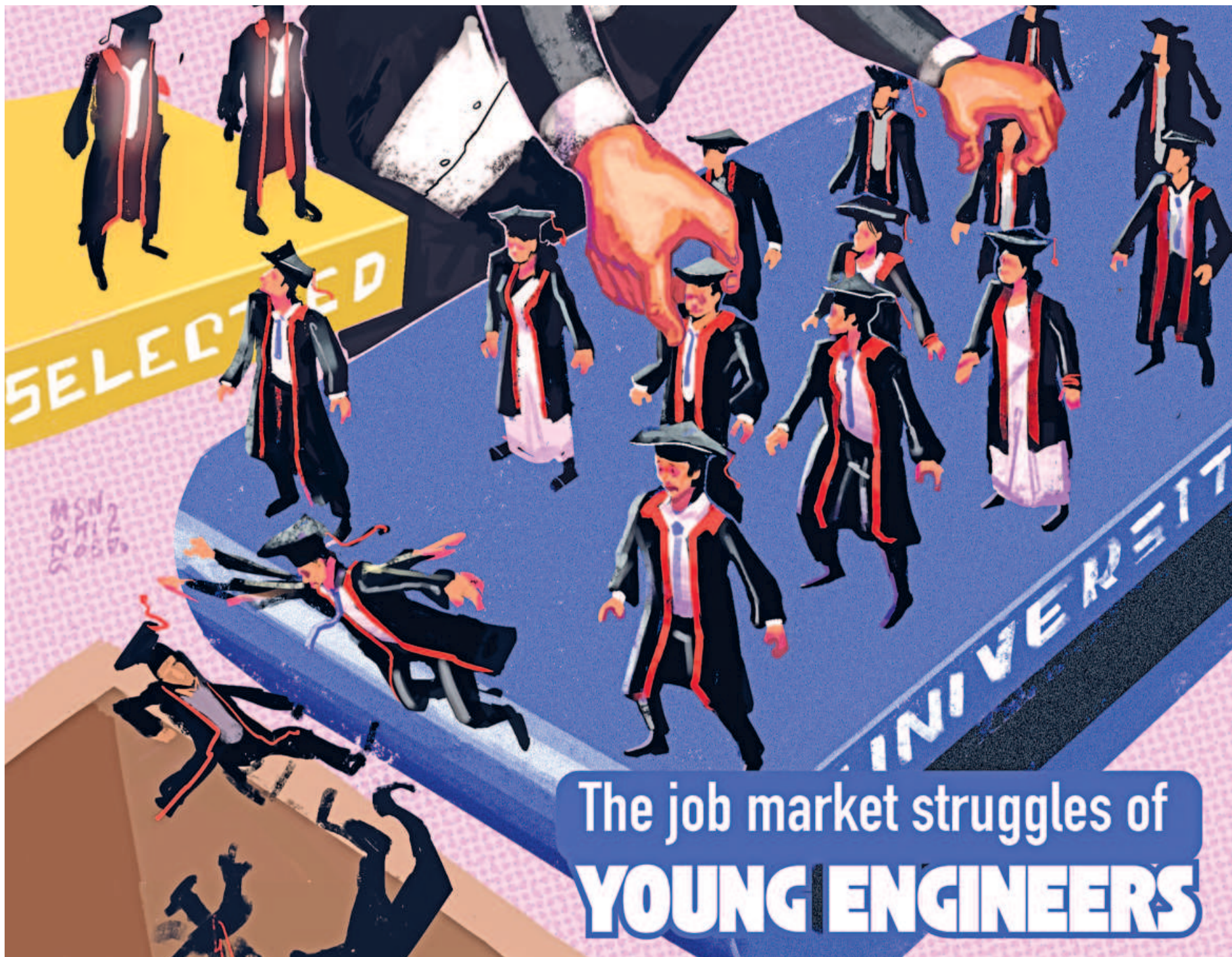


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MOVIES

DHET!

An unflinching
examination of the
absurdities of inertia



ABIR HOSSAIN

DHET! (2025) by Ummid Ashraf treads the terrains of many modern-day woes. One of the greatest attributes of the short is perhaps the many interpretations that the audience can take away from it. Whether it is the unforgiving nature of the “gig economy” that the film hints at, or the lack of empathy that an indifferent metropolis induces on its inhabitants, the film is driven by a lot of heart. It presents its audience with a fairly simple narrative plot, one that most of us who live in Dhaka are very familiar with. Yet, the twists and turns that unravel throughout its short runtime are exhilarating.

