THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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ILLUSTRATION: **FATIMA JAHAN ENA**

EDITORIAL

We take things for granted, it's just something we do when we are comfortable. We look around, things feel familiar, dynamics we have set around us just fit, so we become complacent. We find contentment in the world we create for ourselves and we choose to disregard the little things that make us uncomfortable, because let's face it we are tired. We are all tired of being on the edge, waiting for the other shoe to drop, the next disaster to strike.

Unfortunately, disasters culminate best around complacency. When we fail to speak about the things that bother us, the issues continue to grow and fester. Chances are, things that bother us have bothered others, and will continue to do so in the future as well. And while it is unfortunate that it falls on us to create dialogue, to start talking about things and to keep complaining about things when no one seems to be listening, I can tell you with absolute certainty that every individual voice matters.

– Syeda Afrin Tarannum, Sub-editor, SHOUT

A	B
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Wannabe Spice Girls	I Wanna Get Better Bleachers
Sweet FA Peach Pit	What You Wanted CIX
Another Love Tom Odell	I Want It That Way Backstreet Boys

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

PLAYWATCH

DOCUMENTARIES

Caught Out exposes the rampant match-fixing in Indian cricket

INQIAD BIN ALI

The 118-minute-long documentary – *Caught Out. Crime. Corruption. Cricket* – not only exposes the rampant betting culture in Indian cricket but also reveals India's leading role in global match-fixing.

The story begins in 1997. Rookie sports journalist Aniruddha Bahal was shocked to see journalists talking to bookies in-game. Some bookies were even found to be talking with players during games and manipulating the scores, field choices, and which bowler would bowl and how many runs he would concede in a particular over.

Amidst all this, Bahal got former cricketer Manoj Prabhakar to be his whistle-blower. In the June 1997 issue of *Outlook* magazine, Prabhakar alleged that a top Indian cricketer offered him 25 lakh rupees to perform poorly. The report was met with scepticism and ridicule from everyone, including the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). People binned those claims and the magazine even got sued for defamation. But as fate would have it, Bahal would be proven right… by accident.

A man approached Delhi Police in 2000, claiming he was being extorted. Tracking the phones, cops uncovered a bombshell. They intercepted a call where a bookie offered eye-watering sums to fix matches to former South Africa Captain Hansie Cronje.

Of course, everyone denied it. But Bahal, emboldened by the latest exposes, got Prabhakar and journo Minty Tejpal to restart their investigations. Using a spy camera, Prabhakar got top Indian cricketers and administrators talking about fixing.

The revelations were horrifying. Administrators and cricketers treated the game with contempt. They also knew about the rampant match-fixing but never bothered to take a stand as it kept their wallets full. Some even suggested that the 1999 Cricket World Cup was rigged. It was enough for the central government to take action, with the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) springing into action.

Meanwhile, in South Africa, Cronje admitted that he had fixed many matches, but also revealed India's leading role in global match-fixing.

The CBI investigation revealed the involvement of Sharjah-based bookies led by Indian mafia gangster Dawood Ibrahim. All that the investigators needed was ironclad proof. That's when a bookie, MK Gupta, came forward. He detailed how Sharjah high command controlled the operations, even killing people if necessary. He also stated how he groomed cricketer Ajay Sharma to do his bidding and how he got the then-Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin to fix games.

It sealed Sharma and Azhar's fates. Both were handed lifetime bans. Azhar's case was very contradictory. According to investigators, he admitted to match-fixing, only for Azhar to later say that he never said such things. Sharma and Azhar had their lifetime bans lifted by the Indian Supreme Court in 2014 and 2012 respectively.

Prabhakar, meanwhile, revealed the cricketer who offered him 25 lakhs to be Kapil Dev. Those allegations were ultimately unfounded and Prabhakar, instead, was found to be guilty of fixing himself, leading to his ban.

