



DHAKA THURSDAY NOVEMBER 21, 2024, AGRAHAYAN 6, 1431 BS | A PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star

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CITY OF DREAMS AND STRUGGLES

Students on coping with the dread and demands of Dhaka

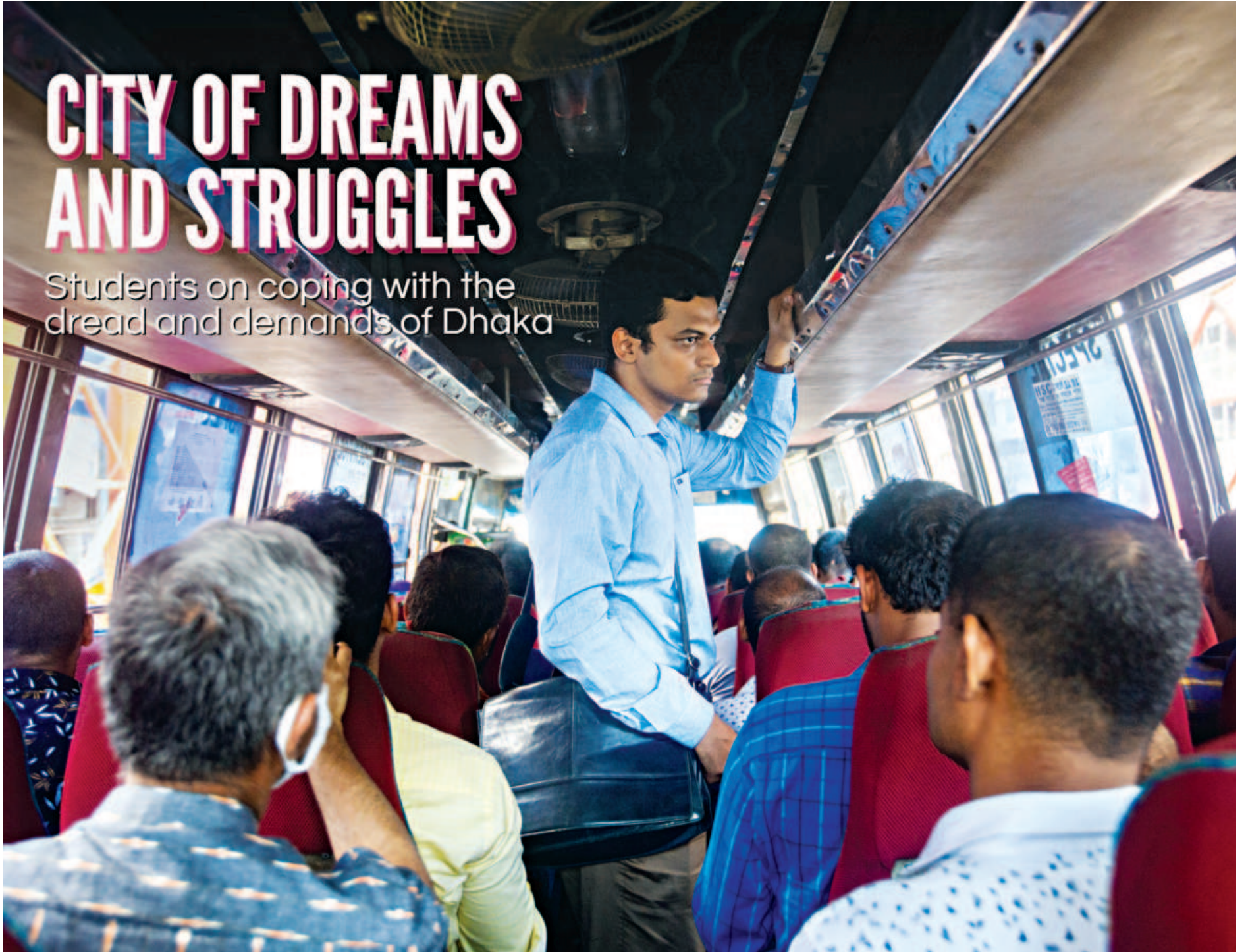


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ANIME

DANDADAN

A pulpy, genre-bending shonen that will move you

RAIAN ABEDIN and ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

The current landscape of shonen anime feels depressing. It was, therefore, with a certain level of scepticism that we started the latest *Jump+* adaptation, *Dandadan*.