As the night marches on, the protagonist — a ride-sharing motorcyclist — attempts to get to his next passenger. From the get-go, the heaving horrors of the city rear their ugly heads at the audience. The passenger curtly reminds the driver not to bother him and to show up where he is supposed to without any further questions. The film builds on this set-up, going from zero to a hundred in a matter of minutes. Yet, it does so without missing a beat. Given its short runtime,

the short packs a lot of punch throughout the nine minutes, eventually landing the knockout blow.

Horrifying as the film may be, the heart that I refer to — although veiled — pulls the audience in. The driver knows where to go, his destination determined, and his arrival anticipated. With each turn, however, the familiar — in the guise of the alien — pops out. The driver's seemingly mundane task is marred by contradictions. His frustration is palpable, injecting a sense of delirium through each and every aspect of the film.

What stands out right as the film shifts its gears is the blaring, relentless soundtrack. With its pulsating roars, the score encapsulates the fear and exhaustion of a nightmare with no end in sight. The cinematography, on the other hand, feels like a series of shifting tides. At the emotional height of the film, the images descend into madness, multiplying in scale and horror. Despite how absolutely jarring it feels, the visual language of the film is deceptive, arranged with intent to induce the suffocation back to the audience. And

just when the time is right, it dials down the chaos momentarily, merely to slip back into it.

Even through its surreal and often dreamlike quality, *DHET!* aptly captures the darkness lingering across Dhaka at night. The exhaustion is etched to your bones, yet respite remains evasive. This is best portrayed through Ahsabul Yamin Riad's performance, who is both lulled to sleep by the city's cruelty and jolted awake by its chaos.

At its core, the short is a raw and gripping look at how absolutely nauseating and claustrophobic this place feels. It is a subtle nod to the mundane things that drag us forward. Despite our collective apathy towards it, we are thrown into a daze when we are unable to break free from it. It is precisely these contradictions that the film teeters around with a lot of clarity. *DHET!* doesn't attempt to make sense or even contrive meaning from it. It simply lets the feeling fester, unravelling the horrors that manifest when all that we do with it is restrain it.

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CAREER

Lessons my first job taught me

TAASEEN MOHAMMED ISLAM

There's a lot that you have to learn through experience that academia simply cannot teach you; this is why experiential learning exists to begin with. Oftentimes, as students, we underestimate just how much of our lives will be spent working after graduation. Additionally, coming from a controlled, regulated academic environment and being flung into the "wild west" can be jarring, to say the least. So, for your reading pleasure, here are the most important lessons I've learnt over my first year of employment.

Your degree does not matter as much as you think

I remember being at the end of my second year of university, completely freaking out, because I didn't know what I wanted to major in. I had Excel sheets pulled out of which majors led to which careers and a hundred tabs of Glassdoor, LinkedIn, and even Wikipedia, trying to figure out if I should study Finance or Supply Chain Management. Imagine my surprise, a couple of years later, when I interned at a major bank, where a third of the people around me were engineers, and the recruiter was a Life Sciences graduate. While your degree is an important factor, most jobs can be learnt through experience. In my experience, a can-do attitude and transferable skills turned out to be more important than a piece of paper stating what my degree was.

Having a job you enjoy is pretty important

Do you ever look at people working in corporations, telecommunications, and banks and envy them for how good their lives look from the outside? Well, chances are that these same people are actually miserable Sunday through Thursday, crying themselves to sleep for the price of a lifestyle that isn't even sustainable long-term. However, many people, while underpaid and potentially still overworked, are not having a mental breakdown at every minor inconvenience, as they have a job aligned with their interests or values. While self-fulfilment shouldn't be the core driver behind your employment decisions, having a job you enjoy is pretty important to your overall well-being. After all, you spend 40 hours a week at work at the bare minimum; you may as well do something that is worthwhile.

Work-life balance is a mythical concept

While people and companies are more aware of the relationship between productivity and rest than they used to be, work-life balance is not as enforced as social media would make you believe it is. Even though people now get catered lunches and office events, their work still creeps into hours beyond scheduled times. But it's also important to note that even though no one will hand you a balanced work schedule, it's important to advocate for yourself and create that balance. Setting boundaries and learning to say

no, even as a fresh graduate or new hire, is not a crime and may even lead to your supervisors and team gaining some respect for you. Please feel free to utilise Outlook's out-of-office features as they are designed.

