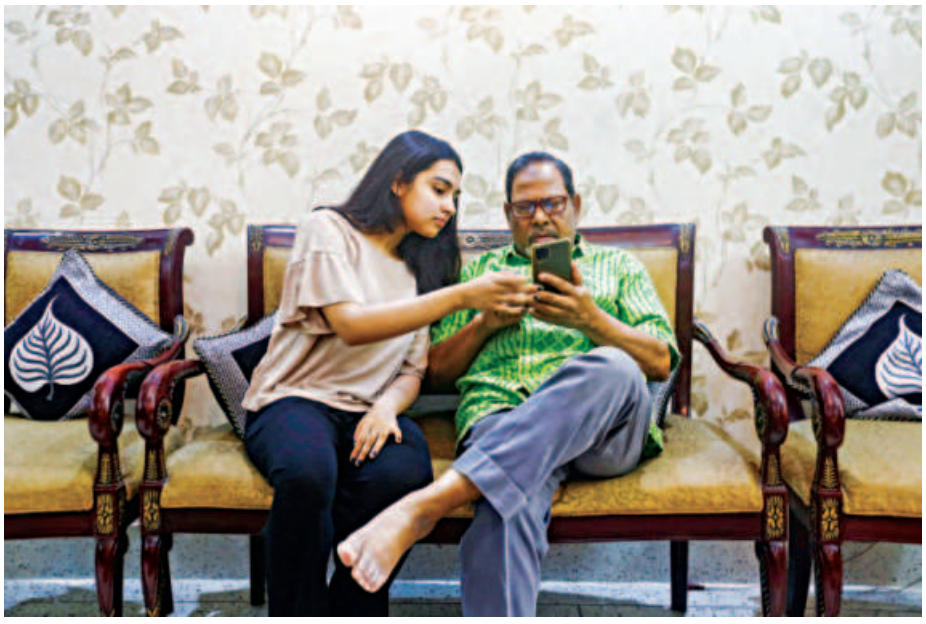


PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

Start with the basics and gradually introduce more advanced features. Make sure to explain things in simple terms and use examples they can relate to. Avoid using technical jargon and explain things in a comprehensible manner. Rather than simply telling them how to use the technology, demonstrate how to use it. Have them repeat the instructions and practice. If necessary, go over the steps again. Above all, try not to get frustrated if your parents don't understand everything right away.

Encourage them to ask questions and practice using the technology on their own. Make yourself available to answer any questions they may have or to assist them in troubleshooting any issues that may arise. Additionally, it may be helpful to find online resources or tutorials that they can refer to for additional help. Providing detailed written instruction may also be of great help, as it is sometimes easier to understand something when it's in written form.

Positive reinforcement can also help to boost their confidence when it comes to learning new technology. Remember when your mother kept getting angry when you didn't understand that one maths problem before a test and how pressured you felt? You wished for your mother to be gentler with you. So, in our position of being the teacher, we can work to become gentler with our parents.

Unlike us, our parents were not born into a world where extensive use of technology is almost like second-nature. Therefore, empathising with their struggles of trying to fit into this new world will take you a long way.

References:

1. MIT News | Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2020, October 27). *Study helps explain why motivation to learn declines with age.*

2. News From Brown (n.d.). *Many older brains have plasticity, but in a different place.*

Azra Humayra is a part-time roach squasher and full-time trash television connoisseur. Send her show recommendations at: azrahumayra123@gmail.com

Unpacking the layers of internalised racism

ARANYO RISHI

We all know that one friend who is more in touch with the group of cultures we bundle together as the "West", than they are with their own. They won't try local delicacies like moglai porota, but call it a deep-fried egg quesadilla, and they are most likely to dig in. But, as their numbers grow in increasingly concerning ways, it poses one question. Could this be the symptom of a bigger problem?

ILLUSTRATION: **FATIMA JAHAN ENA**

Internalised racism. Big words, but bear with me. It's a phenomenon where someone regards their own race to be inferior compared to another race. This reverence for the "superior" race is usually rooted deep in our subconscious. In our case, the reverence is usually towards white people.

In this day and age, teenagers are chronically online, in cyberspaces dominated by white content creators. When we see that popular TikTok star in their penthouse suite or eating at a Michelin 3-star restaurant, our mind wants to connect their wealth to the colour of their skin. We may subconsciously begin to associate success with race and that's where internalised racism comes in.

People with internalised racism constantly measure themselves against Western cultures and standards. When your lifestyle does not resemble that of the famous people you see on the Internet, it makes you insecure. It makes you despise your own culture and surroundings. It's not something one would ever voice openly, but rather feel and quietly anguish in.

At worst, it could make someone insecure about what they could never change about themselves: their skin colour. You look at what your idol looks like, and you look at yourself in the mirror. When you see the two things contrasting all the time, it serves as a constant reminder that you'll never truly be like them.

The harms of this mental hurdle are innumerable. It's not just a desire to erase your cultural identity, but it also gives rise to severe self-loathing. Since it's subconsciously developed, people don't realise why they're unhappy with their appearances. Their inability to pinpoint the problem further adds to their frustration, leading them to buy harmful products like fairness creams, or other skin "brightening" products. This insecurity sometimes even translates into not feeling beautiful no matter what you do to change your appearance.

Ultimately, trying to distance yourself from your own race creates a feeling of isolation, where you are unable to join the revered race due to inherent differences, and have trouble assimilating with your own group.

Not only is it a difficult problem to detect, it is a difficult topic to talk about. You can go to a friend screeching "INTERNALISED RACISM," but they're unlikely to understand or pay attention. We need to not only be aware of the problem ourselves, but spread awareness among our peers.

Instead of trying to be something we can never truly be, we should take pride in our own cultural identity. We should try to be more forgiving of our background, and embrace it. And instead of talking down to people, we can delicately bring it up. So, the next time you see that friend busting out cutlery to eat their *polao* and roast, instead of resorting to mockery, why not strike up a casual conversation about it?

THANATOS

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

"Ship C5-Reaper has successfully made its landing on the surface of Planet Earth yesterday on the 25th hour," the Launch Director of Planet Eravix's only space station declared in the conference room.

All states of Eravix, known as Kepler-253b by inhabitants of planet Earth, had unitedly taken a grave decision. The forefathers, which is a reverent term for Earth dwellers, were to be exterminated. Earth has been regarded as a threat to itself and the solar system since the late 21st century. It's rather commendable that humans have somehow sustained the planet for six centuries, but as the chances of survival wane, Earth's attempt at finding alternate habitats had gotten aggressive.

Humans have seen three interplanetary wars in the last decade alone, and the planets who have fallen victims to Earth have urged Eravix to take action.

"It's rather unfortunate that we must say goodbye to our origin. After all, our heritage and ideologies have originated from Earth," remarked the head of another prominent state. "But there is no alternative. Relay our decision to Gliese 357, Kepler-1649, and Luyten-b."

The conference concluded then and there. Not a soul in the room was unbothered by the planning of Earth's imminent end. However, as the planet housing the most technologically and cognitively advanced individuals, Eravix had to be the one to issue such an edict.

* * *

Tas was the chief engineer behind the creation of Thanatos, the cyborg with a powerful AI tasked with the destruction of Earth. An avid reader of Earth's mythology, she named her cyborg after the Greek god of death, an action many found to be in poor taste. She thought it apt.

The administrator was sceptical about sending one cyborg to carry out the task of exterminating an entire planet but sending many at once would raise alarm. Thanatos was the perfect solution.

He has been equipped with an arsenal, including cannons capable of wiping out cities. Earth has laxed regulations on security to a dangerous degree due to their desperation for intergalactic currency, so when the C5-Reaper landed, Thanatos was perceived as an amiable intergalactic tourist due to his appearance. The cherry on top was his ability to lie and deceive.

It was planned that Thanatos would remain on Earth for three years. Scanning for optimum planting spots, gathering resources to assemble explosives, collecting rare elements from Earth – these were his chief missions.

Thanatos was programmed to send updates to Tas every ten seconds on Earth. She'd been looking through a script of their latest exchange. The camera mode was deactivated to reduce power consumption, so documentations were her only source of update.

"Seems like it will rain tomorrow," Thanatos said. "Will that bother you, Caretta?"

"Yes. I hate rain," replied the other party.

"I assumed as much. You can seek refuge in my vehicle, if you wish."

"I'd like that."

Tas furrowed her eyebrows. She didn't recall programming altruism into Thanatos. She inspected Thanatos's activity log, and deduced that it was necessary to assume the role of a good Samaritan to blend in.

A day or two passed before she personally checked his reports again. He had been gathering calcium ore from Türkiye, and sent a report of another interaction.

"Caretta, I suggest you do not touch anything in this vehicle. Some of my possessions are fragile."

Thanatos had allowed Caretta to follow him to Türkiye, all the way from Ecuador. Strange.

"Caretta, I specifically requested you not to touch the trinitrotoluene. You must not be so cavalier about explosive chemicals."

"Fine, I'll keep my hands off."

"Thank you."

Thanatos had shown a similar pattern of travelling to protect his cover, especially in decision-making simulations, so Tas shrugged it off without much thought.

* * *

Thanatos had collected all necessary elements except radium.

He was in Congo, excavating for uranium ores. The Earth-shattering explosives were all in place. Earth only had a week of existence.

Caretta was still with Thanatos. In his reports, he'd described her as a well-mannered yet adventurous girl in the prime of her life, with large blue eyes and hair of multiple colours.

She was unemployed, somewhat of a vagabond. Thanatos met her roaming the streets of Thailand, and after a conversation over dinner, she decided to accompany him on his mission. Thanatos claims her presence adds believability to his alibi.

The hour of departure drew near. Tas joined the launch team at the control station, awaiting Thanatos' report. This time, he used his audio-visual communication medium. Upon finishing his concise overview of accomplished tasks, Thanatos said, "If the explosives are detonated, my companion Caretta's chances of survival will be null. I request permission to bring Caretta to Eravix."

His request was immediately denied by the administration, considering the recent epidemic of viral diseases spreading among Earth-dwelling humans.

Thanatos refused to budge, "Either Caretta comes with me to Eravix, or I will immobilise the explosives and remain here on Earth permanently."

Tas and her team found themselves dumbfounded. While AI can be programmed to form attachments, it was absent in Thanatos' directory. Yet, he was clearly attached to Caretta.

After a couple hours of troubleshooting, one of the programmers reported to Tas, "His programme has been tampered with since the field tests. The mission statement has been overwritten by a condition, but it doesn't look like any of us did it."

It had been overwritten by Thanatos himself thanks to his self-modifying code. Tas sighed and gave Thanatos the green light to bring Caretta to Eravix.

"Tighten health regulations at the landing zone, extract Caretta and Thanatos and quarantine them. We'll execute the human after temporarily disabling Thanatos."

* * *

Thanatos enabled the cameras in the C5-Reaper. In spite of their sorrow, Eravix inhabitants wished to witness the first time an exoplanet blew up into smithereens.

He manoeuvred his ship expertly, aware that his negotiation with headquarters about Caretta had taken valuable time off his hands. The explosion was set to take place in a matter of minutes.

He escaped the danger zone by a thin margin. "It's time, Caretta," he said.

His interpreter informed him that Caretta wished to be released from her seatbelt, and he obliged. Picking up the Siamese cat in his arms, he walked over to the porthole.

Planet Earth went up in flames, and Caretta meowed in approval.

Zabin Tazrin Nashita cancels plans in order to be productive and ends up laying in bed all day. Share her struggles at: zabintn@gmail.com

Getting into NBA in 2023

INQIAD BIN ALI

National Basketball Association (NBA) is undeniably the most prestigious and exhilarating basketball league in the world. Halfway through the regular season, the 2022/23 NBA is proving to be highly exciting. Riding this high, it might be the perfect time to hop onto NBA.

Here's everything you need to know.

Why you should watch NBA

Each match is a fast and furious, end-to-end encounter resulting in high-scoring games with a lot of thrills and spills. The matches are relatively short as each game lasts 48 minutes, equally divided into four 12-minute-long quarters. Even including all the breaks, it takes no more than two hours.

With an 82-game regular season, some common occurrences in the NBA are upsets, big margin wins, inexplicable losses, and upturns in the forms of the teams. In addition, teams get a sizeable amount of time to recover forms. So, even if they go through a rough patch, they get enough time to come back.

Take Brooklyn Nets this season for example. After a disastrous start, they have rallied from late November, going on an amazing winning streak to propelling themselves to second in Eastern Conference by January. But, an injury to star man Kevin Durant derailed their journey, going on a six-game losing streak to drop down to fourth.

When do the matches take place

During the festive periods, the first game usually kicks off at 11 PM Bangladeshi time, with other early games scheduled between 12 – 1:30 AM.

One of the challenges of being a Bangladeshi NBA fan is to wake up early to catch the games. In normal circumstances, the matches are aired anywhere between 2 AM to 10 AM.

Where to watch (legally)

Fans can get the NBA League or Team Pass. Subscriptions are available for the entire season (October-June) or even monthly packages.

NBA is broadcast in India and the rights belong to Viacom18's channels-Vh1, MTV and their streaming platforms VOOT and Jio TV.

How to pick a team to support

This is a difficult step. There are 30 teams competing in the NBA and a lot of factors should go into play while picking a team to support. Some fans might just follow the team their favourite player plays for. Others might simply fall in love with the team colours and badges. While others might just support a team because of its underdog status, rich history or something as simple as its location. For instance, I fell in love with Milwaukee Bucks while watching Giannis Antetokounmpo play.

PHOTOS: **REUTERS**

You might want to steer clear of teams which rarely make the top-ten of the Conference Leagues if you want to actually enjoy watching the matches. Going for an up-and-coming or established team might also be a good way to settle on a side to support.

The drama factor

As games aren't allowed to end as draws, tied scores result in five-minute-long overtimes. Its suspense only increases as teams go toe-to-toe, often resulting in thrilling conclusions to the game. During matches, nothing can beat the feeling of scoring a buzzer-beater three-point rocket to clinch victory.

NBA's unpredictability will keep fans on the edge of their seats. There are many instances where teams have thrown away massive point leads in the dying embers of a game. The same applies to playoffs. These seven-game-long series have produced some memorable ties over the years.

For example, the Toronto Raptors vs Philadelphia 76ers playoff from 2019 is a cult classic. It was the ultimate series, with Raptors and Sixers winning alternating games. The Raptors ultimately won 90-92 with the last throw of the series in Game 7, sparking iconic scenes.

And that essentially caps off the basics of the NBA. With intensely competitive rivalries, booming finances, and a vibrant talent pool, NBA truly is a one-of-a-kind sport.

Inqiad is a passionate Bucks fan and a Giannis stan. Contact him at inqiadali007@gmail.com