

The underlying effects of **AUTO-PASS IN HSC**

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MUSIC

The sound of resistance

Songs that came out during the student movement

AYAAN SHAMS SIDDIQUEE



AWAAZ UTHA
(Hannan, SnareByt)

Hannan's "Awaaz Utha" was, perhaps, the most direct and unapologetic battle cry released during the student-led protests. Throughout the song, he repeatedly asks all of Bangladesh to raise their voice and point fingers at the murderers without reservation.

ROKTO GOROM MATHA THANDA
(Kaaktaal)

"Rokto Gorom Matha Thanda" is an open letter to those who hide behind the pretence of duty and the lure of greed while perpetrating violence. The track is also a cry to mobilise the masses, urging listeners to overcome the shackles of fear, and stand up for what is right.



AMRA BIR
(Oni Hasan, Kazi Zohad Yazdani)

Oni Hasan's rock n' roll composition roars with a heavy and gnarly guitar riff and consistent growls to feed into the brutality of the song. It acknowledges everyone's valiant contributions to freeing the country from the shackles of fascism and urges them to remain unwavering in their efforts.

WATCHLIST

<p>CLUE dir. Jonathan Lynn</p>	<p>THE SHAPE OF WATER dir. Guillermo del Toro</p>	<p>RAINCOAT dir. Rituparno Ghosh</p>
<p>THE LIGHTHOUSE dir. Robert Eggers</p>	<p>PARASITE dir. Bong Joon-ho</p>	<p>RASHOMON dir. Akira Kurosawa</p>

OPPORTUNITIES



ELIGIBILITY

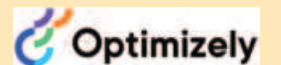
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The student can't represent or be associated with any other media organisation.

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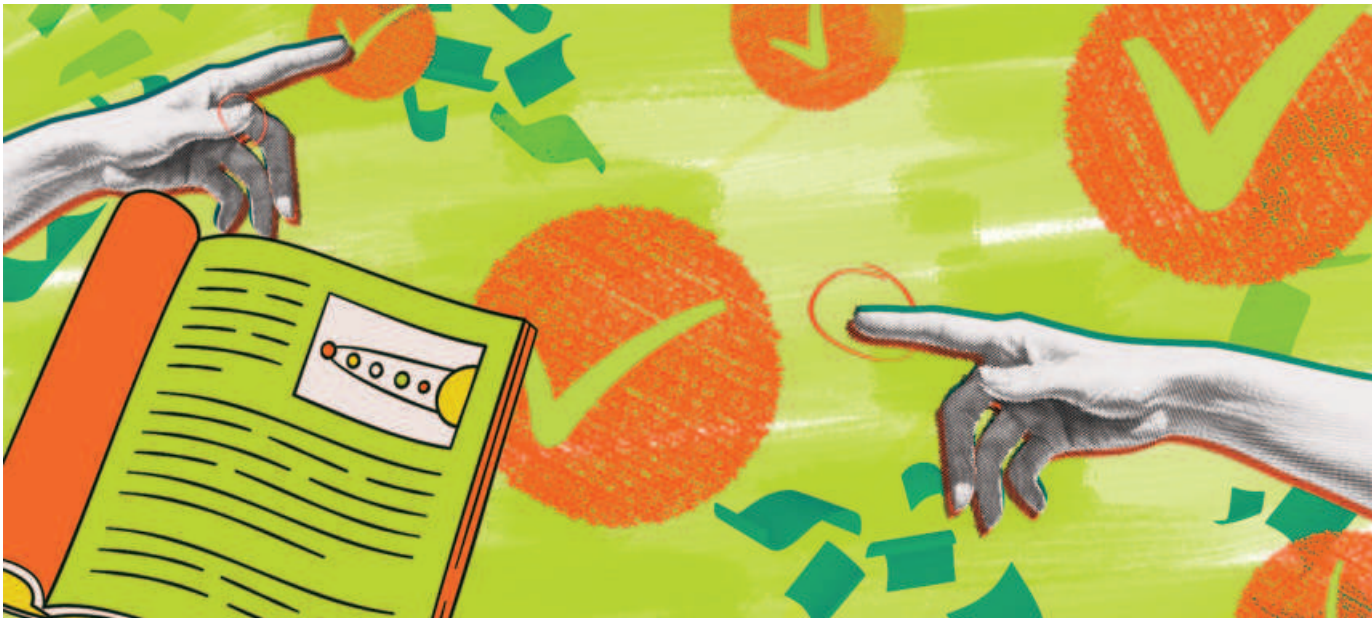


ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

■ OFF CAMPUS ■

Reassessing the misconceptions around open-book exams

FATEMA TUZ ZOHORA

Allowing students to take books and other study materials into exam halls might seem questionable to some but open-book exams might have the potential to become the norm given the evolving educational landscape.