Okarun and Momo are two high school students who have a chance encounter. Okarun believes in aliens but not ghosts and Momo believes in ghosts but not aliens. The logical thing for them to do would be to part ways. Instead, they embark upon a wild adventure that pulls them into a world of ghosts, aliens, psychics, and every other irreverent thing you can possibly think of.

On the surface, *Dandadan's* plot can be a bit much. Filled with crazy, random elements and driven by a character motivation that frankly neither of us could have imagined in our wildest dreams, the story seems nonsensical and might be off-putting to many viewers. However, at its core, *Dandadan* is just a simple story about two people going on an adventure and falling in love.

The romance is, perhaps, the best we have seen in shonen battle anime in a pretty



long time. The character interactions feel fresh and reflect real human experiences. The show employs a monster-of-the-week format, but each individual episode is so well-written and fits into the overarching theme of the story so well that it never feels stale or monotonous.

From the get-go, what makes *Dandadan* stand out is its striking visual presentation. The simplistic use of primary, saturated colours is used to highlight the contrast between different scenes, and sometimes even

between different characters or episodes.

Studio Science SARU, known for their brilliant work on *Devilman Crybaby*, *Ping Pong the Animation*, and *Scott Pilgrim Takes Off*, is the perfect fit for a project like *Dandadan*. There is also the music, done by industry heavyweight Kensuke Ushio, that helps set the scenes very effectively.

A genre-bending melting pot of comedy, romance, action, and sci-fi, *Dandadan* feels like the beginning of something fresh in the world of shonen anime.



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CAREER AND EDUCATION

Centralisation of opportunities in Dhaka

What impact it has on students and young professionals

TAZRIN RASHID PRITHA

Dhaka is currently the fourth most populous city in the world, with around 2,000 people moving to the country's capital every single day. This influx is largely driven by the fact that many opportunities are still heavily concentrated in the capital, leaving those in other parts of the country with limited access.

Salsabil Imam, a software engineer based in Rajshahi, highlighted the challenges faced by job seekers outside of Dhaka, "Most job sectors are based in Dhaka, and the written exams for many reputed organisations are held there as well. For those of us without close connections in Dhaka, the stress of managing accommodation discourages many from applying to these jobs that would otherwise be a perfect fit."

She added that this issue disproportionately affects women due to safety concerns, giving Dhaka-based job seekers a significant advantage. "Those living in Dhaka can apply to multiple job openings which increases their chances of securing a decent job," Salsabil explained.

Echoing Salsabil's concerns, Tajrian Haque Laira, a student at East Delta University in Chattogram, remarked, "Just as job seekers outside Dhaka are discouraged from applying to multiple openings, university students from other cities are also often hesitant to participate in extracurricular activities and events, many of which are based in Dhaka."

Laira explained that business students often participate in various types of business competitions which employ practical applications of classroom lessons. However, she pointed out a major challenge, "The organisers of these competitions often expect us to travel

back and forth between rounds, which is both physically and mentally exhausting. It's difficult to balance our health, academics, and personal lives when we have to make six to seven-hour-long journeys so frequently."

When asked whether virtual participation could help bridge the opportunity gap for students and employees residing outside Dhaka, Laira expressed doubts. She said, "I think these competitions are valuable networking events for university students. Online interactions don't offer the same opportunity to build meaningful connections."

Adding to this, Salsabil suggested, "Creating more remote job opportunities for people outside Dhaka could be a temporary solution. It would be beneficial for those who don't want to leave their families or the city they've lived in all their lives."

