



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

ওয়ালটন  
স্মার্ট ফ্রিজে  
এখন দেশের সীমানা পেরিয়ে  
পৃথিবীর ৫০টিরও বেশি দেশে

**WALTON**  
Smart Fridge

For Details: 16267 08000016267 (Toll Free)

waltonbd.com

MOVIES

# The Fantastic Four: First Steps

## finally does justice to Marvel's first family

SABIL SADAT ZAHIR

After multiple failed adaptations over the past few decades, Marvel's *The Fantastic Four: First Steps* gives the iconic superhero team a long-overdue chance to shine on the big screen. The film tells a heartfelt and passionate family-focused story that draws inspiration from the early Fantastic Four comics from the 1960s. The film stands out as perhaps the most unique and accessible Marvel movie in recent times, both in its narrative and visual style.

Despite starting a new phase of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), the film is set in an alternate, retro-futuristic 1960s timeline and tells a standalone story where the titular team, comprising Mr Fantastic, Invisible Woman, Human Torch, and The Thing, must save the Earth from being devoured by an all-powerful cosmic being known as Galactus. The team's origin story and encounters with other minor villains are also told within a quick expository flashback early on, and the movie dives right into the conflict with Galactus.

Two things in particular make this movie really good: the aesthetics and the interpersonal relationships of the characters. It brings to life the idea of futurism that was envisioned during the 60s, blending



elements of technology from that time with more advanced science fiction gadgets. The world of the Fantastic Four is more vibrant and optimistic than the main MCU timeline, displaying how the team has genuinely changed the status quo of society in effective ways. It might be the first Marvel movie to truly embrace the source material, rather than try to reinvent or modernise it.

The villains, however, are not as nuanced as the heroes, but this issue may be

attributed to the film's other problem: its runtime. The film attempts to provide some emotional depth to the villains, Galactus and his herald, the Silver Surfer, but it is told through expository dialogue and not explored enough.

Overall, though, *The Fantastic Four: First Steps* is a unique Marvel film. It's visually distinct and crafted with genuine respect for the source material, and just as the title suggests, it truly is fantastic.

### OPPORTUNITIES

## Chevening Scholarships for Bangladeshi students to study in the UK



### ELIGIBILITY

Be a citizen of a Chevening-eligible country or territory.

Commit to returning to their home country for at least two years after the scholarship ends.

Have at least 2,800 hours (around two years) of work experience after graduating from your undergraduate degree.

Hold an undergraduate degree that qualifies them for a UK master's programme.

Apply to three eligible UK university courses and secure an unconditional offer from at least one within the stated deadline.

**DEADLINE: OCTOBER 7, 2025**

[Visit chevening.org/scholarship/bangladesh](https://www.chevening.org/scholarship/bangladesh) to learn more



## University of Glasgow World Changers Glasgow Scholarship (Postgraduate)

### DETAILS

The scholarship is worth GBP 5,000 in the form of a tuition fee reduction.

No separate application for the scholarship is required.

**DEADLINE: NOT MENTIONED**

[Visit gla.ac.uk/postgraduate/](https://www.gla.ac.uk/postgraduate/) to learn more