Not everyone is your friend

Sitcoms set in workplaces have really done so much to strengthen the corporate propaganda of "we are a family". It is possible to form lasting and true friendships with your coworkers. Being in close proximity to others going through the same nightmare scenarios is a catalyst for trauma-bonded friendships. However, every sitcom has a villain, and corporate theatre is no different. Unfortunately, not everyone has your back, and sometimes stepping on toes is a requirement for others to get ahead.

As I have mentioned before, this is the wild west, and anything goes as long as performance targets are satisfied. Another thing to note is that it's not possible to make everyone happy, and many people will dislike you for the most trivial of reasons, and there's not really much you can do about it. But it's also important to recognise and learn to navigate tricky situations while keeping your sanity intact.

Taaseen would like to highlight that he is not a career coach and cannot be legally held liable for any unexpected outcomes resulting from this article.



NOTICE BOARD

Stamford University concludes six-day Faculty Development Training

The Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of Stamford University Bangladesh has successfully completed the Faculty Development Training Programme (FT-N8), a six-day initiative aimed at enhancing teaching excellence and promoting outcome-based education (OBE) among university faculty members.

Over the course of the programme, 24 expert-led sessions were held covering diverse areas such as effective pedagogy, assessment strategies, and curriculum alignment. The final session, held on November 8, 2025, featured faculty presentations on OBE-related topics, highlighting the role of educators in achieving sustainable development in teaching and learning.

Participants also took part in a peer evaluation segment, allowing them to exchange insights with colleagues and expert reviewers. Structured feedback was collected to guide improvements in future training programmes.

The Certificate Awarding Ceremony, hosted by M Azizul Haque, Director of IQAC, was attended by Prof. Dr Md Yunus Mia, Acting Vice-Chancellor; Prof.



M Feroze Ahmed, Emeritus Professor; and Muhammad Abdul Matin, Registrar of Stamford University Bangladesh.

In their remarks, the speakers underscored the importance of faculty development in maintaining academic integrity and fostering global academic competitiveness. Prof. Dr Md Yunus Mia emphasised continuous self-improvement for institutional growth, Prof. M Feroze Ahmed stressed academic and research excellence, while Muhammad Abdul Matin highlighted regulatory compliance and

accountability.

Certificates were awarded to all participants for successfully completing the training. The programme was coordinated by M Azizul Haque, Subrata Chowdhury, Additional Director (QA), and Dr Tamanna Zerine, Additional Director (ETL).

The annual training, organised by IQAC, remains a key requirement for newly appointed faculty members, nurturing reflective, skilled, and globally oriented educators committed to sustainable educational excellence.

SEU Economics department hosts EcoFest 3.0

The Department of Economics at Southeast University (SEU) held EcoFest 3.0 on November 6. The event was organised to promote cultural awareness and strengthen community spirit. SEU Pro Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Dr M Mofazzal Hossain, attended the event as the Chief Guest.

Dr Muhammad Shahadat Hossain Siddiquee, Professor of Economics at Dhaka University, served as the Keynote Speaker. His speech contributed significant value to the programme.

Attendees included Prof. Dr Farhana Helal Mehtab, Dean of the School of Arts & Social Sciences, other Deans, Chairpersons, faculty members, and students from the Department of Economics.



SU Champions League concludes at Sonargaon University

The SU Champions League 2025, organised by the Sonargaon University Sports Club, was held at Turf Nation. It was a franchise-based football tournament featuring nine teams in total. Each team had a faculty member as its owner, while one female student participated as the team ambassador.

Sonargaon University is known to take such initiatives to promote sports alongside academics, with the aim of nurturing football and cricket players every year. As a result, the university currently has several players representing the national teams and different divisions in both football and cricket.

The event was graced by the presence of University Advisor Azizul Bari Shipu, Vice-Chancellor Professor Shamim Ara Hasan, Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Bulbul Ahmed, Treasurer Professor Dr Muhammad Ekramul Islam, Dean of the Faculty of Business Professor Al-Amin Molla, Director of Student Welfare Julkarnine Sultan Alam, along with department heads, faculty members, and students from various faculties.