Salsabil added, "However, I wouldn't necessarily prefer working remotely. I've learned a lot from my colleagues during my time at my current workplace, and they've inspired many positive changes in me. I doubt that would have been possible if I worked from home."

University students aiming to pursue higher education often have to move to Dhaka as well. Mahjabeen Al Hussaini, a fifth-year medical student at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, said, "Government hospitals in Bangladesh are structured across several levels to provide healthcare services nationwide. At the primary level, community clinics offer basic healthcare in rural areas. District hospitals provide secondary care, including surgeries and specialist

services. At the tertiary level, medical college hospitals offer specialised treatments, while specialised hospitals focus on specific fields like cardiology, orthopaedics, and mental health."

Mahjabeen continued, "Medical college hospitals and specialised hospitals in Dhaka offer a wider variety of postgraduate courses compared to those in district hospitals. As a result, students studying in medical colleges attached to these hospitals often have no choice but to move to Dhaka after graduation, and patients frequently have to travel to the capital for better treatment."

University students and job seekers alike face significant challenges due to the centralisation of resources, often having to relocate to Dhaka for better educational and career opportunities. This exacerbates the city's already strained infrastructure and pushes it toward an unsustainable future. To tackle these problems, a well-planned decentralisation strategy is essential, focusing on expanding development and facilities to other regions of the country.

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2. The Financial Express (November, 2023). *Dhaka with an oversize population on verge of collapse*.
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Tazrin is a finance and banking student at Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP). Convince her that she is not Thanos at rashid tazrin1@gmail.com.

OFF CAMPUS

CITY OF DREAMS AND STRUGGLES

Students on coping with the dread and demands of Dhaka

ANICA BUSHRA RAHMAAN

For students living in Dhaka, the urban nightmare that the capital has morphed into is frightening. Blaring, relentless traffic turns every commute into a battle, broken roads compromise safety and breed discomfort, and the rampant air pollution is a slow poison – these are aspects we are all familiar with unfortunately. Yet, none of us have really become accustomed to it.

So, what then happens to the students who are new to the city? The ones who have left their hometowns behind to pursue an education and make their dreams a reality. How do they perceive the Gordian mess, which is Dhaka?

Abbar Jahan Arpita, an undergraduate student at the Department of Law at North South University (NSU), hailing from Mymensingh, recalls her first time visiting Dhaka as a child, "I have fond memories of my childhood in Mymensingh, where I'd spend most of my afternoons playing in fields with my friends. I learned how to swim and fish in a nearby pond with my father. In Dhaka, however, there wasn't much space for kids to play except for cramped garages or rooftops. Everywhere I looked, it was just one building after another and never-ending construction."

Having to live in the capital as a student has become a series of decisions that compromise Arpita's immunity. "My physical health has clearly deteriorated since I moved here. Dhaka's air pollution is the most stressful as it triggers my asthma, to the point where I have to miss classes."

Even food – a basic necessity – poses difficulties for students to access due to its lack of affordability and quality. Shrabonty Deb Ina who is from Sylhet and a student at the Department of English and Humanities at

the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), notes, "In my hometown, everyone prefers home-cooked meals as opposed to dining out. But in Dhaka, I have observed that dining out or ordering in is a common practice, even if one lives with their family. I live in a hostel where the food served is hardly ever good. I rarely have time to cook either. So, I almost always have to opt to dine out as well."

"However, the meals aren't affordable. If the meals are affordable then the place itself isn't very inviting. Nice cafes or restaurants that serve good food come with expensive prices. As a result, food takes up most of my expenses, which is why I often have to forgo doing or buying other things," she says. "Moreover, the quality of food here is bad, especially the fruits and vegetables. Depending on my monthly budget, I don't even buy them sometimes."

For many students, especially those without the comfort of family members, the housing conditions of Dhaka, too, present challenges.