Editor & Publisher  
**Mahfuz Anam**

Features Editor and  
Head of Content  
Marketing  
**Ehsanur Raza Ronny**

Campus In-Charge  
**Faisal Bin Iqbal**

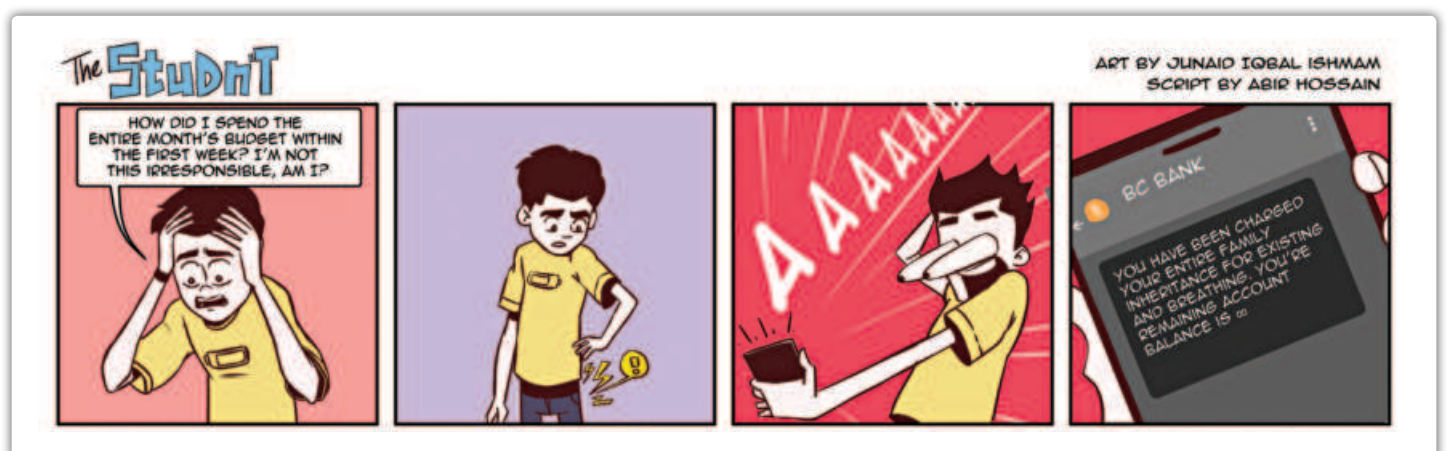
Campus Team  
**Syeda Afrin Tarannum**  
**Abir Hossain**  
**Azra Humayra**

Photographer  
**Orchid Chakma**

Graphics & Layout  
**TDS Creative Graphics**

Production  
**Shamim Chowdhury**

Send your articles,  
feedback, and  
opinion to [campus@thedailystar.net](mailto:campus@thedailystar.net)  
Find our content online  
at [thedailystar.net/campus](http://thedailystar.net/campus)



## CAMPUS LIFE

# The five stages of grief in a group assignment

ANICA BUSHRA RAHMAAN

As a student, there will come a time where you will be forced to participate in group assignments. If you are unlucky enough, you will have to do it quite a few times. If you are God's favourite soldier, maybe you will get to do it with your friends or people who actually take their studies seriously. But few of us are rarely that fortunate.

A group assignment will test your limits like no other, make you question how some people got enrolled in your educational institution and transform the concept of teamwork into a myth. It doesn't matter if you are an introvert or an extrovert, if you're a topper or not, a group assignment will lead to undue character development. However, in the end, you somehow come out alive, barely unscathed. Working in a group assignment presents a front-row seat to the five stages of grief.

## Denial

It's a normal day in class for you. You range between zoning out, paying attention and trying not to fall asleep. All of a sudden, the world stops as your teacher utters the two dreaded words which makes your heart rate splutter. "Group work".

While the teacher goes on and on about the wonders of collaboration, new perspectives and shared workloads, you hear war noises. Empty Google meet calls where all the screen reflected was your miserable face and nothing else, being consistently left on "delivered" or worse, "seen", begging people to write a sole paragraph, late nights screaming and crying as time refused to slow down.

As you ground yourself back to reality, you console yourself. Maybe it won't be that bad this time. Maybe this time you'll actually have competent groupmates. Maybe this time you won't have an internal breakdown every other second. Maybe this time you won't feel alone and frustrated. You go home and open a group chat. Not a single person replies. It's okay. People can be busy.



This hope will be your folly.