Former national cricket team player Hannan Sarkar and Bangladesh national football team goalkeeping coach Biplob Bhattacharjee attended as special guests. The matches were conducted by the university's Sports Director, Mehrab Hossain Joshi, and members of the Sports Club.

19th BELTA-SMUCT-THT Teacher Development Conference 2025 held on "Teaching English in Interesting Times"

The Department of English of Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology (SMUCT), in collaboration with the Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association (BELTA) and Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) from Japan, successfully organised the 19th Teacher Development Conference 2025 on the theme "Teaching English in Interesting Times."

The two-day conference was held in hybrid format, with an online session on Friday, November 7, followed by an in-person session on Saturday, November 8, 2025, at the SMUCT campus in Uttara. The event brought together English language educators, researchers, and practitioners from across Bangladesh and abroad to explore the challenges and innovations in English language teaching in a rapidly changing world.

Prof. Dr Md Shah-E-Alam, Vice-Chancellor of SMUCT, inaugurated the conference and emphasised the importance of adapting to contemporary challenges in education. "Teachers must continue to

learn, adapt, and innovate to meet the diverse needs of their learners," he said.

Prof. Dr Syed Azizul Huq, Dean of Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, SMUCT, highlighted the value of such collaborations in promoting reflective teaching practices.

Prof. Ahmed Bashir, President of BELTA and Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka, expressed his deep appreciation to all participants and collaborators for making the conference a success. "BELTA has always been a platform that connects teachers, inspires innovation, and nurtures a sense of community among English educators," he remarked.

Dr Patrick Dougherty, Team Leader of THT and Dean at Akita International University, highlighted the long-standing THT-BELTA partnership, saying it "continues to foster global dialogue and shared learning among teachers."

Md Shahrear Talukder, Convenor of the 19th BELTA-SMUCT-THT Teacher Development Conference and Head of the Department of English at SMUCT, thanked all participants, saying, "This conference reflects our commitment to teacher growth and collaboration. As educators, we must continue to exchange ideas, integrate technology, and develop new pedagogical approaches to meet evolving classroom demands." Educators participated actively in workshops on teaching methods, AI integration, curriculum design, and materials development. The 19th BELTA-SMUCT-THT Teacher Development Conference 2025 ended with a renewed sense of collaboration and commitment to enhancing English language education in Bangladesh and beyond.



CAREER

Career opportunities in Printing and Publication Studies

ADRIN SARWAR

The debate of whether printed books will survive or not arose when Philip Meyer, a professor of Journalism, predicted a finite lifespan for the printed newspaper. He went further ahead and predicted that the last printed newspaper would run out of daily readers sometime around 2040. Since then, many debates have arisen, and much research has been conducted to find out whether digital publications would really take over the age-old printed publication.

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), in 2021, 45 percent of people bought a printed book, compared to the 23 percent who bought an e-book. When the world is rapidly shifting towards a paperless digital phenomenon, in the case of publishing, debate prevails over whether print will live or die in the near future. Amid this debate, the existence of an academic department that offers honours and master's programmes on this subject might seem meaningless to many.

What is the use of studying this subject, and what will you do after graduating? These are just a few of the questions the students of this discipline face when they tell someone that they are pursuing their bachelor's degree in Printing and Publication Studies at Dhaka University (DU).

This experience is perfectly captured by Kotha Nahian, a lecturer in the Department of Journalism, Communication and Media Studies at the State University of Bangladesh (SUB), who was a student from the very first batch of this department. She recalls, "Initially, whenever somebody asked about my subject, they used to ask what this subject was and what I would do by studying this subject."

The constant questioning took a toll. She found this line of questioning to be disappointing and unmotivating.

However, Kotha explains that this initial perception is born from a misunderstanding of the programme's true scope.

"As we started progressing through the programme, we were introduced to courses like graphic design, printing methods, management, and packaging," she says.

The degree isn't just about old-fashioned printing; it was a gateway to a diverse and creative industry.

In his autobiography, *Dhal Prohorer Alo*, Dr Bimal Guha, the visionary behind the Department of Printing and Publication Studies, speaks about his experience studying editing and publishing in other countries, which was enlightening. This later compelled him to establish this department.

Dr Guha also realised that there was a large gap between academia and training and the printing and publishing sector in Bangladesh. Those working in the government or private companies had no formal education in this field. This lack of professionalism was evident in the publications. He believed that this kind of on-the-job training was not enough for quality publishing.