Shayonto Hasan of Rajshahi, a student at the Department of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) at BRAC University, currently living in a house for bachelors, reveals, "I live close to my university and the rent here is very high, around 20,000 taka or more for a two-bedroom house but the living conditions are very poor. There is no proper drainage system, the roads are narrow and broken, and there's no gap between the houses. We often tell each other that even the worst street in Rajshahi is better than Badda's best street."

Moreover, the capital's frustrating traffic and road conditions do not make things easier. Shayonto states, "In Rajshahi, I can travel to the farthest of places in just 20 to 30 minutes. In Dhaka, it can take one to two hours just to travel the smallest distance. Also, despite being the capital

city, the footpaths of Dhaka are the worst. In most places, you cannot even use them as they are either entirely broken or half covered by hawkers."

Coupled with the pressure to succeed and secure their well-being, students are always on the edge, worsening the mental strain of having to adjust to such a cluttered and demanding city.

Shrabonty shares, "There is no guarantee that once I leave my house, I'll return home safely. From mugging and reckless driving to random acts of violence, often targeted towards women, there is no way to distinguish between good and bad people. I am constantly on edge regarding everyone. Having to be vigilant all the time is draining. Thoughts about my future and its uncertainty are always on the back of my mind as well. Everyone comes to Dhaka with a dream and there is a constant unrelenting pressure to fulfil it."

Yet, the very thing which brought these students to the capital city seems to be free of stains for some. Arpita remarks, "Unexpectedly, Dhaka's environment has positively influenced my academic performance. Since I live close to my university, it spares me from the exhausting traffic and saves me time and energy. Everyone around me is quite dedicated to their education and future aspirations, which motivates me to perform better academically as well."

The rapid urbanisation of Dhaka has constructed a landscape brimming with promises and challenges alike. With each day appearing to be an endless grind, it's plain to see that dreams come with a cost. Yet, waiting around for much-needed solutions – which are often talked about and seldom implemented – cannot be an option. With no way around the overwhelming urban demands of Dhaka, newcomers are forced to accept such a city.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

NOTICE BOARD

BRAC University hosts “Policy Dialogue on Financial and Economic Reforms in Bangladesh”

BRAC Business School of BRAC University organised a policy dialogue titled “Policy Dialogue on Financial and Economic Reforms in Bangladesh” on November 16 at its Merul Badda Campus. The event brought together prominent policymakers, financial leaders, industry experts, and academics for an in-depth exploration of critical reforms needed to strengthen Bangladesh’s financial landscape.

The event commenced with an opening plenary session, “Actionable Financial and Economic Policies for an Inclusive, Equitable, and Prosperous Bangladesh”. Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, Advisor for Finance and Science & Technology to the Interim Government, delivered the keynote address as the Chief Guest. Special guests included Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD); Professor Syed Ferhat Anwar, Vice-Chancellor, BRAC University; Selim RF Hussain, CEO and Managing Director of BRAC Bank PLC; and Farzana Lalarukh, Commissioner, Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission.

Prof. Mujibul Haque, Acting Dean of BRAC Business School, opened the



session by highlighting BRAC University’s dedication to nation-building.

Dr Salehuddin stated that the administration has taken charge during a critical time, tasked with driving reforms, particularly in the financial sector. He noted that the economic damage is unprecedented, making reform urgent and essential.

He added that effective reform requires a strategic approach that benefits the grassroots. He noted that the interim government’s reforms will leave a lasting footprint for future policymakers, assuring that the administration is

committed to stabilising and advancing the economy.

Dr Bhattacharya commended BRAC University students for their inspiring role in the July movement, emphasising their crucial contributions toward a more inclusive Bangladesh. He also warned that reforms would fail without market stability, cautioning that economic discontent could trigger widespread public anger. He paid tribute to Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, the founder of BRAC University and BRAC, stating that Sir Fazle’s visionary work continues to inspire both him and the nation.

Farzana Lalarukh highlighted the pressing issue of trust deficits in the capital market. Selim RF Hussain stressed that central banks must act as strict enforcers to ensure successful reform implementation.

Prof. Syed Ferhat emphasised that today’s Bangladesh is a gift, and it is essential to ensure its sustainability. He highlighted financial reform as a key area that requires attention. He also noted that BRAC University’s initiative underscores its commitment to becoming a leading academic institution driving efforts for meaningful reform.

Throughout the day-long event, insightful panel discussions featured key industry experts, including Naser Ezaz Bijoy, CEO of Standard Chartered Bank Bangladesh; Humaira Azam, Managing Director of LankaBangla Finance PLC; A B Mirza Azizul Islam, Professor at BRAC University and former Caretaker Government Advisor; Md Abdur Rahman Khan, Chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR); Dr Selim Raihan, Executive Director of SANEM; and Michael Trueblood, Director of Economic Growth and Governance, USAID, among others.



The British Council Scholars’ Award 2024 recognises students’ exceptional achievement

The British Council organised the “British Council Scholars Award” on November 12, 2024, at Radisson Blu Water Garden in Dhaka. The awards celebrated and honoured 36 outstanding students who achieved exemplary results in their May/June 2024 Cambridge International and Pearson Edexcel Qualifications (O levels/IGCSE/International GCSE) conducted by the British Council for the UK Exam Boards.

Stephen Forbes, Country Director Bangladesh, British Council, inaugurated the event with his welcome speech. He said, “Congratulations to all the brilliant students who have demonstrated remarkable dedication and commitment to their studies, achieving exemplary results in the examinations. The qualifications you earned through UK Exams Boards equip you with globally recognised education and assessment standards, opening doors to a brighter future.”

The welcome speech was followed by a presentation by Maxim Raimann, Exams Director Bangladesh, British Council. He said, “The Scholars’ Award recognises and celebrates the highest achievers, motivating them to

pursue excellence and inspiring their peers to reach similar heights. This event acknowledges individual hard work while fostering a culture of collaborative effort and academic achievement. Additionally, it reinforces the British Council’s commitment to supporting and empowering the next generation of educational leaders.”

The event also brought together 150 school leaders from 189 partner schools, creating a valuable opportunity to connect, explore, and share experiences.

Talal Meer, Regional Business Development Director for English and Exams in South Asia at the British Council, also addressed the event, discussing the British Council’s collaboration with partner schools in delivering examinations that unlock future opportunities and pave the way for students’ brighter futures.

Following the speeches, the outstanding achievers were presented with crests and certificates. The British Council also announced that the awarded students would receive sponsorship from the British Council for a subject of their choice in the first sitting of the AS (Advanced Subsidiary) exam when they take it.

First “Durbin Exhibition” at IUB showcases celestial wonders

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) hosted the first “Durbin Exhibition” on October 31 as part of “Astronomy Night 8”, organised by Durbin IUB, the Bangladesh chapter of the international astronomy outreach programme Dur Bishwer Nagorik (Durbin).

Held in collaboration with the Computational & Observational Astronomy Lab (COALab) at IUB and the Dunlap Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics at the University of Toronto, the exhibition displayed an impressive collection of 37 astronomical images.



The images spanned between the distances of 90 million km to 60 million light-years. Over the past 18 months, more than 100 images were captured by Durbin’s national volunteers. The exhibition represented the best of these images, exemplifying the outreach programme’s mission to make astronomy accessible to the public.

The exhibition’s top five images received awards from M Arshad Momen, PhD, a professor of Physical Sciences and Director of Graduate Studies, Research, and Industrial Relations at IUB. The first prize went to Md Shahadat Hossain Shahal, a Computer Science and Engineering major at IUB, who is also pursuing a minor in Astronomy and Astrophysics.

The event marked the successful use of two Equinox Interstellar Telescopes, the most advanced deep space imaging equipment in Bangladesh, gifted to IUB by the Dunlap Institute in 2023.

■ OFF CAMPUS ■

KUET STUDENTS

turning plastic waste into furniture

TAMJIDUL HOQUE

A group of innovative minds from Khulna University of Engineering & Technology (KUET) are looking to make an impact on society through their project "PENTABLE" by tackling the pressing issue of plastic waste. An idea that arose during a late-night conversation with friends later went on to secure a top eight finish at the regional finals of the HULT Prize 2024.

PENTABLE came into existence through the initiative of four KUET students, all from the university's Mechanical Engineering department. The team includes Adib Muttaki as the team leader, Mohit Chowdhury who is involved with ideation and research, Faijuz Salehin Nafi who oversees loophole analysis and operations, and Mohaimen Zaman who takes care of the financial side of things.

In regards to coming up with the idea, Adib says, "Excessive plastic waste is a major problem in Bangladesh. Around eight lakh tonnes of plastic waste is thrown into the sea annually in Bangladesh, and most of this waste is generated from discarded pens, bottles, and so on. The initial idea, as the name of our project suggests, was to turn pens into tables. Hence, the name PENTABLE came into existence. However, we gradually moved towards making other furniture pieces as well from discarded pens and other plastic waste."

The whole process of turning plastic into furniture

consists of four steps – collection, preparation, extrusion, and assembly.

"Firstly, plastics, especially polypropylene plastics, are gathered from different plastic recycling sites and turned into polypropylene copolymers via sorting, cutting, and mixing. Reinforcing agents – primarily sawdust – are then mixed with the copolymers while they are in the semi-liquid stage. This makes the product two to three times harder than conventional plastic materials. A simple extrusion process follows this to make sheets and blocks for the furniture. After that, we finally start assembling the furniture," explains Adib.

After extensive study, experimentation, trials, and spending countless hours in the administration building to manage funding, PENTABLE took this idea to the Hult Prize 2024 Global Summits Bangkok as "Team Aperture".

Describing their journey at the competition, Adib says, "Our first round went incredibly well, but we didn't think that we would be one of the teams in the finals. Beyond all odds, however, we were called on the stage along with the other top eight teams. We felt really happy that we could give ourselves, our university, and Bangladesh that global exposure."

The competition might be over, but the team did not give up on its project. While the idea is still more of a concept, they are willing to do whatever it takes to make their dream a reality. As Adib puts it, "The project is still in its early stages right now. The long-term vision is to

create a prototype that can compete with the existing furniture in the market and also be more eco-friendly, fashionable, and affordable. Additionally, PENTABLE is not just some other eco-friendly furniture brand. Our unique donation scheme also allows customers to donate old used furniture which we collect, refurbish, and distribute to underprivileged kids."

While they dream big, they are also aware of the challenges that lie ahead.

"One challenge we are currently facing involves getting the perfect polypropylene copolymers, as most of the plastic units available are either PVC or Styrofoam. The manpower needed to maintain a regular and uninterrupted supply chain is another concern for when we expand," Adib adds.

Nevertheless, the team is hopeful about their project. They believe there is a big need for a furniture company that is eco-friendly and socially impactful. In this regard, PENTABLE can provide the solution and become a brand that can compete with other traditional furniture manufacturers by grabbing people's attention in the near future.

Through innovation and hard work, this group of young students from KUET is showing us the potential that our country's youth has and how they can work towards the greater good.

Tamjidul Hoque is an UK LLB graduate.



CAREER

From fresh graduate to FACULTY MEMBER

The prospects and challenges

SADMAN AHMED

University is one of the most important periods of a student's life – it acts as the bridge between their youth and adulthood. University faculty members, thus, play a huge role in shaping a student's life. As a result, it seems necessary for these faculty members to truly know what they are doing. What then, is the case for educators who have joined as a faculty member right after their graduation?

As expected, the answers varied widely. Despite that, certain common themes emerged throughout my conversations with various students.

"At Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), I have felt that the issue depends on whether the new faculty member belongs to the same department as the course they are teaching," says Tahsin Ahmed Ayon, a second-year student at BUET. "If the new faculty member is an alumnus of the same department, students usually have a more positive attitude towards their lectures than towards non-departmental faculty members. In both cases, however, the educators' lack of experience shows in many aspects, for example, when taking classes or exams."

Samayla Binte Salam, a fifth-semester student of English at BRAC University, points out, "In many cases, these freshly graduated faculty members become busy preparing for their master's or PhD, and neglect their teaching. This sometimes

leaves the syllabus for that particular course incomplete or finished haphazardly."

While many of the responses are pretty negative, there are students on the opposite end of the spectrum.

Maliha Mumtaz Anandi, a third-year International Relations student at Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), says, "Fresh graduates who become faculty members are like our older siblings, they are much more relatable to us."

Rodiya Hossain, a sixth-semester student of Biotechnology at BRAC University, explains, "I've had two faculty members who are fresh graduates take my courses up until now, and both were amazing. Their level of knowledge was great, and they were very adept at teaching. I don't think the lack of experience is an issue. What matters more are knowledge and understanding of the subject."

Surprisingly, the faculty members who joined as fresh graduates mostly agreed with the points raised by the students, both praise and criticism. Taukir Azam Chowdhury, a faculty-member-on-leave at Bangladesh University of Business and Technology (BUBT) and a current PhD student at UC Riverside, opines, "Training periods are essential for the new faculty members. As most of these faculty members aim for a master's or PhD, they should teach first or second-semester courses. Teaching Assistants (TAs) are still not very popular in Bangladesh, but it could be helpful for these young educators to start as TAs."

teaching techniques and become accustomed to their learning methods more easily because there is no generation gap."

Is the lack of a generation gap only an advantage? Nafisa Nazin Lutfu, an International Relations lecturer at BUP, has mixed feelings about this.

"Of course, it is great that fresh graduates can communicate with current students better, having studied the same curriculum and being acquainted with recent information, which is very important in today's hyper-evolving world. However, students can become too friendly with the faculty member and forget the need for boundaries, going as far as to ask the teachers to shorten the syllabus or cancel classes. They probably wouldn't have thought of doing such a thing had I been an older faculty member. Learning how to handle these situations is vital for the new educators," she said.

However, Wasifa Rahman, a lecturer at the Islamic University of Technology (IUT), has a more positive view on this, "The new generation comes with new ideas. They care about their mental health, which the older faculty members are at risk of neglecting. Also, the career options are currently much more diverse for every discipline. The new faculty members can play a huge role in educating the students about these sectors due to how recently they've graduated."

Hasanul Kabir, Head of the Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) Department at IUT, shares his thoughts, "While it is true that young faculty members can help students with their mental health, I believe it is best to leave that for the professionals."

"The reason why we recruit fresh graduates is because of their jack-of-all-trades nature. They don't, however, have in-depth knowledge on the topics they have studied." He advises the younger faculty members to focus more on classroom management and advancing their research for growth.

What all sides agreed upon, however, is the practice of empathy. Empathy should be extended from students to teachers and vice-versa. Transitioning from being a student to an educator is difficult. While students should be concerned about their studies not being hampered by the lack of experience of their faculty members, they should try not to make the transition harder by being harsh.

The journey between aspiring to become an educator and reaching that goal is a long one.

Just a few months isn't enough for that transition to occur smoothly. On the other hand, it is the newer faculty members who bring in new ideas, catalyse better research, and modernise the system — things that are crucial for moving forward. Therefore, for the sake of the education system, fresh graduates should be encouraged to become educators.

Sadman Ahmed is a student at the Islamic University of Technology.