## Anger

The deadline is two days away. You had the doc file shared, divided which parts needed to be covered. And nothing. While you do your part, you check up on what your dedicated group mates are doing. Two of them haven't even seen your last text, let alone start their work. You hate the feeling of déjà vu that has begun to creep in. You decide to give it a few more hours. Perhaps



ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

it's too soon to get angry.

A few more hours go by and things remain unchanged. Your patience is fraying. You type out a bunch of angry texts and hit send. Your only other companion, who did their work, can only react to your texts. As for the others, one keeps chiming in "I'll get started right away", never to be found again. One seenezones you. One still hasn't opened the group chat. You look up the meaning of free rider and vehemently nod your head. You are reminded of the layers anger can have.

## Bargaining

Your anger has morphed into sheer desperation by now. You're giving reminders of the group marks at stake, making deals that would put a diplomat to shame. "I did your part, can you at least write the citations?" Some take pity. Some are unmoved. You wish you could be carefree like that.

By this point, you no longer dream of an A+. You have bid a strong farewell to the denial phase. As of now, a passing mark will do, and a few hours of sleep.

## Depression

Eventually, you find yourself in the company of misery. Your group project is about 50% done and the deadline is a handful of hours away. You visualise the tragic outcome of your grades and your CGPA plummeting to depths unseen. You don't know if you should cry, panic or scream. You stare longingly at the screen and then take a painful glance at the clock.

The inevitable is almost here. You can feel it. You take a few minutes to mourn over having your expectations met.

## Acceptance

In the end, you abandon all hope. You open the laptop, yet again, and cover up for your teammates. Will you get any recognition for

it? A smidge of gratitude? Absolutely not. But it doesn't matter. You are simply doing what's necessary, simply being the only one who cares.

You prepare the 7th cup of coffee, take one last look at the clock and start typing, while your groupmates lounge in peaceful slumber. When you finally hit the "submit" button, right at the brink of 11:59 pm, you are not even proud. There is a mild sense of relief, dulled by numbness.

Until the next time.

Anica Bushra Rahmaan is a student of Economics at BRAC University. Reach her at [anicarahmaan@gmail.com](mailto:anicarahmaan@gmail.com)



**WITH MORE CAPACITY, WE ARE MORE READY  
TO BUILD TOMORROW'S BANGLADESH**



CAREER

# The lives of office-goers working UNCONVENTIONAL HOURS

When thinking of a job, the first phrase that comes to mind is the term “nine-to-five”. You clock in at nine, get some work done by lunch, and procrastinate all afternoon to scramble out the door around five to beat the evening rush. Sometimes, the nature of your job makes you work before and after this enforced window, for example, nurses, doctors, actors, and other service workers who must work irregular hours due to the demanding nature of their professions. It is still quite rare to see office-goers work non-standard hours, or so I thought.

TAASEEN MOHAMMED ISLAM

One thing the pandemic has done is normalise hybrid work schedules. So, it's not uncommon, even in Bangladesh, to see office-goers work in person three days of the week and spend one or two days working online from home. In a similar vein, remote work has also been normalised over the last half-decade, with more and more people flocking

like migratory birds to warmer (and cheaper) destinations, such as Bali, Thailand, and the Philippines, to both work and enjoy the summer weather.

Add a pinch of globalisation to the equation, and you have people from all over the world working different time zones, be it working New York City (NYC) time in Amsterdam, or London hours in Sri Lanka, there's a plethora of office workers stationed in countries different to their

employers, churning out Outlook mails, PowerPoint decks, and passive-aggressive Microsoft Teams messages intercontinentally at all hours of the day, twenty-four seven, three hundred and sixty-five days.

Irregular working hours have long been ingrained into the lives of people working in the informal economy. Domestic and agricultural workers, as well as informal service and industrial workers, are seemingly in a loop

of unconventional and irregular hours, with little to no structure to their work schedules.

However, with the increased presence of multinational corporations (MNCs) as well as the rise of Bangladesh as both an outsourcing and freelancing hub, irregular hours have started bleeding into office jobs as well. Whether it be a major bank, a manufacturing company, or a more niche start-up, Bangladeshi office goers are increasingly finding themselves working schedules beyond the norm.

