

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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THE TRIALS AND TRIBU-
LATIONS OF STARTING A
NON-PROFIT AS A STUDENT

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MAKING OUR CITY
BEAUTIFUL

PG 8



IS THE TRANSPORTATION
SYSTEM FAILING
THE YOUTH?

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

EDITORIAL

How important is transportation, really? People talk about it all the time, its problems and nuances become matters of national discourse, entire Facebook groups of thousands of people are dedicated to discussing and meme-ing it. But is all of that warranted, or does transportation have an outsized influence on its surroundings? Because at the end of the day, people are still getting places. They're late, they're tired, but most of them are getting to their destinations, right?

Things change when you think of this issue in terms of hours lost in traffic or lost waiting for buses and trains. Think about the money lost by the accumulation of the extra five taka a passenger has to pay the bus conductor every day simply to avoid a confrontation, or the years lost from their lives when one considers the toxic fumes they have to inhale because bus owners simply refuse to comply with vehicle fitness regulations. If these human level sufferings fail to make a mark, think of the productivity lost because of all this, and what damage it does to the economy.

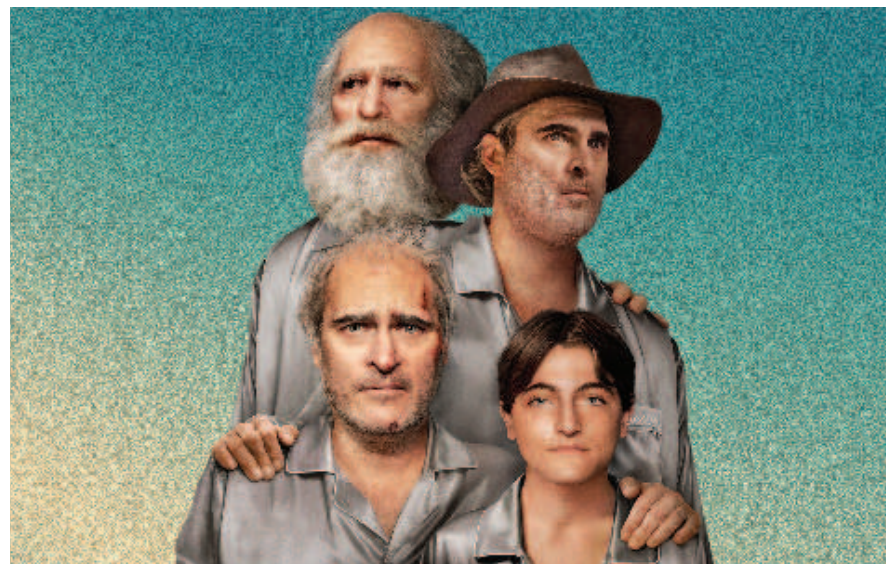
Transportation is everything. It needs to be fixed.

– Azmin Azran, Editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

MOVIES



Beau Is Afraid and I am confused: Ari Aster's comedic venture is still scary

KOUSHIN UNBER

"I think I need to call my mom," a middle-aged gentleman remarked to me as everyone got out of the theatre after a three-hour-long anxious viewing of *Beau Is Afraid*, Ari Aster's newest comedy-horror about a man's attempt to reconnect with his mother despite having the "disappointment" label imposed on him throughout his life.

If you are not familiar with Ari Aster's previous works, this movie may not be for you as watching it will most definitely elicit a rather wrongful first impression of the director's works. *Beau Is Afraid* is the result of giving an emerging director who's made a mark in cinema their creative freedom; I'm just not convinced he should be allowed to use them again.

The movie stars Joaquin Phoenix playing Beau Wasserman, an extremely anxious sad-sack with no redeemable qualities that allow the viewers to grow a liking to him and Joaquin Phoenix's performance is nothing short of excellent.

The film surrounds Beau being confronted with one unfortunate event after another. Even if all of it may be made up in his mind, watching him go through the worst doesn't enable the audience to empathise with him. Throughout the film, I wasn't sure if I should root for him. Beau has nothing going on for himself, and everything he experiences is too bad to be true.

The runtime is painstakingly long, and it is only the first act that seems to make the most sense. The first scenes are fast-paced and even if hyperbolic, the events he goes through make sense. The camera work in the city scenes proves

to be well-thought-out and beautifully executed.