Open-book exams are often perceived as less challenging simply because resources and information are readily available to students under exam conditions. However, the issue lies with the kind of exams students already sit for rather than our expectations of the outcome. Memorising facts may lead to good scores in traditional exams, but does it truly help students learn beyond the words of a textbook? Unfortunately, open-book exams are often undermined because of the misunderstandings surrounding them.

Open-book exams are easy

Having access to resources does not make open-book exams an easy option. The answers to such exams require effective understanding and proper usage of available information. Often conventional exams may turn out to be easier compared to open-book exams if students are only required to write out information from rote learning. On the contrary, open-book exams are all about efficiently locating and applying necessary information, making it more difficult than closed-book exams.

Studying for open-book exams is not required at all

It is important to study for open-book exams just as it is for other types of exams. A lack of preparation may confuse the students as a considerable amount of time may be wasted when looking for the relevant information. In addition, not preparing well enough and leaving gaps in understanding of the course content may lead to lower scores if teachers identify

improper application of information.

Consistent preparation and developing better answering techniques are required which cannot be executed without adequate preparation.

Copying straight from the books is all one needs to do

Most people argue that taking materials in the exams leads to students copying the exact words from books. However, there is little truth to that as copying full texts from the materials is plagiarism which is a punishable offense in most exams. Materials are there to assist in forming answers to conceptual questions and copying answers may lead to heavy deductions in exam scores.

Students are allowed to bring whatever material they want

Many believe that students can bring any material they want to an open-book exam. However, there are often strict guidelines about what resources are permitted. These restrictions ensure that students rely on their understanding and analytical skills rather than skimming through an overwhelming amount of information during the exam. Typically, materials that are allowed are limited to textbooks, class notes, and specific reference materials approved by the instructor.

Open book exams may seem less rigorous at first glance, but it can prove to be very challenging as such assessments effectively shift the focus from rote memorisation to deeper comprehension and critical thinking. By addressing the misconceptions, educators, and students together can create an environment where open book exams will serve their true purpose, that is, meaningful learning.

Fatema Tuz Zohora is a third year student in the Department of Finance, University of Dhaka.

A QUICK GUIDE TO SKIMMING EFFICIENTLY

Identify key elements

Look for headings, subheadings, bullet points, and bold or italicised text, as these often highlight important points.

Read first sentences

Start by reading the first sentence of each paragraph. This often contains the main idea giving you a quick overview of the excerpt's content.

Focus on keywords

Scan for keywords or phrases related to the main ideas. This helps you grasp the essential points without getting bogged down by less critical details.

Skip unnecessary information

If something doesn't seem immediately relevant to your purpose, skip it. Focus on sections that are directly related to what you need.

Adjust speed based on content

Some texts might require slower skimming for better comprehension, while others can be skimmed more quickly.

Summarise as you go

As you skim, try to mentally summarise what you're reading. This helps reinforce the main ideas and ensures you're catching the most important information.



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■ SKILLS ■

Managing multiple jobs as a UNIVERSITY STUDENT

SABIL SADAT ZAHIR

As someone who is currently in their final year of university and working multiple jobs, I like to think of my life right now as being like that of Peter Parker from *Spider-Man 2*. The start of the film shows Peter struggling with two different jobs (three, if you count his job as Spider-Man). Similarly, on an average weekday, I find myself running from work to university or vice-versa, and going home incredibly tired – knowing I have to study and also do my work assignments from my other freelance jobs. I may not be a superhero like Peter, but trying to manage all these without breaking down often seems like a superhuman feat.

