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of studying

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■ MUSIC ■

Taylor Swift's The Tortured Poets Department

Still a confusing mess

RAIAN ABEDIN

I never quite enjoyed Taylor Swift's latest album, though upon release I did make several attempts to do so. To me, the album represents everything pop music shouldn't be: lyricism that is either painfully derivative or generally not well thought out, production that is skeletal and gutless— with no sound standing out in particular— and a mix that makes the overall listening experience feel like it was prepared by amateurs.

Between the first release of this album and now, the billionaire entertainer has released several versions of *The Tortured Poets Department*, with some sources claiming around 19 different physical versions alone. One has to wonder if there is any artistic intent behind these actions, but the reality is clear once you see the charting numbers, and the desperate attempt to hold on to the continued quantitative success brought about by so many pointless releases.

Revisiting this album months after its

release, I take away even less than when I initially listened to it front to back.

While the description may create expectations of vastly different sounds in the two halves of the album, the truth is most of what is present here sounds incredibly lacklustre in terms of catchy melodies or interesting and punchy beats.

For the biggest pop star in the world (and one of the biggest of all time) to come up with a serving of songs that sound so watered down is, to say the least, disheartening.

Then there's her song-writing, which has been on a downward spiral since *Midnights* but has never seen a point as low as this before. Every single song is chock-full of half-baked metaphors and images that add nothing to the emotional weight of what Taylor is actually trying to say and, instead, take away from the song.

While there are certainly highlights (such as "The Manuscript"), to say that they make the listening experience worth it after trudging through everything else would simply be a lie.



OPPORTUNITIES

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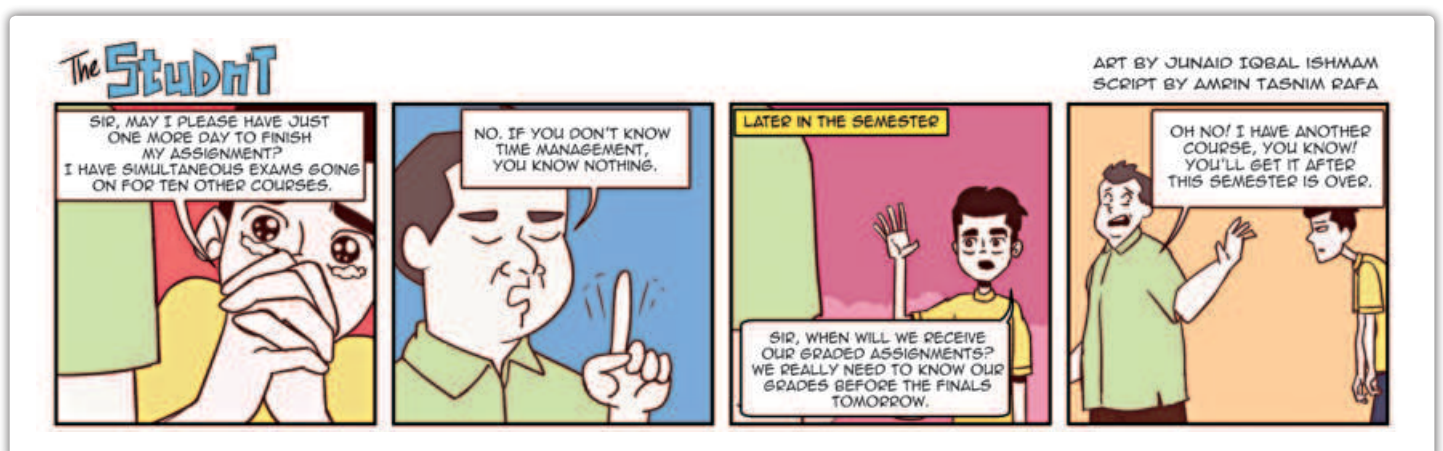
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UCB SEND ITS 7TH MONASH BATCH TO

AUSTRALIA AND MALAYSIA

Monash College CEO
Jo Mithen's special greetings

The evening of June 29 at the Sheraton Dhaka lit up with joy and celebration of hard work and determination, as the proud graduates of Universal College Bangladesh's (UCB) Monash programs tossed their caps up to the stars. 102 of the finest, most meritorious students of the country, pursuing Monash University Foundation Year (MUFY) and Monash College Diploma (MCD) through UCB, were presented with their graduation certificates at a grand convocation event. H. E. Nardia Simpson, Acting High Commissioner of Australia to Bangladesh graced the event as the Chief Guest.