Work seeping into everyday life has become an alarming trend, with many claiming the traditional 9 AM to 5 PM has been replaced by endless work days with emails and tasks being sent off at all hours of the day.

“The nature of my work often meant that I had to clock in early to get a head-start on the day

and leave late in the night before following the same cycle again the next day,” says Maiesha\*, a former analyst at a reputed multinational tobacco manufacturing company.

“With my team also working beyond their scheduled hours, I often felt pressured to also go above and beyond to deliver, leaving very little time to myself when all is said and done,” she elaborates.

While these schedules manifest in a variety of work times and durations, they usually tend to follow American, European, or Asia-Pacific (APAC) times, translating to the same eight hours of work but anywhere between 8 AM to 4 PM, 2 PM to 10 PM, and even 6 PM to 2 AM, to name a few. Depending on role and scope, many people have rotational schedules, periodically cycling through different slots instead of having a fixed one.

“I have been working on a rotating schedule for over a year now, and while I'm happy with the job and compensation, changing my

sleep schedule constantly is quite exhausting,” says Raidah Rehma, a contract operations analyst at Optimizely. She further elaborates by saying that having to adjust to a new schedule monthly has undeniable impacts on energy levels, sleep, and overall job performance.

Here's the kicker, many offices operate from Monday to Friday, instead of the typical Sunday to Thursday in our country, in order to keep operational alignment with foreign offices. Working on the weekend can lead to both feelings of isolation and being out of sync with everyone else, putting a significant damper on social lives. “Not only do I have different weekends from most office goers, but I also work night shifts,” explains Fatima\*, who works at a local tech company. “This makes it difficult to make plans, especially on local weekends, and I often find myself saying no to a lot of social events I would otherwise have gone to.”

Another obvious downside of working unconventional hours is maintaining a work-life balance. Aligning with teammates working different hours globally and locally means that you may have to be available beyond scheduled times to get work done. “Not all my co-workers have the same hours, so for more collaborative tasks, I often have to work off-hours to accommodate them,” says Fatima.

She also adds that even when she tries to work only during her hours, dependencies lead to delays in outcomes and overall performance, putting her in a lose-lose situation.

While having to forego weekends and work various times throughout the day is typically a deal-breaker for professionals, there lies a hidden advantage for students. Mahiat Shan, a senior at North South University (NSU), currently also working as an executive partner manager at a fast-growing global fintech firm, finds the non-linearity in his schedule as a strategic advantage, allowing him to balance work with academics. “Considering the rate of human progression in global tech and interconnectedness, waiting till graduation to join the workforce is a thing of the past,” he explains.

Elaborating further, he says, “As an undergrad tackling demanding executive roles, I've made it a motto to advocate for student-friendly employment policy frameworks across Bangladeshi corporations to better position ourselves in the global markets. I appreciate organisations for taking progressive steps to address this within Bangladesh's rigid policy infrastructure,” he concludes.

However, with every cloud, there's a silver lining. It goes without saying, but most MNCs and start-ups offer above-market pay, culture, perks, and benefits, which does soften the blow of having unconventional hours.

Furthermore, hybrid work arrangements also help save time wasted commuting and offer some respite, flexibility, and control in planning your workdays. “With my schedule, I do often get to spend quiet mornings and free evenings, and being off while others are working does help in finding some tranquillity amidst the hustle and bustle,” comments Raidah.

Fatima shared similar sentiments when she said that she can get chores done faster; hospital and bank visits and passport office trips are done much faster without having to worry about falling behind.