In the second act, however, there is a severe tonal shift in the movie after which the plot suffers and becomes confusing just for the sake of it. If the entirety of the second act was cut out from the movie, it would make no difference to my understanding of the film.

The third act is where more of our questions start getting answered. Beau finally comes face to face with his mother and this is where a lot of the issues surrounding mother-son relationships float to the surface. Maybe you will find some elements of relatability in Patti LuPone's monologue about having to love someone who constantly and unfailingly disappoints, but that gets drowned out in the overwhelming concentration of nonsensical hogwash that goes on in the scenes surrounding it.

If you're watching *Beau Is Afraid* with the intention of finding out what it's about, you're probably doing it wrong. There is no puzzle to piece together or a mystery to solve. Psychological horror is the newest craze, and the notion is there is always a lesson to take away at the end. However, I walked out of the theatre gaining no new viewpoints of the world.

Just watching the movie, itself won't suffice to understand it, but maybe the point isn't to understand the film. Maybe all it does is exist as a reminder that you should always call your mom to check up on her.

Koushin is still struggling to get over her jet lag. Send her obscure Wikipedia articles at koushinunber27@gmail.com

TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



A

The Bends
Radiohead

MOVE
TAEMIN

Movement
Hozier

Bailando
Enrique Iglesias ft. Descemer Bueno, Gente De Zona

B

Oh Honey
Delegation

Move
Thousand Foot Krutch

Moves Like Jagger
Maroon 5 ft. Christina Aguilera

After The Storm
Kali Uchis ft. Tyler, The Creator, Bootsy Collins

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



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

The trials and tribulations of starting a non-profit as a student

JAIYANA CHOWDHURY

Students initiating social media campaigns to raise funds for a cause are not rare occurrences, neither is it a new concept. Looking at the sheer number of new non-profits, it is only normal to develop conflicted feelings. It is widely believed that students have different motives while establishing or joining a non-profit, from being passionate about the cause to participating just to polish their resume.

Despite the rising popularity of such organisations, there are several difficulties students have to face while trying to make a space for their non-profit in this cluttered field.

Finding the right team

Choosing team members is a crucial part of this process, as the people you work with will help shape the future of your organisation. A team with expertise in networking, advertising, graphic designing, and event management can go a long way. It is also important to ensure that your team members believe in the cause and are willing to put their best effort towards it.

At this stage, don't be disheartened by not being able to find a place for an acquaintance in your organisation, or having your idea being dismissed by someone you want to recruit, as you will eventually be able to find equally passionate individuals.

Building your reputation

Another hurdle is building a reliable image for the organisation. Convincing everyone that you are serious about this when so many organisations die out after just one campaign can be tough.

Building a reliable online presence is crucial in this stage, so be prepared to give detailed and accurate answers to queries regarding your non-profit. People will only contribute to a trustworthy organisation, so be sure to maintain professional-

ism during online interactions.

It is also important to let your donors know that they have indeed helped someone through your organisation, be it by informing the contributors individually or sharing your work through social media. However, the latter should be done while keeping in mind that the people you may be helping also have the right to guard their privacy. Asking for permission and respecting their decisions will go a long way in this case.

Raising funds

The real test in this journey is appealing to people so that they donate to your cause and participate in your events. Failure to make the audience resonate with the cause at hand and looking for donations in the wrong places are common mistakes that most non-profits end up making.

Properly knowing the cause you're championing, presenting your case with statistical data, and detailing the ways the funds will be utilised can make all the difference.

A good way to familiarise people with your organisation is through organising events in societies or educational institutions. Activities such as raffle draws, carnivals, and charity fairs can raise funds while also spreading the word about your work.

Moreover, non-profits can approach companies who usually have a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) budget.

Student-run non-profits usually start as passion projects helmed by teenagers, but that doesn't mean they can't transform into something commendable. With the right amount of support, these organisations can sustain themselves and bring positive changes in our society.

Jaiyana is looking for ways to stop procrastinating and survive A Levels. Send her suggestions at jaiyanachy@gmail.com

Why we should include philosophy in our curriculum

USRAAT FAHMIDAH

In 2022, I visited Lisbon, Portugal, to take part in the International Philosophy Olympiad – an event aimed at promoting the study of Philosophy at the high school level globally.

