



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

UNIVERSITY RANKING RACE

Can't live with them, can't live without them



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

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SHAMSAD MORTUZA

This is the time of the year when newspapers tell universities what they need to do. The butterflies of an influential magazine in the UK has fluttered their wings to air the news of who's who in the educational landscape. The centrifugal force of the wings flapping has created a storm in our local news outlets and newsweld. A section of the local press cried havoc in a classic half-empty rhetoric, "No university from Bangladesh in the top 800 global rankings." The news, however, could have mentioned that there are two new entries from Bangladesh in the top 1,000 universities of the world, according to the Times Higher Education (THE) World Rankings 2024. Brac University (BracU) and Jahangirnagar University (JU) have joined their compatriots, the University of Dhaka (DU) and North South University (NSU).

THE has widened the net to incorporate 1,904 universities from 104 countries. Until 2011, before

I know how difficult it is to be on the list. University rankings are complex and multifaceted. The parameters through which the quality and performance of a university are measured are far from simple. To be successful, they require a combination of resource allocation, research output, academic perception, international collaboration, funding opportunities, quality of education, breaking the language barriers, and institutional policies. The process leads to a competition, often unhealthy, that has forced universities to join a "numbers game where administrators are incentivised to manipulate figures, game the system, and focus on parameters of dubious importance while paying scant attention to what happens in the classroom." One scandalous instance of manipulation became apparent when Columbia University was found guilty of doctoring data. From being the

there are three key criteria that institutions must meet to be considered for enlistment: teaching at the undergraduate level; at least 1,000 publications in the past five years and 150 each year in journals listed in Elsevier; and less than 80 percent research in one single subject. The second criterion acts as a gatekeeper, as the participating universities must build a research portfolio over a long period of time. Sadly, our universities were designed to be teaching institutions with a value system that did not necessarily match the ranking benchmarks with their heavy research orientation. Higher education in Bangladesh has been viewed as a public good that benefits the individual receiving it and their broader community in turn. A quick glance at the ranking metrics will tell you that many of the categories put our local universities in a disadvantageous position. The grades for institutional income and industry income are cases in point.

The four foundational pillars of this year's THE World Rankings include teaching (29.5 percent), research environment (29 percent), research quality (30 percent), industry (four percent), and international outlook (7.5 percent). There is 59 percent emphasis on research, which includes metrics on the citation impact and the income, reputation, productivity, strength,

Ranking	Uni	Overall	Teaching	Research Environment	Research Quality	Industry	International
801–1000	BracU	32.7-36.9	14.8	12.3	71.1	15.7	42.2
801–1000	DU	32.7-36.9	17.5	10.0	68.8	18.1	48.5
801–1000	JU	32.7-36.9	24.1	8.9	71.9	19.5	49.7
801–1000	NSU	32.7-36.9	12.9	10.0	76.1	15.8	43.3
1001-1200	BAU	28.3-32.6	29.5	9.9	45.2	22.6	49.5
1001-1200	Buet	28.3-32.6	21.7	15.8	50.7	35.2	29.8
1001-1200	RU	28.3-32.6	15.9	9.3	59.3	17.6	39.6
1201-1500	KU	22.8-28.2	17.0	9.5	46.9	17.1	43.7
1201-1500	Sust	22.8-28.2	13.2	8.4	43.4	16.6	44.8

THE partnered with Thomson Reuters Foundation for data analysis, it published a coveted list of 200 universities under the old methodology. DU got featured on the list for the first time in 2016 in the 601-800 bracket. The university was pushed outside the top 1,000 circuit on the THE world ranking lists of 2018, 2020 and 2021. In 2022, DU returned to the club of 801-1000 universities. In 2023, it moved up the ladder to be placed in the 601-800 band, only to slip back to its present 801-1000 position.

Last year, eyebrows were raised when a 30-year-young private university, NSU, breathed on the neck of the century-old DU in the 601-800 ring. DU is likely to feel more pressure with two new challengers. But it is encouraging to see that Bangladeshi universities are making strategic efforts to be on the world map. A total of 21 universities submitted data to be ranked by THE World Rankings; only nine made the final cuts. Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) and Rajshahi University (RU) are in the 1001-1200 slots, while Khulna University (KU) and Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (Sust) are placed in the 1201-1500 slots.

As an academic administrator,

number one US university, Columbia was subsequently downgraded on the ranking list of News & World in 2022. Ranking agencies rely on the data submitted by the institutions

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and the research data available in the international repository.

So, I congratulate all the participating universities for their efforts. For THE World Rankings,

The question of translation

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FARIDUL ALAM

On May 24, 2017, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring September 30 as International Translation Day, commemorating the feast of St Jerome, a multilingual with a mastery of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, canonised as the "Patron Saint of Translators." He was commissioned by Pope Damasus I in 382 to revise the Latin translations of the Bible by revisiting and reviewing the original texts in Hebrew and Greek (Septuagint) by 404, resulting in the Vulgate Bible, to be officially

complex world is inconceivable without translation. As millions of people keep moving, migrating and fleeing across the world in the 21st century – more than ever before – for a wide array of variables including, but not limited to, unemployment, underemployment, famines, persecution, natural disasters, environmental calamities, warfare and tourism, prompting displacement or "deterritorialisation," to borrow from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1972), the global significance of translation inexorably springs to the fore.

Nonetheless, a double entendre has always been imputed to translation. The Italian adage, "Traduttore Traditore" or "Translator, Traitor" obtains unabated. The translator, Ricoeur postulates, serves two masters –

practices, as Lawrence Venuti (1998) so cogently argued.