It was an occasion for the UCB students, guardians, teachers, and staffs to celebrate that UCB exclusively hit the record with 100 percent passing rate for the MCD program. The UCB MUFY grads also topped the world with an enviable 97 percent success. Considering this to only be the 3rd graduation of students in Monash programs under UCB, the prospects and positive impact of this program gives an auspicious and optimistic proceeding for the aspiring students in Bangladeshi.



Professor Hew Gill, President & Provost, UCB said, "UCB results in Dhaka are now better than Monash results in Australia. Our Monash programs offer a guaranteed pathway to a world top 40 university for every student who passes, and all our students pass. This means all our students are prepared for excellence and we are honored to have played a role in our students' academic journey."

Jo Mithen, CEO of Monash College, Melbourne, sent a special message praising UCB on its great achievement. "We congratulate the staff and students of UCB on the outstanding achievements of the cohort in the recent semester outcome. The strength of academic preparation



provided by the team has ensured the highest level of success yet for students of the College, ensuring they are very well prepared for the next stage of their academic journey. Well done to all involved and we look forward to continuing outstanding results from UCB! Thank you for your contributions to our students' success, and for your continuing commitment to excellence at UCB", the CEO's message read.

Many of the graduates are now headed to Monash University Australia and Malaysia to complete top international degrees. Many students are also going to other prestigious institutions, like the International College of Liberal Arts (ICLA), Japan; Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation (APU), Malaysia; Macquarie University, Australia; University of Dundee, Scotland; University of Manitoba, Canada; Sunway University, Malaysia; and Taylor's University, Malaysia.

Sayedul Alamin Arnab, the valedictorian from the UCB Monash Graduation Convocation 2024 a graduate of the MCD program, said "After completing my HSC at Notre Dame College, I successfully completed the MCD program at UCB. My outstanding MCD result not only earned me a Vice Chancellor's Scholarship and a bursary grant for a Bachelor of IT degree at Macquarie University Australia but also allowed me to directly enter the second year of my degree. UCB's exceptional culture and academic faculty equipped me with valuable knowledge and life skills for my future career."

Many of the proud parents thoroughly acknowledged how essential it was for their offspring to have their foundations constructed at UCB. "UCB has given my son an international exposure beyond traditional education. Because of UCB, my son could set out to study abroad in earliest possible time", said Engr. M. Aktaruzzaman Hasan, the father of Md. Wahiduzzaman, a first-year student of BSc in ICT (Honors) at the Sunway University. Wahiduzzaman is a MUFY 2024 graduate.

The Chief Guest's words reflected the importance of cross-border academic exchange in the context of equipping young Bangladeshis with international-standard skillsets. "The strong ties between the two nations are deeply rooted in a shared commitment to education. We greatly appreciate the Bangladesh government's

forward-thinking decision to welcome international education. And it is wonderful to witness the process accelerate through a commendable organization like UCB", said H. E. Nardia Simpson, Acting High Commissioner of Australia to Bangladesh.



UCB is the exclusive partner to Monash College in Bangladesh, operating in the country with the Education Ministry's approval. UCB offers university pathways for students who have completed HSC/O/AS/A levels and who want to study anything from business to IT, and engineering to medicine. The MUFY is a pre-university program for students to gear up and step into their guaranteed first-year entry at Monash University. MCD is equivalent to the first year of the degree program at Monash University Australia and Malaysia and allows students direct entry to the second year of degrees in data science, business, IT, and engineering. Everything related to the annual teaching plan, semester breakup, learning objectives, curriculum, testing, and evaluation process for the UCB Monash programs are completely directed and monitored by the Monash College. UCB students also qualify for unique fee waivers when they enroll at Monash University Australia. Students who are interested in pursuing world-class, yet affordable Monash degrees are encouraged to visit UCB and find out their next best feat.

The upcoming MUFY intakes are scheduled on July 15 and August 27; and MCD intakes will take place on October 14.

For more details, please contact: +8801886333222; +8801886412222; or +8801896013882; and visit www.ucbbd.org





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EDUCATION

Using computers as a medium of TEST TAKING

Is it a good idea?

MD. NAYEEM HAIDER

Pen-and-paper examinations have been, throughout time, the most popular way of testing a student's proficiency. It may be argued that their continued usage today is a testament to their efficacy. After all, why fix something that isn't broken? The procedure is a simple but effective one. Yet, the traditional way, for all its merits, also has its flaws.

According to a study by H.K Lee, students with bad handwriting may find themselves disadvantaged in essay-based examinations due to the negative impression their work might have on the examiner. This issue was made more acute by research undertaken by Sülzenbrück, Hegele, Rinkenauer and Heuer, which suggests that extensive use of computers, as done by young people and children today, can impair fine motor skills such as handwriting. But perhaps the most crucial argument against handwritten examinations involves the environment.

In Bangladesh alone, millions of students at schools, coaching centres, colleges, and universities sit for various tests and examinations throughout the year. Copious amounts of paper are needed to satisfy this burgeoning demand. Trees, consequently, have to be cut. But as a country, we are at the forefront of the battle against climate change. So, can we really afford to be that wasteful?

The issues may be resolved by a switch to computer-based exams. They usually require a student to type their answers in a secure exam portal on a device provided by the institution. Once done, they could simply click "submit" to have their script collected and stored on the exam database. Adoption of such exams would result in a student's handwriting ceasing to be a significant factor and would also lead to a decrease in the demand for paper.

Many developed countries have made this switch in the past or are in the process of doing so. In US law schools, for instance, typed exams have been the norm for decades. Scandinavian countries have also been enthusiastic in adopting this mode of examination. Furthermore, the transition to computer-based exams was further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw schools and universities worldwide turn to various exam portals such as Exam.net and Inspira.

In the Bangladeshi context, however, very few exams take place in such a manner. Almost every school, college, and university conducts theory examinations on paper. Students of these institutions may only ever encounter typed exams if they choose to sit for IELTS or SAT examinations. There are, nonetheless, rare exceptions at the university level. For example, Bangladeshi students studying English law at the University of London must take their exams on laptops and PCs.

Jannatun Nisa Zarifa, a student of LCLS (South) who recently sat for her first-year examinations, describes that while she initially struggled to make the switch, having given exams traditionally all her life, she has

grown increasingly comfortable with giving typed exams, to the point of finding them to be more convenient than handwritten exams.

She says, "There are quite a few reasons why I now find typed exams to be better than handwritten ones, the first being the obvious fact that it is much easier to be writing a greater number of words in a shorter amount of time. If I were to write an essay of around 1500 words by hand, it would take a big chunk of my day to be finished, while it takes less than an hour or so to do the same on a PC. Another reason is that correcting mistakes or erasing words is just a click away, which would be much more of a hassle had the exams been pen and paper based."

He says, "I learned small details that would have been left unnoticed had the exam been typed. This is because the software finds corrections for you. Writing codes by hand in a pressurised situation forces us to develop problem-solving skills, which is the most crucial skill for coding."

Yet, the most important arguments against typed exams in our institutions may be those of capability and privilege. Many, if not most, educational institutions lack both the technical and financial capacity to make such a transition. However, even for those institutions that can successfully make the leap, it would only widen the gulf between students of different socioeconomic backgrounds.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

However, a powerful argument can be mounted that whatever the benefits of typed exams may be, they are only restricted to disciplines that are entirely essay-based, such as law. For a subject like mathematics or the natural sciences, where solutions have to be shown and diagrams made, it is unlikely that typed exams can provide an efficient alternative. This may be true for other subjects as well.

Md Abtahi Addin, who is majoring in Computer Science at BRAC University, is of the opinion that writing code by hand for exams helped strengthen the foundations of his programming skills and thus argues against the introduction of computer-based exams aside from lab work.

Privileged students may have had the opportunity to develop their skills on a computer from an early age as opposed to those who did not have access to a computer.

From all of the above, we can thus conclude that while typed exams could indeed be the future as we chart the seas of a more environmentally conscious and technologically advanced world, there are still factors that hinder their total adoption. Even in countries with more developed infrastructures of education, the speed of progress has been tempered by caution. In the case of Bangladesh, at least for now, widespread adoption of typed exams may be no more than an intriguing matter to think about.

EDU GUIDE

The prospects of studying SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT



ILLUSTRATION: FATIMA JAHAN ENA

TAASEEN MOHAMMED ISLAM

The year was 2021, and thanks to the new availability of the Covid-19 vaccines, many parts of the world were slowly opening up again after a year of stagnancy. However, it soon turned out that pent-up consumer demand during the pandemic was putting a significant constraint on the availability of products and services, especially Taiwanese semiconductors vital to the technology we use every day. In an even more dramatic turn of events, a 400-meter-long container ship had obstructed the Suez Canal, one of the most important global trade routes, significantly slowing down already strained international trade. Further into 2022, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there was another significant disruption in the supply of grains and whole foods due to the conflict. These scenarios highlight the importance of the supply chains in the world we live in today.

A supply chain is a flow of goods through a network of companies and people, who are responsible for manufacturing and delivering a product or service. Fuelled by an explosive rise in global trade after World War II, the supply chain industry was estimated to be valued at USD 28 billion in 2022 and is expected to balloon to USD 75 billion by 2032.

The industry is rapidly expanding and with it, the importance of supply chain management (SCM). On a similar note, SCM is involved with the management of the material flow process, as well as procurement, manufacturing, operations, logistics, and marketing of finished goods from raw materials. While a relatively niche function in management, SCM has tremendous global growth and numerous job opportunities.

With Bangladesh's export-import trade volume exceeding USD 100 billion, the functional importance of supply chains for the economy is underscored. A report from IDLC shows that the industry has around a thousand local firms alongside twenty multinational logistics and freight forwarding companies, employing nearly 40,000 people. Additionally, the 2023 Logistics Performance Index (LPI) report published by The World Bank ranked Bangladesh 88th, a considerable 12-point improvement from 2022.

With industry growth comes an increase in educational and job opportunities. Regarding educational programs, a couple of universities, such as North South University (NSU), BRAC, and East West University, have started offering SCM as a BBA

degree major. On a non-managerial side, Industrial Process Engineering (IPE) degree-holders usually get jobs in supply chain management. IPE degrees are common in Bangladesh and taught in many institutes, from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) to Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST) and Islamic University of Technology (IUT).

You may ask, if Supply Chain BBA majors and IPE students can get the same functional roles, what's the difference between the two degrees?

"Internationally speaking, Supply Chain Management is taught in Engineering and Business schools as a bridge between the two disciplines," says Dr Ziaul Haq Adnan, Associate Professor at the Department of Management at NSU. "Engineering students learn IPE, which is more modelling and mathematically oriented. On the other hand, Supply Chain Management in Business schools is more case-study-heavy and taught from a managerial perspective," he explains.

So, let's get to the main point: should you consider getting a degree in SCM or not? Compared to other BBA majors, SCM falls on the tougher side of the spectrum, as it contains a lot of technical information, such as transportation models, quality management, and project management. So why should you choose it over more popular and established majors such as Finance or Human Resource Management?

"The biggest advantage of studying Supply Chain Management, I would say, is the tremendous growth potential of the field," says Meshbaul Hassan Chowdhury, lecturer at the Department of Management at NSU. "Both local and multinational corporations are specifically looking for supply chain graduates to streamline their operational activities efficiently," he adds.

Hence, SCM remains more future-proof compared to functions such as Finance, which are becoming increasingly saturated and outsourced to newer technology.

Another advantage of SCM is the broad scope of functional job roles available. "Effective supply chain management is essential to ensure a seamless flow from the point of origin to consumption," says Afnan Yusuf, lecturer at the Department of Management at NSU. "SCM professionals work in areas like buying supplies, managing transportation, keeping track of inventory, and production planning. These roles ensure efficient operations, timely delivery, and customer satisfaction,

making SCM critical for any successful business," she explains.

Apart from communication and negotiation skills, SCM demands quantitative, analytical, algebraic, and statistical prowess and in-depth proficiency in computer software and tools. "Advanced Excel skills such as solvers, analysis toolbox, macros, linking, and referencing, are necessary for supply chain modelling. For most careers in supply chain management, proficiency in spreadsheet applications, Power BI dashboards, and enterprise resource planning (ERP) certifications should be enough. However, for research, knowledge of Python, MATLAB, and coding is essential," says Ziaul.

As with any job, a degree in SCM or IPE is optional to enter the supply chain management industry, but it is an added advantage. Ziaul adds, "Having a degree in Supply Chain Management does certify that you have basic knowledge and understand core principles of SCM, which will definitely help you to stand out."

However, a popular way for graduates from different fields to enter the world of SCM is through professional certifications. "Earning a certification, especially after entering the industry, has helped boost my career growth and allowed me to stand out to the office management from a large pool of potential candidates," says Morshedul Alam Abir, a recent SCM graduate from NSU. Some popular supply chain certifications worth looking into include a CSCA (Certified Supply Chain Analyst), CSCM (Certified Supply Chain Manager), PGD in SCM, and Lean Six Sigma black belt certifications, to name a few.

So, is SCM worth pursuing as a degree? A hundred percent yes, according to Mesbaul. "When I joined the SCM department as a lecturer back in 2018, we had a maximum of 20 students in a course; fast-forward to today, we now offer multiple sections for many SCM courses," he says. "This shows that students understand the necessity and value of majoring in supply chain management and that there's increased demand for supply chain graduates in the corporate sector."

With the local logistics industry growing at an annual rate of 6.5 percent and the proliferation of manufacturing activities by local and MNC corporations, supply chain management seems an excellent candidate to study, seeing its undeniable footprint on the global economy.

Taaseen Mohammed Islam is a student at NSU.

NOTICE BOARD

AIUB Architecture Week 2024 begins

On June 28, AIUB Architecture Week 2024 started with the inauguration ceremony of the Design Charrette: QUEST, held at American International University - Bangladesh (AIUB). The Department of Architecture, AIUB received an extensive response of registration from more than 300 participants from all the IAB-accredited Architecture schools across Bangladesh.

The Charrette Quest aims to reinforce a dynamic learning environment by fostering collaborative and respectful connections among students from different architecture schools across



the country. A total of 85 groups participated in the charrette. Along with the Charrette, AIUB Architecture Week 2024 is also hosting lectures by accomplished professionals and academicians, student work exhibition, cultural programme, etc.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Nadia Anwar, Founder Member and Vice Chairman, Board of Trustees, AIUB in presence of Ar Jalal Ahmed, Former President, Institute of Architects (IAB); Arefeen Ibrahim, Head, Department of Architecture, faculty members, officials, and students of AIUB.

UCB celebrates Monash College Graduation Convocation 2024

Universal College Bangladesh (UCB), the exclusive partner to Monash College in Bangladesh, recently celebrated the Monash College Graduation Convocation 2024, on the evening of June 29. 103 students pursuing different programmes offered by Monash College, namely, Monash University Foundation Year and Monash College Diploma (Business, Information Technology and Engineering), graduated on this day through an event held at the Sheraton Dhaka.

This is the third batch graduating from Monash University Foundation Year and Monash College Diploma through Universal College Bangladesh (UCB). At the graduation event, Manas Singh, CEO, of STS Group, and Zarif Munir, Director, UCB, as well as students, parents, teachers, and other esteemed guests were present. Nardia Simpson, Acting High Commissioner of Australia to Bangladesh joined the event as the chief guest.

The event began with a welcome note from Prof. Hew Gill, President and Provost at UCB, followed by a board commendation speech by Zarif Munir, Director and Member of the Board of UCB. The event moved forward with an occasional address by Matthew Carter, Executive Director of Education, Monash College Australia, followed by a commencement address by Nardia Simpson.

The graduating students were presented by Prof. Md Ismail Hossain, Dean of Academic Affairs at UCB who completed his doctorate at Monash University Australia. All the students were awarded Monash University Foundation Year and Monash College Diploma certificates at the convocation.

Seven students received awards for outstanding academic performance, including one student who achieved world topping scores in two IT exams. 20 Students were also recognised for their community contributions, including serving as members of the UCB Student Council, and involvement in charity projects for the needy.

Zarif Munir, Director, UCB, said, "Witnessing the graduation of these talented students fills me with immense pride. Through our partnership with Monash College at Universal College Bangladesh, we are providing the youth of Bangladesh with a world-class educational pathway to unlock their full potential and shape a brighter future for themselves and the nation".

"Our Monash programmes offer a guaranteed pathway to a world top 40 university for every student who passes, and all our students pass. I am honoured to have played a role in our students' academic journey," said Professor Hew Gill, President & Provost, UCB.

Nardia Simpson, Acting High Commissioner of Australia to Bangladesh, said, "The strong ties and connections between the two nations are deeply rooted in a shared commitment to education. We greatly appreciate the Bangladesh government's forward-thinking decision to welcome international education. And it is wonderful to witness the process accelerate through a commendable organisation like Universal College Bangladesh. Congratulations to the graduates, I am confident that they will ensure a brighter future for Bangladesh and strengthen the partnership between Bangladesh and Australia".



Book launch programme held at IUBAT

A book launch programme of *Methods of Statistics with Applications* was held on June 29 at the International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT). The book has been authored by the three faculty members of IUBAT – Prof. Dr Khandoker Saif Uddin, Prof. Dr Anil Chandra Basak, and Prof. Dr Rajib Lochan Das. The book is written for undergraduate programmes in various disciplines offered by the public and private universities, and affiliated colleges. The programme was chaired by the IUBAT Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr Abdur Rab.

The Director General of Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) Dr Md Shahjahan Kabir was present as the chief guest. Treasurer and Director Admin of IUBAT Prof. Selina Nargis was present as the guest of honour.



In the beginning, those present paid homage to the departed souls of the Founder VC of IUBAT M Alimullah Miyan and the former Pro-VC Mahmuda Khanum by standing in silence for one minute. Prof Khandoker Saif Uddin described the background and rationale of writing the book saying that it was specifically done for the learners who want to be a good user of statistics irrespective of their disciplines. Prof. Uddin answered questions from students and teachers. Then, the book was unwrapped by the guests and a group photo was taken with the three authors and the guests on the stage.

Prof. Dr Rajib Lochan Das gave some basic facts about the book to the audience. As the guest of honour, Prof. Selina Nargis appreciated the initiative taken by the authors and hoped that the book will help students learn Statistics in a better way. Dr Md Shahjahan Kabir described the significance of statistics especially for research works in agriculture, health, and other fields. The chief guest also uttered the importance of a good book and expressed his belief in success of this book.

In his speech, Prof. Dr Abdur Rab encouraged other faculty members to come forward about writing textbooks. He concluded his speech with the well wishes for the authors and the success of the book. At the end, Prof. Dr Anil Chandra Basak delivered the votes of thanks to the guests.

CAMPUS LIFE

Dengue and its ramifications in STUDENT DORMITORIES



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Starting from April last year, Bangladesh encountered its deadliest outbreak of dengue with a total of 321,179 recorded cases in 2023. Dengue fever generally peaks around the rainy season in Bangladesh. As such, highly populated areas face a greater risk of a dengue epidemic. This is especially bad news for students spending much of their time in close quarters with their peers, and those living in residential facilities are especially vulnerable.

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

The dengue situation in student dormitories

The dengue outbreak may affect students residing in dormitories disproportionately compared to regular students if proper standards are not maintained. Aedes mosquitoes responsible for the spread of dengue thrive in artificial containers and still waters. That's why, cautionary measures with proper knowledge of the characteristics of Aedes mosquitoes must be adopted by both students and authorities.

"While the numbers of dengue cases aren't severe, we do have a lot of mosquitoes in our hostels because of the trees and hills around our campus. So, people are sick most of the time with fever or cold," says Humayra Adiba, a second-year MBBS student at Chittagong Medical College. "The number of cases is higher in the dorms because cleanliness isn't maintained properly. There's water lying around here and there, especially in the bathrooms, which makes for the perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes."

The mosquito situation is far more bleak at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), according to Tahzib Rayhan Himadry, a student of Chemical Engineering currently residing in the Suhrawardy Hall.

"The number of dengue cases is shocking," says Himadry. "Most of my friends from the dorms suffer at least once or twice during the dengue season, and my roommate was ill from dengue for nearly a month and a half this year. This affects the students greatly as missing classes often leads to a dent in our academic results. This often discourages students from seeking medical care. To make matters worse, most of the dorm students aren't from Dhaka, so they rarely inform their families about their condition."

Rubaiya Ahmed*, a resident student of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College speaks of similar conditions. "Last year, most of the girls in our hostel contracted dengue from June to November. Although the situation is better this year, as I haven't heard of anyone catching it yet, sufficient steps aren't taken in the residential halls until the situation gets dire."

Of course, some universities are faring better than others

in this regard, especially if proper precautions are taken. Mehrin Ahmed*, a fifth-year student of Armed Forces Medical College, talks about the precautions taken by the authorities and subsequently, low numbers of dengue afflictions. "We have a lake within our campus premises. However, we have adequate protection against mosquitoes alongside anti-dengue campaigns once or twice every year. Authorities also ensure that students aren't letting water accumulate anywhere."

What can be done

The attempt to prevent dengue must be taken both by dorm authorities and the students themselves. Himadry informs that the authorities in his dormitory are quite proactive in anti-dengue activities. "Mosquito repellents are being sprayed regularly and notices are being put out to create awareness. The authority even hired staff to supply food and medicines to the sick students in their rooms, and the teachers are considerate when it comes to class tests."

Common preventive measures like mosquito repellents may also be ineffective due to incorrect uses. To properly utilise incense extinguishers, the windows and doors to every room within the building must be closed to keep the mosquitoes out. Otherwise, it's likely to be counterproductive as mosquitoes will try to escape the smoke by taking refuge within the rooms.

Students should also try to maintain proper regulations by protecting themselves from mosquito bites by using insect repellent lotions and sprays, mosquito nets etc, and making sure that water doesn't accumulate in artificial containers in surrounding areas.

"Most of my friends from the dorms suffer at least once or twice during the dengue season, and my roommate was ill from dengue for nearly a month and a half this year. This affects the students greatly as missing classes often leads to a dent in our academic results. This often discourages students from seeking medical care. To make matters worse, most of the dorm students aren't from Dhaka, so they rarely inform their families about their condition."

Mehrin* mentions how she and her friends combatted dengue for the last few years. "We made sure to keep opening our doors to a minimum during the peak hours – dusk and dawn. We also hung a mosquito net over the balcony door attached to our room. This helped keep the mosquitoes away."

Practising such measures may lower the chances of contracting dengue, but if it proves insufficient, medical care should be sought out immediately. High fevers, headaches, nausea, joint and muscle pain etc are some symptoms of dengue. There are other symptoms of this viral disease that everyone should watch out for, especially if there's a dengue patient in your vicinity.

As a student, it might feel like visiting the doctor and resting may affect your academic performance, but it's important to identify the disease early and act upon it. Speaking to faculties and visiting the medical centre of your respective university will also aid in rescheduling exams and deadlines, so you must prioritise your well-being.

Zabin Tazrin Nashita is a student of Islamic University of Technology.

CAREER

Are fresh graduates prepared for THE JOB MARKET?

NUZHAT HASSAN CHOWDHURY

Who cares if you went to a public or private university? We are all going to be unemployed in the end anyway.

All graduates-to-be have laughed at this statement at some point of their student lives. However, the joke loses its humour once their academic career comes to an end.

According to UNICEF, the quality of education in Bangladesh and its relevance for the labour market is sub-optimal. The employability of fresh graduates remains a pressing concern for both students and employers alike. The only party that does not seem particularly concerned are the universities responsible for preparing their students for the job market.

Skills considered essential for most corporate jobs, such as proficiency in MS Office Suite, or visualisation software like Tableau and Power BI are left out of the curriculum by most institutions. However, rote memorisation of facts in general education courses has somehow found its place on the syllabus.

Although there is no harm in taking courses that are not directly relevant to one's major for the sake of broadening horizons, we cannot justify doing so at the expense of learning crucial skills required for favourable career prospects.

Moreover, timely updates in the curriculum are essential considering the competition is now more cut-throat than ever before due to the rising number of graduates and the consistent lack of job opportunities.

"I had to take a lot of courses that did not really need to be a part of the curriculum.

This includes a beginner level

English course, the contents of which I had already covered back when I was eleven. I personally don't think my university prepared me for the job market. I learned all the important skills required for a corporate job after I graduated," says Shoaib Rahman*, a business analyst at a renowned software development company.

"During my very first job assessment, they gave me a basic Excel test to evaluate my skills. I was only able to complete it as I had done an Excel course on Coursera. Upon speaking to the other candidates, I realised many of them were unable to complete it as they never learned this in university. It would be helpful if my university would omit irrelevant lab courses like Environmental Science and Psychology, and add Excel and PowerPoint labs to the curriculum," he added.

Learning theories in class is important as it can build the foundation required for a deep understanding of relevant concepts. However, there will always be a gap between classroom learning and real-world practice. The answer does not lie in ignoring key practical skills and only focusing on the theory, or vice-versa, since earning a high CGPA without being considered employable by recruiters does not serve the purpose for most graduates.

There needs to be a balance between the two so that students can utilise their knowledge and skills to adapt effectively in real-world scenarios. The integration of theory and practice not only enhances students' ability to grasp new concepts, but also prepares them to tackle the complex demands of the current job market.

This is not to say that students hold no responsibility in this and should solely rely on their universities to gain a competitive edge in the job market. However, involvement of higher education institutions in ensuring the employability of their students by timely updating the curriculum and offering opportunities to gain experience plays an integral role in their career trajectory.

Although employers look for talented candidates, they are often not willing to invest in new talent that may need to overcome a learning curve. Looking for fresh graduates with a couple years of relevant experience is unrealistic.

"I worked hard as a student and secured a good CGPA as I naively thought this will help me land a good job. I was extremely disappointed when I realised a lot of companies were asking for one to two years of experience or a Master's degree for entry level jobs. I am glad to have joined a company that does train fresh graduates without experience, but most Bangladeshi companies are not willing to do so," says Samira Hanif*, a product analyst at a fin-tech company.

Ultimately, addressing the disconnect between academic training and job market requirements is essential for improving employability among graduates. Universities must prioritise curriculum updates and practical skill development to prepare students for real-world challenges. The commitment of educational institutions to provide relevant and timely education is vital for our youths' successful career outcomes.

**Names have been changed for privacy upon request*

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