Nevertheless, it is a feat that many university students have to achieve. For most people, including myself, the primary obstacle when working as a student is managing time. As a person who used to “go with the flow”, I had to learn to be more organised and plan out my days more carefully. Though I do not always get the desired results, it helps to varying extents.

Mariam Jannatul*, 23, who is currently pursuing her Masters of Arts at the University of Glasgow while working in retail and tutoring students, shared a similar account of how she manages her time, “I use a planner and schedule my tasks for the week. I schedule absolutely everything – even cleaning my house, calling my friends, meal prepping, and grocery shopping. I feel more in control of my schedule and feel reassured that I’ve made time to get important things done.”

Of course, not everyone can meticulously schedule their work and studies. Some people find doing things on a priority basis to be a more effective means to manage their workload.

Hamidul Huda Stevan, 23, a freelance photographer and

cinematographer who is majoring in Anthropology at the University of Dhaka, said, “I usually prioritise my tasks according to the opportunity. There are some clients I give my highest priority to. When I have an exam however, I don’t take any new clients. The ‘Process of Elimination’ always helps me organise my study or work schedule.”

Some people might find regularly finishing their

studies at university and not leaving anything for home to be a convenient way to distribute workload. Maruf Hossain*, 24, a recent graduate from Independent University of Bangladesh talked about how this worked for him, “I think the best approach is to create a network of friends who have similar work ethics. Try to make the most of your time at campus and get work done there so that when you get back home, you can spend time doing other things”

Despite trying your hardest to maintain a proper schedule or finish tasks based on priorities, there will inevitably be overlaps and you may be prone to burnout and stress. Personally, I find going out at least once a week or doing something I am passionate about to be great ways to relieve stress.

Luckily for me, I do enjoy the work I do. Despite studying Computer Science & Engineering, the jobs I do are mostly related to writing. From my own experience, when you enjoy the work you

do, you may feel stressed but you are less likely to feel discontented. Nevertheless, it is natural to go through burnout especially when you cannot find time for leisure. Having supportive people in your life could help you mitigate that stress.

“I talk to my friends when I’m feeling stressed out or insecure over a piece of work, and even if I only end up complaining and we don’t arrive at a solution to the problem, I find that complaining really helps – it frees up some of my headspace for other things,” added Mariam.

Setting boundaries and taking time for yourself is also incredibly crucial and can help you de-stress.

Nahian Jamal Joyeeta, 24, a Public Relations graduate from the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, said, “Maintaining clear boundaries between work and personal life is crucial for me. I have separate phone numbers for work and personal use, ensuring work calls don’t intrude on my downtime.”

Ultimately, motivation is key when it comes to managing multiple jobs besides studies. You might

have to sacrifice a lot of things, but at the end of the day, you

have to make sure that you hold on to the things that give you hope.

“I won’t say everything is picture-perfect. Working while studying does make it difficult to maintain a healthy social life. When I see my friends hanging out after classes, I often have to rush back to the office. However, at the start of the month, when I receive my salary, I find my inner peace and motivation,” shared Khawja Masham Fahim, a Content Writer and Economics major at East West University.

For me, knowing I can make my parents proud and become the person I was meant to be, makes all the hard work seem worthwhile. At the end of the day, we are all striving and working hard to make something out of our lives; to achieve our dreams and transform ourselves into something better. But it is okay to take a break once in a while and pace yourself if you need to. You will get where you need to be in due time.

*Names have been changed upon request

ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN



■ EDUCATION ■

The underlying effects of AUTO-PASS IN HSC

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

After 2019, a series of decisions regarding the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination has led to the credibility of the curriculum to be put to question.

The 2020 HSC batch was given auto-pass due to the pandemic. HSC 2021 was held on six subjects with 32 marks being reserved for each, and HSC 2022 was held on 45 marks for each subject. But more importantly, the syllabus was curtailed for these batches and it became a new standard even years after the pandemic. HSC 2023 was also held on a shortened syllabus.

However, the final nail in the coffin for the credibility of the HSC exam was when HSC 2024 was cancelled and auto-pass was implemented yet again.

