DHAKA THURSDAY JANUARY 1, 2026, *POUSH 17, 1432 BS* | A PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star

CAMPUS

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MOVIES

AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH REVIVES THE GRAND SPECTACLE OF PANDORA TO LIFE ONCE MORE

MD. NAYEEM HAIDER

Avatar: Fire and Ash, directed by James Cameron, and released on December 19, faces two threads of criticism from critics and viewers: "it is too long" and that it is "more of the same." Catching the third instalment of the *Avatar* series in theatres on the third day from release, my experience, however, was far from dampened.

The story picks up from where *Avatar: The Way of Water* concluded. The last movie ended with Jake Sully (played by Sam Worthington), his wife Neytiri (played by Zoe Saldaña), and their family grieving for Neteyam, Jake and Neytiri's firstborn son, killed in the final battle. The plot in *Fire and Ash* remains rooted in their grief, with its branches and tendrils wrapping themselves around the characters, pushing them forward yet holding them back, and setting the course for how they confront their loss.

With regard to visuals, the torch has passed without dimming in the least; both the first *Avatar* and *The Way of Water* became acclaimed for the innovation they brought in the realm of 3D filmmaking, and the third instalment is a continuation of the same breathtaking tradition.

Pandora, in its picturesque otherworldly landscapes, is an easy world to get lost in. But credit isn't just due to the visuals alone. There is depth and believability to its fantasy, making it exhilarating for the imagination despite being meticulously grounded in an enigmatic logic of its own. The harmony of existence in Pandora, the mystique and spirituality interwoven into the fabric of its nature, is only enhanced by the rich portrayal of the culture of its inhabitants.

The film encompasses the hatred and hedonism of the Mangkwan clan, who give *Fire and Ash* its name. Their history and way of life expand the world-building in the *Avatar* franchise, and their cult-like ritualistic ferocity, coupled with the desolation of their habitat, adds an intriguing layer that sometimes creates an ambience reminiscent of the Harkonnens in *Dune*.

On the grandiose stage thus set, *Fire and Ash* presents a family drama that's intense and intimate, an anticlimactic dance with a second chance, and a grappling match with grief and its manifestations, each culminating in a final acceptance. The protagonists of the movie, Jake, Neytiri, and their family, make you feel for them, but personally, it was the franchise's recurring antagonist, Colonel Miles Quaritch (played by Stephan Lang), who really stole the show.

Quaritch's charisma dominates whichever scene he finds himself in, and he remains unpredictable throughout, the constant flux in his loyalties lending further tension to the story. He is a man given another shot at life, who remains stuck in the quicksand of his past and pride, even though the tempting prospect of a fresh start dangles at arm's length. His confidence may border on the brink of arrogance, yet there are moments of hesitation that offer a glance into the ethos of a man caught between two worlds. His relationship of mutual desire and benefit with Varang (played by Oona Chaplin), the leader of the Mangkwan clan, and his adoption and acceptance of their culture, serve as a twisted parallel to Jake's story in the very first movie. This enjoyable blend of nostalgia and irony, and the immersive coupling of mystique with emotion, is, of course, spaced with thrilling action.

Avatar: Fire and Ash is far from perfect, but it is a good movie if you let it sweep you off your feet and into the uncharted unknowns of the world of Pandora. It may feel familiar, but that has its own comfort, and it may feel long, but that just gives you more time to enjoy James Cameron's grand spectacle.

Nayeem is a law student and a contributing writer for The Daily Star. Tell him to spend less on movies at nayeemhaider90@gmail.com.

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OFF CAMPUS

Stuck in traffic? Consider trying these absolutely-not-stress-inducing activities

NUZHAT TAHIYA

If you have ever found yourself wedged between a bus, a rickshaw, and the crushing weight of your own regrets, don't despair. Below are several meaningful and absolutely-not-stress-inducing activities to fill the hours and transform this slow-moving purgatory into a personal growth retreat.

Reevaluate every life choice
There's nothing like the smell of overheated engines to make you wonder how you ended up here. Traffic offers a rare opportunity for introspection – mostly because nothing else is happening. Stare into the distance (approximately three inches away, because that's all you can see through the buses) and ask yourself important questions: Why did you choose this job? Why did you trust Google Maps when it said that the estimated arrival time would be 18 minutes? In fact, why did you even leave the house?

Become an impromptu rickshaw art connoisseur
Every rickshaw is a mobile gallery, and you are the curator. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder: evaluate its artwork with the seriousness of a "seasoned" art critic. Reflect on the symbolism of random tigers, floating eyes, and ponder why a large portion of rickshaws feature Shabana posed dramatically against waterfalls. Is that tiger symbolic of national identity, or did the artist simply run out of paint halfway through? Why does the back of every rickshaw feature a vague approximation of a Bollywood star from 1994?

