

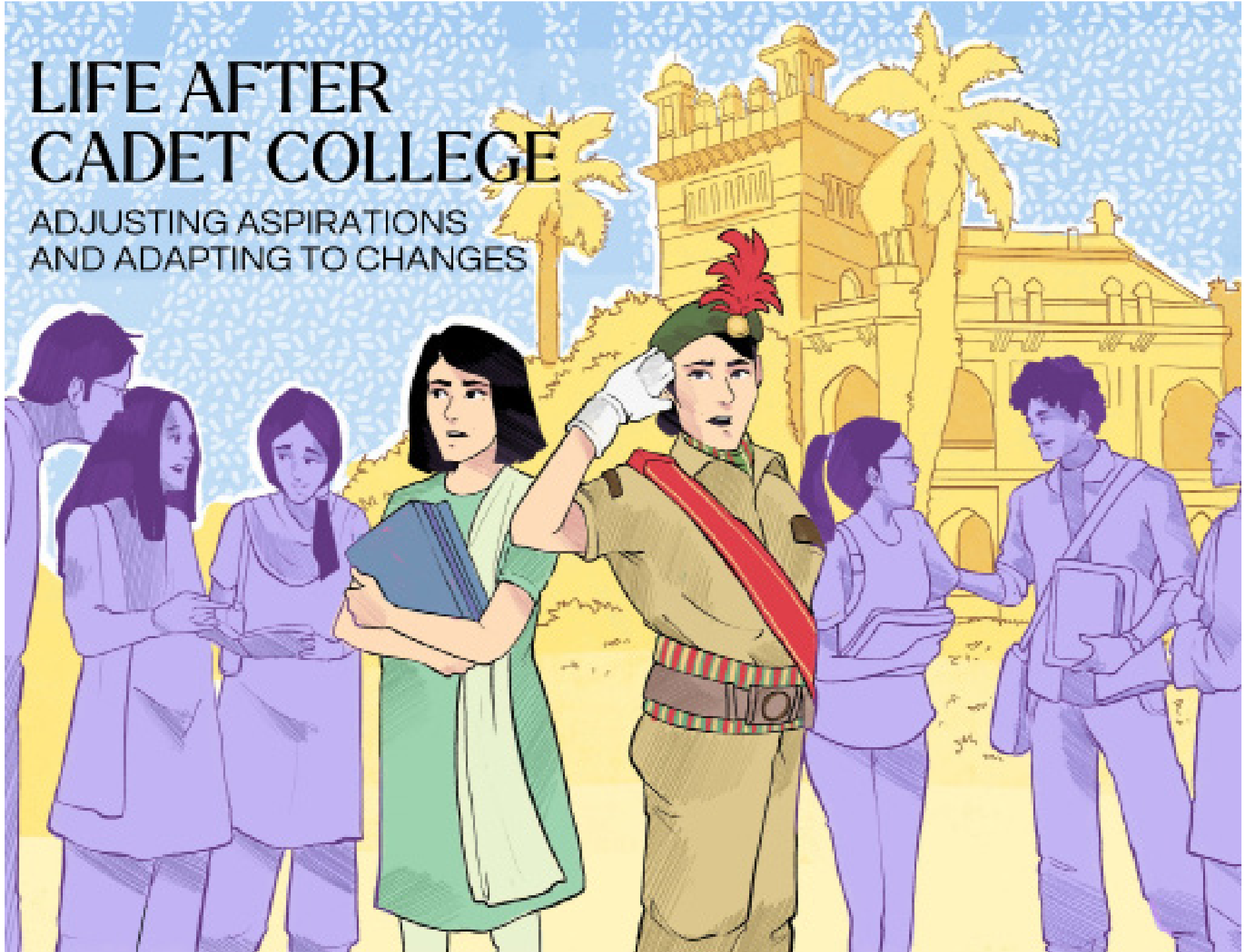


ILLUSTRATION: RAKEEB RAZZAQ

দেশজুড়ে তোলপাড়
ওয়ালটন প্রণয় কিলে হতে পারেন

আবারও
মিলিয়নিয়ার

রয়েছে লক্ষ লক্ষ টাকার ক্যাশ ভাউচারসহ
কোটি কোটি টাকার নিশ্চিত উপহার

শর্ত প্রযোজ্য

ওয়ালটন ফ্রিজ, চ্যুফ্রাজ, ফ্রিডস্টার থেকে
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১০ লক্ষ টাকা

জনাব রাসেল ফকির
পিতা: রজিব ফকির, আঃ শিঃ ডাঃ, চরভদ্রাসন, ফরিদপুর

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MOVIES

SING SING

A story of the transformative power of art

RAIAN ABEDIN

In the United States, the Rehabilitation Through the Arts (RTA) programme exists to create a space for humanity and compassion to exist within maximum and medium-security "correctional facilities" across the country. To live in prison is to forego all of your humanness and accept dehumanisation as common practice. This is the world within which the story of *Sing Sing* happens. It is a story of a group of prisoners setting up stage plays through the RTA programme as a means to escape the cruelty that permeates their lives, find joy, and realise the healing that comes through art.