Apart from the long-term consequences of this newly established culture, it is also unfair to the HSC candidates according to Najifa Anjum, an HSC 2024 candidate from Viqarunnisa Noon School and College (VNSC), "I was devastated to hear the news because it felt like a major portion of my batch only had their own interests at heart. To prepare for an exam for two years and yet, never get to sit for it and prove myself – it's just heartbreaking. It also felt morally wrong to forcefully get this demand fulfilled while the country has so many critical problems to deal with."

Sharlin Khan, another VNSC student of HSC batch 2024, feels that the decision to give an auto-pass to all HSC candidates undermines all the hard work and effort put into preparing for the HSC examination.

"The uncertainty and constant changes in the government's decision-making process have taken a toll on our mental well-being, causing significant stress and emotional strain. The impact of this decision extends beyond just academic concerns, affecting future opportunities of studying abroad," said Sharlin.

Moreover, the decision to cancel HSC has also made the admission preparation for these students significantly more complex.

"I'm going through a tough time regarding my admission preparations because if I had sat for my HSC exams, I would have had a lot more confidence regarding my basic preparations," said Nahina Akter Neha, another HSC 2024 candidate. "Now, I feel unsure whether I should start from scratch or jump into the admission process with coaching and private tuition. HSC also works as a reality check for many and if someone had an underwhelming result at HSC, they could work hard during the admission season and bounce right back. But due to the auto-pass decision, many candidates will not understand how prepared they are for the admission exams."

"Several public universities, such as Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), and Bangladesh University of Textiles (BUTEX), have certain marks and grading requirements to sit for their admission tests. As most of the HSC exams were not held, the results are not justified for the students who worked hard to sit for certain admission tests," added Sharlin.

The auto-pass decision also hastened the admission preparation process for many students, as per Abrar Mahir, an HSC 2024 candidate from Notre Dame College.

"I expected that the HSC exams would either be postponed or held on reduced marks sometime around September, he said. "So, I wasn't ready to start my

admission preparation just yet. But now, I am having to change my plans and begin preparing early to give myself a head start. Before, I could take an hour every day to dip my toes in the water, go through the syllabus and ask seniors how to prepare. But now, coaching classes are starting early, so the pressure has increased with the accelerated admission phase."

Nomrota Mehzabin, an undergraduate student at BUET and an HSC 2020 candidate herself, believes that a college student cannot be judged based on her Secondary School Certificate (SSC) or HSC result, saying, "Auto-pass ruins all the effort a student puts in college. I saw many of my friends, who were the least serious in school, put in a lot of effort in college. But because of the auto-pass decision back then (2020), all their efforts went in vain and they couldn't sit for admission

solution for their shortcomings," she said.

Abrar explained how the decision to implement auto-pass is unfair to qualified candidates, saying, "Auto-pass is a punishment for the students who worked really hard in college as their SSC marks were sub-par. For instance, I feel really frustrated because I had to endure weekly quizzes and practical exams in my college for two years, only to get an auto-pass. It's just not fair. In my opinion, most of the students who protested for the auto-pass only care about the certificate and not the long-term implications of the HSC exams."

But with the auto-pass decision implemented for the current HSC batch, what can be the solution moving forward?