Throughout our lives, we were taught that working 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday, is as integral to modern work life as Excel is to Financial Planning and Analysis. However, systems are changing, and the culture we have lived in before the pandemic has largely given way to a culture driven by individualism. What used to be a largely centralised working environment has branched off into jobs that are remote, hybrid, and completely diverted away from each other. Yet, it remains interconnected. And with these timings and roles increasing in number and prominence, it does make you wonder how drastically office jobs will change by the end of the decade.

*\*Names have been changed upon request for privacy. Taaseen Mohammed Islam is tired, send him help at taaseen.2001@gmail.com*



## SHIFT WORK SLEEP DISORDER

Research shows that irregular work schedules can negatively impact your health. Health experts classify this condition as “Shift Work Sleep Disorder (SWSD)”.

A study published in the PLOS One journal found that irregular work schedules can take a serious toll on health. Researchers noted that morning shifts are generally healthier for employees compared to working at night.

The journal defined a “standard” work schedule as starting no earlier than 6 AM and ending by 6 PM. In contrast, unconventional schedules often begin around 2 PM or later and finish near midnight.

To understand the long-term effects, researchers tracked 7,000 people over three decades, from ages 22 to 50. They examined how different work patterns influenced sleep, as well as physical and mental health. The results showed that people who consistently worked non-standard hours developed more health problems. Even participants who began with stable schedules but later shifted to irregular hours in their 30s faced higher risks of cardiovascular disease, anxiety, and other health complications.

These problems often stem from chronic sleep deprivation and poor sleep quality. In fact, health experts classify this condition as “Shift Work Sleep Disorder (SWSD)”.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

## NOTICE BOARD

### Launch of cancer detection tool at BUBT Vice Chancellor's Lecture Series

A programme of the Vice-Chancellor Lecture Series of Bangladesh University of Business and Technology (BUBT) was held on August 14 at the BUBT International Conference Hall. The event featured two significant topics: "The Role of Youth to Build a Nation" and "Our Expectations to Nurse from a Specialist Point of View". As part of the BUBT Vice-Chancellor Lecture Series, BUBT Graduate School organised this seminar.

Dr Fatima Ashrafi, MBBS, DGO (Dublin), DFFP (UK), FRCS (Edin), FRCOG (UK), FRANZCOG, Senior Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Avicenna Health, delivered the keynote address. In her speech, she emphasised that youth are the most powerful driving force for a nation's progress, and nurturing their potential through proper education, values, and opportunities is essential for sustainable development. She also shared professional insights on the role of nurses, highlighting their contribution to maternal and neonatal care, and urging society to recognise and respect the nursing profession.

During the seminar, BUBT's research team presented CancerDetNet, an innovative AI-based mobile application developed by Md Darun Nayeem, a research assistant at BUBT. The app uses a hybrid deep learning model trained on over 50,000 histopathological images to detect nine types of cancer — including skin, lung, colon, and breast cancer — with an accuracy of 98.98 percent in less than one second. Beyond merely identifying cancer, CancerDetNet can also distinguish

non-cancerous tissue, enabling rapid and precise preliminary diagnosis.

Prof. Dr A B M Shawkat Ali, Vice-Chancellor of BUBT, attended the programme as the Special Guest. In



his remarks, he praised the dedication of healthcare professionals, especially nurses, in safeguarding public health. He also called upon students to actively contribute to nation-building by combining academic excellence with social responsibility.

The session was presided over by Prof. Santi Narayan Ghosh, Director of IQAC. The programme was attended by faculty members, students, officers, and other distinguished guests, making it a vibrant and engaging discussion platform. A group of nurses, who were invited from OGSB Hospital, were also present.

The event concluded with an interactive session, during which participants exchanged views with the speakers, creating an atmosphere of mutual learning and inspiration.



### UCBD HOSTS MASTERCLASS ON DATA SCIENCE: SHAPING THE FUTURE WITH DATA

On August 17, Universal College Bangladesh (UCBD) hosted a masterclass titled "Shaping the Future with Data: Global Trends & Bangladesh's Path", on the relevance of Data Science in today's world and future career prospects both locally and internationally. During the session, UCBD announced that it will soon launch the Bachelor's in Data Science programme with the London School of Economics (LSE)-University of London, one of the top-ranked academic programmes worldwide.

The masterclass was carried out to familiarise the graduates of HSC and A2 and their guardians with Data Science, its global rise, and the future of data professionals in Bangladesh, so that students can tap into the best opportunities available to them.

Held at the UCBD Student Lounge, the session highlighted the relevance of Data Science, showing participants the field and career prospects locally and internationally.

The event was attended by Prof. Hew Gill, President and Provost of UCBD. The masterclass featured Dr James Abdey, Associate Academic Director, LSE, who spoke about global trends in Data Science in the session. He opined, "We are pleased to announce that recently UCBD got the approval to offer a BSc in Data Science and Business Analytics. As the world becomes ever more data-driven, investing in your data skills will not only contribute to your personal career success but also strengthen the overall human capital of Bangladesh."

Adding the local perspective, Sumit Saha, CEO of Learn with Sumit (LWS) and Co-founder and Managing Director of Analyzen, said, "The demand for data professionals in Bangladesh is growing rapidly. Today, data is the new oil. Just as oil once determined the pace of economies, data now drives innovation and opportunity. If you can master data, you will be at the center of tomorrow's most exciting careers, both in locally and globally."

### Stamford Business Forum hosts seminar on "Future Leaders in Focus"



On 14 August, the Stamford Business Forum (SBF) successfully organised a seminar titled "Future Leaders in Focus: Business Communication and Personal Branding in the Digital Era" at the Stamford University Bangladesh auditorium. The event brought together distinguished speakers, faculty members, and students for an inspiring

afternoon of learning.

Keynote speeches were delivered by Dr Shariful Islam Dulu and Sadia Afrin Hema, who shared valuable strategies on leadership, communication, and building a strong personal brand in today's competitive digital landscape.

The event was honoured by the presence of Dean Prof. Dr Jamal U Ahmed, respected faculty members, discipline heads, and programme coordinators.

The university offers its gratitude to the SBF fifth Executive Committee for their dedication, the seminar's valued sponsor Grameen Danone (Shokti+) for their generous support, and esteemed alumnus Benjir Abrar for joining the event.

In the closing remarks, assistant professor Mohammad Ahsan Kabir Rubel, Convener of SBF, highlighted the forum's journey since its founding in 2019.

### Job Fair 2025 successfully held at Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology

The Department of Business Administration at Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology (SMUCT), Uttara, successfully organised "Job Fair 2025" on August 17.

The event was presided over by Professor Dr Md Shah-E-Alam, Vice-Chancellor of SMUCT, and was inaugurated by Prof. Mostafizul Haque, Chairman of the Board of Trustees and a distinguished artist.

Among the notable attendees were Prof. Mohammed Sohail Mustafa, Dean of the Faculty of Business Administration, Prof. Dr Behzad Noor, Head of the Department, along with respected faculty members and a



number of students of the department.

During the discussion session, representatives from participating companies shared insights on the job market

demand for BBA and MBA graduates, along with the facilities and career opportunities being offered by their organisations.

The day-long fair featured prominent organisations such as Babylon Group, Talent Shapner, Ha-Meem Group, SkyTech, Tally Solutions Bangladesh, Ananta Companies, Al Kimne International, and IF Visa. Company representatives received student applications at their stalls and offered internship opportunities to approximately 40 students with the possibility of transitioning to full-time employment upon successful completion.

OFF CAMPUS

# Are the wonders of our everyday conversations withering away?

I recently ran into an old friend on campus, and we immediately launched into an enthusiastic back-and-forth. It had been nearly two years since we last spoke. There was a lot to share. For fifteen solid minutes, we hurled questions at each other – rapid-fire, curious, animated. Both of us kept jumping from one topic to another, like we were trying to cram two years' worth of life events within a quarter of an hour.



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

IRINA JAHAN

At one point, she mentioned that she had been struggling with a particularly difficult course that semester, to which I nodded and offered a standard, sympathetic response. However, without meaning to come off as dismissive, I immediately pivoted to asking her about a mutual friend. She answered, and then I changed the subject again.

I also remember that she lit up with glee when telling me about her new pet, but in the haze of the conversation, I never caught the name. It was only afterwards, when I had just begun walking away, that I realised how frenzied the entire exchange had been. We had spoken over each other, rushed through topics, and stacked question after question like we were checking off a list. It felt oddly stressful and left me with a sense of detachment.

This has been a recurring pattern in the conversations that I have been having as of late; how unintentionally exhausting and shallow it has felt. Talking to others feels like a ping-pong match of quickly generated questions. No one seems truly invested in the answers – at least not as much as they are in merely filling the silence that follows.

In all honesty, it feels as though asking meaningful, follow-up questions has become a rare practice – the dearth of which poses the risk of losing real connections. This might seem like a rather trivial concern, but Dr Alison Wood Brooks, a behavioural research scientist and longtime professor at Harvard Business School has delved deeper into the matter. In her book *Talk: The Science of Conversation and the Art of Being Ourselves*, she shares a straightforward yet powerful insight from the results of her investigation, which reveal that asking thoughtful follow-up questions is among the simplest things we can do to become better conversationalists.



There is, nonetheless, a thin line between being curious and nosy, which can be manoeuvred by practicing the art of asking the right questions. When talking to friends, loved ones or even strangers, we ought to lean into each other's thoughts and experiences with more patience. The more enriching our conversations become, the more we can open a window into someone's world without it feeling like a barrage of pop-quiz questions.

Along with the gradual demise of meaningfully inquiring about people's lives, few things are more disheartening than the manner in which humorous hypothetical questions have been quietly edited out of our conversations. What happened to picking people's brains with questions that require them to draw out answers from childhood anecdotes and forgotten personal tales? What happened to asking incredibly specific, whimsical questions like, "What

is the most pretentious piece of clothing item you own?" or something that requires a bit more imagination like, "If you were to form a new country, what would the flag look like?"

If these traits of our conversation have been sent to the backseat, it is time to pull them out to the front and allow them to take centre stage. It could make even the most mundane of exchanges lively and something worth looking back at.

I suspect that this observation of mine, like most features of the current times, can be attributed to the internet's iron fist over our attention spans. We have grown so unaccustomed to being fully present with one another that we have forgotten to even try. In many ways, I fear that through our inclination for doomscrolling and bed-rotting, we might have conditioned ourselves to skim through real life as well, without actually letting the moments sink in.

While this is not a manifesto that seeks to reinvent how we speak, it is a reminder that people appreciate an extra question asked out of genuine curiosity. There is substance in asking something odd or delightful, and then waiting through the pause that may come after. It makes the shared moment, and consequently, our connections more meaningful.

If there is someone in your life who, amidst this conversational drought, still invents imagined scenarios just to ask you something playful or puts in the effort to probe deeper into your statements, it is certainly worth appreciating them and the effort they put in. They deserve to be cherished for bringing the kind of playfulness and depth in conversations that allow us to feel seen and understood.

*Irina is looking forward to answering your meaningful/whimsical questions. Send them @ [irina.jahan2025@gmail.com](mailto:irina.jahan2025@gmail.com)*

## INTERVIEWS

# HANZALAH BIN SULTAN'S JOURNEY FROM BUP TO META

RAIYAN BIN SARWAR

Raised in Dhaka and an alumnus of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), Hanzalah Bin Sultan now plays a key role at Meta's regional headquarters in Ireland, where he works on designing large-scale systems that shape how millions interact with Meta platforms, especially around payments.

Hanzalah's story isn't one of overnight success. It's a narrative of calculated risks, relentless curiosity, and the courage to pivot.