The narrative of *Sing Sing* follows the growing friendship between Divine G and Clarence 'Divine Eye' Maclin. At the start of the story, Divine G (played by Colman Domingo) has already established himself as a confident and collected member of the RTA. This already established dynamic is the space in which Divine Eye breaks in, with his rugged attitude and hunched shoulders. It is clear that Divine Eye is shaped by the soulless prison — a system that has nothing to offer



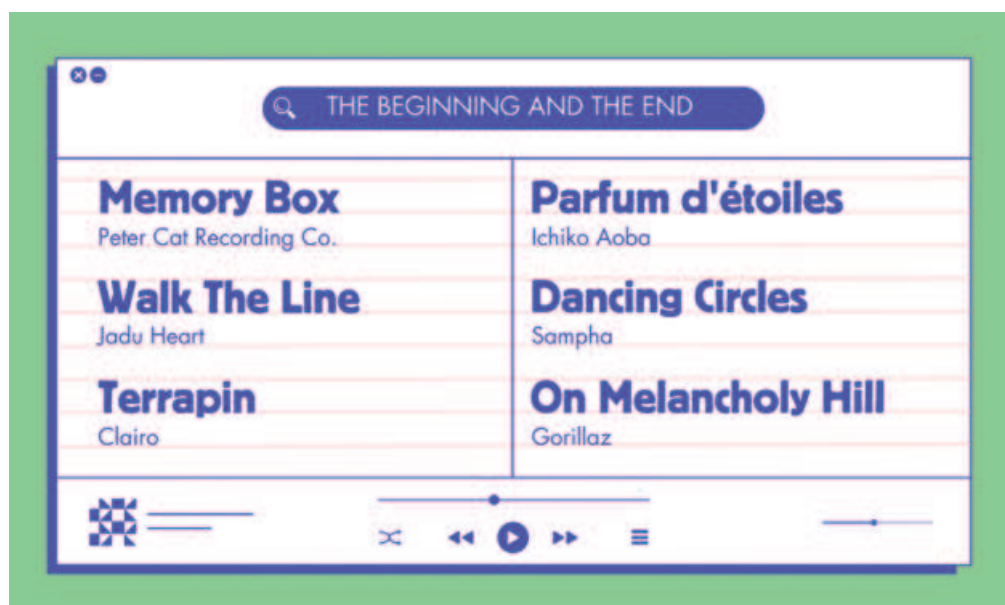
but misery and false promises hidden behind layers of bureaucracy.

Aching and inspiring, much of what the story offers feels grounded in reality and not just because it's a well-written tale, but because the stories are drawn from the lived experiences of the real-life Divine G — who also takes charge of playing his younger version in the movie. The film doesn't just showcase a fictionalised version of the lives of these incarcerated people; it brings them in and allows them to shine.

It's hard to tell just how much of the movie was fictionalised and how much was

completely rooted in reality. But that only goes to show how carefully, and tenderly, the film was written. More than just an inspiring tale, *Sing Sing* works on multiple levels as a filmmaking achievement. Its cinematography, grainy and warm, creates a visual language for the film seeped in emotional maturity. The music, too, is fantastic, albeit sparsely used.

Emotionally devastating, and never really shying away from depicting vulnerability as something essential for humans to be humans, *Sing Sing's* very existence is celebratory and, yet, born out of a tremendous amount of pain.



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PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

SATIRE

Student drops three semesters to focus on club activities

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

It is widely believed that peer pressure in university involves either someone offering you unsolicited career advice or everyone else's relationships making you feel horrible about being alone. However, the reality is that as a freshman, everyone around you is busy being recruited by university clubs.

Being left out from that is worse than third wheeling five couples at the same time. Not joining a club, which involves at least seven to eight rigorous rounds of screening, is considered a skill issue. Moreover, defending yourself by claiming that you're simply not interested in university clubs is assumed to be a pathetic attempt at coping.

"I thought of joining the cultural club to have a social life on campus, maybe make a few friends outside of my class. But then I heard Sakib Bhaiya's speech on club day, and I realised that if I didn't immediately join the Career Development Club I would be another unemployment statistic, a disappointment to my parents, and a failure in life," said Fariha Tasnim while frantically creating a LinkedIn profile. "If you'll excuse me, I need to perform a SWOT analysis on myself before the club interview."

Upon hearing such glorious remarks of his articulation abilities, we sought out Sakib Bin Chowdhury in hopes of gathering his wisdom. Despite his busy itinerary consisting mostly of intimidating unassuming freshmen, he was kind enough to spare us a moment of his time.