Sharlin believes that authority should ensure that

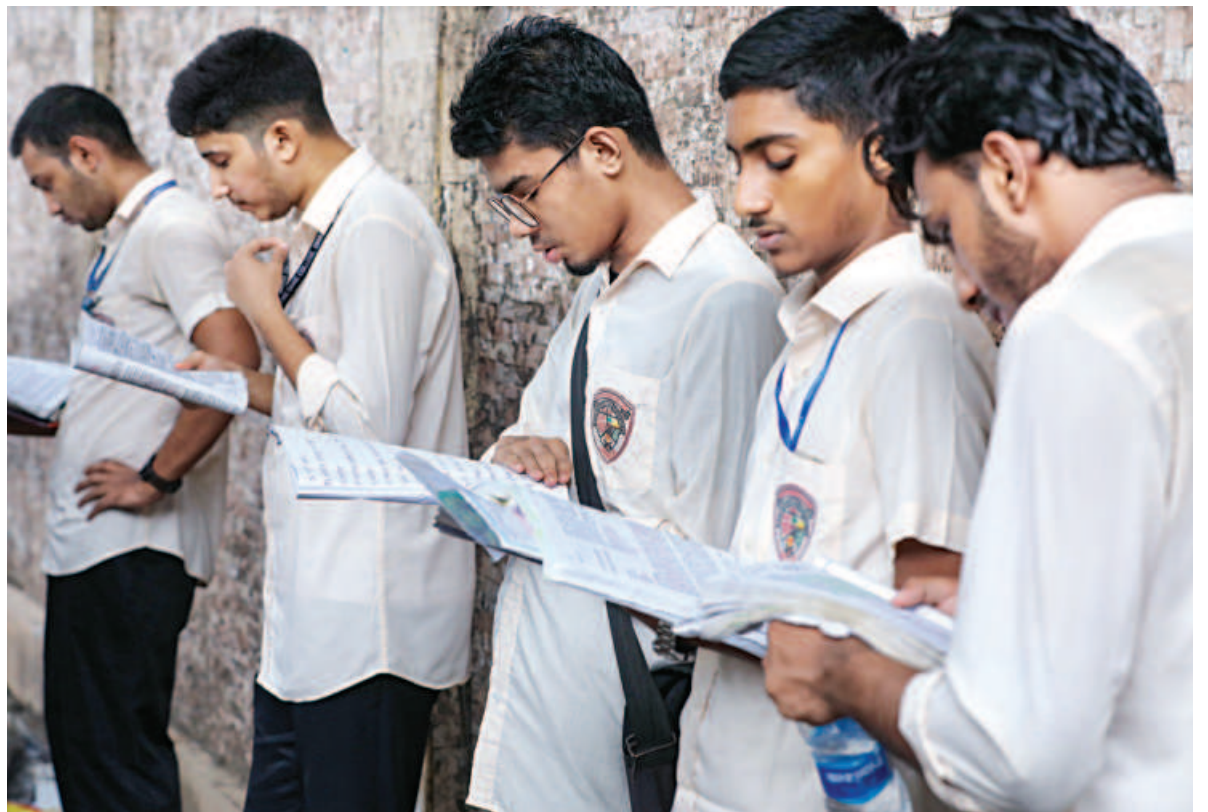


PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

tests at some universities. The newly established culture of short syllabi is also extremely harmful. If you go through the entire HSC syllabus, you'll see that some chapters are connected to each other. All of these concepts are needed for a student to be prepared for their undergraduate studies, since there's a continuity between those chapters and a few undergraduate courses. If a student isn't familiar with these concepts, the HSC certificate will lose its value. I understand that the short syllabus decision might have been necessary at the time because of the pandemic, but this shouldn't have been continued."

Najifa also believes that the recent auto-pass decision by the interim government will make them look malleable.

"Since our batchmates essentially forced the interim government into making such a decision, the future HSC batches might get the idea that postponing exams and asking for an auto-pass is a plausible

the HSC exams properly reflect students' potential for future batches, "Moving forward, authorities need to ensure that students' academic achievements are accurately reflected no matter how unique the circumstances are. Furthermore, universities abroad could consider adjusting their admission timelines or offering flexibility in application requirements to accommodate students impacted by these circumstances. Such practical solutions can reduce the academic strain on students and ensure a smoother transition during this challenging period."

Najifa suggests that the grading for HSC 2024 should be done based on the seven exams they sat for.

"Auto-pass is the biggest insult to the merit-based system, one that the students actually fought for. No matter how much a batch protests, the government can't give in. If any other board exam is dismissed like this, the merit that we do have will dwindle at one point or the other," said Najifa.

■ CAREER ■

BREAKING THE SILENCE

The reality of workplace bullying and the need for change



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



“It began with subtle jabs,” recalled Borsha Zahan, a marketing executive at a renowned firm. “At first, my team manager would make offhand comments about my attire, but over time, he started twisting ordinary interactions into moments of humiliation. Eventually, he began singling me out because of my socio-economic background, even expecting me, as an intern, to treat the entire office just because my parents are well-off.”

TAZRIN RASHID PRITHA

Contrary to popular belief, bullying isn’t confined to high school corridors; it extends into the adult world, where the consequences can be much more severe. In the United States alone, approximately two million people experience workplace bullying each year, according to the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI). The situation in Bangladesh is similarly alarming, where the issue often remains unaddressed, leaving countless employees to suffer in silence.