Over the span of four days, I engaged in conversations with participants from more than 40 countries about the importance of studying Philosophy in today's world. We all acknowledged the relevance of studying Philosophy in today's world, despite hailing from academic backgrounds with a heavy focus on science subjects.

As more students opt for STEM subjects for its financial prospects, the importance of liberal arts is shrinking, leading us to ask, "How is it affecting our education?"

The discussion was intriguing when it was brought up that Philosophy is either a compulsory subject or an optional one in most education systems of the Western world. It's even valued as an important subject necessary for a well-rounded education.

While some of my peers from other countries were introduced to the subject early in their high school, others like myself pursued it through self-study out of sheer curiosity because it's not offered in our curriculum.

But what if we, too, incorporated Philosophy into our school curriculum?

In essence, philosophy pushes us to question the world around us. It plays a crucial role in helping students gain a deeper understanding of ethical and moral issues by urging them to think critically and ask questions. This has become a valuable skill in classrooms and in the current world, as we are constantly bombarded with information. The subject can help us form informed opinions and make better decisions without blindly accepting whatever piece of information or opinion we may view online or be presented with.

Philosophy also emphasises the importance of meaningful debates and respectful dialogue. It's an essential practice to continue in classrooms to teach students to be more tolerant and inclusive, while providing room to freely exchange ideas without the fear of censorship.

All of the above reasons illustrate how philosophy has the potential to have a profound impact on Bangladeshi youth, helping them shape their worldview and develop the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in today's complex and rapidly changing world.

While the higher secondary level in Bangladesh does include a subject named "Logic", the syllabus does not cover the other important branches of the subject like Aesthetics, Ethics, and Political Philosophy.

The main issue with our education system is the rigid core curriculum which discourages students to explore other subjects, its lack of practical application, and the focus on rote learning and restricting students from opting for the humanities. But one solution for this eroding system could be introducing subjects like Philosophy, as it has the ability to foster free thinking among students, though its proper implementation remains a concern.

Interacting with diverse students at the Philosophy Olympiad made me realise how highly valued the subject is in the education curriculum of other parts of the world where free speech, critical thinking and democratic values are highly regarded. Maybe it could be the same in Bangladesh, too.

Usraat Fahmidah loves philosophy. Her favourite philosophers include Simone de Beauvoir and Agust D. Send her book recommendations: usraatfahmidah@gmail.com



ILLUSTRATION: FATIMA JAHAN ENA



Is the transportation system failing the youth?

SUMAIYA RASHID AND HRISHIK ROY

Public transportation in Bangladesh, particularly in Dhaka, has been a long-standing issue that has only worsened over time. With a population rapidly on the rise, the number of cars on the roads has increased, and the already ineffective public transportation system has become more disjointed. The everyday struggle of commuters from all walks of life is marked by long lines at bus stops and train stations, congested public transportation, and wasted travel time. For Dhaka's millions of young commuters, the situation is particularly dire, with insufficient traffic management and costly and inaccessible public transportation making inter-city travel nothing short of a nightmare.

To demonstrate the questionable situation of transportation services, Titlee Rahman*, an undergraduate student at Dhaka University claims, "The public transport system in Dhaka, especially buses, have a lot of issues going on. First of all, they take hordes of people in no matter the number of seats



left. Furthermore, they seldom follow traffic rules, frequently overtake other vehicles, and try to crash with another bus because of the unhealthy competition which exists between these buses. Then there are often people who will probably try to make me feel uncomfortable through unwanted touches or other forms of harassment such as passing vulgar comments."

The deteriorating transportation situation in Dhaka has made commuting a daunting experience, particularly for young girls and

women. While buses are the most accessible and cost-effective mode of transportation in the city, they are also hazardous, unreliable, and crowded – making women feel vulnerable to sexual harassment. The threat of harassment limits women's freedom to travel and compromises their safety.

Anisa Mumtazina Dewan, a student at Independent University, Bangladesh, shares her experiences of being harassed by men on buses, CNGs, and riding services, and how it has affected her mode of transportation and daily life.