"I'm in my final year of university and I have learned a lot during my time at this Career Development Club. Do you think I became president of this club with my nose in

a book? I dropped three semesters to organise events and create networking opportunities for myself and my fellow members," he said.

Owing to the average person's ignorance about the ways of the world, we too displayed skepticism about putting academics on the backburner, but Sakib proceeded to kindly illuminate us: "Academics have no bearing on your workplace success. Always prioritise your club work and trust me, you'll have reputed companies lined up to offer you full-time unpaid internships. The midterm you skipped might cost you a couple of grade points, but that missed conversation with the CEO who would have hired you as a fresh graduate could cost you your whole career."

The interview with Sakib was cut short as the fifth and final round of screening new recruits was about to begin, which is when Farzana Khan, the vice president of the club took over.

When asked about the rigorous screening process, she said, "It's the low acceptance rate that sets us apart. People who want to focus on their grades or technical skills and have no formal suits or romantic prospects are best left for the robotics clubs and out of ours. They'll be working *for* us in the future, anyway."

When asked to verify whether only failed debaters have lined up to join the club, Farzana refused to comment and invited us to promote their newest case competition Victory Ventures instead.

Zabin is an engineering student at the Islamic University of Technology, a chronically online night owl, and a sufferer of many migraines. Find her at: zabintn@gmail.com

RED FLAGS TO BE AWARE OF AT A UNIVERSITY CLUB

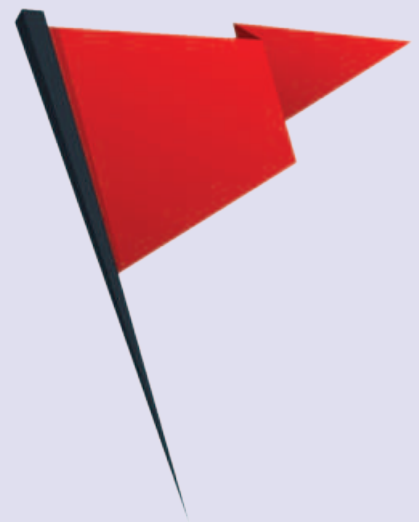
Lack of transparency is a major warning sign. If a club is vague about its goals, leadership structure, or finances, it may not be well-organised or trustworthy.

Excessive fees with no clear purpose should raise concerns. Firstly, clubs shouldn't be charging fees in most cases. But, if they do charge fees, maybe for tours or lunches, they should be justified.

A toxic or exclusive environment can ruin the experience. If members seem cliquish, unwelcoming, or overly competitive, you may struggle to feel included.

Poor leadership and disorganisation often lead to chaotic events and unmet promises. Reliable clubs should have a clear structure and active participation from leaders.

High-pressure recruitment tactics can indicate a problematic culture. Clubs should encourage, not pressure, you to join. Also, it's a university club, not a multinational corporation; the club shouldn't have an extremely difficult recruitment process either. If it does, it means the club thinks too highly of itself, which is never a good thing.



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CAREER

What you should know before starting a career in TECHNICAL WRITING

SABIL SADAT ZAHIR

Any software or technical product requires an accessible and understandable guide for its users, be it tutorials detailing the step-by-step process to use that product or documentation explaining its features and functions. This is where technical writers come in.

While often confused or interchanged with content writing, technical writing serves a distinctly different purpose. Technical writing is the process of transforming complex technical information into accessible content for target audiences or users. It involves creating manuals, user guides, documentation, and other instructional or informational materials, such as updating changelogs that help users understand software, hardware, and other technical products. Technical writers may also have to write UI (user interface) texts and product descriptions for the company's website.

Content writers, on the other hand, usually have to write blogs, social media posts, and other marketing materials on a variety of topics. As the name suggests, technical writing is a bit more 'technical' and precise in every sense, whereas content writing requires more creativity.

Technical writing is one of the most important and growing fields in tech companies worldwide. While developers work on building the software, technical writers are needed to make that software understandable for users. Thus, to be a technical writer, you need to have good writing and analytical skills.

Depending on the type of company you're working for, you may require some knowledge of programming

and software development, but in most cases, this is not mandatory. Usually, technical writers are taught the basics of the company's software and how to use it. For instance, if the company works on web development based on a particular content management system (CMS), the technical writer will be kept up-to-speed on how to use that CMS before they are tasked with work.

Furthermore, technical writers are required to do some additional tasks beyond writing. A key part of technical writing is constantly collaborating with developers, product managers, UI/UX designers, and other team members to gather information and ensure the documentation is consistent and up-to-date. A technical writer needs to properly understand how the features of a product work and think of ways to easily explain that to potential users. This requires thorough research of the product and similar products on the market as well as frequent collaboration with the dev and design teams.