“It began with subtle jabs,” recalled Borsha Zahan, a marketing executive at a renowned firm. “At first, my team manager would make offhand comments about my attire, but over time, he started twisting ordinary interactions into moments of humiliation. Eventually, he began singling me out because of my socio-economic background, even expecting me, as an intern, to treat the entire office just because my parents are well-off.”

Shabab Junayed, an HR intern at a reputed mobile financial services (MFS) company, shares a similar experience. “My first encounter with workplace bullying happened during my first job out of college. A senior colleague would constantly criticise my work in front of others, often in a mocking tone, mostly because I was much younger than the rest of the team. Some co-workers would occasionally join in, seemingly to gain favour with the senior colleagues.”

While verbal bullying is not uncommon in the workplace, covert actions are often more prevalent.

“I was assigned tasks that were impossible to complete within the given timeframe,” Shabab recalled. “Additionally, I was denied access to the information I needed to finish my work. I was being set up for failure.”

Adding to Shabab’s experience, Borsha shared, “I had never felt so lonely and isolated in my life. It had become clear that having a different perspective from the group was an easy way to get outcast. What hurt me the most was that they didn’t even include me in the group chat before an office trip.”

Moreover, when bullying is targeted at women, it introduces an additional layer of complexity to this already pervasive issue. Mayesha Rahman, a lecturer at a public university said, “The concept of pseudo-equality is widespread in today’s workplace. As a society, we are still struggling to accept women in leadership roles. There is a fine line between assertiveness and arrogance, but an opinionated woman is often mischaracterised as arrogant by her colleagues.”

Mayesha added, “I was shocked to discover that my colleagues were speaking about me behind my back. I was simply focused on doing my job and ensuring the well-being of my students.”

The aftermath of workplace bullying is complex, affecting both the mental health of victims and the overall efficiency of an organisation. Shabab explained, “Bullying took a severe toll on my mental health. I developed anxiety, especially about going to work. I had trouble sleeping, often felt depressed, and questioned my abilities and self-worth. This impacted my job performance significantly. I became anxious about presenting my work, second-guessed my decisions, and spent extra hours perfecting everything to avoid criticism. My productivity decreased because I was constantly stressed and distracted.”

Borsha added, “My negative experiences at work also affected my personal life. I lacked the mental strength to interact with my family when I got home, and I was too burned out to socialise with friends, even on weekends.”

Most organisations have established HR protocols to address workplace bullying. Raisa Haque, an HR Executive at an industrial conglomerate, explained, “Our goal is to foster a workplace where everyone is treated fairly. Victims are encouraged to file a written complaint with detailed information about the incident. Depending on the situation and severity of the complaint, HR will initiate an investigation with a dedicated committee. If the investigation determines that bullying occurred, disciplinary actions may be taken, potentially including termination. Both parties involved are given the opportunity to appeal the decision.”

However, the effectiveness of these policies in combating workplace bullying remains a subject of debate. Mayesha noted, “It’s very challenging to support allegations without sufficient proof to prompt HR to initiate an investigation. Additionally, raising complaints without evidence can put the victim at a disadvantage. Not only might they face social exclusion, but they could also struggle to find a new job, as HR departments often contact previous employers to verify employment history.”

Complications remain in the current protocols to combat workplace bullying, thus more needs to be done to ensure a streamlined and secure work environment for all.

Tazrin is a Finance and Banking student at Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP).

■ OFF CAMPUS ■

MIST's Mongol Barota secures runners-up trophy at Anatolian Rover Challenge 2024

The team also secured the champion title in the ARC Junior 2024 Exploration Challenge.

FATIMA ASHRAF

Mongol Barota, the Mars rover team from the Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST), has secured the runners-up trophy at the Anatolian Rover Challenge (ARC) 2024, and the champion title in the ARC Junior 2024 Exploration Challenge. The competition took place from July 17 to 21 at the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara, Turkiye.

MIST's Mongol Barota, consisting of 38 students across several engineering departments of MIST, took on this year's ARC challenge with their latest rover, Maverick. Six of them represented the team in Turkiye.