*Campus* sat down with Hanzalah to learn how his years at BUP, combined with real-world experiences, shaped a path to one of the world's most influential tech giants.

**Campus (C):** Could you tell us about your journey from BUP to Meta? How did it all begin, and what inspired you to pursue a career in tech?

**Hanzalah (H):** I wouldn't say there was one defining moment; it was a series of small, intentional steps. At BUP, I constantly pushed myself out of my comfort zone; joining competitions, building networks, and interning wherever I could.

I began my professional journey in a conventional corporate role, but I quickly realised I wanted something more dynamic. That led me to Pathao, where I joined as a management trainee. It was there that I discovered how powerful data can be when used to solve real-world problems.

Later, I was approached by Unilever Bangladesh during a phase when they were scaling tech-driven initiatives across digital marketing, e-commerce, and business-to-business (B2B). The opportunity to work on projects that has the potential to grow meteorically was exhilarating. I had access to large datasets that revealed consumer behaviour at scale, and I was hooked.

By the time Meta reached out, I had developed a diverse set of skills that spanned across data, product strategy, and consumer insight. Looking back, my curiosity and willingness to take unconventional paths mattered far more than a linear plan.

**C:** What was your interview experience at Meta like, and how did you prepare for it?

**H:** In late 2021, I got an email from a Meta recruiter about a market specialist role focused on the Bangladesh market. I was excited but cautious; Meta's hiring process is intense.

The interviews were multi-layered, testing critical thinking, collaboration, and alignment with Meta's values. I focused on how my previous experiences — from Pathao to Unilever — could translate to the Meta ecosystem.

In one interview, a panellist asked, "Why do you think you're a good fit for this role?"

I replied, "Whether it's ride-sharing, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), or digital platforms, the audience I have worked with has always been the same: the people of Bangladesh. I understand their digital triggers, their consumption behaviours, and how to turn insights into impact. That's what I bring."

A week later, I received my offer letter to join Meta in Singapore.

**C:** What would you say helped you stand out during the application process?

**H:** It was a combination of technical understanding, analytical skills, and storytelling. Working with data gave me the edge in analysis, while communication skills helped me build rapport and articulate complex ideas simply.

But most importantly, I took time to understand my journey. I reflected on what I had learned, how I had



PHOTO: COURTESY

grown, and how that aligned with the role at Meta. It is the authenticity that helped me stand out.

**C:** What does your current role at Meta involve?

**H:** I currently work with product and engineering teams to design workflows that improve payment experiences across Meta platforms. It's not just about fixing bugs or launching features; it's about creating systems that make it easier and safer for users and businesses to transact globally.

Interestingly, Meta doesn't offer shortcuts, even to internal candidates. I had to go through the full interview process again to earn my current position, competing alongside external applicants.

The most fulfilling part is knowing that even a minor improvement in our systems can impact millions of users around the world.

**C:** How do you stay relevant in such a fast-evolving global tech landscape?

**H:** I am very deliberate about what I consume. I follow global tech trends, business news, and thought leaders across social platforms. My social media is less about

entertainment and more about insight.

I also believe in creating an ecosystem of learning where absorbing new ideas becomes effortless. Whether it's a podcast during commutes or newsletters in my inbox, I stay in sync with where the world is headed.

**C:** What advice would you give to students or graduates from non-technical backgrounds aiming for top tech companies like Meta?

**H:** You don't need to be a coder to work in tech, but you do need to understand how tech works. Learn the basics of data, automation, and product logic. But more importantly, apply what you learn. Build a project, analyse real-world data, and write about your ideas.

Also, don't underestimate the power of curiosity and clear storytelling. Big tech values people who can connect the dots, communicate well, and think critically. Stay curious. Take risks. And build your story; that's your biggest asset.

*Raiyan Bin Sarwar is a Campus Ambassador for The Daily Star from Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP).*