All in all, Caught Out lays bare Indian cricket's systemic failure. Indian law prohibits betting but doesn't list match-fixing as a criminal offence. To BCCI's credit, they took action, establishing their anti-corruption unit in 2012. Additionally, anti-corruption units stay with players in team hotels to ensure no bookie gets near them.

Despite all that, bookies have alleged betting still continues unabated in India.

Inqiad is the CEO of Rashford FC. Contact him at inqiadali007@gmail.com

Why we should set healthy boundaries in friendships

SHANUM SARKAR

Boundaries are psychological demarcations that protect the integrity of a person or help them set realistic limits on participation in a relationship or activity. In other words, boundaries establish where your space ends and someone else's begins, like an invisible fence around the perimeter of a yard.

Due in part to media exposure and conventional therapy, our minds have been socially conditioned to think of boundaries in the context of romantic and professional relationships only. Boundaries often feel abstract, especially when it comes to platonic relationships.

Friendships can be taxing when they have no bounds. Healthy boundaries in friendships are the limits we place around our time, emotions, body, and mental health to stay resilient and content with who we are. But how do we know when to set boundaries?

Like an internal compass, boundaries all tend to begin with a gut feeling that tells us when we have the time or energy to devote to something, and when we need to say no.

Before we begin to set boundaries, it is important to delineate them to ourselves concretely. A good way to go about visualising our boundaries can be to write them down, as this can help us achieve greater clarity on where we want to draw the line between us and other people.

Setting up boundaries in our mind and assuming the people around us would know them instinctively, without us actually sharing them with the people, is a grave mistake we often tend to make.

Boundaries are rooted in clear communication. And fortunately, once someone is aware of them, most people will respect them and apologise if they accidentally cross the line. Not everyone will understand or respect our boundaries initially, but it is essential to stand firm in our own decision while kindly reminding people of our needs.

Saying no doesn't always require an apology or an explanation. However, it is important to pay attention to how we can shift these conversations to clearly draw a boundary instead of leaving the person hanging.

However, setting boundaries is in no way an easy task. It can be uncomfortable to talk about seemingly small issues. Things go up a notch for people pleasers with an innate fear of rejection.

Even though it can be an intimidating concept, any relationship that's good for us will likely flourish after we set healthy boundaries. A friend worth keeping will understand our need to have appropriate boundaries, and the process is integral for any friendship that's going to withstand the test of time. If a friend continues to overstep our boundaries after we've spelt it out to them countless times, it may be time to acknowledge that the friendship might not be worth another shot. For the sake of our mental well-being, it is crucial to understand that after all the work from our end, there should be no regrets in taking a step back from the friendship for good.

Shanum closely resembles a raccoon, send her reasons to cut down on caffeine at shanum-sarkar18@gmail.com

PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

University instructors need to do better as teachers

RAIAN ABEDIN

As a struggling university student, having to deal with a poor instructor is my worst nightmare. With every new semester, I dread having my grade and education fall into the hands of an instructor who, in spite of plenty of expertise in their field, struggles to communicate meaning to students. The university course load may be difficult, but the true source of strife here usually comes from unhelpful instructors who struggle to deliver a proper lecture.

There is no prospective help coming in from the outside, the instructor and the few textbooks are usually what we have to learn all the required material from, and yet with every passing class, it feels evident that none of the lectures are designed to communicate complex concepts to students. But then, why does it have to be like this?

To answer this, I think it's important to understand the fundamental difference between a university instructor and a school teacher. For school teachers, their primary job – the very reason they are hired– is to teach students to the best of their abilities. While this does not mean that all teachers are bound to be the symbol of excellent mentorship, chances are a lot of them will be adequate in their given responsibility.

University instructors, on the other hand, are hired not just as teachers. They tend to be hired more for their research output and for their ability to produce research publications by working with students. Even lecturers, in many cases, are typically not given opportunities unless they can show thorough research work, but rarely are their teaching skills questioned. This is where we run into a major problem: a good researcher need not be a good teacher, and university instructors that can be both are not as common as one may think.