The team was led by Md Jawadur Rahman from the Department of Computer Science & Engineering (CSE), with Alamin Rashid Tarek from the Department of Mechanical Engineering (ME) as the co-leader. Other members of the team included Lt Md Sarower Morshed (CSE), Istiaque Ahmed Arik (CSE), Raisul Islam Rahad (CSE), and Ahmed Ahnaf Saqafi (ME). The team was guided by their faculty advisors Lt Col Muhammad Nazrul Islam (CSE), Maj Md Shawkat Ali (CSE), and Lecturer Shah Md Ahasan Siddique (ME). The ARC Junior 2024 team was led by Lecturer Ahasan with Alamin and Saqafi.

Mongol Barota faced fierce competition from 21 other teams from countries like Poland, India, and Turkiye amongst others. The competition required teams

to complete four demanding missions set in environments simulating the environmental conditions in Mars, the moon, and the Earth.

Despite few technical challenges, the team's resilience paid off, earning them the second overall position with a total score of 235.18 points. They also received the ARC Special Prize for the "Best Team Structure". This award was judged by Umut Yildiz, a deep space communications engineer at NASA to whom Mongol Barota's inclusive team culture, which involves welcoming all members regardless of age or contribution, and nurturing a healthy learning and growth environment, stood out.

On July 18, during the Night Launch mission, the team received a devastating news from Bangladesh that Shykh Ashabul Yamin, a fourth-year CSE student from MIST, had tragically lost his life during the quota reform protests. The news shook the team to its core. Rahad, the rover's communications lead, said, "We felt extremely restless for not being able to communicate back home due to the nationwide internet shut down in Bangladesh back then. Despite wanting to give up, we stayed and fought back with our feelings, because we knew we had to win this for Yamin *bhaiya*, as well as for all the others who have embraced martyrdom [during the protests]."

Fatima Ashraf is a Campus Ambassador for The Daily Star from Military Institute of Science & Technology (MIST).



PHOTO: COURTESY



PHOTO: COURTESY

■ OFF CAMPUS ■

NABIK: A REMOTE-CONTROLLED ROBOT DEVELOPED BY BRACU STUDENTS FOR FLOOD RELIEF

RITTIQUE BASAK

Members of BRAC University's Robotics Club, in collaboration with the startup Nabik Automations, have developed the "Nabik" robot to help with relief operations across different parts of the country affected by the recent floods.

Nabik Automations was formed in 2022 by Fardeen Khan and Mashruzzaman Saad, current students of BRAC University (BRACU), under the guidance of Adil Hossain, a BRACU alumnus currently pursuing his post-graduate studies at Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada. Alongside Fardeen, Mashruzzaman, and Adil, the current team also consists of other members, including Md Saqlain Newaz Chowdhury, Fariyan Shah Fahi, Bhuban Mazumder, Miftahul Jannat, Abu Auhon Rahman, Muntasir Abdullah Bin Ahmed, and Nafisa Rahman.

Nabik is a compact, two-foot-long robot boat that can operate effectively in the shallow and narrow channels common in flood-hit areas. The robot is remote-controlled, with an impressive operational range of two kilometres, allowing it to navigate through flood-affected areas that are otherwise difficult to access. Despite its small size, Nabik is capable of carrying substantial payloads, enough to deliver up to eight life jackets and several packaged meals in a single trip. This capacity makes it an invaluable tool in initial response efforts, where rapid delivery of life-saving equipment and food can make all the difference.

Moreover, Nabik can also record live video footage from the centre of the disaster zone using a first-person perspective (FPV) camera, providing rescuers with an uninterrupted feed of the ground situation. By providing a direct visual link to the affected areas, the FPV camera helps the team make informed decisions about where to direct their efforts, ensuring that aid reaches those who need it most. It also has a microphone for communication, allowing the rescue team to talk directly with those in the affected areas. The ability to communicate in real-time can make a significant difference in emergencies, helping to calm fears and facilitate organised, effective rescue operations.

Recently, Nabik successfully managed to deliver relief goods like sanitary napkins, water purifying tablets, etc. to families stuck in flood-hit areas in Feni. Innovative solutions like Nabik will be essential in saving lives and assisting communities as climate change continues to increase the severity and frequency of natural disasters.

Rittique Basak is a Campus Ambassador for The Daily Star from BRAC University.