Due to how closely technical writing is linked with software development, it is a good alternative for Computer Science or Computer Science and Engineering majors who want to work in the field but are not necessarily interested in jobs that require coding or a lot of technical skills. However, one does not need to have studied Computer Science to be a technical writer; anyone from any background can enter this field so long as they are good at writing and research. Companies mainly observe an applicant's writing portfolio and aptitude when hiring technical writers.

In Bangladesh, technical writing is an expanding field. One of the main reasons why this field

is used interchangeably with content writing is because companies in the country tend to combine these roles within their teams. Often, content writers and people in marketing roles are tasked with technical writing responsibilities. Companies tend to name their roles: "content analyst", "research associate", or simply "content writer".

To understand which role requires technical writing, you need to check the job responsibilities and requirements listed by the company before applying. It is worth noting that due to the hybrid nature of these roles, being a technical writer in Bangladesh means you may also have to do marketing and content-oriented work, such as creating and editing video tutorials, writing blogs, and writing and managing the company's social media posts. While it does forego the specialised nature of technical writing, the bright side of this kind of work means you gain more versatility in your career trajectory and can pivot to marketing and content management roles later on.

Technical writing is a great way for people who are talented in writing and have great analytical skills to find work in software companies, IT firms, and start-ups. As long as you know how to write user-centric content, are able to research and understand technical products well, and can learn additional yet related skills such as video editing when needed, then technical writing may be the right career path for you. While most companies in Bangladesh might not treat technical writing as its own specialisation, the work itself is still an important part of the tech industry and the hybrid roles they

offer can allow you to use technical writing as a stepping stone to other fields.



OFF CAMPUS

Adjusting aspirations and adapting to changes: Life after cadet college

ADRIN SARWAR

What's the first thing that comes to mind when you meet an ex-cadet? Do you assume that they're boring or maybe a little rude? Or perhaps someone who is athletic and has a solid grasp on most things? These impressions are often shaped by limited interactions, which culminate to form stereotypes. But how accurate are they? More importantly, how does it impact the students who are being judged?

Md Mahmudul Hasan Sumon, a final-year undergraduate student of Printing and Publication Studies at Dhaka University (DU) and ex-cadet from Rangpur Cadet College, shares, "Both my classmate and I needed a lot of time to break the ice. Even now, in my final year, I don't have many friends outside my cadet college circle. I try to maintain balanced connections in class, but some classmates have told me that they initially found it difficult to communicate with me."

This sentiment resonates with many ex-cadets who struggle to adjust after leaving the regimented environment of cadet college and transitioning to other institutions.

A cadet begins their journey in class seven, spending six formative years immersed in a structured lifestyle. For most, these years are among the best of their lives, marked by deep friendships, camaraderie, and a strong sense of belonging. Md Moinul Islam, a student at the Institute of Business Administration, Dhaka University (IBA, DU) and ex-cadet from Mirzapur Cadet College, recalls, "It felt like diving into a new world, though the routine was challenging. We had little to worry about in a broader sense. Our schedules were predetermined, and we knew the consequences of our actions. But the world outside is different."

"People started calling me 'major' after I joined cadet college. Initially, I planned to join the armed forces to fulfil my father's dream. But in class nine, during a career session with an ex-cadet from The World Bank, we were encouraged to explore other opportunities. That session changed my perspective, and I decided to aim for IBA."

While Moinul struggled with the uncertainty of change, others, like Nawshin Islam Bonna a student at the Institute of Education and Research, DU, and an ex-cadet of Joypurhat Girls' Cadet College, faced mental health challenges. "Leaving cadet life was one of the saddest phases of my life. The mornings and evenings were never the same again. How could I spend a day without the faces I had been with for six years? It significantly impacted my mental health, especially due to the pressure of admission tests looming. Thankfully, my parents supported me through this difficult time, helping me prepare for the future. My parents were my main source of strength"

The difficulty of the transition is a common experience for most ex-cadets as they leave behind a place, they once called home. Moinul elaborates, "A

lot of cadets experience something akin to Stockholm syndrome. Both the good and bad memories resurface. But over time, you adapt. You make new friends, set new goals, and find a new rhythm to life."

It is common to assume that cadet college alumni will pursue a career in the military, but not every cadet dreams of donning the uniform. "Like most cadets, I said yes to joining the military in grades seven and eight. Even in grade 12, when the then Chief of Army asked me, I said yes but that wasn't entirely true," Moinul remarked. "By grade 10, I had decided to study at IBA, DU. Since then, I never seriously considered the military or government services."

For others, the allure of the military career faded as time went on. Mezbah UI Islam, trade marketing



specialist at Coca Cola Icecek (CCI) Bangladesh and ex-cadet from Jhenidah

Cadet College reflects, "People started calling me 'major' after I joined cadet college. Initially, I planned to join the armed forces to fulfil my father's dream. But in class nine, during a career session with an ex-cadet from The World Bank, we were encouraged to explore other opportunities. That session changed my perspective, and I decided to aim for IBA."