Developed countries were far ahead because they had educational programmes for this subject. For Dr Guha, the answer was clear: Bangladesh needed a proper discipline to teach printing and publishing so it could produce skilled professionals for the future. Thus, Printing and Publication Studies began its journey in 2015. Prof. Dr Sudhangshu Sekhar Roy is the Founding Chairperson of the department.

The honours programme's curriculum is structured to build a student's expertise from the ground up. In their first year, students focus on foundational skills through courses like Bangla and English Writing Skills, Basic Computer Skills, and Copy Editing and Proofreading. They study the history of printing and publishing and the global and local industry. As they advance, the curriculum delves into more specialised and technical areas.

Mohosina Islam, Assistant Professor of the Department of Printing and Publication Studies at DU, explains, "The



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

curriculum we have designed has been created in relation to social science," she notes. "Even so, some scientific topics come up. Aesthetics will definitely come up, as it is related to publication. Students can select their profession by giving importance to their area of interest."

The ultimate goal, as Assistant Prof. Mohosina clarifies, is to prepare students for leadership roles in this specific sector. "We don't really want to see them as printers," she states. "We hope that they will be in the management of those houses. We give them basic knowledge, from the initial thought to the entire post-press process."

In this modern era, the industry mostly functions based on traditional practices. Assistant Prof. Mohosina, on this matter, shares, "Our publishers don't know these things academically or theoretically. They know it through practice. They have applied their knowledge based solely on experience and brought it to this stage. If they had theoretical knowledge alongside their experience, they could take the industry to a much better position."

The Printing and Publication Studies department has passed one decade of its academic journey. The fresh graduates are out, preparing themselves for the job market. When asked about the job opportunities in this sector, Sheikh Jinat Sharmin, an assistant professor of Printing and Publication Studies at DU, emphasises, "Graduates have several career paths, majorly divided into the printing and publishing sectors. A major field is Public Relations (PR). The publishing industry itself is highly diverse, offering opportunities in specialised areas like children's books, e-books and audiobooks. This allows students to choose a path that matches their specific interests."

In the fourth industrial revolution, new technologies are being introduced regularly. The impact is also clear on the publishing sector. Assistant Prof. Sharmin, in this regard, says, "The rise of digital and online platforms has created a large demand for book marketing. Students are well-prepared for this; learning practical skills in graphics, advertising, public relations, and packaging can contribute to both marketing campaigns and overall product design."

Even though Printing and Publication Studies is a relatively newer subject, there are interesting opportunities

for graduates. Nafew Sajed Joy, a postgraduate student of this department, shares an overview of this subject in the marketplace. He shares, "When we talk about job opportunities for this subject, I think there are quite a few. However, there remains one initial problem, which is that not many people know about this department and what topics we study. So naturally, there is a gap."

As this discipline is relatively new, there have been fewer graduates out in the job market. Even though publishing has been around for a long time, it has fewer professionals. The job sector is new and expanding, which offers ample opportunities for graduates to explore.

Nafew adds, "Besides the traditional job sectors like government jobs and bank jobs, graduates of this department can also get into media houses. If someone starts writing from an earlier stage and learns to write well, the path becomes smoother for them."

Sharing the same sentiments, lecturer Kotha says, "When I was in my second year, I had the opportunity to work as a news presenter for a television channel. At that time, my job was to edit the news reports and present them. My knowledge in editing and proofreading helped me to do the job well."

While the debate over print's survival continues, the Department of Printing and Publication Studies proves that the industry is not dying but evolving. Born from a vision to professionalise a field long reliant on informal training. The department equips its graduates with a versatile skill set, spanning from design and editing to marketing and management. Though they may face the initial challenge of raising awareness in the job market, these students are uniquely prepared to lead the industry's transformation. They are the skilled professionals who can bridge the gap between its rich history and its dynamic, digital future.

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Adrin Sarwar is a student of printing and publication studies. Reach her at adrinsarwar@gmail.com.

OFF CAMPUS

The H-1B visa policy proclamation and what it means for international students

TARANNUM KHONDKAR

The news of the changes in the H-1B Visa Policy has upended the lives of thousands of people worldwide. Among those most impacted are international students in the US, who have now been forced to reconsider just how realistic the American dream is.