The search for the holy grail of perfect translation from the source language to the target language has been likened by Walter Benjamin to the "messianic echo" of the original. In spite of its inevitable pathways of digression/dispersion/dissonance/distortion, translation tends to (re)constellate into an afterlife or incarnation of the original text at best. In other words, translation embarks on an intercultural and intertemporal endeavour, bearing the trace of the original, carried over to the present through metamorphosis. In Benjamin's own words, translated from the German original (as *mise en abyme*), the translator's task is "to find the intention towards the language into which the work is to be translated, on the basis of which an echo of the



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used by the Roman Catholic Church henceforth.

Suffice it to say, this belated recognition of the translators was long in the making. The International Federation of Translators advocated for marking this day from its very inception in 1953, until its official celebration kicked off in 1991. It was intended as an acknowledgment of the profession, historically instrumental in bringing about a bridging network among an ever-growing number of language communities, cultures, and nations arguably to facilitate meaningful dialogues and public discourses that potentially beef up international cooperation and security, and bolster and enhance alterity, diversity, equity and inclusivity. The essence of this enterprise is captured in the theme of this year's theme for the day: "Translation unveils the many faces of humanity."

Accolades for and invectives/innuendoes against translation were never in short supply. The growth of world culture, the development of comparative literature, and the civilisation in Western Europe were deservedly attributed to the shaping influence of translation. French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (2004) describes the role of a translator as an arbiter, or cultural mediator, imbued with the art and ethics inherent in translation, considered invaluable within the confounding context of unending ethnic and religious conflicts. He argues that translation not only spreads knowledge, but also transforms what it means to know, to the extent that the notion of navigating an increasingly

the foreign author and the reader who speaks the same language as the translator, propelled by the pressing need to appropriate, resulting in the paradox of being "doubly sanctioned" in which the "vow of faithfulness" is undercut by "a suspicion of betrayal." The plight of Afghan translators following an abrupt pull-out of the US from Afghanistan in 2021 epitomises a blatant case in point.

There is no denying the truism that translation historically served the best interest of the colonisers anywhere from intelligence-gathering to sustaining colonial rule through persuasion, knowledge and exoticisation of the colonised "other," by definition without history and unable to represent itself before being rendered (translated, better still) adequately compliant and subservient as a faithful subject to be counted on contemporaneously and prospectively, consistent with the discursive construction and formation underpinning how power is complicit with knowledge. Translations from the non-Western originals to the Western target texts were found replete with deep-seated Orientalism, reflected in their caricature, denigration, distortion, oversimplification, trivialisation, stereotyping, subjugating, subverting, subsuming, and domesticating of the irremediable "other." More to the point, regardless of how translation has been scandalously exploited and sidelined as a discipline and an enterprise, it indefatigably served as a powerful site of resistance by interrogating the contradictions and hypocrisies implicit or explicit in the dominant cultural values and

original can be awakened in it."

In this process, the survival or afterlife of the original text hinges on the transitional space between the two languages/cultures, generating hybridity, analogous to the "international space of discontinuous historical realities" (Bhabha, 1994:217), requiring iterative disambiguation. "It is not about the passage from one language to another, but about the crossing of a threshold characterised by blurred limits," suggests Maria Teresa Costa (2022, Pg 17-18). The putative echo turns out to be "a complex figure of resonance that cannot be reduced to the repetition of a stable entity" (Pg 216).

Derrida's rereading of Benjamin reduces the text's survival, or afterlife, through translation into one "living on the boundary, on borderlines, on the edge" (Bassnett, 2013, Pg 342). It resonates with Hans Georg Gadamer's (1989) framing of translation that dispenses with the original's reproduction by embracing empathy and distance. Ricoeur treads the fine line to posit that "a fantasy of perfect translation takes over from... (the) banal dream of the duplicated original" (Pg 5). Extending the dialogic underpinning of Gadamer's hermeneutics, Ricoeur also comes up with a heterodox exegesis that "the self only knows itself through the other." In this hermeneutics of selfhood, oneself is understood as both selfhood and an(other), adding to the problematics of the illusory origin associated with translation.

This is an excerpt from a larger article.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Roll call answer

5 Historic event

10 Early hr.

12 "Skyfall" singer

13 "The Taming of the Shrew" city

14 Network points

15 Print units

16 CDs' forerunners

18 Bowler, e.g.

19 Handles

21 Snug

22 Some time in the future

24 Famed fur tycoon

25 1970s scandal

29 Green shade

30 Church sights

32 Avenue tree

33 Fabric color

34 In what way

35 Select group

37 Move smoothly

39 Showed over

40 Quite full

41 Flight makeup

42 Prudent

DOWN

1 Aspirations

2 Tooth layer

3 Sight from Yemen

4 Mer makeup

5 Stadium group

6 swearing in vow

7 Scorching

8 Tabloid content

9 Peevish

11 Blue-gray cat

17 Depict

20 Country division

21 Rock unit

23 Angled golf holes

25 Spot for a ten-spot

26 Look up to

27 Where Gauguin painted

28 Undermines

29 Mocks

31 Nobel, for one

33 Bears' lairs

36 Call on

38 Bar study

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WEDNESDAY'S ANSWERS

B	A	T	H	E		M	I	T	T	S
E	T	H	E	R		A	D	H	O	C
A	R	E	N	A		K	E	E	N	E
T	A	J		S		W	E	A	R	I
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		G	I	G		T	I	S		
	R	E	T	R	O		E	T	C	H
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S	T	I	N	G		S	O	B	I	G
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E	N	T	E	R		S	O	R	E	R