Narrate the traffic like a nature documentary
Channel your inner David Attenborough: "Here we can observe the majestic bus in its natural habitat, blocking three lanes while communicating through a (not so) complex series of horn blasts. Witness the private car attempting a daring migration to the right… and failing."

Start a podcast
Monetise your suffering. Call it "Stuck FM", or perhaps "Turn Signal Confessions."

Although each episode may be recorded at a different intersection, they will all sound exactly the same. Content ideas include rating nearby billboards, interviewing the fruit seller outside your window, or conducting in-depth analyses of the implications of ever-increasing rickshaw fares.

Rehearse arguments you will never have
Practice saying why you're late to your faculty. Rehearse your monologue on why Dhaka roads need a more holistic urban planning approach. Pretend you're debating Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) officials on live TV. Win every single argument with flawless logic. You'll never actually use these lines, but you'll feel powerful for 30 solid seconds (or hours, depending on the traffic).

Accept your fate
This is your home now. The people in the buses around you are your neighbours. The flyover is your sky.

Update your will
Since you now live in this jam indefinitely, you might as well get your affairs in order. Jot down important notes: who gets your books, who gets your mug collection, and who inherits your unspent bKash cashback. Most importantly, should your Facebook account be memorialised with a cover photo of your beloved cat or the Banani traffic?

Plan to be a better person when this is over
You won't, but it's nice to dream while imprisoned inside a CNG that refuses to move.

By the time the vehicles lurch three feet forward, you'll have emerged like a butterfly from the chrysalis – older and wiser. And what is wisdom, if not accepting and perhaps even cherishing the things that life throws your way? Even if it's complete gridlock that you've been blessed with, remember traffic isn't a delay – it's a lifestyle. So, embrace the chaos. You were late anyway.

Nuzhat is a compulsive doodler and connoisseur of bad early aughts television. Send her recommendations at nuzhat.tahiya@gmail.com

STUDY ABROAD

Life as a Bangladeshi undergraduate student in South Korea

TASFIAH LIAKAT

In recent years, South Korea has become the new destination for Bangladeshi students who want to attain both quality education and the possibility of mobility, due to the country's emerging global universities and technological advancement.

Studying in South Korea might sound like a dream come true. Everyone back home thinks you're living a glamorous K-drama life: cherry blossom petals falling in slow motion, sleek subways, the soft glow of convenience stores, and every cafe encounter inevitably turning into a meet-cute. The reality is often different.

Two undergraduate students, Nusrat Jahan Alve and Sahara Tabassum Toishi, currently studying Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) at Sejong University, Seoul, share their experiences to shed light on what life really looks like for Bangladeshi students pursuing their undergraduate studies in South Korea.

The application process

When applying to Korean universities, the two most common routes available for Bangladeshi students who are looking for scholarships or financial aid are the Korean government scholarship or the Global Korea Scholarship (GKS).

The GKS is highly competitive and requires you to complete a mandatory one-year Korean language programme before you can start the actual degree. According to Toishi, she had not applied for GKS, as she did not want to lose a full academic year. She was also a bit unsure whether she could master the language well enough within that time frame.

There are also many English-track universities in Korea that offer tuition waivers for the first semester based on the applicants' IELTS scores. According to Alve, "If you have an eight in your IELTS, you usually get around an 80 percent scholarship for the first semester. With a 7 or 7.5, it's around 50 percent. Even 6.0 or 6.5 can get you 30 to 50 percent, depending on the university."

"But, after the first semester, your scholarship depends entirely on your CGPA. The grading scale may vary slightly; some universities follow a 4.3 scale and others a 4.5 scale. Maintaining around 4.0 is generally enough to secure a 50 percent waiver, and if you are a top-ranking student, securing an 80 percent waiver is possible," adds Alve.

Surprisingly, for many universities, there is no need for a recommendation letter. If you are targeting top-tier universities like Korea Advanced Institute of Science & Technology (KAIST), Ulsan National Institute of Science & Technology (UNIST), or Korea University, strong profiles with olympiad achievements and extracurriculars are necessary.

Alve had prepared all her documents herself and consulted an agency only for the university application. "You don't really need an agency. The process is fairly simple. I only found the online portal a little confusing," she says.

Toishi, on the other hand, regrets using an agency. According to her, she paid BDT 1.1 lakh for paperwork she could've done herself.

Academic life

Academic years in South Korea consist of two semesters: Fall and Spring, with each semester lasting 16 weeks. Midterms are held during the eighth week, and finals are held around the 16th week. The grading structure at Sejong is as follows: finals carry 40 percent, midterms carry 30 percent, quizzes carry 20 percent, and 10 percent is reserved for attendance.

A few courses have no midterm, only assignments and finals. Attendance is taken very seriously, and missed classes greatly affect the overall grade.

Students may take 15 to 21 credits per semester. For CSE majors, the course load is heavier than in other disciplines. Most professors are strict but supportive, and research opportunities begin earlier than in Bangladesh, with many labs active in fields such as artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), big data, and quantum computing.

"The class environment is good. In the English-track majors, all the classes are conducted in English, so I haven't faced any problems," shares Toishi.

Interacting with fellow students is an integral part of academic life, which is often a source of anxiety for international students who find themselves in an entirely new environment.

"Local students tend to value personal space. If you need any help and ask them, they will surely help you. But they are not naturally sociable like Bangladeshis are," says Toishi.

"As I am in the English track, I don't get to interact a lot with Korean students. Student life is very busy: attending classes, going home, cooking, rushing to part-time jobs, and studying. The campus culture is very different from what I imagined," shares Alve.

Fitting in with locals

International students often find themselves worrying about whether natives will be welcoming towards them or not, especially in countries where there's a language barrier. According to Toishi, Koreans generally do not discriminate towards international students.

"Koreans treat international students normally, just like other students. They don't behave differently towards us. Sometimes, they are curious and happy to see international students studying here," says Toishi.

Alve shares a slightly different perspective, "Koreans tend to behave more positively with Europeans or white students. Older people occasionally show subtle signs of racism, but most people are good."

However, the real barrier is language. They avoid speaking in English, not because they want to be unwelcoming, but because many Koreans are insecure or embarrassed about their own English.

Culture, society, and adaptation

Some culture shock is expected when you're moving to a whole new geographical location, but there are ways you can manage as an international student.

"For me, food was the biggest culture shock. They eat many things that are not acceptable for Muslims or Bangladeshis," says Alve.

"Halal food is easy to find. Muslim communities from Bangladesh, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Pakistan run halal marts where you can find nearly everything, and you can also order online. But most of the time you have to cook yourself," adds Alve.

The climate is also another shock. Winters often drop to -15 or even -20 degrees Celsius.

"Seoul is extremely cold. Three months of life below zero was the hardest part for me," Alve opines. "Working part-time in that weather is brutal."

Daily life in Korea is well-structured, private, and quiet. "People mind their own business. They don't randomly talk to you. People are also extremely hard-working as compared to Bangladesh," she adds.

The subway system is orderly, with no pushing or shouting. "In rush hour, the subways are overcrowded, even more than in Bangladesh, but people don't fight. Everyone somehow manages to get on and off," reveals Alve.

Some students tend to choose *goshiwons* or shared houses instead of on-campus housing to reduce costs. According to Alve, "Minimum *goshiwon* rent is 2.7 lakh South Korean won, but a decent one in Seoul costs around 3.5 lakh South Korean won. If you aim for a shared house, the rent would be lower, but you need to give a deposit of 3 to 4 million South Korean won beforehand."

Students spend all their time commuting, cooking, cleaning, attending classes, and working, leaving no time for leisure. "At the end of each day, you are completely exhausted and just have to lie down. There isn't much time for friends or outings," adds Toishi.

But the late nights, empty pockets, homesickness, and pressure have the potential to forge great qualities: independence, resilience, discipline, and control.

Part-time jobs

"Job hunting is quite difficult. I don't see how people say there are endless jobs here. I managed to get only one part-time job, and that too through a senior. When I was done with that one, I couldn't find another," says Toishi. "They may ask for work permits, which makes it harder."

According to Alve, "Hourly pay is usually 10,000 to 11,000 South Korean won (around 800 to 850 taka per hour). If you work 10 hours, you earn around 10,000 taka. Monthly expenses are at least 600,000 to 1,000,000 South Korean won, including tuition. Balancing studies and work is the main difficulty we face here."

For the students planning to stay in Korea long-term, whether it's for work or graduate studies, investing in Korean language study is a must. "If you know the language well enough, getting a job is relatively easy. Without Korean, you have to stick to harder work: dishwashing, cleaning, serving, and making cookies. I have done all of these jobs during my stay here," says Alve. "During semester break, I worked at a camping area about 100 kilometres away from Seoul. I stayed at the owner's house. Living with them has helped me learn a lot of Korean really fast."