The problem, obviously, is not limited to just that definition. But the lack of teaching experience many university instructors have often becomes apparent when they attempt to teach a class. In my experience, I have witnessed instructors who fail to recognise the level at which their students may be at, making their lectures far more complex than they should be. I have also seen many instructors who are universally considered to be awful teachers, going off by just reading the lecture slides out loud and adding nothing of value. The management and research work these instructors put in for the university, however, is very clearly more important than their teaching capabilities. And thus, they are never at risk of losing their jobs.

Of course, it is absolutely important for a university student to be independent when it comes to academics, yet that should only come as an additional quality that students may utilise on top of the help provided by the course instructor. There is no reason for a student to be berated for not learning something when, in truth, so many of these lecturers and professors exist only as part-time teachers. And if even the system refuses to acknowledge their inadequacy, how can a university be a space for cultivating learning?

Give Raian your favourite electrolyte/chocolate milk suggestions at IG: @raian_is_burning

ILLUSTRATION: **SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM**

The need for youth involvement in POLICY DIALOGUE

Despite the severe inadequacies plaguing the footpaths of Dhaka, walking is my preferred mode of commute – provided that the place I am going to is within walkable distance amidst other factors. But I prefer it not because it is a pleasant experience but because it seems like a much better alternative than sitting in traffic for hours. While walking does impose its own set of challenges, it is made all the more harrowing because of the dire state of the walkways. It doesn't take a lot of scrutiny to observe all the things that are wrong with it.

ABIR HOSSAIN

Hence, people are forced to walk on busy roads, parkour between rickshaws, and be wary that they don't get run over by a bus. These are real problems that pose real danger to the masses. Naturally, I have found myself wondering on multiple occasions what it might take to fix it.

More often than not, my concern is reduced to despair. Not only do I not know how to express my concerns but I also realise that it will most likely not be taken any notice of, even if I do. I trivialise my own problems except these problems are shared with a thousand others.

As young people, we want to see policy changes that suit our needs. The harsh truth, however, is that to tackle policy change, we need to tread through a labyrinth of bureaucracy that most of us are not well-informed of. Even if we were to try and make proactive attempts to do anything about it, it would only expose the inefficiencies of the system.

Zaheer Abbas, Head of Reform Management at Youth Policy Forum (YPF) and a sophomore at the Dual BA Program Between Columbia University and Sciences Po, reflects

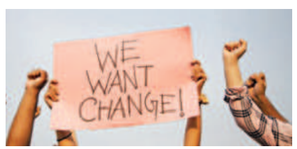

PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

on what instigated his participation in policy advocacy. "Before I started working for YPF, I began thinking about how I can get my opinion heard. This wasn't too long after the Road Safety Movement in 2018 when we literally marched onto the streets and made our demands clear. Even then, we didn't get what we asked for. And it made me realise even protesting is not a good way to get our voices forward."

As arduous as the process may be, we cannot let it force us into inaction. To better understand how we can tackle the complex process of sparking policy dialogue, we had Zaheer explain what it is that YPF does and how they do it.

"We tend to pick up work that we think is pertinent in Bangladesh. Our advocacy agenda reflects the current situation of the country. It isn't necessarily us reacting to everything that happens. Rather, we try to identify issues around which no other organisation is pushing for reform, issues that require us to intervene immediately. We also need to evaluate the long-term need for it," he said.

"The process varies on a case-to-case basis. It depends on the campaign that we are running and what our end goal is for it. For our Rohingya advocacy project, we wanted to spark public dialogue to revitalise interest in the Rohingya issue," said Zaheer. "The other project, Local Development Initiatives, was very ambitious. Through this project, we sought to bridge the gap between evidence and policy. Oftentimes, the people occupying seats in the parliament don't have data that reflects what it is that the constituents want and we wanted to help tackle this issue"

Regardless of whatever initiative is being taken though, Zaheer stressed the importance of having the right people who are willing to back the cause. For an institution of YPF's magnitude, that is possible because of the large network of people it has gathered. Through their members, they get in contact with stakeholders and policy champions, who in turn, help get them in contact with the right people in the right places.

Elsewhere, Abul Bashar Rahman, 21, an undergraduate student at the University of British Columbia is on a pursuit to highlight the impact of climate change in Bangladesh. "As a devoted climate activist, I am preparing for an ambitious mission this coming May – a bike ride across Bangladesh from Tetulia to Teknaf. My goal is to produce a documentary that showcases the experiences and preparedness of the communities most vulnerable to climate change in the country. With climate change threatening vast regions of Bangladesh, including the risk of catastrophic flooding in Dhaka, this 45-day journey holds immense personal significance for me," he said.

There is no doubt that the likes of YPF are doing invaluable work to further the interests of young people. But the issue lies in the fact that without working with such organisations, the voice of just one individual gets crushed. Even if those voices all came together to amplify their needs, it appears to be futile. In addition, stories like Bashar's is an outlier.

Samiha Tahsin Medha, 21, is a student from the Institute of Business Administration, Dhaka University. She was a vocal protester during the Road Safety Movement and talks about how she feels five years after the protest. "I feel frustrated at having

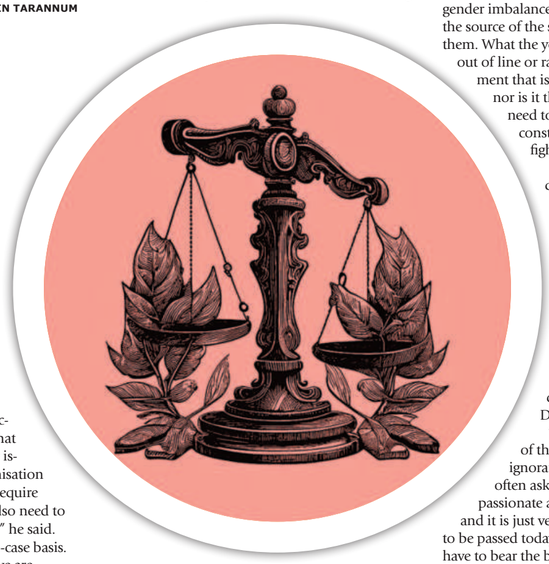

ILLUSTRATION: **SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM**

my voice shrugged off. Even though I participated in the Road Safety Movement, a part of me knew that one movement was not enough to reframe the system. It is going to be a long fight. The movement has not come to a halt," she said.

Mansib Adnan*, 22, an undergraduate student pursuing a degree in software engineering in Malaysia, said, "It is enraging. We are the future of the country and that gives us a right to say what we want our future to look like. It's not like we are asking for things out of the blue. What we are asking for are basic needs and if those are not met, what are our future plans supposed to be based on?"

When the voice of an entire demographic is shunned, the consequences manifest in unsavoury ways. People begin to foster feelings of despair, and who can blame them? With an endless stream of problems stacked against them, it is only natural that they seek a way out. Brain drain has long been a problem that Bangladesh has struggled with, and opportunities being few and far between, it won't slow down anytime soon.

"I was initially supposed to stay back in Bangladesh. I didn't want to leave because I really believed that by staying back, I could make a difference and contribute to the growth of the country. However, I was very demotivated after getting a glimpse at the state of higher education in Bangladesh," said Mansib when talking about his decision to leave.

"I feel like we are already starting the see the consequences of negligence. There is this feeling that things aren't supposed to be the way they are. It is only a matter of time before the effects of undermining the opinions of an entire generation catch up to a country. This might just be a transitional phase but it can't go on like this for too long," said Samiha.

Of all the people I have spoken to for this article, there were many variables but only one constant: the need to see change implemented by the system itself. Whether they thought the entire legal framework needed an overhaul or there exists a blatant gender imbalance in professional settings, the source of the solution was clear to them. What the youth are demanding isn't out of line or radical. It isn't even entitlement that is driving their demands, nor is it the need to thrive. It is the need to feel like that they aren't constantly in the middle of a fight for survival.

Historically in Bangladesh, it is young people and students who have spearheaded change because it is them who have had the most at stake. They realised that they weren't just fighting for their future but also their legacy. The spirit of our forefathers is a testament to the fact that the need to see change is woven into our DNA.

"To ignore the opinions of the next generation is an ignorant thing to do. At YPF, we often ask ourselves why we are so passionate about fighting for change and it is just very simple. If a law were to be passed today, it is the youth who will have to bear the brunt of this law for the rest of their lives," said Zaheer.

Regardless of wherever we are headed, the youth cannot be side-lined for too long.

"When our voices are side-lined, we lose the opportunity to contribute our passion, creativity, and innovative solutions to this fight against climate change. By not including us in the conversation, you are stifling the potential for progress that our generation carries within us," iterated Bashar. "This denial of our right to a healthy and secure future only serves to deepen the chasm between generations and the sense of disillusionment many young people feel."

ILLUSTRATION: **AAQIB HASIB**

A guide to buying your first guitar

A.M. FAHAD

Buying your first guitar can be a challenging task. You may find yourself overwhelmed at the ocean of options available when you enter a guitar store. The confusion only increases when the shopkeeper tries to hand you an expensive guitar to convince you that this product will help you play like Jimi Hendrix, and the whole process turns out to be way more arduous than it is.

There are many factors that make a guitar worth buying. Though the idea of worth maybe subjective, it's wise to have a clear picture of what you want beforehand to steer clear of future regrets. Here's what's important when you're buying your first guitar.

FIX A BUDGET

Having a fixed budget before you start browsing is always a good idea. You can ask the salesperson of your local guitar store to show products from a specific price range early on to avoid liking a vintage piece that costs more than a few of your organs combined.

Usually, you will find good acoustic guitars within BDT 5,000-15,000. Electric guitars are more expensive and can range from BDT 20,000-40,000 with the additional cost of an amplifier or an audio interface. If possible, spare an additional BDT 1,500-3,000 for accessories like gig bags, guitar capos, and spare strings.

PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

FIND WHAT'S COMFORTABLE

Though one might argue that the quality of sound is more important, I personally think comfort overshadows everything else. You will have to like how the guitar feels in your hands to be able to play it in the long run. The weight should be comfortable and you have to be able to access the entirety of the fretboard smoothly so that playing for longer hours doesn't feel uncomfortable.

The easiest way to test this is to place the guitar on your lap and run your hands across the fretboard to see how it feels. If it doesn't feel comfortable to you, it's a good idea to look for an alternative.

CHECK THE EQUIPMENT

Do you like the sound of the guitar? Does the guitar have fret buzz? Are the electronics in good condition?

These are all questions you should ask and get answers to when buying your first guitar. Check if the neck of the guitar is straight. If the strings are too far apart from the wood, that means the action of the guitar isn't right, which may produce an unpleasant sound even when the salesperson is playing the right chords. A great way to have these things checked is to have someone with you who knows how to play the guitar.

IS THE AESTHETIC EVEN IMPORTANT?

The way your guitar looks is more important than you may think. You need to like how it looks so that you actually want to pick it up and practice. Try out different shapes and colours to see what satisfies your aesthetic sense.

At the end of the day, buying your first guitar is an exciting process. But it's only the beginning of an even more exciting journey. Make sure to create healthy practising habits so that you can reach your goal with your new instrument and have fun while doing so.

Fahad likes frogs and wants you to take him with you when you're buying your first guitar. Find him at amfahad1747@gmail.com

The joy of designing your own dresses

NOUSHIN NURI

White is the most annoying of colours.

Arriving at such a conclusion about the colour that rules my closet was unexpected. But after spending hours walking through the alleyways of a market with similar shops, it's hard to keep patience. I had been making circles in Chandni Chawk to buy some fabric for a *salwar* to match a white *kameez*. But every time I placed the fabrics beside my *kameez*, each of them was either too white, too yellow, too thin, or too expensive.

While some of you can relate to my frustration of matching white with white, others can ask, why go through this ordeal in the first place? Why take the convoluted route through the Chandni Chawk backstreets when I can just swipe a card in a store or better yet, make a few clicks on the internet?

It does cost more to customise a dress than to grab one that has been mass-produced. So, while the rationalist in me doesn't approve of such endeavours, there's another part that gets slightly dazed at the sight of fabric rolls neatly lined from the top to the bottom of a wall.

When the salesman unfurls the nature print organza before my eyes, my heart is divided between the yellow daisies on black and the lavender blossoms on white. It hurts to leave any of them behind but my budget makes me do cruel things.

While I'm running errands to collect materials, it's not only the feminine floral prints that allure. One of my favourite places to shop is the men's fabric store. I consider them the haven of solid pastel colours. Though fabrics in men's shops tend to be on the pricier side, their texture and durability happen to be much better than the ones made for women.

ILLUSTRATION: **FATIMA JAHAN ENA**

The most telling of all fabrics is definitely the ones repurposed from old sarees. One of my friends wore an *anarkali* made from her mom's red jamdani for Baishakh when we were in the third grade. The memory still remains even now, when I'm at the dusk of my undergrad. That's how immortal a *kameez* reborn from a saree can be.

The inspiration for a design can be a revelation, sometimes, literally from the sky. One day, you look at the sky and the fluff of gliding autumn clouds makes you want to wear the sky. You go to a boutique house and ask if they can embroider clouds on a sky-blue fabric. The possibilities of customisation are beautiful – tea cups, cats, books – it's a way of telling someone what you care about without saying a word.

From the dreamy desire to wear the sky to the energetic expedition of making it a reality – it's a fun little project. Finding the right shade of white lace to line my white *kameez* is like fitting the last pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. The difference is that I can fit this puzzle around my body and walk into the world with contentment. Designing the dress, I want is a preparation for dressing the way I want. I hope more and more of us can do that.

Noushin Nuri is an early bird fighting the world to maintain her sleep schedule. Reach her at noushin2411@gmail.com

A BROKEN GODDESS

MARIFA ROSE

Being stabbed in the back a million times,
She is broken but she is fine.
The thought of being fragrant and deceived
Makes her shiver and burn in grief.

He made her feel a way –
That she was his life.
She cries every night in thousands of fright.
In thought of him leaving her.
Maybe people were right?
They fight, they quarrel, they misunderstand the meaning of life.
Being stabbed in the back a million times,
She is broken but she is fine…

Does love make her unsighted or
leave another scar in her life.
People tell her the love they have
But why does she feel used in every part of her life?
Being stabbed in the back a million times,
She is broken but she is fine.

They make up, they break up, and love loses the trust.
Whereas she imagined in her childhood love full of pixie dust.
He comes back as if her heart could be broken again,
She falls, falls in love another time…
Being stabbed in the back a million times,
She is broken but she is fine.

The writer is a student of Class 7 at Southbreeze School.

ILLUSTRATION: **FATIMA JAHAN ENA**

ILLUSTRATION: **FAISAL BIN IQBAL**

Keep you company, keeping myself company

SHAIKH SABIK KAMAL

I imagine you.

In a meadow of half-bloomed flowers, full of unwavering vibrance, you've become a part of the beauty. But your eyes, they've become colour blind. The soft welcome of the daffodils don't intrigue you. Deep down, you know they're lessening your dreamed space. The splendour of the meadow doesn't resonate in the black and white you've grown weary of. You await. Your hollow eyes atone for the price of the sins they never saw. Right now, you're like orchids – wishing for the wind to take you away, must nothing else does.

You imagine me.

By the shore of the serene sea, even as I stand atop the eroding sand, I feel as if I'm below it. A hazy, opaque background to my back, thoroughly lacking transparency. A calm, melodious yet deadly sea to my front. The open blue sky of the eerie evening does not know how to welcome me. Nor do the birds that pry on me keenly before they fly away to a place I've never heard of. The sombre waves keep crashing, just not close enough to my fragile feet. "Has time stopped?" is a question I very well have lost the answer to at this moment. But I still ask the sea if it would be alright to stay here for a little while. Even after I suffocate, I wait for the sky to embrace me. I know it will. One day.

You're left in misery, I dwell in doubt. While hope tries to detach from you, fear takes me over. Are you unfazed by the lack of your wanderlust? Or am I undaunted by my sheer faith in meaning?

I do not know. Nor do you. But we're hauntingly aware of everything.

We imagine ourselves.

In a room, dark yet it's bright enough to let us see each other's faces. We sit by the fireplace. Your hands resting inside the woollen blanket you've wrapped yourself with. The smoke from the coffee you've despised so much grants a soft sweet fragrance, almost as if it's comforting you. I take slow sips from my mug as I observe you examining the burning flame from the fireplace. It seems to be illuminating our presence – a kind gesture indeed. I've also wrapped myself in a hand sewn blanket. I love following you after all. Because we always seem to find a place to let our souls fit in. I understand that you enjoy my presence as much as I do, so I stay and converse whenever I can. Unlike me, you don't speak too much. But when you do, it's like carefully crafted pieces of paintings from the Blue Period.

This space we've made, even if it only exists inside our thoughts, never let go of it. We're both powerless in our own unique ways, but we're as humane as it gets. We'll stay, until we find each other, outside of our minds, in this great big world that surrounds us.

I'll keep you company, keeping myself company.

Shaikh Sabik Kamal loves making up words, especially with his benchmate during classes. Send him your own made-up words with meaning at sabik2005kamal4787@gmail.com

Availability of menstrual products in educational institutions

AZRA HUMAYRA &
ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

PHOTOS: **NAYEM SHAAN**

It is an unfortunate truth that conversations around menstruation are considered taboo in our country. From the very first time that a girl gets her period, she is made to believe by her family members that menstruation is something to be kept under the wraps.

Faced with the air of discomfort around this topic, these girls become conditioned to treat their periods with utmost secrecy, resulting in them feeling rather ashamed of their periods. Due to the stigma surrounding menstruation, as well as their ingrained feelings of shame, many females find it embarrassing to talk about menstrual products. It isn't uncommon for women to have never bought sanitary napkins for themselves from a pharmacy well into their adulthoods, nor is it rare for them to be embarrassed to ask someone else to buy menstrual products for them.

Educational institutions teach students of all ages and they are filled with educators who should be aware of the problems female students face regarding menstruation. They should be at the forefront of the fight against the stigma surrounding periods. However, most institutions are still caught in back-dated ways to properly address menstrual issues. Consequently, if students get their periods unexpectedly while at their education premises, they lack the proper support should they require aid.

Kazi Zuairia, a student at Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, expresses disappointment at how her school handles menstrual products. "Our school tried taking some steps to make pads available a few months back. However, the vending machines they introduced broke within a week and haven't been fixed or refilled since," she says. "Furthermore, they hung some dispensers in certain washrooms but they never had any pads installed in them."

Speaking on the attitude of teachers when students ask them for help, she says, "They tell us to go to the washrooms and fix it ourselves so most of us don't bother asking them anymore but turn to our friends and hope they have a pad."

Most institutions have sanitary napkins in the nurse's office, which is usually located some ways away from bathrooms, where students generally go to when they are faced with sudden periods. Having to walk the distance from the bathroom to the nurse's office, especially when they might have stains on their clothes, is obviously less than ideal.

The scene isn't particularly different in female-only madrasas. A female student at a madrasa in the southern part of Keraniganj, who asked to remain anonymous, says, "The madrasa provides no access to feminine hygiene products, and we have to buy our own from nearby shops."

The issue here is that students are taught to feel shame when asking for sanitary pads at stores. Being a female-only madrasa without providing menstruation supplies is concerning, as most students enter madrasas at an early age and experience puberty while enrolled.

One solution would be to introduce vending machines to dispense sanitary napkins. When the sanitary napkin vending machines were introduced at the University of Dhaka, they were met with nothing but applause and appreciation. But the current situation renders the former nothing more than the clever marketing of a sanitary product manufacturer. It's simpler to just run into a pharmacy rather than using one of the broken vending machines to get a pad.

Mishkat Mahiuddin, an undergraduate student at the University of Dhaka, paints a picture that almost every female student attending a public university can relate to when she says, "Before the pandemic, we always had access to sanitary napkins, but now we do not. We have classes at Mokarram, so the halls are fairly far away. Dhaka Medical College (DMC) is the closest location to get pads. However, we must return to the department's restroom to wear the pads. There is a vending machine in the math building, although it's faulty, as are all of our hall's vending machines. I was only able to pull out a pad once."

Jim Ilyas, a student of Jahangirnagar University, adds to the argument. She says, "We have vending machines in our halls and departments. They may be present in every hall, but not in sufficient numbers. The vending machines do not function properly, and if one crashes, it is never repaired. There is no access to pads at TSC, where the majority of clubs and events are hosted. Save for a select handful, the conditions of the washrooms are appalling."

Menstruation is a monthly occurrence for women, and having little to no access to pads when needed is a major cause for concern. Moreover, the conditions of the restrooms at these institutions are deplorable, resulting in female students frequently refusing to use washrooms conveniently located near them in favour of those located further away.

Upon interviewing private university students, it is quite apparent that the availability of feminine hygiene products is not satisfactory there either. Amreeta Lethe Chowdhury, an undergraduate student at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), says, "They installed a dispenser in the women's common room. It's not always convenient because our campus is huge, and this common room is quite far away from the actual classrooms. Besides, the machine doesn't always work."

"We had to appeal to the Vice Chancellor to get the vending machine installed. But there are many difficulties in using it and, resultantly, we still have to carry our own pads. It would have been much easier to have a few packets in each washroom," states Nahian Jamal Joyeeta, another undergraduate student at ULAB.

At North South University (NSU) and BRAC University (BRACU), the situation isn't any better. Only one bathroom at NSU has a machine that dispenses pads, and that is connected to the female-only lounge. Bathrooms with available menstrual products in BRACU are few and far between.

Going about looking for a pad while bleeding and experiencing cramps directly burdens the students rather than the institutions. The administrative body should assume responsibility for providing students with menstrual products instead of leaving them to handle the situation on their own.

The situation gets more complicated for students with disabilities, who often have to battle debilitating cramps and bleeding, while searching for menstrual products or even an accessible bathroom. Most public buildings, including universities, often lack the necessary infrastructure for accessibility, such as wheelchair ramps or handles for support.

It is critical to conduct a comprehensive assessment in order to determine the number of female students and their needs. For a large number of students, installing a few vending machines or designating only one washroom with feminine hygiene products is insufficient. This approach ignores the actual needs of the female student population, which can result in uncomfortable or unsanitary conditions. The authorities should also make sure whether the facilities already available to the students are functioning properly or not.

Institutions should make informed decisions about where and how many feminine hygiene products and accessible washrooms are needed. By taking this approach, educational institutions can foster a supportive and inclusive environment that prioritises their students' health and well-being.

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