■ **STUDY ABROAD** ■

How to have the “money conversation” with your parents when applying abroad

AMRIN TASNIM RAFA and ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

Studying abroad is expensive. So much so that, for the vast majority of us, after the lengthy and draining application process concludes, where we ultimately end up usually comes down to the financial package.

Regardless, with the approach many of us take in our applications, the financial planning or, “money conversation,” usually takes a backseat. Instead, we prioritise applying to as many countries and institutions as possible, hoping that this will increase our chances of multiple acceptances and scholarship offers to choose from based on cost.

The current approach is risky

The application timeline is the last year of high school, and many of us find ourselves steamrolling through the year: familiarising ourselves with the distinct application requirements of multiple countries, sitting for standardised tests, and writing personal statements and countless essays, all the while preparing for upcoming board exams.

Thus, we spread ourselves thin, which can result in not being very successful in securing acceptances and adequate scholarships and financial aid. At this point, as we have dedicated most of our time and effort to applications abroad, we often lose out on the opportunity to attend public universities at home as well.

So, it is important to reduce the number of places we apply to by assessing our options based on how they will suit our preferences and needs. Due to the generally large costs involved, one of the biggest factors to consider should be finances.

Why this conversation is necessary

As unfair as it might seem, opportunities for higher education don't always directly correlate to merit. Certain locations, such as the UK, Australia, and Canada, rely on international students as an important source of revenue. They provide far less need-based aid and require you to pay a hefty sum in tuition and living expenses should you choose to attend. Your financial solvency will also significantly determine the calibre of the institution you can attend in these countries.

Moreover, while the higher availability of need-based financial aid in places like the US might seem like a way out of the cruel shackles of capitalism, there are plenty of caveats there too. Very few institutions are need-blind (meaning they do not take your financial situation into account when evaluating your profile) for international students, thus they are much harder to get into.

Most institutions are need-aware: the more money they would have to give you in scholarships to cover your cost of attendance, the more competitive your selection will be.

Approaching the conversation

Start by explaining the concept of the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and how it may affect your chances of gaining admission in the first place. Offering a reasonable amount of money, if possible, can help you gain admission somewhere that strikes the right balance of institution reputability and affordability for your unique case. In this light, ask your parents to be transparent about how much they are willing to invest in your education. An informed discussion on your preferred course of study and estimated future returns on investment should be covered.

Many students also avail a more expensive option than their families can reasonably afford with the expectation that they will find employment to cover the surplus. Here, it is very important to address that neither student employment nor the future employment prospects of your degree will always work out, given the volatile state of the global economy and the saturation of international student populations in developed countries. Thus, you should discuss if you are prepared to cover the whole of your expenses if things don't quite work out according to plan and the repercussions of the financial toll it could take on your family.

Most institutions are need-aware: the more money they would have to give you in scholarships to cover your cost of attendance, the more competitive your selection will be.

Challenges that may arise

To begin with, many of our parents feel uncomfortable speaking to us about their financial situation. Thus, they are not likely to be fully forthcoming and transparent when you ask them to present you with the exact figure they are willing to invest towards your education.

Your parents may not have a prior understanding of the application process and may harbour unrealistic expectations of you, asking you to apply and attempt to achieve a full scholarship before you even broach the possibility of dipping into family funds. They might also be inclined to listen to their acquaintances and advertising from opportunistic educational agencies over you.

Possible solutions

This can all be extremely frustrating but you can get through it. Research these matters thoroughly so you can become a trustworthy source of information for your parents. The most accurate picture of what the study abroad journey will look like for you can be gained by reaching out to other Bangladeshi students who are studying or have studied where and what you plan to study. Reassure your parents that it is, indeed, necessary for you to have a clear understanding of your financial situation and to not leave anything up to fate or chance.

Additionally, don't hold unreasonable expectations from your parents. It is okay for you to ask your parents to compromise a bit, as long as it is within a limit that's fair to the rest of your family.

Education is essentially a commodity. Your ability to purchase this commodity can significantly limit or expand your options. This is not to say that a lack of funds will certainly ruin your chances of getting a foreign education. However, being prepared about the financial aspects will give you more control over the outcomes of your admission process.

Adrita and Amrin are glad they never have to undergo the undergraduate admission process ever again.



ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM