DHAKA THURSDAY JANUARY 23, 2025, *MAGH 9, 1431 BS* | A PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star

CAMPUS

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THE SILENT BATTLES

OUR UNIVERSITY TEACHERS GRAPPLE WITH

PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

MOVIES

NOSFERATU

A riveting depiction of gothic horror and Victorian tragedy

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

The release of Robert Eggers' remake of the 1922 film *Nosferatu* might not have been the most anticipated event of the year, but it goes without saying that a certain portion of movie watchers (read: horror enjoyers) was rather psyched about it. And it certainly doesn't need any mention that I belong to the aforementioned group.

Nosferatu might or might not be your thing, but there's no way around admitting that it's visually stunning. The film is akin to a looking glass, allowing viewers to peer into a nocturnal world, where even daytime scenes appear moonlit, as is befitting of a gothic horror.

The film boasts an incredible cast, with Lily-Rose Depp, Willem Dafoe, Nicholas Hoult, Emma Corrin, and Aaron Taylor-Johnson in the main roles. Depp's depiction of Ellen Hutter, the newlywed bride of real estate agent Thomas Hutter, played by Hoult, is despondent and often convulsive, yet never unconvincing. The duo delivers an incredible performance as their lives and marriage are catapulted into a perilous trial under the looming threat of a powerful supernatural being from Ellen's past. Bill Skarsgård's appearance as Count Orlok or the Nosferatu is mesmerisingly grotesque, and his phenomenal immersion into the role adds to the charm of the monster.

The silent film *Nosferatu (1922)* was largely based upon Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*. For the first half, *Nosferatu (2024)* also follows the novel quite faithfully, but all on screen adaptations of *Dracula* have taken some creative liberties. For a story that's been told so many times, a faithful retelling would be redundant, and that's not a word I'd use to describe this film. Aside from the complex interpersonal relationships depicted in the film and Eggers' own twist to the plot, Willem Dafoe's brilliant performance as Professor Albin Eberhart von Franz breathes new life into a character that could have easily been a derivation of Professor Van Helsing.

Nosferatu might not be the sort of horror that keeps you up at night or scares you off your seat, but it doubles as a seductive gothic romance that bewitches viewers.

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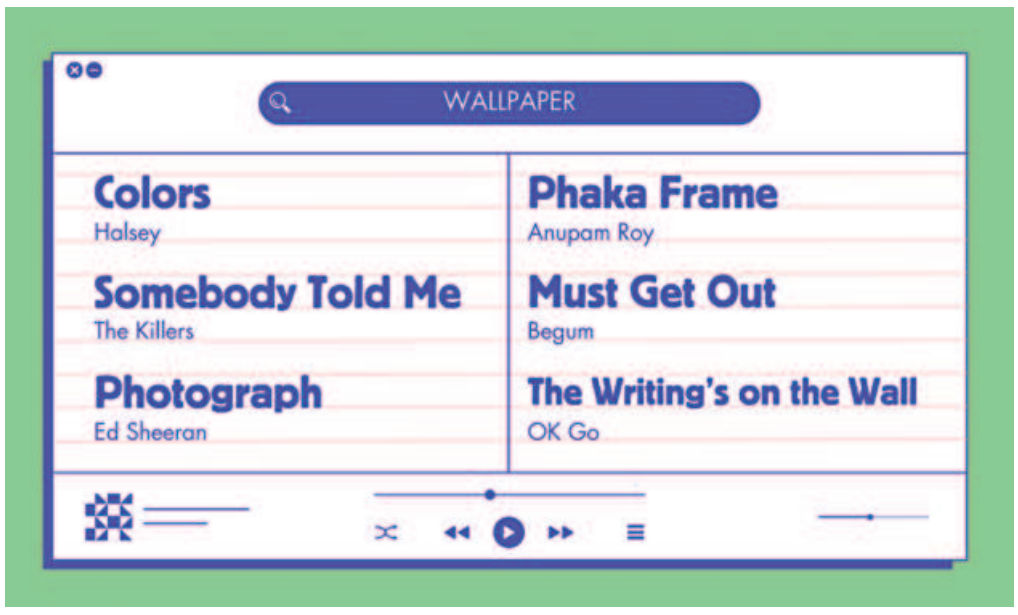

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CAREER

Exploring career options outside engineering for those who love maths

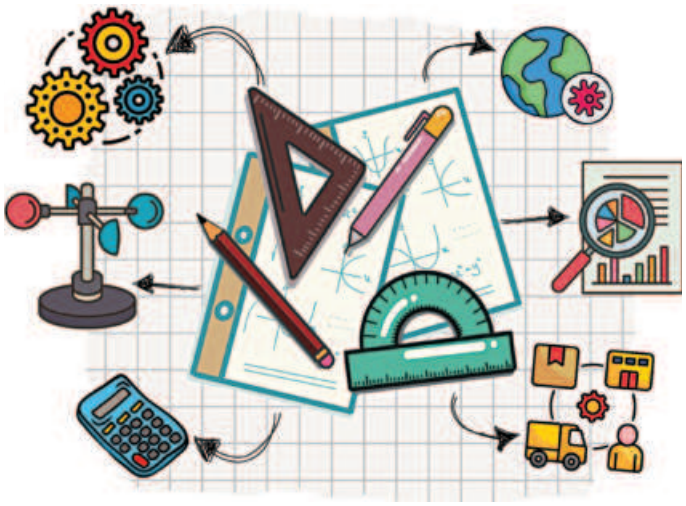


ILLUSTRATION: **ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM**

TAZRIN RASHID PRITHA

Mathematics is often referred to as the language of the universe given how it is frequently used to describe its fundamental nature. Hence, being a math whiz definitely has its perks.

Studies have shown that people who enjoy solving mathematical problems have enhanced problem-solving and critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of the world. It also opens up an array of interesting career opportunities beyond just engineering.

Financial analyst

A financial analyst helps people and companies make smart monetary decisions by analysing financial data. They assess a company's performance through financial reports, predict future trends, research market conditions, and assist with investment decisions.

Important skills for financial analysts include strong mathematical problem-solving abilities, attention to detail, and proficiency with Excel. It also demands effective communication and time management skills from the professionals. That's because financial analysts are frequently required to clearly communicate their findings or analyses to others at work, and often within tight deadlines.

Those interested in this profession can start by obtaining a bachelor's degree in Finance or a related field. Earning a professional certification, like the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) certification, offers an additional advantage.

Meteorologist

A meteorologist is a scientist who specialises in studying and predicting weather conditions. They utilise mathematical models, equations, and statistical methods to interpret data gathered from weather instruments and satellites. By analysing this data, meteorologists forecast weather conditions accurately.

To become a meteorologist in Bangladesh, individuals typically begin by obtaining a bachelor's degree in Meteorology, Atmospheric Science, or a related field from a UGC-recognised university. Aspiring meteorologists further gain practical experience through internships or training programmes at meteorological agencies, like the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), which allows them to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world weather analysis and forecasting.

Epidemiologist

Epidemiology might be the perfect career option for individuals who are equally passionate about mathematics and biology.

An epidemiologist is a public health professional who specialises in understanding the causes and locations of disease outbreaks. Epidemiologists utilise mathematics to create models that simulate how diseases move through communities which, in turn, helps them predict future outbreaks and evaluate the effectiveness of various disease prevention or outbreak-control strategies.

To become an epidemiologist in Bangladesh, individuals start by earning a bachelor's degree in Epidemiology, Public Health, or a related field from a UGC-recognised university. It is also expected for future epidemiologists to gain practical experience through internships or training in epidemiology at research institutions like the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control And Research (IEDCR) and icddr,b.

Supply chain analyst

Supply chain analysts are experts who ensure that products are efficiently transported from factories to shops across the country and even other parts of the world. Mathematics allows them to bring efficiency to their workflow.

Supply chain analysts use mathematics and statistics to predict how much of a product people will buy which, in turn, helps their companies to decide on how much to produce and keep in stock. They also utilise mathematics to plan efficient routes for delivering goods and decide where to store products in warehouses.

Supply chain analysts in Bangladesh typically start their career trajectory with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, ideally with a concentration in Supply Chain Management, and eventually secure certification as a Certified Supply Chain Analyst (CSCA). In terms of mathematic skills, supply chain analysts should have a strong understanding of arithmetic, linear algebra, and mathematical modelling. Based on their day-to-day job requirements, they might also need to work with large data sets and use quantitative methods to analyse data, for which having a sound knowledge of statistics is crucial.

Tazrin, a Finance student, sees stocks and stars aligning. Remind her to take a break from the cosmos at rashidtazrin1@gmail.com

DO YOU HAVE MATHS ANXIETY?

Maths anxiety triggers worry or panic when solving maths problems, but it isn't tied to one's intellectual abilities. While anyone can experience it, girls tend to have higher levels of anxiety about maths than boys, despite generally showing similar levels of maths performance, according to findings by the Journal of Educational Psychology.

Signs of maths anxiety can include anything from feeling panicked or stressed to increased heart rate or sweating and nausea when solving maths problems. Sometimes, the anxiety can reach levels where one will try to avoid situations involving maths entirely.

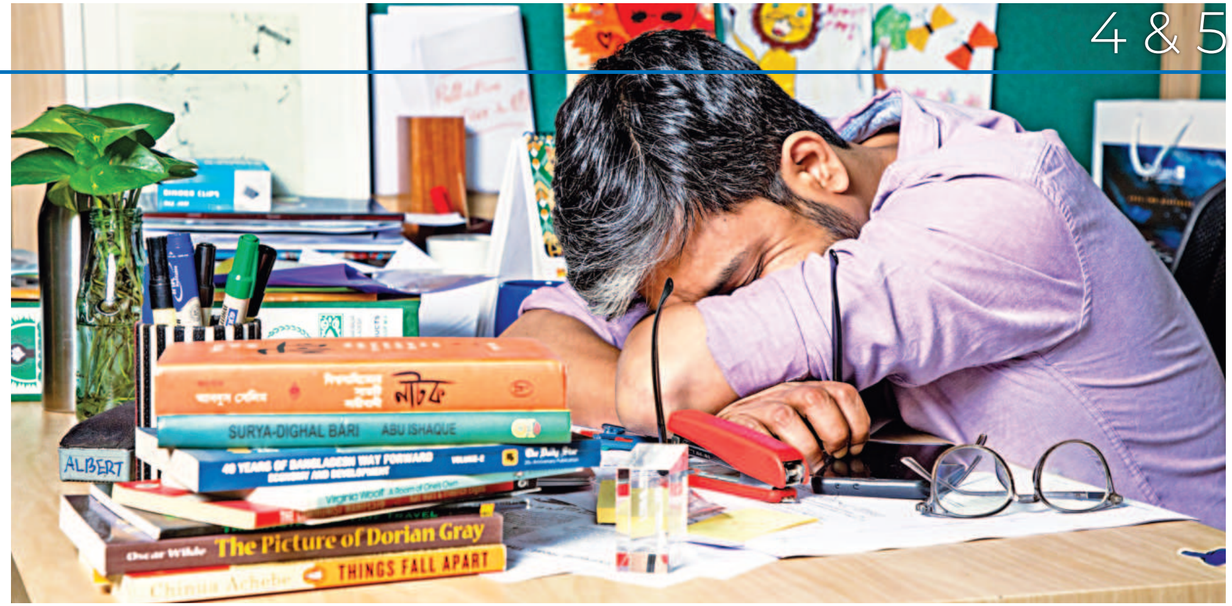
While maths anxiety doesn't reflect academic ability, its stress can impact performance, creating a cycle of fear and avoidance. This reinforces the belief that math skills are fixed, reducing motivation to practice and improve, ultimately hindering learning and progress in the subject.

You can overcome maths anxiety by practising regularly, breaking problems into smaller steps, using positive self-talk, and seeking help from teachers or tutors. It'll take time to get over your fear and anxiety, but every small step, in this regard, counts.

THE SILENT BATTLES

our university teachers grapple with

Many factors weigh in on the mental health of our mentors



> "The amount faculty members get is a bare minimum to make ends meet. We have to struggle to maintain the daily expenses. Within this, we have to do research, bear publication fees, and whatnot,"

PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

AFRA ANIKA NAWAR KHAN

As a young, impressionable teenager in Bangladesh, when I was beginning to learn that there are some designated professions deemed better than others, I was told that becoming a university lecturer or professor was a top choice. Not only does this profession supposedly bring you a stable income, but it also puts you on the societal pedestal of intellectuals. You are automatically respected.

However, it was not until I enrolled into university about three years ago and was able to develop a good enough relationship with my lecturers that I realised that while their noble profession is possibly one of the most reputable one there is, the educational system in many ways, fails to accommodate their needs, which ultimately takes a toll on their mental health.

A university faculty member's responsibility does not consist only of providing slides and delivering lectures, as one would presume in academia. It is a constant juggle between balancing their teaching responsibilities, research duties, and attending administrative duties, often resulting in sacrificing time with their own families. University teachers lead multiple lives, and most of us remain unaware of it.

Motiur Rahman, an assistant professor of English at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Dhaka University of Engineering and Technology (DUET), shares how due to his work pressure, he has to sacrifice a lot of his family time. "Due to excessive workload, I have to compromise a lot of my personal and family time. In the end, I am always in a rush."

The hours required for teachers to put together a syllabus, prepare and deliver lectures, look after assessments, and fulfil all the administrative tasks that they are expected to take care of, are often a lot higher than the ones they agreed to on paper. What makes the situation even grimmer is the fact that their remuneration often does not reflect these efforts and long hours.

"The amount faculty members get is a bare minimum to make ends meet. We have to struggle to maintain the daily expenses. Within this, we have to do research, bear publication fees, among a myriad of other things," Rahman adds.

When speaking about the pay disparity among universities, Rahman notes, "Having worked at both public and private universities, and contrary to popular beliefs, I have seen some private universities provide flexible work hours for the faculty members. And the salary structure is also way more rewarding in private institutions."

Furthermore, the structure and workload can often be rigid and unforgiving. Without much room for flexibility in tightly packed schedules, especially those in private universities, can become a source of further stress.

Syeda Maisha Ali, a lecturer at North South University says, "While there are TAs to help us with our work, they are not allowed to take on the heavy duties. Designing our course materials, taking back-to-back lectures, and, at times, five sections consisting of forty students does affect our overall stress levels. What further exacerbates the anxiety is the incredibly short span of time available to us to get to know all the students and to understand how we, as teachers, can cater to their individual learning needs.

With overarching expectations from students for us to be the best version of ourselves to them, and the general conditions of a university, the pressure to fulfil all expectations can sometimes feel insurmountable,"

Maisha Ali also says, "It is true that if a faculty member is invested in research duties, they can apply for course waivers. But those are the bigger parts of being a teacher at a university. North South University has recently begun to provide mental health support to faculty members and administrative staff."

However, the workload faculty members have to juggle is already quite a heavy burden to carry. With most mental health resources and professional psychological facilities on campus catering towards students, faculty members are often left without a lurch, further adds Maisha Ali.

While deemed "safe" in terms of safety in the literal sense and also a safer professional option, educational institutions, to some extent, fail women. It's a shame that reputable universities in Bangladesh often are inefficient in catering to women's needs, such as providing on-campus support. Adeeba Naz, a lecturer at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), points out how academic institutions can do better by their women employees.

> "Functional depression and anxiety are some common mental health issues amongst the academic line of professionals. However, one highlighting factor would be their feeling of failure – failure in their jobs, which leads to them feeling isolated from their colleagues."

"I am fortunate that I have not faced any gender disparity in my institute. Rather, we are seeing more and more female faculty members joining, even in an engineering institute like mine. However, I am speaking for my institute, and this doesn't mean that disparity doesn't exist in other institutes. We need to be proactive in addressing any such incidents of discrimination if they occur anywhere," says Naz.

Naz emphasises the need to provide better support to female employees. "To better support female faculty members in balancing their professional and personal responsibilities, things like more flexible work hours, on-campus childcare facilities, and remote work options could make a big difference. Also, having a supportive workplace culture that understands and considers family responsibilities can help female faculty members manage their dual roles more easily."

Faculty members, as you cannot already tell, are often overburdened or often treated as if they are superheroes. The pressure of excelling in all aspects of their lives is not only what they put themselves through but also what society, and to some extent their students, put on them.

Antara Das Antu, a psychological counsellor at Psychological Health and Wellness Care (PHWC), shares how her patients coming from the line of academia often feel a constant sense of burnout. "Functional depression and anxiety are some common mental health issues amongst the academic line of professionals. However, one highlighting factor would be their feeling of failure – failure in their jobs, which leads to them feeling isolated from their colleagues."

According to Antu, "They are burning themselves out and are putting constant pressure on them to thrive with daily preparation for taking classes, suffering from work-life imbalance. They feel somewhat out of place if they are not excelling and constantly battling the pressure to be successful in this career to be accepted among peers. It also goes without saying that people's expectations from university teachers do not help."

Antu advises academics to be kinder to themselves and for universities to begin talking about mental health actively, uplifting the stigma around it. "Universities need to begin by fostering open communication about mental health on the university campus, sharing their own journey of mental health struggles, arranging mental health campaigns and seminars, and providing free mental health support by professionals. And faculty members should start by providing self-compassion to themselves, expressing gratitude to those who are helping them every day, and self-reflect on how much value their work carries, and how it is impacting their own and others' lives."

In the line of professional work, academia is not only deemed the "safest" or just "respectable," it does offer flexibility, as Naz points out, praising her line of work and institute, as well as her deliberate choice to make time for herself. "Balancing work and personal life can be challenging, as responsibilities often extend beyond office hours. While I try to make time for personal and family life, it's not always enough, especially during busy periods like the start and end of a semester. That being said, academia might be a bit more flexible and comfortable compared to some other types of jobs. I believe maintaining this balance is crucial for mental well-being, so I make a conscious effort to prioritise and compartmentalise my time whenever possible."

Our teachers are the backbone of our society. Therefore, it has become essential that we begin to learn how to treat them well and foster a more caring approach to their well-being. While having high expectations is alright, it is a collective duty of both educational institutions and students to remember that their faculty members are also humans with lives of their own and that they must be treated better.

Afra is a student of English Literature at North South University. Write to her to discuss anything F1 at afraankhan20@gmail.com.

NOTICE BOARD

3rd International Education Conference held at Daffodil International University

To mark the 24th founding anniversary of Bangladesh Chatra Kallyan Trust, Daffodil International University hosted the 3rd International Education Conference on "Education for World Peace" between January 18 and 19 at the International Mother Language Institute in Dhaka. Prof. Dr M Aminul Islam, Special Assistant to the Ministry of Education, inaugurated the conference as the Chief Guest while Prof. Dr Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of North South University and Chairman, Grameen Bank presented the keynote paper in the conference. Prof. Zakir Hossain, General Secretary of Bangladesh Shikhkhok Karmachari Oikko Jote; Prof. M A Sabur; Prosanto Kumar Tripura, Member, Khagrachari Hill District Council; Tareq Rahman, Joint Secretary, Gano Odhikar Parishad; Md Anowar Habib Kazal, Senior Assistant Director (Public Relations), Daffodil International University; and Mostikima Islam Meem, Vice Principal, Trust Model Academy were present as the Special Guests. Prof. Dr Abdul Latif Masum, Vice Chairman of Bangladesh Chatra Kallyan Trust presided over the conference while Principal Nure Alam Talukder, Founder and Executive Director of Bangladesh Chatra Kallyan Trust delivered the welcome address in the conference.

Prof. Dr M Aminul said the education curriculum from class one to class ten should be developed in such a way so that the stress on rote learning is reduced, and issues like creativity and human values are highlighted through pictures and graffiti. He also called upon the students to serve the country, society, and community, irrespective of the state they live in.

IUBAT celebrates 34th founding anniversary

The International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT), the pioneering non-government university of Bangladesh, joyously celebrated its 34th founding day at its campus in Uttara, Dhaka on January 16, 2025.

Prof. Dr Abdur Rab, the Vice-Chancellor of IUBAT, inaugurated the opening ceremony with the national anthem, commencing the celebration with the hoisting of flags and laying floral tributes at the grave of the university's Founder.

In the open auditorium of IUBAT, a ceremonial cake was cut to commemorate the 34th anniversary, marking the participation of all departments. Present at the event were IUBAT Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr Abdur Rab; Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr Mohammad Mahmudur Rahman; Treasurer Prof. Selina Nargis; Registrar Professor Dr Md Momtazur Rahman; Exam Controller Brig Gen Dr Md Zahid Hossain (Retd); Engineering Dean Prof. Dr Md Monirul Islam; Agriculture Dean Dr Md Shohidullah Miah; Dean of the Faculty of Business Professor Mozzaffar Alam Chowdhury; and other esteemed professors.

Additionally, a special discussion programme was organised to honour the university's 34th anniversary, featuring the participation of teachers, officials, and students. Founded in 1991 under the guidance of eminent educationist Prof. Dr M Alimullah Miyan, IUBAT is recognised as the first non-government university in Bangladesh. The university aspires to produce at least one graduate from each village in the nation. Drawing students from all corners of the country and beyond, with over a hundred foreign students from 12 countries in Asia and Africa, IUBAT offers education under eleven departments within its expansive 20 *bigha* green campus in Uttara

NSU holds MPPG and EMPG orientation programme

The Spring 2025 semester orientation programme for the 12th Batch of Master in Public Policy & Governance (MPPG) and 7th Batch of Executive Masters in Policy and Governance (EMPG) was held on 18 January at North South University (NSU). The event, organised by NSU's South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG), marked a significant milestone in the institution's commitment to nurturing future policy leaders.

Håkon Arald Gulbrandsen, Ambassador of Norway to Bangladesh, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. In his address, he emphasised the unique opportunity presented to the students, stating, "It is an incredible privilege for these students to study this subject at such a critical juncture in Bangladesh's development. The country is undergoing significant policy reforms, and the knowledge gained here will be invaluable in shaping its future."

The Ambassador expressed his satisfaction with Norway's involvement, adding, "I am delighted that Norway could be a partner in the initial stages of this programme."

The MPPG programme stands as a beacon of excellence in South Asia, offering a thesis-based international master's degree in Public Policy and Governance. This unique programme has been instrumental in educating

and providing hands-on experience to professionals, predominantly from the civil services of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Its regional impact is evident in the recognition it has received from governments and donors alike. Since its inception, the programme has produced over 170 graduates from 10 batches up to 2022, including young civil servants and professionals from various South and Southeast Asian countries such as Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia.

Launched in Fall 2021, the EMPG programme is SIPG's latest academic initiative. It aims to enhance the academic competence and professional skills of a diverse group of learners, including public bureaucrats, corporate executives, development professionals, embassy officials, NGO managers, private sector officials, and recent graduates from Bangladesh and abroad.

The orientation commenced with a warm welcome from Prof. Sk Tawfique M Haque, Director of SIPG, NSU. Following introductions by the new students, Dr Rizwan Khair, Associate Professor and Chair of PSS and Graduate Programme Coordinator (GPC) at SIPG, provided a comprehensive overview of the MPPG and EMPG programmes. A particularly engaging segment of the event was an open discussion where current students and alumni shared their experiences, while new entrants expressed their expectations from the programme, fostering a sense of community and continuity. Other speakers at the programme were Prof. Md Rizwanul Islam, Dean, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, NSU, and Professor Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman, Adviser, SIPG, NSU. The programme ended with a vote of thanks by Dr Akram Hossain, Assistant Professor, PSS & SIPG, NSU.

OFF CAMPUS

Moving out, for all its challenges, can be liberating

LAKUM MURSALUN

Living away from one's family is often seen as a step toward adulthood—an experience that supposedly helps gather important life skills and lessons. Whether it is learning how to cook a full meal, shop for groceries, or simply manage expenses, the process invariably teaches self-reliance.

"I think self-reliance is better learned while living alone. Living by myself allowed me to develop my own autonomy in making everyday decisions like what I want to eat, when I want to do household chores, and how I want to plan my finances," expresses Emrita Siddique, originally from Chittagong and a recent graduate of Jahangirnagar University.

"Once you learn to live alone, it becomes a loophole. There is a kind of comfort in living alone that you won't find anywhere else. I am not restrained by anyone or anything. I can go on a walk, sing loudly in my room, and wear that pretty dress," explains Efath.

Fuad Hasan, an undergraduate student at Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET), shares, "I don't know if everyone views it as a skill, but I've learned the basics of electric maintenance, things such as setting up a ceiling fan, bulb plugs, or an electric switch. It proves to be pretty handy, especially when you're switching houses. Apart from this, I've learned to ride a motorbike with the help of my friends, and we often go on long rides."

Even though cooking is a basic life skill, for Sefayet E Jannat Efath, a master's student from Chittagong University (CU), it wasn't entirely easy.

"I've hated cooking my whole life. At home, my mother and sisters handle cooking. That's why I never really had the pressure to learn to cook. In these last three to four years of living alone, however, I've had to prepare meals for myself, which probably wouldn't have happened if I were at home," she states.

For many, enrolling in a university miles away from their home has given them the opportunity to conquer the fears of travelling alone as well. Sifat E Noor Sahiba, currently a second-year student at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET), says, "The idea of travelling alone used to terrify me before I left my parents' house. But I frequently have to travel long distances alone now which I've gotten used to. Overcoming this fear has been a personal achievement for me."

Often, living solo allows individuals to meet and interact with a diverse group of people. Efath shares, "When we live on our own and start engaging with other people, we understand how different each person is. In the past, I viewed every person and my bond with them to be equal, but I eventually realised the uniqueness of each relationship."

Nonetheless, living on your own comes with its own setbacks. Istiak Hasan, a third-year student at Chittagong Medical College, says, "The food in our dining hall is overpriced and tastes horrible. Often, it so bad that eating feels like a chore."

Similarly, Ahnaaf Raad Shahamat, a second-year student at BRAC University, reflects, "My family lives in Chittagong and I really miss home-cooked food now that I live in Dhaka."

Living on your own can be empowering, but it also comes with its fair share of emotional hurdles. "Handling stress and anxiety and tackling other emotional challenges make living alone exhausting. Sometimes, being on your own can lead to loneliness if there's no one around to share moments with," states Emrita.

"Once you learn to live alone, it becomes a loophole. There is a kind of comfort in living alone that you won't find anywhere else. I am not restrained by anyone or anything. I can go on a walk, sing loudly in my room, and wear that pretty dress," explains Efath.

However, she also thinks this can lead to other hurdles. She says, "When you live with another person or a bunch of people, there are other things that you have to be considerate about for the sake of the living environment." This compromise is not something you learn when you live alone.

Fuad, on the other hand, expresses concern about a different issue. He says, "Going on long bike rides with friends has become a thing for me. We meet new people along the way. Sometimes we set camp in remote places and enjoy nature. But when I come back home or go to the campus, I feel like I can't stay there for too long. It feels suffocating. I'm not sure if I have developed a nomadic lifestyle, but I really enjoy the lifestyle I have right now."

Living independently is a transformative phase that shapes individuals in profound ways. In the silence of our own space, we learn to embrace life's rhythms—both gentle currents and rough waters. It's a chapter of life that gives us a chance to step beyond the shelter of our homes to explore ourselves as well as build meaningful connections. It is a journey everyone should embark on after coming of age, if they have the means to do so.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

CAMPUS LIFE

The hurdles of the course advising process and THE PLANS THAT FALTER

TINATH ZAEBA

The open credit system in private universities across Bangladesh is often said to offer students flexibility and control over their education. In fact, it's one of the reasons why many students choose private universities, as the open credit system allows them to pick courses according to their schedule.

In theory, it sounds perfect. Yet, for many students, it's far from it. The process of course advising — registering for classes at the start of every semester— has become a major source of stress and frustration, exposing significant flaws in both the system and its management.

At some private universities, a key issue is a shortage of sections. This is particularly critical in departments with high enrollments, where popular courses fill up almost instantly. If a student fails to register for a course they need, it causes further complications that could lead to the disruption of an entire academic plan.

As many courses are prerequisites, missing one may prevent a student from taking others in the next semester. This issue can even lead to one's expected term for graduation to be prolonged, causing further complications. A final-year student, for example, may end up spending an extra semester or two, simply because they couldn't secure a seat for a required course. This issue has broader implications for students, who may face additional financial burdens and delays in starting their professional careers. In departments with a relatively smaller number of students, the situation can be even worse since courses aren't always offered every semester due to limited faculty or resources.

"It's already tough to keep up with credits in an open credit system," said Sk Mustarin Muskan Mortuza, 23, an alumna of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). "For smaller departments, not every course is available each semester. If you miss one, you might have to wait a year. This disrupts whatever planning you had."

This situation makes long-term academic planning nearly impossible for students. The lack of consistency in course offerings adds another layer of difficulty, as students often have no clear roadmap for completing their degrees on time.

Technical failures compound the issue. Students frequently struggle with their university's online registration system, which often crashes or freezes, especially during high traffic phases. This adds unnecessary anxiety to what should be a straightforward process.

"The website and allocation are to blame. Increasing course sections requires logistical support, but at least the registration process could be improved with a better website," added Mortuza.

However, technical teams argue that the issue isn't solely system related. An anonymous IT department employee at a renowned private university highlighted their challenges, "The advising portal works fine – you can log in at your allocated time with minimal crashes. The problem is students can't find sections because they're all booked. We don't have the authority to create new sections; that's up to the departments. Our hands are tied." This underscores a deeper issue: the disconnect between university administrations and technical teams. IT systems may function well, but without proper planning and resource allocation by the administration, student issues persist. Universities often treat the advising process as a routine administrative task rather than recognising its critical role in shaping the student experience.

In most universities, advising involves two stages: pre-advising and advising. Pre-advising, which happens near the end of the ongoing semester, is often the main focus. "You're given a slot based on the number of credits earned, and have to choose courses within that slot," explained Ibtedat Fatin, 22, a Biotechnology student at BRAC University.

"But problems arise when students can't get the courses they need. The credit hierarchy makes it harder for those with lower scores or those retaking failed courses," added Fatin. While students may adjust choices or retake courses, opportunities are limited and come with strict deadlines. Moreover, students with lower academic standings are disadvantaged in this system, as their credit scores directly affect their ability to secure preferred courses.

Academic advisors are meant to ease this process, but their availability and effectiveness vary greatly. Fatin noted, "It's sometimes hard to figure out who your advisor is, but they do help if there's a problem."

Unfortunately, at many universities, advisors are inconsistent and often inaccessible.

Students frequently have to approach department heads for assistance, an impractical and inefficient solution. Advisors also change frequently, leaving students without continuous or reliable support. This lack of guidance exacerbates the stress and frustration of an already chaotic advising process.

The inefficiencies in course advising extend beyond inconvenience. For commuting students, a poorly organised schedule can mean waiting long hours between classes. Many students end up registering for whatever classes are available, regardless of timing, resulting in wasted time and added exhaustion. Instead of planning their semester, students often scramble to secure whatever is left.

These problems become even more critical in the final years of study, where missed courses or failed registrations have greater consequences. With the pressure to complete degree requirements on time, any disruption feels like a significant setback. Delays in graduation can also have financial implications, as students may have to pay additional tuition fees or forgo job opportunities while they wait to complete their degrees.

ILLUSTRATION: **SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM**

What is particularly frustrating is that these issues are avoidable. Advising problems are not new, and students have voiced their frustration for years. Investing in better IT systems, increasing course sections to match demand, and improving communication between departments and technical teams could significantly ease the chaos. Additionally, offering more consistent advisor support and training could help students navigate the complexities of their academic journeys more effectively.

At its best, the open credit system empowers students, giving them the freedom to structure their education. It offers the flexibility to tailor academic plans according to personal needs and professional goals. However, without proper infrastructure and support, it becomes a source of stress and frustration. Students deserve better than to be stuck in a cycle of inefficiency and mismanagement.

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