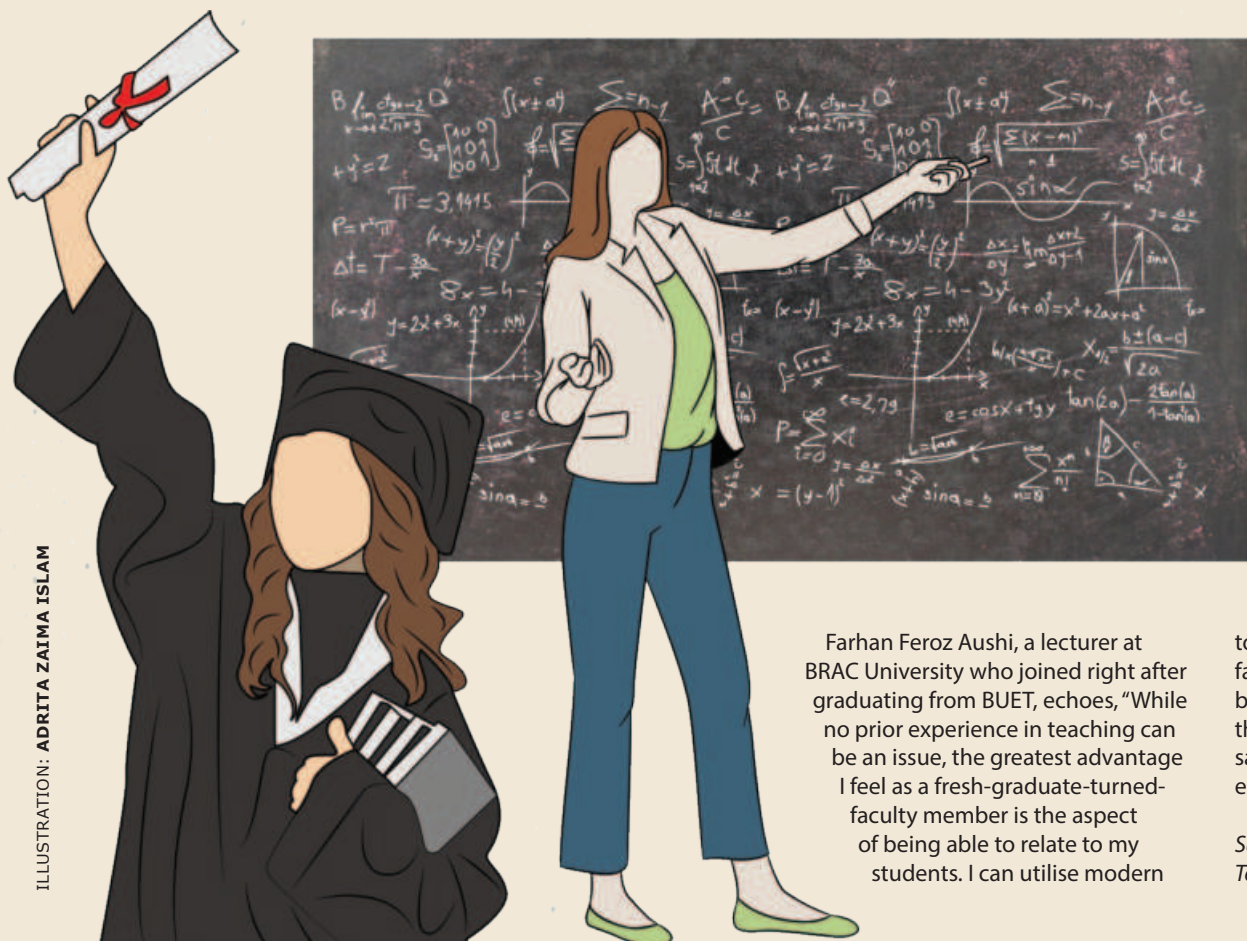


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Farhan Feroz Aushi, a lecturer at BRAC University who joined right after graduating from BUET, echoes, "While no prior experience in teaching can be an issue, the greatest advantage I feel as a fresh-graduate-turned-faculty member is the aspect of being able to relate to my students. I can utilise modern