"In one particular instance, I was alone in the CNG and the CNG driver was making lewd gestures and making me uncomfortable during the ride. Since then, I have stopped travelling by CNGs alone and always make sure that I am accompanied by a friend whenever I have to travel in a CNG. I have faced harassment from riders of various ride-hailing services too. One of them saved my number after the ride and decided to call me and harass me over the phone. I had to

block their number and I passed their number to my friends who scolded him over the phone and forced him to stop harassing me."

The poor transportation system in Bangladesh has a significant impact particularly on the education and employment opportunities of young people. Many young people in Bangladesh rely on public transportation to get to school or work, and the unreliable and inefficient system can make it difficult for them to arrive on time or at all. This can often result in missed classes or even dropping out of school altogether, limiting their chances of future success.

Raihana Sharmin, a psychology lecturer at North South University, emphasises, "Late in classes and exams, and exhaustion is a common consequence of traffic jam which results in difficulty in time management and less productivity in academic and professional life. This in turn can affect life satisfaction and family relationships."

Titlee Rahman shares further, "Of-tentimes, we have lectures, debates, or seminars arranged by our institution where various guest speakers come and



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

engage with topics of my interest. However, these often tend to happen around the afternoon and end around the evening, maybe sometime around 6 PM. I often have to carry out a cost-benefit analysis of whether I should take part in such events and build my extracurricular profile, or if I should leave early and reach home safely as travelling after the evening often feels unsafe as the CNGs drivers tend to take alternate paths through unknown alleyways after sunset, and buses are particularly unsafe and uncomfortable after dark. This results in me missing out on opportunities such as developing academic or extra-curricular connections which are important for my career, or even recreational activities. I am also not able to pursue my hobbies or interests because I lose a large chunk of my time trying to get to places."

Limited transportation options also affect young people's employment opportunities. Many jobs require commuting to different parts of the city or even different cities, and the lack of efficient public transportation can make it challenging for



young people to secure employment or even attend interviews.

Additionally, these issues tend to affect people's emotional health in harmful ways. Anisa further shares her observation that, "People overreact even at the minor inconveniences and lash out at others as the emotional toll caused by cumbersome transportation often becomes difficult to manage."

On top of the issues related to safety, alternatives to buses, such as CNGs or cars from ride-hailing services, are often very expensive.

"Nowadays, a lot of CNG drivers don't agree to a fare less than 400 or 500 taka between my home in Mirpur and Dhaka University, and even 600 taka if the heat is too much or if the weather is a bit gloomy. It is unbearable that I have to spend around 1000 to 1200 taka every day just so that I can travel to my institution," adds Titlee. She also stated that while motorbikes from ride-sharing services are cheaper and faster options, the bikers are often reckless, making the rides very unsafe at times.

Similar sentiments were echoed by Tajrian Khan, an A level candidate, who says, "I have also had minor accidents while travelling on motorbikes. On one occasion when I was travelling to my student's house, the motorbike I was riding crashed into another motorbike. I was lucky enough to anticipate the crash from a distance and was able to jump off the bike in a timely manner. The bikers are often not cautious enough. A few days ago, this biker I was travelling with was speaking over the phone while driving the bike. Another time, a biker was actually scrolling through Facebook while speeding down an empty street."

Given the pathetic conditions of Dhaka's transportation system, many young people may have to rely on private transportation. For those who can afford it, buying a car or motorbike may be an option, but this comes with additional costs for fuel, maintenance and parking fees. However, those who find themselves unable to opt for private transportation, are left with no other choice but to settle for a less comfortable, unsafe, or unreliable modes of transportation.

For Rahat Mohashin Zarif, a student of Notre Dame College, being able to utilise the train system to travel from Uttara to Kamalapur and back has been beneficial in terms of avoiding Dhaka's bustling traffic. But, Rahat also warns that the train system has room for a lot of improvements. "The situation with trains is very messed up as well. Not a single train is on time, so there is a high level of uncertainty. To catch my classes at 8:00 AM, I need to catch the train around 6:45 AM, but it often arrives at 7:30 AM or 7:45 AM, making trains a non-viable mode of commute on most days as well. A lot of these are privately run commuter trains, which

often wait till the entire train is filled to maximise profits, causing long delays. Also, these trains are often very congested making it the ideal place for pickpocketing. Some of my friends have had bad experiences as they have lost their wallets and phones to pickpockets."

When asked about the different ways in which they think the transport could be improved, both Anisa and Rahat pointed out the lack of a proper traffic control system in the city which causes traffic congestion.

Tajrian further adds, "We really need to get rid of car-centric infrastructure and nationalise our public transportation, especially in Dhaka. Traffic policies are never going to be effective until the public transport system is fixed. Privatised buses need to be stopped as they only care about maximising their profits through shady practices and inefficient routes. Introducing nationalised bus services with fixed routes will definitely solve a lot of public transportation issues if managed properly."

According to Titlee, "The authorities need to make student-only bus services available, as this will allow young people to travel smoothly across the city. This will also reduce the number of cars in the city as students are more likely to take the student-specific buses if they are comfortable, instead of cars."

*Names have been changed upon request.

Hrishik is an intern at the Daily Star Books and a contributor at SHOUT. Reach out to him at hrishik.roy.27@dartmouth.edu

Sumaiya is just trying to make it through each day; give her toxic positivism at sumrashid10@gmail.com

BEYOND
BANGLADESH

WWW.KALONBD.COM

Beyond Bangladesh:
The future plans of an innovative e-commerce Platform

Kalonbd.com, the first e-commerce platform exclusively for women consumers, started its journey in Bangladesh in 2018. Since then, the platform has gained immense popularity, serving almost 70,000 customers across the country. With a focus on quality items, Kalonbd.com has become a favorite among women shoppers in Bangladesh, providing a seamless shopping experience.

The only hurdle the platform faces is logistics, as all of their items are imported from around the world. However, the team is working hard to improve logistics to ensure a smooth shopping experience for their customers.

We had the opportunity to talk to the management team of Kalonbd.com, and they shared their plans for the future. The platform is now planning to expand globally, which will be a major milestone in the country's e-commerce industry.

With Bangladesh's economy projected to have the highest growth rate in 2024, surpassing China and India, Kalonbd.com's future looks bright. The platform has set its sights high, and we look forward to seeing it achieve its goals.



PHOTO: COURTESY

In conversation with Professor Imran Rahman

Vice-Chancellor of University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh (ULAB)

AZMIN AZRAN

ULAB was shortlisted for the Times Higher Education Awards Asia 2023 for Outstanding Contribution to regional development. What has the University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh (ULAB) been doing that has led to this?

Professor Imran Rahman: Times Higher Education is one of the leading university-ranking agencies in the world. When I saw the opportunity to submit a story from ULAB, I sent the notice to all our department heads. Professor Sumon Rahman, the director of ULAB's Centre for Qualitative Studies, sent in a story about an interesting initiative he's leading called "FactWatch". FactWatch is the only university-based fact-checking centre in Bangladesh, it has been doing well, and it's been listed with Meta as well. It's run by our students, and this initiative was shortlisted by THE for contribution to the regional development category.

ULAB is now offering a minor in South Asian Studies. What will be included in the curriculum? How will that impact in shaping the world views of students?

Professor Imran Rahman: South Asian studies is a subset of international relations, which is an important subject in a globalised world. While we don't have a department of international relations, the beauty of a liberal arts system is that even though we don't have a degree program, we will find a way to teach one or two core topics. The reason we are offering this minor is because we have a brilliant director behind this, Sudeep Chakravarti. He is an internationally famed nonfiction writer who has written books on South Asia. The courses under this minor will be available to students across all departments and disciplines. This will give students an additional skillset that might provide an edge for certain jobs.

ULAB's Department of Bangla Language and Literature has formulated a "creative thinking-based professional curriculum". Can you tell us more about it?

