

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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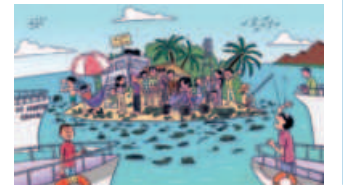


DON'T LET FOMO
DICTATE YOUR LIFE

PG 3

TOURISM IS HARMING THE
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
OF ST. MARTIN'S ISLAND

PG 8



THE CASE FOR STUDYING LAW



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

EDITORIAL

I struggle to pen my thoughts these days.

Whether it's a Facebook post or something I am writing for this paper, I know that I am being watched. I am also aware that whatever I say, write, or even think can be used against me. My thoughts can be taken out of context and their narratives can be altered. So, what do I do? Do I stop writing? Do I stop speaking? Do I stop thinking?

I struggle to think these days.

It's not like the thoughts don't come. They do and often, they are very hard-hitting. Yet, I seem to ignore them. After all, why should I think if I know that it can get me into trouble at some point.

Is there a solution to this problem at hand? Yes. Is it a solution that can be reached easily? No.

So, what now? I don't know, and I am sure you don't either. For now, however, I'll continue filtering the things I write, the words I speak, and the thoughts that come to my mind.

– Faisal Bin Iqbal, Sub-Editor & Digital Coordinator, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

BOOKS



DESIGN: FAISAL BIN IQBAL

No Longer Human: Dazai's tale of distortion, degeneration, and decay

MD. NAYEEM HAIDER

Trigger Warning: Contains accounts of self-harm and substance abuse

Japanese literature is a vibrant world unto itself. Yet, even in this vastness of literary wealth, certain works exhibit such sincere profundity that they have become celebrated milestones in the nation's intellectual and artistic development.

In this unique class of novels, Osamu Dazai's magnum opus *No Longer Human* is undoubtedly one of the foremost.

The story follows Yozo, who, from his early boyhood, struggles to comprehend and connect with others. Bearing witness to the egoistic, double-faced, and even downright depraved behaviour humans can be capable of, he lives in terror of those around him and their society. Yet, unable to cut himself off from the world, he is forced to put up a near-immaculate façade of cheerfulness to protect himself from that which he cannot be a part of.

He is constantly ridden with guilt and shame, and the fear of being discovered as "fake" only fuels the flames of the hell his mind has condemned him to. Addiction and other hedonistic pleasures become the few things that impart a semblance of comfort to his otherwise miserable existence.

And through no intention of his own, his outward attractiveness affected good humour, and the implicit aura of secrecy he possesses become the bait, drawing women into the murky cesspool of his life. He is loved dearly, that much is certain, but can love really save a man who doesn't love himself?

It should come as no surprise that the philosophy and themes expressed in this book are often deeply cynical. Yozo, widely regarded as a stand-in for

the author himself, contends that far from religious morals or humanistic values, it is the mundane, spontaneous, and continuous contentions between self-centred individuals that form the basis of all human interactions.

This is something I do not agree with. However, I understand the thought process behind such a position. Yozo watches on silently as the last rays of his salvation are devoured by darkness. He loses his trust in everything except evil. He finds himself believing in the existence of hell but not that of heaven. It is then that he says, "God, I ask you, is trustfulness a sin?"

No Longer Human is perhaps more relevant today than it has ever been. After all, aren't we the generation that perfected the art of creating the idealised version of oneself on social media? To be loved, to be protected from the malice of others, we create caricatures of ourselves that stand out but also conform. If so, where does the "mask" end and the "face" begin?

In the end, Yozo's abject terror may only be an extreme rendition of the primal feeling all humans know deep in their hearts – the fear of each other.

Hopelessness pervades the pages of this short, semi-autobiographical novel. Shortly after the end of this novel's serialisation, aged just thirty-eight, Osamu Dazai would take his own life. In his wake, he would leave for the world a tragic chronicle of a man's desperate struggle against himself, a futile war that rages on until his inevitable defeat. Until the day he is forced to concede that he truly is no longer human.

Nayeem reads depressing novels at the dead of night. Send recommendations at nayeemhaider90@gmail.com

TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



A

SING

My Chemical Romance

Dealer

Lana Del Rey

Blurred Lines

Robin Thicke ft. T.I., Pharrell

Lethal AF

Faizan Ahmed Prod. by

Mansieve

B

Gangsta's Paradise

Coolio ft. L.V.

Buried Alive

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DON'T LET FOMO DICTATE YOUR LIFE

NOYOLEE MUNIM

Recently, I volunteered for an event despite having a lot on my plate. While I did have solid reasons for signing up for this, including it being a great learning opportunity and an overall fun experience, I realised my biggest motivation was something entirely different. I signed up for it so that I wouldn't miss out and regret forgoing the opportunity later on.

This phenomenon that I experienced is commonly known as FOMO (the fear of missing out) and it happens to dictate many people's lives. It forces us to base our decisions, priorities, and schedules around it. The problem of FOMO is that we contemplate the consequences of not doing something rather than thinking about how much we really want it. Sometimes, we let it get the best of us and convince ourselves into signing up for things we don't have the time or energy for.

Suppose after a long hectic week, you agree to go out and watch a theatre show with your friends, mostly because of FOMO. If you don't have enough energy to socialise or concentrate on the show, no matter how entertaining and engaging it may be, it will feel like a chore.

Life often feels like a rat race and we are under the impression that by taking time off, we are falling behind. We constantly worry about the opportunities that we might have forgone. For instance, you might guilt yourself into going to that office picnic just so your superior has a good impression of you, or so that you don't miss out on the chance to interact with people higher up in the company. But at the end of the day, you'll only come back home exhausted. There's no need to participate in every single activity just to earn brownie points. Ultimately, what this results in are half-baked experiences and burnouts.

Social media further aggravates this problem. There's no way to avoid seeing what we might have missed out on because as soon as one enters the digital sphere, they are instantly bombarded with pictures, videos, stories, and statuses from the events one decided to skip out on. Even if that person didn't feel bad for not showing up, they are bound to feel differently now.

Since social media only shows the highlights, we only get to see one side of the coin. The concert might have been crowded and suffocating, but the videos on Instagram will only showcase the blinding lights and the crowd singing along to familiar tunes. This clouds our judgement because an experience isn't just weighed on one aspect but many, including the negative parts as well.

When deciding to commit to a plan, we should ask ourselves why we are really doing this and whether or not we even have the time for it. This will help distinguish between FOMO and what we actually want. Remember that just because one passes up on one opportunity doesn't mean they will never come across another. Taking days off to stay at home is also a priority. When we deprive ourselves of breaks, we take away the ability to actually enjoy what we're doing. We should try and break out of this cycle before it burns us out.

Noyolee is either sleeping or procrastinating or both. Tell her to stop overthinking at munimns13@gmail.com



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



DESIGN: ABIR HOSSAIN

Animation is more than just children's cartoon

Critics and awards do not do justice to the art of animation

RAIAN ABEDIN

In 2022, during the presentation for the Oscar for Best Animated Feature, several comments from the presenters made me contemplate the general air around this medium of art. While animation is by no means a medium of entertainment lauded by critics in the academy (or really, most critics of an older age), having the presenters play off the entire medium as simple children's cartoons that parents have to suffer through is nothing but insulting.

This isn't merely centred around the Oscars, most critics tend to regard animation as a lesser form of art or entertainment. This has been the opinion for the longest time and is shared by anyone who considers themselves to be a "grown-up" too old to watch children's cartoons. Have things changed? Sure, on a more consumer level, the world is now more open to the many wonderful doors animation has enabled for storytelling. But for critics around the world, time seems to have come to a standstill.

Circling back to the Oscars, the award for Best Animated Feature has by far the shrewdest system of voting in place. There are no technical restrictions in place, allowing members from every department to vote. However, voters aren't even required to watch all the movies they vote for. This leads to many issues, with reports coming from members of the academy that their vote was cast into the only piece of animated film they watched, that usually end up being a Disney movie.

If even the most esteemed critics don't take such a prestigious award seriously, how do they expect the rest of the world to? I can tell you from personal experience that support for animation is overwhelming on an international level from creators. Artists of all kinds are enamoured with this medi-

um – not genre – that allows for the most varied and unique style of cinema. I have spent countless hours and sleepless nights watching animated movies and shows from far-flung corners of the globe, and have felt how ardent the creators' love is for their medium.

The dismissal of such a unique form of filmmaking does not help these artists or the entertainment industry across the globe, especially when an industry dedicated to animation can barely grow in so many countries. This is an issue that may be most visible at popular award shows, but it persists everywhere.

In Bangladesh, animation as an industry is far from thriving due to a lack of financial and industrial support. What little we see of animation usually comes in the form of short commercials and, in extremely rare cases, serialised animation. However, YouTube has proven to be a popular medium through which many independent animators release their own projects. As heartening as it is to see artists express their creativity in a variety of means, this highlights the exact issue animation is having today.

With no support from film producers and critics, we cannot expect the industry to grow at the pace that it should. It does not take too much effort to realise that animation is not simply just children's cartoons. Every year, we get to see some incredible work being released from Europe, Asia, and even by smaller studios in the US that do not necessarily fall under the trademark Disney family-friendly nature of storytelling. Instead, they choose to tell compelling stories with art styles unique to the directors and animators. These are worthy of recognition just as much as any live-action project, if not more.

Raian is currently watching Adventure Time, do not bother him at IG: @raian_is_burning



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

THE CASE FOR STUDYING LAW

FATIMA JAHAN ENA

The word “lawyer” might invoke certain scenes and images in our minds. The dramatic usage of legal jargon inside a tense courtroom, or the overworked paralegal drowning in mountains of paper may come to mind. Some cultures might revere legal professions, others might have a not-so-favourable view.

Regardless of all the pre-conceived notions, making a career in the legal sector is a long and arduous journey and at the end of it all lies the struggle to uphold justice.

The reasons for choosing a career in law differs from person to person. Ali Mashraf, Lecturer of Law at East West University, shares, “My mother being a law professor was indeed a consideration. However, she never

pressured me to study law. Instead I wanted to study journalism at Dhaka University (DU). But I didn’t get the subject due to a controversial admission test rule. So then, I applied to study law at DU.”

Anupoma Joyeeta Joyee, who is a Barrister-at-Law of Lincoln’s Inn, and Advocate, District and Sessions Judge Court, adds, “Back in school, I used to really love debating. Towards the end of high school, all my peers started getting enrolled into medicine or engineering admission coaching centres. I realised I needed to make a decision quickly so I sat my family down and sought their opinion. It was a consensus across the board that since I had good oratory skills, I would probably enjoy the field of law.”

The first step in pursuing a career in law consists of obtaining a Bangladeshi law degree from a reputed college or university. The Bachelor of Laws (LLB) programme is the standard 3-year-long undergraduate law degree, whereas an LLB Honours (Hons) degree is considered to be of a higher level, consist-

ing of specialisation and taking about four years to complete. Law colleges offer Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Law, which takes two years and costs significantly less than an LLB degree from a private institution.

Students can either choose a private or public institution for their LLB or LLB (Hons) degree. Private institutions such as North South University and BRAC University centre their curriculum around Bangladeshi law, the same as public universities. On the other hand, only a few institutions such as London College of Legal Studies (LCLS) and Newcastle Law Academy (NLA) focus on British law.

Chandra Banarjee completed her LLB degree from LCLS (South) under University of London’s program and is now pursuing her Master of Laws (LLM) degree from Bangladesh University of Professionals. On the topic of her LLB degree, she shares, “One of the pros of a private institution is that you get more attention from the faculty members and your academic problems are dealt with instantly. You can also get more support from

other students as everyone is studying law.”

As for the drawbacks of a private institution, Chandra adds, “Studying through an institution like LCLS is cheaper than going to the UK. However, the cost is still huge. People who are from well-off families are lucky in this case, but this is not the case for everyone.”

Public universities such as Dhaka University and Jahangirnagar University all consist of highly competitive LLB programs.

Tauhid Rahman*, an LLB student from Dhaka University, shares his experience, “The access to world class teachers and their thoughts is extremely important. Rather than just asking to memorise entire case laws and statutes, our teachers also ask us about the loopholes and the problems with these laws. I think this mindset is vital.”

Public universities are not without systemic fault, however, as Tauhid adds, “One of the cons would be lack of sheer will from the teacher’s side. Frequent cancellations, late arrivals continue to be a problem. Law clinics, which are vital for any law student, are non-existent in most of the public institutions.”

Upon completion of the LLB program, the graduates have several paths to choose from. The first and most obvious option would be to become an advocate or barrister, and this is where the Bar Exam comes in.

In order to become an advocate in Bangladesh, a six-month long pupillage must be completed under a senior lawyer or law firm. After that, the graduates need to pass the Bar Exam administered by the Bangladesh Bar Council to become eligible to practice law. Once the graduate passes the Bar Exam, they must register with the Bar Council to obtain the licence and officially become an advocate in the lower court. For the higher court, the candidates need to give the High Court Permission Exam and a recommendation

is required to become enrolled in the Appellate Division.

If a student chooses to enrol into the Bar Training Course (BTC) and become a barrister, they first need to meet the requirements for an English law degree under a university in England or Wales, which is possible studying at institutions such as LCLS and NLA. Then, they need to complete the BTC, which can take up to a year or two. After that, prospective barristers then undertake a year-long pupillage in barristers’ chambers or in an organisation approved by the Bar Standards Board. Once the training is complete, the final step would be to secure tenancy in a set of barristers’ chambers or go into practice as an employed barrister.

If a candidate chooses to come back to Bangladesh and become an advocate, they will still have to sit for the Bangladesh Bar Exam. This is where both sides face a common issue, as the Bar Exam in Bangladesh is held infrequently, whereas it’s supposed to be held twice every year. However, since 2017, the Bar Council has only conducted three enrolment exams.

Regarding her experience, Barrister-at-Law Joyee says, “Despite clearing all the stages in one go, it took around 2 years before I could obtain the licence. Throughout that entire period, with the constant anxiety and frustration, I was working full time, not knowing when I finally would be able to formally qualify as an Advocate. On top of that, a lot of seniors use the requirement to have a licence to severely underpay the juniors.”

It is a common assumption that becoming a barrister is necessary to practise in Bangladesh, or that the foreign bar exam makes for a better lawyer. Joyee says, “The pros of being called to the bar of England and Wales are largely passive. However, over time, it can culminate into a really valuable investment into a lawyer’s career in Bangladesh. The training itself is really intense, so aside from the decorative value that we attach with becoming a

barrister due to our colonial hangover, the learning is also quite constructive.”

Barrister Shahedul Azam, Advocate at the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and Partner at Credence LP, echoes this sentiment, saying, “Clients usually value the title of ‘barrister’ but on a professional level, advocates perform just as well, sometimes even better. In my personal view, becoming a Barrister sharpens some skills for the individuals.”

Another point of concern for law aspirants is that the returns on investment usually come in the latter stages of the career. It is not uncommon for junior lawyers to be paid around BDT 5,000-10,000 during their pupillage.

Farzana Tasreen Synthia, Barrister-at-Law, Lincoln’s Inn and Senior Associate at Credence LP, says, “Say you invest a handsome amount of money to make a career in law. Then, if you decide to practice in Bangladesh, you cannot really expect a return on investment within 1 year or 5 years. If you’re expecting that, then you’re in the wrong profession.”

The late monetary returns, combined with the hassle of waiting for the Bangladesh Bar Exam, often influences LLB graduates to turn to other career pathways.

One such example is Ali Mashraf, who says, “If the exams were held regularly, I may have decided to pursue a dual career. Since junior lawyers who work as apprentices in chambers experience various roadblocks like meagre pay, I realised that I did not want to experience this steep journey at the onset of my career. Hence, I decided to pursue a career in academia.”

Another common pathway is to work as an in-house legal counsel at a corporate firm, where the practices greatly vary from a litigation firm.

Barrister-at-Law Farzana Tasreen Synthia, speaks of her experience in both sectors, “In-house counsels blend with other departments and use their legal analytical skills with the current problems to provide assistance. Whereas in law

chambers, particular issues are brought to you by clients for legal advice.”

Perhaps one of the grander goals of pursuing law would be to be appointed as a judge in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. A minimum of 10 years of practice in the High Court division, coupled with recommendations, elevates the High Court advocate to Justice.

Apart from these requirements, justice aspirants have to undergo a more extensive and rigorous academic career, viva voces, and extremely thorough background screenings to make the cut.

Tauhid, who had once aspired to be a judge, shares, “In order to become a judge, a relatively greater amount of study than the Bar is required. Hence, most students opt for the bar.”

As for the future of practising law, Barrister Shahedul Azam says, “Given the current political climate, there may not be much improvement in law as a subject. Furthermore, given the payment structure and the nearly-guaranteed struggle of about 5-10 years, a lot of talented people change career paths.”

But there may be hope for young advocates, as he adds, “In the past, with due respect to senior lawyers, the structure was a one-man show. When I returned to Bangladesh as a barrister, I worked in a top firm but I was paid nearly nothing. That was the norm but we are trying to change the system. We have introduced a basic starting salary and in time will try to introduce work participation fees to sustain their livelihoods.”

**Name has been changed to protect identity*

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Fatima Jahan Ena is a sub-editor at SHOUT.



What should modern schools look like?

Integrating meaningful amenities in school campuses for sustainable growth

Children are multi-dimensional “whole” beings whose development is complex and rich. The period of early childhood development is arguably the most crucial period of life. In order to reach their full potential, children need appropriate support from families, education and healthcare professionals during this journey of growth. As the children of today gear up to become adult citizens of tomorrow, schools play an instrumental role in their overall growth and development that goes beyond just teaching.

A school must provide a holistic environment to the impressionable minds and equip them with diverse tools to foster their versatility, one of the most essential tools being amenities. Modern educational amenities are inseparable parts of education. A growing body of research shows that school facilities can have a profound impact on both teacher and student outcomes. The quality of school facilities and infrastructure makes a significant impact on a child's learning and development in their formative years, essentially building the core foundation of the demonstrable characteristics and competencies as an individual.

The times have changed to give rise to a new era of technologically stimulated education. The advent of truly pragmatic learning, stresses the importance of premium school infrastructure and school facilities to provide an integrated holistic learning experience. Amenities offered by a school directly affect the health, behaviour, engagement, learning, and growth of the students. For example, a school equipped with a swimming pool and other sports facilities like a football field, a table tennis table and a badminton court, can allow its students to learn key life skills and help them remain healthy – physically, emotion-



ally and mentally.

With the addition of unique learning facilities and tech-enabled classrooms, school education has transformed rapidly in the past decade, leaving parents more inclined towards a rich and nurturing learning experience. Parents now want schools that can help immerse their children in a multifaceted experience of the learning journey. Whether it is language clubs, STEM integration, indoor and outdoor

sports centres, or other recreational facilities, education is now more about the entire experience. When viewed in isolation, the facilities may seem overwhelming, but for parents in the final stages of choosing between otherwise similar schools, special amenities may be the deciding factor on where their child can make their home for said journey.

In Bangladesh, the number of schools providing innovative and state-of-the-art fa-

cilities is not that high as of yet, but efforts are definitely underway. A few schools have come forward with exceptional facilities and innovative initiatives to offer a ‘wholesome curriculum’. For instance, Glenrich International School (GIS) is striving to create next-generation leaders and learners by incorporating outstanding facilities and special programs into its curriculum. The school has got language programs, Math Lab, a robotics-integrated curriculum, a swimming pool and so much more. These amenities will help the learners to develop the right competencies and grow into ‘whole’ human beings while tackling all challenges the uncertainty of life throws their way, with ease.

Over the years, education has undergone a significant transformation. Today, education is not only about academics. It is more about developing life skills through wide-ranging activities. This process of fostering students’ abilities requires a safe haven, which is usually the school for children. In this contemporary world, schools that can provide state-of-the-art facilities and compelling learning experiences can truly make a difference and leave remarkable impacts on students’ lives.



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What do your eyes see?

A.M. FAHAD

I can see well with my eyes,
Captive in their dreadful sockets. Unaware of the existence of the other.
Desperately taking in all they can, in their hunger –
A gentle ray of sunlight passes through my lenses,
The sun and I are both alive and well.
I am aware of the softly beating heart inside of me
That I often think of, and sometimes long for, but do not entirely miss.
But I like this newer version of me.
A paranoid android. Waltzing at 84 bpm,
A brain that does not work, a slab of odd chemicals and meat. A voice that cracks more often,
Fingers that can't strum the guitar the way they could before.
Proximity. The reason why
My hands shake, and the metal strings pass through my fingers
Like dandelions on a windswept field,
A soft breeze on an anxious night, or a dreamy Thursday afternoon.
My eyes are afraid of meeting yours.
Afraid of peering into your skull,
Have these lights twist and bend, to my horror, and illuminate the outlines of
An infinitely flawed version of me –
Bones and Flesh.
There's an endless space inside of your eyes,
Vast. Like a magnificent ocean.
I am paralysed. Waves crashing onto me.
I am drowning.
When you are not looking.

Fahad is bad at expressing his thoughts. Send him tips at www.instagram.com/fvehed/



ILLUSTRATION: FAISAL BIN IQBAL



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

The lies we tell at funerals

RUBAMA AMREEN

Death has always been there. Over the mountaintops, on the other side of the river, in the room with you right now. You just never notice it. It stands there silently, not watching, but just being. Death has always been, and will always be. You only see a part of it – the human interpretation of it – at funerals.

Nishi didn't see death either, not even at funerals. All she saw were people putting on a facade. Weeping women with dry faces, a funeral conductor prattling on about the deceased when really, all he cared about was the payment he'd be getting. No, funerals were not an honest place, but of course, which place was?

The earliest funeral Nishi could remember was her brother's. They had been a team of five, with three sisters and two brothers, Nishi herself being the second youngest. Except they had never really been a team, had they?

Anyways, there were four of them now. Nishi didn't even know him that well. There was a gap of seven years between them but what she did know about him was not exactly pleasant.

Passing at only eighteen is a tragedy, most would agree. However, what happens when that tragedy is one you model with your own hands? Giddy at receiving his driver's license, Imran had gone on a long drive in his car – so long that he'd never come home from it.

His family later learnt that he had been driving a good measure over the speed limit, and crashed head-first off a bridge. The remains of his body, when taken for post-mortem, reported traces of intoxicants in his system. They were let off from paying any charges, as their father had contacts higher up in the police department. Boys who ended up dead usually complicated things anyways.

So, he was gone, and while the incident greatly shook the entire family, Nishi and her younger sister

were more or less unaffected. They were the youngest after all and had never been deemed important enough to be given enough attention over their ever-egoistic brother. But just like the rest of the women in the family, they adorned themselves with white *kameez* on the day of the *milad* and covered their heads with a white cloth as the *imam* recited verses. After the ceremony was completed, tea was served, and everybody shifted back to their usual spots on the plush sofas.

Then began the pity talk. A distant aunt whom they had seen maybe once in five years shrieked on about what a loss it was, to lose Imran at such a young age. He had been so bright. So full of potential to achieve great things. Everybody nodded their carefully practised faces of sympathy in place. Nishi was ignored, so she slunk off to a corner and contemplated what she was hearing. Imran had never been exceptionally clever, nor did he have ambitions of becoming a pilot or an engineer as the woman was insinuating. So why was she saying those things?

It was then that Nishi realised that the dead were treated in a more dignified manner than the living would ever be. Lies were told in the name of respect – lies spun to be as smooth as silk, lies that felt like honey on your tongue, all because the unknown circumstances surrounding the death were a cause of irrational fear. Speak ill of the deceased and, who knows, maybe they will hear. Maybe they will crawl into your bed at night and take your soul as collateral.

Shuddering away from her suddenly dark thoughts, Nishi nudged her sister's arm and pulled her away to the roof to play. Nishi was eleven. There would be more than enough time for internal monologues in the future.

Rubama Amreen functions with only two working brain cells. Donate a few more at rubama.arahman@gmail.com.

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Tourism is harming the natural environment of St. Martin's Island

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

St. Martin's Island, also known as Daruchini Dwip and Narikel Jinjira by the locals has emerged as a popular tourist spot in the last two decades due to the travel to the island being made easier. The peak season for visiting St. Martin's is November to February, and the locals spend the rest of the year preparing for the surge of tourists during these months.

Before embarking on a tour to St. Martin's, there's obviously a lot of pros and cons to weigh. You might be wondering about the cumbersome and extremely risky journey, the exaggerated prices of food and commodities during peak season, or the availability of proper accommodation. One question that we should add to the list is, "What can we do to be respectful towards the natural environment of St. Martin's during our stay?"

Preserving natural resources has always been important, but the need is greater now than ever when it comes to St. Martin's. When I imagined St. Martin's Island before, I envisioned expanses of coral reefs, coconut trees lining the beach, and clear blue water. Unfortunately, I was let down when I set foot on the island and realised the natural environment of St. Martin's had been largely compromised by human intervention.

Littering

If you've visited St. Martin's recently, you've definitely noticed this problem. The local authority has taken steps to set up trash bins around the beach within walking distance of one another, but you'll still find plastic bottles and packaging right where the waves hit the shore. The damage is exacerbated by floating shops popping up here and there.

Not only does it put a blemish on the aesthetic aspect, but the waves also carry the plastics into the sea. I'll spare you the textbook explanation of how harmful plastic is to marine wildlife and the soil. While it's difficult to stop the use of plastic altogether, not littering on the beach is the least tourists can do.

Vehicles on the shore

The seashore is home to various living creatures including a number of micro-organisms. As such, vehicles like bicycles, motorcycles, and auto rickshaws are strictly prohibited on the beaches. Yet, this is very lightly regulated. You won't find all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) like on the beaches of Cox's Bazar, but it's easy to rent a bicycle on an hourly basis, which can trample the organisms living in the sand, such as crabs.

This rule is so loosely enforced that most tourists aren't even aware that bicycles shouldn't be ridden on the beach. Many even take bicycles or auto rickshaws to go to Chhera Dwip to avoid the trawler journey. The authorities are more vigilant about auto rickshaws as they produce more sound than bicycles.

Feeding the seagulls

While journeying to St. Martin's Island by ship, you might chance upon squabbles of seagulls. Seagulls are naturally inclined to hunting for fish in the sea, as well as scavenging for insects and rodents. Tourists enjoy feeding the seagulls by throwing dry foods like chips and biscuits at them. Unfortunately, such foods have little nutritional value to seagulls, and they end up getting accustomed to being fed by humans within the span of the three or four months that tourists visit St. Martin's every year.

the four months between November and February, it is the biggest natural attraction anywhere in Bangladesh.

The sounds produced by tourists, vehicles give way to noise pollution, which is harmful for fishes and other marine animals. Sound production is inevitable in places where there's a high concentration of people, but for the sake of the ecosystem, noise pollution should be managed.

Stray Dogs

As cute and fluffy as the dogs in St. Martin's Island are, they pose a threat to both

of how to treat stray animals. Different organisations have been working hard to neuter and vaccinate dogs on St. Martin's Island in the recent past but more needs to be done in this regard.

Aside from these, picking up corals and sea-shells is also another seemingly harmless tourist activity that actually has grave consequences. Sea-shells are admittedly gorgeous to look at and to decorate with, but they're home to tiny organisms. Picking them up for collection causes these organisms to die, as they're taken out of their natural habitat.



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Consequently, when tourism season is over, they are left to fend for themselves but are unable to do so. This leads to them starving, which is a fact most tourists are unaware of. So as beautiful and fast as they are, one might want to refrain from feeding them for their own good.

Crowding

Considering that tourism contributes greatly to the economy of St. Martin's, we can't really blame locals for trying to profit as much as possible from the tourists. Floating stalls and vendors on the beaches are thereby almost inevitable. Crowding on the beaches is also inevitable since for

the tourists and the ecosystem.

Tourists, unaware of the impact, often feed the stray dogs, which causes more of them to come down to the beaches. Stray dogs tend to attack mother turtles when they lay eggs on the beaches. As such, it's wiser to not feed them if spotted on the beaches so they do not congregate there. The rise in the number of dogs in the island causes multiple other problems too. The limited amount of resources in the island mean that stray dogs have to fight amongst themselves for food and territory, making them more hostile towards tourists, many of whom are unaware

All of this doesn't mean you should check St. Martin's off your list of destinations for a trip. Despite the damage it has suffered recently, the island is still beautiful with plenty to offer. St. Martin's Island has a delicate ecosystem, and tourism is bound to bring some level of imbalance. Preserving such a gorgeous tourist location is on us – the tourists, so we should do what we can to minimise damage to its environment.

Zabin Tazrin Nashita is trying her best to gain the affection of the cats on her campus. Help her win them over at: zabintrn@gmail.com