On the other hand, Nirjhor*, an officer of the Bangladesh Army, had a different path. "I never planned on joining the army. I even hated the idea of it. I used to think about spending my days at DU, TSC, and university campuses. I wanted to be a doctor and help people. It was something both my dad and I wanted. However, peer influence prompted me to leave my medical aspirations behind and join the army. I wanted to become self-dependent quickly, and the military seemed like the right option. I kept regretting those three years at the Bangladesh Military Academy (BMA) because I loved sleeping. Ever since my cadet life began, however, I have had to wake up at 5 AM."

Adjusting to life after cadet college is often a challenge for ex-cadets accustomed to the routine. Moinul notes, "Though I wish I could return to those days, cadet life was a small, insular world. The reality outside is much more complex. But somehow, we manage."

Nirjhor echoes this sentiment. "In cadet college, we

said what we felt. But outside, there's a gap between what you say and how people interpret it. It makes life more complicated."

Even mundane aspects like food and transportation can become hurdles. Sumon shares, "We used to have very well-maintained, balanced daily meals. On some days, we had special meals. We had dedicated teachers and staff to ensure the quality of food. So we never really had to worry about meals. But after starting university, I had a tough time adjusting to the food arrangement. There were times when I was 10 minutes late for lunch and the food had run out at the canteen. Whereas in cadet college, the meal was laid down on the table. All we had to do was sit and have our lunch. After I started living on my own outside the campus, I even had to find restaurants in search of a better daily meal. The beginnings of my undergrad were extra troublesome because of this."

With these bittersweet memories, all cadets move on to the next

ILLUSTRATION: RAKEEB RAZZAQ

stage of their lives, carrying the lessons, friendships, and resilience they gained during their cadet years. It also prepares cadets for the challenges of the world outside. The bonds formed during that time stays strong, shaping a unique identity that every cadet holds close. No matter where life takes them – whether it's the military, corporate offices, or other fields – they remain part of one big community.

Reflecting on the cadet experience, Mezbah shares a word of advice for aspiring cadets. "Cadet colleges make you an all-rounder, not a specialist," he explains. "If you want to be just a scientist, musician, or sportsman, cadet college might not be the best fit. But if you want to explore all of these options at once, cadet college is the right place for you."

His words capture the essence of cadet life – a place where students are not only prepared academically and physically but also encouraged to grow into versatile and adaptable individuals. While it's not easy, this experience lays a foundation that helps cadets succeed in whatever path they choose.

*Name has been changed upon request

Adrin Sarwar is a final-year student and really trying hard to get out of writer's block. You can send her inspirations at adrinsarwar@gmail.com

NOTICE BOARD

BRAC University holds its 16th Convocation

BRAC University organised its 16th Convocation on February 25, 2025, at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Center in Purbachal, Dhaka, celebrating the theme “Excellence in You”. The event honoured the achievements of graduating students and recognised their dedication to academic excellence and innovation.

A total of 4,829 students received degrees while two Chancellor’s Gold Medals and 28 Vice-Chancellor’s Gold Medals were awarded in various categories at the graduation ceremony.

Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud, Adviser to the Ministry of Education, presented the Chancellor’s Gold Medals as the Chief Guest while Professor Syed Ferhat Anwar, Vice-Chancellor of BRAC University, presented the Vice-Chancellor’s Gold Medals.

Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, an Academy Award-winning filmmaker and journalist, was the convocation speaker. Tamara Hasan Abed, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of BRAC University, was also present.



Chinoy urged the graduates to hold on to their convictions and follow their hearts. She also asked to learn from life’s trials, pointing out that failures were stepping stones as when the door to one endeavour closes, another naturally opens.

Valedictorian and Chancellor’s Gold Medalist (undergraduate programme) Shihab Muhtasim gave the farewell speech. The valedictorian said that if one truly wishes to succeed in an endeavour, it is important to enjoy it; small changes

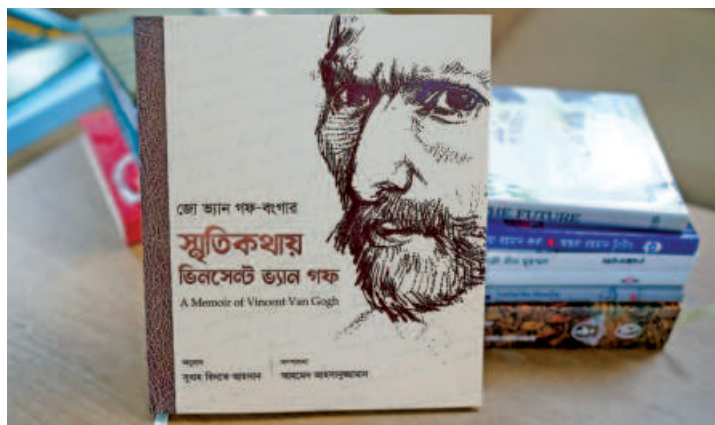
in mindset can have a big impact. He also urged the graduates to consistently try and improve, and to carry BRAC University’s values throughout their lives.

Tamara Hasan Abed said sustainable change requires ethical leaders, the creation of sensible human beings, and helping others reach their potential.

Professor Wahiduddin said that by joining last August’s protests, BRAC University students proved that private university students not only focus on their careers but also try to do good for society. He urged the graduates to honestly carry out their responsibilities in their respective sectors in order to do good for society.

Professor Ferhat Anwar asked the graduates to learn the art of embracing change, which is a natural process for spiritual and personal growth.

Dr Sadia Hamid Kazi, Chair of the Convocation Committee and Chairperson of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, gave the vote of thanks.



Prof. Ahsanuzzaman edits first ever Bangla translation of A Memoir of Vincent van Gogh

Prof. Dr Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman from the Department of English and Modern Languages at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) has edited the first-ever Bangla translation of *A Memoir of Vincent van Gogh*, originally written in English in 1913 by Jo van Gogh-Bonger.

The memoir, translated by Subah Binte Ahsan and published by Journeyman Books in February 2025, introduces Bangladeshi readers to the life and struggles of Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), the Dutch post-impressionist painter whose works have inspired generations of artists worldwide.

Jo van Gogh-Bonger, the wife of Van Gogh’s younger brother, played a crucial role in shaping the artist’s posthumous reputation. Her memoir provides insight into Van Gogh’s turbulent life, marked by poverty, rejection, and mental illness. It is through her perspective that the eccentric and often misunderstood artist continues to be interpreted today.

The Bangla edition includes reproductions of some of Van Gogh’s most renowned paintings, including “Sunflowers”, “The Reaper”, “The Potato Eaters”, “Starry Night Over the Rhône”, and “Almond Blossom”.

Van Gogh, who struggled financially throughout his life, sold only one painting before his death but is now regarded as one of the most influential figures in Western art.

Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering of NSU celebrates Civil Fest 2025

The Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering (DCEE) of North South University (NSU) organised “Civil Fest 2025” on February 26, 2025.

NSU Treasurer and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Acting) Prof. Abdur Rab Khan was present at the event. One of the main attractions of the first day was “Mechanics Mania”, which saw participation from students from different universities. Another thrilling competition was “Buzzzer Master”, where university students were tested on their ability to think quickly.

After an intense preliminary round, the top 12 contestants advanced to the buzzer round, leading to an exciting showdown to determine the winners. The “Battle of Brains” competition featured students from schools and colleges competing in a fun quiz. The combination of energetic performances, engaging

competitions, and vibrant interactions created a memorable experience for everyone involved.

The second day of Civil Fest 2025 continued with the poster and project presentations from the previous day. A special magazine commemorating the department’s 12-year journey was unveiled and distributed, showcasing the department’s remarkable accomplishments and milestones over the past decade.

The prize-giving ceremony commenced at 3:30 PM and was attended by distinguished guests including Chief Guest Prof. Dr M Shamim Z Bosunia and Guest of Honour Prof. Dr M Feroze Ahmed, along with other special guests. All winners, individuals, and groups received prizes, certificates, and crests, celebrating their hard work and dedication.



OPINION

I am so tired of being A WOMAN THESE DAYS

AZRA HUMAYRA

The headlines on my newsfeed blur into one another, a grim carousel of violence: “Woman gang-raped in Munshiganj”; “Ninth grader raped in Sherpur”; “Schoolgirl allegedly raped while collecting flowers in Rangpur”; “Robbery and sexual harassment on a Rajshahi-bound bus”; and so on. The list does not end; it never ends. I do not have to elaborate on the countless cases of murder, robbery, mugging, extortion, vandalism, and attacks that punctuate the daily lives of people in this country.

In the midst of all this, what I must ask – what I must question – is why am I still afraid?

Why, in 2025, am I still mapping out my movements as if walking through a battlefield? Why must I carry a taser, pepper spray, and a pocket knife just to step outside after dark? Why must I clutch my phone in one hand and my keys in the other, ready to strike, if I sense an unfamiliar presence behind me? Why, after the uprising that shook this nation six months ago, do women still have to gather in Shahbagh, holding banners and screaming themselves hoarse, just to be taken seriously?

The government, six months ago, was shaken by the voices of its people. It was forced to look in the mirror and acknowledge the rot that had festered beneath the surface – corruption, misgovernance, the brutal weight of a system that did not serve its citizens but instead crushed them underfoot.

I have a privilege that most do not. The privilege of caution, of contingency plans, of knowing that if something happens, there will be people to call and doors that will open. But for most women in this country, there is no such privilege; only the inevitability of risk.

And here is the irony: We are told to stay inside for our safety, but home is often where the danger lives. We are told not to go out after dark, but for so many women, staying in is not an option. They must go out, they must work, and they must stay out late – on factory floors, in hospital corridors, behind cash registers, walking home long past midnight – because their survival depends on it.

I pass beneath the Shahbagh Metro Rail Station and catch myself holding my breath, as if the air itself carries the weight of what happened here – that a 10-year-old flower-seller was raped in this very place. She was a child, but survival doesn’t wait. So, she had to work.

Only a month ago, a young woman was allegedly gang-raped while returning home to Habiganj for her wedding from Dhaka, where she worked as a domestic help. There is no safe space, no threshold that guarantees security. Not the streets, not the workplace,



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

not even the four walls of home. And yet, when the worst happens, the blame always circles back – to the hour, to the outfit, to the choices women never truly had.

This is not just an individual fear; it is collective. It is the quiet panic of a woman on a rickshaw, realising the streetlights are out. It is the shiver in a mother’s voice when she tells her daughter, “Text me when you reach safely”. It is the exhaustion in the eyes of the people who have grown numb to the news, and who have come to expect impunity as the status quo.

I ask my friends to share their locations. I keep them on the phone when I take an Uber, making sure the driver knows someone is listening, someone is watching. This is the choreography of caution, a routine so rehearsed it no longer feels strange.

I hear public transport is safe – until it isn’t. I hear CNGs are safe – until they aren’t. I hear ride-sharing services are safe – until a friend tells me how the driver made her feel. The illusion of safety lasts only until it shatters, and by then, it is always too late.

The government, six months ago, was shaken by the voices of its people. It was forced to look in the mirror and acknowledge the rot that had festered beneath the surface – corruption, misgovernance, the brutal weight of a system that did not serve its citizens but instead crushed them underfoot. And yet, despite the promises, despite the rhetoric, and despite the assurances that the people will be heard, safety remains a luxury rather than a right.

This country’s women have learnt the bitter lesson that their safety is negotiable. A woman’s life can be shattered in an alleyway, on a bus, and even in her own home. And the response from the state will be the same recycled platitudes: “We will investigate”; “We are looking into it”; “The perpetrators will be brought to justice”. Words, so many words, and yet, the streets remain just as unsafe, the predators just as emboldened, the fear just as suffocating. We watch as ‘devils’ are dragged into the light, paraded as proof of justice

served – yet the streets remain just as treacherous, the night just as unwelcoming, and our doors still bolted shut.

Is this the nation we were hoping for? A nation where the vulnerable are preyed upon in broad daylight while their government looks away? Where justice is not a certainty, but a privilege for the few who can afford it? Where women are told to dress modestly, to not stay out late, to be careful, as if their safety is their own burden to bear and not the state’s fundamental responsibility.

Take the recent case of Rajib Talukder in Kalmakanda, the rapist who has been murdered by the husband of the victim. A name that should have been another in a courtroom, a trial, a system designed to uphold order. Instead, it became another name swallowed by the chaos of vigilante justice, another story that illustrates a grim reality – when people stop believing in the law, they create their own. And when that happens, no one is safe.

There is talk of reform, murmured in press conferences and debated in government halls. But what good are reforms when fear dictates the rhythm of daily life? When stepping outside is an act of calculated risk? When the streets empty before nightfall, not out of choice, but out of necessity? What good is policy without protection, promises without enforcement?

The people are tired – bone-tired, soul-tired – but exhaustion does not mean surrender. They are watching. They are waiting. They are demanding more than empty condolences and carefully worded statements because a country that cannot protect its women, its children, and its citizens is not a country at all. It is a shattered illusion draped in rhetoric. A broken promise wrapped in barbed wire. And we are the ones bleeding.

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EDUCATION

Of passion, practicality, and pursuing AN UNDERGRADUATE MINOR DEGREE

As an undergraduate student who can barely deal with the pressure of a single major, witnessing some of my peers pursuing a minor programme, an option allowing students to venture outside their primary course of study, is intriguing. Why is a minor degree sought by some, knowing an extra discipline is going to impose an additional chapter to an already stressful academic life? Is it a calculated move to embellish their resume and boost their employability? Or is it driven by an intrinsic quest for knowledge reinforced by sheer passion?

ANICA BUSHRA RAHMAAN

Moonim Ahsan, a fourth-year student at BRAC University, currently pursuing a minor degree in Computer Science, says, "Choosing a minor programme was easy for me. From a young age I have been fascinated with computers. While my love for my major, Economics, knows no bounds, I couldn't help but feel a sense of "what if" whenever I thought about learning more about computers and software."

"My interest and curiosity were the most significant factors in making this decision. Yet, I believe that my employability will be greatly enhanced once I am done with both degrees," he adds.

Faculties have the unique perspective of observing just how instrumental a minor programme can be in the vocational progress of students. Dr Wasiqur Rahman Khan, chair and professor at BRAC University's Economics and Social Sciences department, clarifies, "The option of a minor programme is there for students interested in the pursuit of a more specific subject. It is a complementary qualification. Students must decide to what extent they intend to use it. I've had students who went on to pursue their master's based on their minor rather than their major, simply because the former caught their interest more."

Additionally, Dr Wasiqur remarks, "If the objective of the minor is career-centric, students should select a minor programme based on their desired field or industry. Particularly in Bangladesh, employers, especially those in MNCs, look at the broad aggregates. They don't scrutinise your transcript. They'll prioritise your skillset, which can be augmented by a minor degree."

He further states, "The content of a major programme is never fully utilised at a job setting, at most 20 to 30 percent of it is used. Hence, students should pick a minor programme which adds to this percentage."

Nonetheless, not everyone seeks a minor degree for career prospects. For Ibshar Khan, a fourth-year student at North South University, pursuing a minor degree in English Literature has become a comforting endeavour. "Reading has always been a cherished tradition in my family. When I was younger, every month, without fail, my mom would take me to the local bookstore to pick out a new book. Fast forward to sophomore year, when everyone around me advised against choosing Literature as a minor, I let my inner rebel make the decision for me. I opted for something that soothes my weary soul instead of a more conventional route," she says.

The perks of going for a minor degree are not just limited to academic enrichment, though. Ibshar shares, "I have a better rapport with the people I met through my minor than with those I've known for four long years in my major courses. Moreover, this minor curriculum has probably done more for my personal growth than I ever anticipated. It has taught me to peel back the intricate layers of a book and see them as more than just stories. Literature now feels like context, history, and, most of all, truth. It has given me insights about not just the world but also myself. Safe to say, this minor programme has certainly boosted my emotional

intelligence and that's far more valuable for me than intellect alone."

For faculty members like Dr Nazia Manzoor, assistant professor and chair of North South University's English department, the enthusiasm of students pursuing Literature as a minor is a joy to witness. "I have had students repeatedly express that the endeavour feels like a warm welcome, being able to talk about texts in an inclusive manner within a classroom. As an instructor, it is really gratifying to know that we have been able to cultivate an environment which is comforting to students from all backgrounds."

worlds. Dr Wasiqur notes, "When it comes to virtual learning, I would suggest students to focus on requisite knowledge, not something already covered by their minor or major programmes. This way they can keep on broadening their skill sets. Students must practise wisdom when it comes to exploring these options."

Even so, balancing two different curricula is not without challenges. Dr Wasiqur reveals, "Students often want to take courses from other departments such as Anthropology or English because they are intrigued by the content or want to boost their grades. However, having a minor degree can restrict students from



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She adds, "University is perhaps the last opportunity you're going to get to experience and explore things that you are excited about. Once you finish it, your education becomes very specific as you start focusing more on becoming an expert, instead of having a general education in anything. It really is the last opportunity in life to do something just for the fun of it, just for the joy of it. So do it. Take that art class, do that English minor or whatever you've set your heart to."

Yet, in the digital era, where a world full of knowledge can be accessed with just a click, is a minor programme a viable alternative?

Moonim says, "I have enrolled myself in countless online courses and invested a hefty sum of money. The outcome is always zero because I struggle to stay committed. It's difficult to hold myself accountable after failing when there is nothing apparent at stake, like grades. On the other hand, a proper academic setting, bonding with your classmates, connecting with the faculty members, getting productive feedback, and trying to meet their expectations is more rewarding and fulfilling for me. I always perform a lot better under such circumstances."

However, instructors encourage the blend of both

doing so. For instance, if a student is doing a minor in Mathematics, it will be difficult for them to also take their desired courses in Sociology, Biology or any other department because their remaining credits will mostly be consumed by their minor courses, leaving limited options for other courses to be explored. Hence, these trade-offs must be considered carefully."

In a similar vein, Dr Nazia shares, "Some students are unable to prioritise both major and minor curricula. Depending on the requirements of the major, the chosen minor programme can sometimes be a bit of an overreach. Additionally, if the minor is a passion project, which is often the case for English Literature, students end up enjoying the discipline so much that the major starts feeling like a chore and efforts toward it seem to dwindle."

Realistic expectations must be considered when pursuing a minor degree on the basis of passion according to Dr Nazia. "Enjoy yourself and have fun while pursuing a minor, but students must remember that they have to put in the work, do the labour and take the assignments seriously. Passion-driven minor programmes may seem like a fun escape class but it is ultimately a class," she said.