To understand what the new visa policy entails, we must put into context the usual route that international students opt for. Most start off under the F-1 visa, which is the student visa. After graduation, a temporary work authorisation, called Optional Practical Training (OPT), is granted.

Students may receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorisation, either before or after graduation. STEM degree holders, on the other hand, may apply for a 24-month extension after their post-completion OPT.

Afterwards, most students file for the H-1B visa – a non-immigrant visa which allows US employers to temporarily employ foreign workers in speciality occupations which require a bachelor's degree or higher. Without the H-1B visa, the majority of international students simply cannot work or remain in the US and must leave after their OPT ends.

In an executive order issued on September 19, the Trump administration introduced a new rule for the H-1B visa. Every new petition after September 21, 2025, must be accompanied by a one-time payment of USD 100,000 by the employer. This is a staggering increase from the previous fee, which typically ranged between USD 2,500 and USD 5,000 depending on the company size and processing type.

This will, in likelihood, mean that firms will severely decrease sponsorship offers for H-1B visa applicants. Some may even cancel sponsorships altogether, leaving international students with no other option than to leave the country.

Another concern that has emerged is whether this reform applies to the students who are already under OPT. The policy explicitly stated "entry into the United States", which should include those who are applying from outside the country. For international students who are already present in the country, it raises the question: does this include those applying for a change of status within the country?

The administration has provided some clarification on this, iterating that the proclamation does not apply to applicants who have previously been issued H-1B visas. Additionally, it does not change the amount to be charged for any H-1B renewals. Concerns, however, still remain, and the legal opinions are split.

Some, such as CDF Labour Law LLP, say that individuals under OPT will not be subject to this law as they are simply applying for a change of status. Others, such as The Chander Law Firm, warn that the fee may still apply, especially if the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) interprets "entry" more broadly. Due to the uncertainties surrounding the policy, it is difficult to get an accurate prediction of what the future holds.

"The international community in my school is completely dumbfounded," shares Samiha*, a PhD student at UC Irvine. "The job market is already extremely competitive. This new policy simply adds another layer discouraging firms from hiring international students. Many of my friends are already gearing up for graduate school, because they know they won't get a job due to this new reform."

The uncertainty not only plagues the students but recruiters as well. Samiha alleges that it is due to this policy that she has been rejected by every company she has applied to.

Many students, like Adib Bin Kadir, a second-year student at the University of Texas Arlington, say that they plan to cut their losses if it comes down to it. "If this policy affects me in the future, I would simply return home or pursue my masters in another country. You either make the cut or you don't – there's no space in between," he explains.

Despite the inevitable shrinkage in the talent pool that will follow, recruiters may still not be able to offer jobs to international students.

Ayman Sameer, a freshman at Berkeley, shares his two cents regarding the significance of international students in the US. "Given the recent development, companies will be discouraged from sponsoring students even with job experience under their OPT," he says. "However, American firms will still require skills that their citizens simply do not currently possess. Their strength comes from the employees they hire on the H-1B visa."

Appearing on MSNBC, Justin Wolfers, a professor of Economics and Public Policy at the University of Michigan,

said that findings have shown that cutting back on H-1B visas had no effect on the employment rates of American citizens. He says that foreign employees instead help in raising the wages of college-educated Americans. Employers in the US themselves have come forward in stating that the qualifications needed for numerous roles are not met domestically.

Even higher education institutions depend on foreign talent for teaching and research positions. With the ongoing shortage of teachers, coupled with the new reform, not only are they turning away international students, but also stunting the growth of their own.

In Donald Trump's first term, the USCIS imposed policies that led to high H-1B denial rates. However, lawsuits and legal settlements resulted in the agency reversing such practices. Although Trump sought to push a final rule late into his first tenure, it was blocked by a judge who cited that it violated the Administrative Procedure Act. The history of the Trump administration in H-1B visa reform is, thus, far from positive. Taking his track record into consideration, as well as the economic implications of this reform, the future of the new H-1B visa remains uncertain for all.

The facts remain, though, that employability for international students has become harder than ever. Once deemed the land of dreams for many, it seems as though the situation has taken a turn for the worse, that too without any safety net. For the time being, however, the future of international students remains precarious.

**Name has been changed upon request.*

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Tarannum Khondkar is a struggling student, a fur mom, and a contributor at The Daily Star.