Professor Imran Rahman: National Professor Rafiqul Islam, who had been

with ULAB since the beginning, pushed to start a Bangla department at this university. At first, there was a bit of apprehension. But in a country with 170 million Bangla speakers where the language is a central part of our history, it seemed like the right decision to have a Bangla department. Other private universities offer degrees in Bangla, but we felt that we need to offer it just like we offer it in English. Those who study English won't spend their entire lives writing. They study English for their love of it, they study it to develop their thinking and their writing skills. English students are versatile, and they have to think a lot and write a lot and they are skilled in critical thinking. Similarly, we thought we could have a Bangla department where they can pick up skills they will need for their working lives. The learning takes place in a way where the students are involved in the teaching process, we call it "Active Learning". Fifty percent of the assessment will be done through written exams, and the other fifty percent will be through interaction. This encapsulates the creative thinking part.

The professional curriculum refers to the non-credit "Essential Skills" course that every undergraduate student has to take. They have to attend these courses that include behaviour, etiquette, online conduct, empathy, tolerance, etc. And on top of that, they also have to learn English.

Dhaka is a difficult place to live, especially for young students. What does ULAB do to make lives easier for its students in this regard?

Professor Imran Rahman: Many students at ULAB come from outside Dhaka, and I'm proud of the effort they're making to get an education. They leave their families to live by themselves, do their chores, travel alone, and have to deal with loneliness. We try to keep an

eye on them from the first term because students based in Dhaka have the luxury to fall back on their families for support.

We are starting a separate program for students from outside Dhaka so they can adjust to life in Dhaka quickly. We will focus on assisting them with accommodation, transportation, and help in general.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has asked private universities to shift to a two-semester system from 2023. How do you view this proposed change?

Professor Imran Rahman: Most private universities in Bangladesh have been using the trimester system without any hassle. There is a proverb in English: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". We believe that this decision should be left to the universities. In Bangladesh, we don't have

anything close to the diversity of systems that a place like the USA has. They have semesters, trimesters, and even quarter systems.

The universities get to decide what works for them. I hope UGC comes around and lets universities make this decision for themselves.

Late last year, there was a push to start wings of national-level student politics bodies in private universities. Is the university ready to face the complications that come with the presence of politics on campus?

Professor Imran Rahman: Most private universities, from day one, did not want wings of political parties on their campuses, because our history with them has been poor. There was a time when those who participated in student politics were the brightest students. That is no longer the case. Our alumni, teachers, students, and their parents, – everyone agrees that this is not a good idea. This does not mean our students won't be politically aware. They will be future voters and have views. Good students and strong individuals should get into politics themselves. But we don't think wings of

political parties in private universities will add anything.

Private universities are increasingly going toe to toe with public universities. Do you think this is part of a bigger trend in Bangladesh's education sector? And is that good for the country as a whole?

Professor Imran Rahman: I do think this is part of a trend in the education sector. I base my answer on my 22 years of experience working with a public university (Institution of Business Administration, Dhaka University) and then 16 years working with a private university. In my view, most of the development achieved in the higher education sector has been led by private universities. This is because of the lack of freedom that public universities often have to operate under.

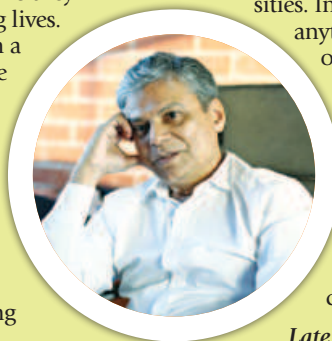
Overall, yes, I do believe the education sector is moving in the right direction but we have a lot of work left to do. Students enter university after 12-13 years of schooling but often lack basic skills, so the quality of education has to be looked at.

The challenge now is to increase the quality of our education, making sure graduates have the right kind of skills to achieve whatever it is they want to do and to make sure they have international parity, where they can compete with students from any country in the world.

What does ULAB do to be more inclusive for students of all economic and social strata?

Professor Imran Rahman: We provide assistance to students to the extent that we can. Our only source of funds is tuition fees so we are limited by that, but we want to assist students. The government should also think about helping our students with scholarships. During the pandemic, we provided financial assistance and we had a committee to look at cases individually. Moving forward, we will do as much as we can as well. We can waive some small fees, extend deadlines, waive late fees, and we can do more for meritorious students.

Azmin Azran is the editor of SHOUT.



MASON JAR

WAZIHA AZIZ

Another night spent awaiting the sunrise. I look out my window facing a mesh of red, orange, yellow hues against a vast, cerulean canvas. I must disagree with the poets. Each morning, it is the same, in its staggeringly tedious white-on-blue enormity, it is the same sky.

The trophy I had wanted since childhood sits menacingly on the shelf. I blink, hoping it might take a brand-new shape. But it remains, the solid object I brought home a few weeks ago. The same hunk of metal and wood moulded into a gramophone, grand and golden, with "FIRST PLACE" engraved on its side like letters on a tombstone.

I stare bleary eyed as my lock screen tells me I have a new message.

"I'm so proud of you, Abrar! I always knew you'd win. There's nothing you can't do! I promise, it will only get better from here."

"Thank you for your kind words." My fingers type out and hit send.

In the past few days, my body has learnt five different ways to reflexively thank someone – automated responses to all my well-wishers.

My mother is upset that I have not sat at the piano since the competition. Initially she assumed I had been rewarding myself with a small break. Now she notices the hollow in my eyes. She notices my untouched meals and unkempt hair. Soon she will come into my room to remind me of my gift. She will ask me why I run from it, now of all times.

How can I explain that playing the piano feels like racing towards nothing? I have no new shinier trophy to set my eyes on. I have no grand title to chase.

My father had bought me my piano when I was a child, and I had longed to master the instrument since. Multiple tutors and hundreds of practice sessions passed when the true reach of my talents began to unfold. Once I found out about the competition in Prague, the course of my life was set.

After years of hard work, a few months ago I finally secured a spot in the com-

petition. And so, my mother and I flew out to Prague a month beforehand. Only one thing stood before my mind's eye: a prize that would be a testimony for my entire career. Each day I would sit at my piano by the window until I knew the Double Thirds Etude like the back of my hand. Each night I would know no sleep. I would stare down at the keys until they'd stared back at me. Stoic expressions on their dull, dead faces. I wouldn't stop until I brought them to life.

On the fateful night, my mind was not my own. A stranger, in a strange theatre of a strange city, wandering in a stranger's body, I drifted in place. As they called my name, I fought down a bout of nausea and entered the stage. Each moment of my life had been cascading towards this point. I felt the burden of a thousand eyes on me, a thousand ears prepared to hear the verdict of whether I would pass on my own life. A hundred flashing lights. Rapturous applause followed by a silence that hung by a thread. My fingers edged towards the keys, approached the final chapter of my biography as I pressed down, an alien note emanating from the piano and drifting into my ears.

With the final key I signed my sentence, either to ascend or to die. Or both.

Towards the end of the night they announced that I had won.

I heard no applause nor cheer. Backstage, I gave in to the bout of nausea and allowed my insides to empty themselves of bile. I let go of the fear, told myself I had finally done it. My dream was finally in the palm of my hands, with nowhere else to put it.

My book has been written, the epilogue closed. I am standing on the other side of my biography. I read through the pages, relive the scenes that brought me all my glory. I have now become a container for the past; a mason jar to hold all my memories in place.

Waziha Aziz is a really loud person with an inflated sense of self. Remind her that she's not all that via Instagram @useless_depressing_poetry.



ILLUSTRATION:
 SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

First flight of a flightless bird

A.M. FAHAD

I write to you in songs that come from the migratory birds that flock
 The skies and swing by the river beside my stick house in search of shelter.

I am a stickman. And I write from uncertain times, a distant future, sped up

As the sun goes down when it's dusk, with the blood of the moon shining crimson red

And the night sky upon us.

I pen misery with dark black ink that I draw from a hole inside of my chest

And as you can see, I am slowly nearing an ink crisis.

A void of words, as you continue to replace them with colors, A stickman's job is to stare at the sky and heave breaths of disdain and curse

At the world, the wind, and everything that goes by
 But it's different for me now. The world is ending soon.

I would like to be of some help to you. Protect what we share –

Every name we give it, and all the reasons why

Before the ground I place my weight on catches fire

Like a sapling full of life, nourish it with soil and water.

Paint my hands with dirt, mud, and care.

I would like to spiral with you into the cursed depths of this hollow earth

And fly my way back to you, wherever you are.

Whether it be a five-minute walk or two continents apart –

From where the migratory birds emerge,

From where their wings take first flight,

I would like to fly back to you

And never leave home again.

Fahad likes frogs. Reach out to him at amfahad1747@gmail.com

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Making our city beautiful

The artists behind the Moghbazar flyover artwork

RAIAN ABEDIN

SHOUT sat down with Mohammed Abu Sufian, the individual who supervised the artists responsible for bringing the pillars of the Moghbazar flyover to vivid life. We managed to sneak in a small yet thought-provoking conversation with them, with Abu Sufian as the artists' representative for our interview.

What can you tell us about how this work came to life?

Abu Sufian: This was carried out under the authority of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) with the sole intention of figuring out a way to stop the spread of the disastrous state of pillars across the city.

For now, we are only doing the pillars that start at Moghbazar and go up to the rail gate. Many of these pillars have far too many posters and advertisements which give it an ugly look, almost to the point where no one wanted to even look at the pillars. So, the whole purpose here is to make these pillars beautiful, and that's how DNCC gave us this opportunity to make the area look livelier and pleasing to the eyes.

Did DNCC have to reach out to a particular organisation to make this happen?

Abu Sufian: No, actually. Most of us are students of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Dhaka University. We don't belong to any specific group. DNCC reached out to the faculty and with their cooperation and the mayor's blessing, we have been able to carry this out. The work has been done by many different artists, each bringing their own

unique style. While I personally helped in gathering artists, it was not a very difficult process since we artists are very keen on trying new and exciting things.

What's the process like for painting these pillars? Could you walk me through the whole thing?

Abu Sufian: The artists mainly work at night, sometimes up until 2-3 AM, and every pillar takes around three days to complete. The duration depends on several factors such as making sure all the artists are present and coordinating ideas and much more. Right now, we're working on another new pillar that may take a similar length of time.

This work that you're doing is under the city corporation's authority. What do you think about doing more street art that isn't necessarily under authority?

Abu Sufian: We'd very much love to do something like that. We are appreciators of art of all kinds, and to be able to do more street art, especially alongside others, is a fantastic idea. However, whenever we, as artists, attempt something new, we are always bound to face certain restrictions. "Do this, don't do that" and whatnot. This feedback comes from everywhere, so there's obviously a huge challenge that we need to always face. Artists are free people, they like having freedom in their work, so with barriers things do feel difficult.

Personally, would you like to do more community-driven street art?

Abu Sufian: Yes, absolutely. We want to celebrate this more because the more

people learn and love art like this, the more artists will be valued. This is actually a loop because as more artists find recognition, the more we will find ourselves wanting to hone our skills and make better art. And when something is pretty to look at, it obviously makes everyone feel better.

What has the response been to this whole project? And what obstacles have you faced in carrying this out?

Abu Sufian: Obstacles have been rather minimal, fortunately. Everyone who has seen our work here now seems to be of the same mind – all pillars should be decorated like this. They want this beauty to spread across the city.

As artists, we are overjoyed with how positive the reception is, but at the same time, we should also try to be careful to preserve the beauty that we have strived to create. Spilling dirt, muck, or even urinating in these spaces is, sadly, quite common. We have seen a lot of these with our own eyes and have had to stop them from happening while we were hard at work. Everyone should try their best to not use these spaces

however they want. When more people are careful about preserving beauty, it will last longer.

In the past, we have seen people who do not like street art take steps to stop it. Have you faced anything like that?

Abu Sufian: Not at all, none of that came our way. Everything we have painted has been entirely for the benefit of society and the development of a clean and beautiful city. We would not want to attempt anything that would be hurtful to the people of this society, and anything that may contain ideas that will hurt others will never be something we would be interested in doing. We try our best to spread kind and thoughtful messages all around through our art. If you see through all the pillars, you'll actually notice a lot of the messages that we're trying to deliver.

Do you have any further plans for decorating other flyovers?

Abu Sufian: For now, we have not talked about any such thing with the city corporation, so this is it. But then there is something to be said about the state of so many of these pillars with their posters, ads, and dirt that make them unsightly. We, as artists, very much want to work towards making them a sight to behold. That's very important to us, and I think the Moghbazar flyover may be the start of something new in this way. Who knows, maybe soon enough we'll be doing this all across the city.

Remind Raian to make space in his google account at abedinraian@gmail.com