For students with strong CGPAs, teaching assistant (TA) positions are also occasionally available.

If you are considering Korea as your undergraduate destination, the message from current Bangladeshi students is clear: the opportunities are there, the scholarships are real, and the path is open. But you can't show up expecting comfort. You have to have a plan and show up prepared, ready to work, and sacrifice.

An allergic-to-small-talk and addicted-to-heart-to-hearts engineering student. Contact her at: tasfiahliakat007@gmail.com.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

NOTICE BOARD

AIUB Computer Club hosts Cyber Gaming Fest 2025

The AIUB Cyber Gaming Fest 2025, organised by the AIUB Computer Club (ACC) and supported by the Office of Student Affairs (OSA), American International University - Bangladesh (AIUB), was held from December 19 to December 22. The event was graced by the presence of Prof. Dr Md Abdur Rahman, Pro Vice-Chancellor; Prof. Dr Manzur H Khan, Proctor; Abhijit Bhowmik, Associate Professor and Special Assistant, OSA; Md Mazid-ul-Haque, Assistant Professor and Special Assistant (OSA); and S M Abdullah Shafi, Lecturer and Special Assistant (OSA).

Spanning multiple days of online and on-campus competitions, the fest transformed the AIUB campus into a vibrant gaming arena filled with excitement and competitive energy.

The *PUBG Mobile* segment began with 51 teams divided into three groups for the online qualifiers, which were narrowed down to 32 teams for the semi-finals on December 19 and eventually to the top 16 teams for the campus finals. On the final day, amid intense focus and competition, four thrilling matches were played, after which "Blackbeard Pirates" emerged as the champions in a highly energetic atmosphere.

The *Valorant* segment featured a combination of online lower-bracket matches conducted via Discord and high-stakes LAN matches on campus. "AllStars" battled through the lower bracket and defeated "No_Nonsense" in a best-of-three series to secure a place in the Grand Final against "NAXR Esports". The final was a thrilling best-of-three contest, where NAXR Esports won the first match in overtime after 26 rounds. However, AllStars made a remarkable comeback by winning the second and third matches to claim the championship title.

The festival also showcased several competitive sports and mobile gaming titles. In *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*, "Viper Strikers" secured the championship. The *FC 25* tournament saw "Neo emerge" as the champion. In *E-Football*, Shaon Shanto claimed the solo championship, while "PNG Bot" lifted the trophy in the team segment.

The closing ceremony was attended by distinguished guests, including Nadia Anwar, Founder Member and Chairman of the Board of Trustees; Dr Saiful Islam, Vice-Chancellor; and Prof. Dr Md Abdur Rahman, Pro Vice-Chancellor.

NSU CLR hosts seminar on "Bangladesh Uprising and the Law and Politics of Democratic Rule"

North South University's (NSU) Center for Legal Research, a research wing of the Department of Law, NSU, hosts a seminar on "Bangladesh Uprising and the Law and Politics of Democratic Rule in the Postcolonial World" on December 24.

The seminar was held at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences Conference Room and attended by distinguished faculty members, students, academics, and legal and political enthusiasts. The seminar was graced by the presence of its Keynote Speaker, Dr Mostafa Haider, Lecturer at Curtin Law School, Curtin University.

Prof. Md Rizwanul Islam, Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, officially opened the programme with his introductory remarks. Dr Haider presented on the topic, igniting thought-provoking discussions. Prof. Ishtiaque Ahmed, Barrister and Chair at the Department of Law at NSU, delivered the concluding remarks. Md Lokman Hussain, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Law and Coordinator for the NSU Center for Legal Research, moderated the session.

Manon becomes champion in MTB International Master's Chess Tournament at IUB

Manon Reja Neer, Bangladesh's highest rated International Master (IM), has become champion in the MTB International Masters Chess Tournament, held at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) from December 14 to 23. The international tournament, which featured three IMs and three FIDE Masters (FM) from Bangladesh, India, and Nepal, was hosted by IUB's Division of Student Activities (DoSA) and the IUB Chess Club, with technical support from the Bangladesh Chess Federation.

IM Manon secured the top spot with 6.5 points in nine games. FM Sakline Mostafa Sajid became the runner-up with six points, and Bivor Adak from India emerged third, also with six points. IM Minhaz Uddin Sagor secured the fourth place with 5.5 points. They received prize money worth BDT 40,000, BDT 30,000, BDT 20,000 and BDT 10,000, respectively.

Other players from Bangladesh included IM Abu Sufian Shakil, FM Khondokar Aminul Islam, and Amit Bikram Roy (from IUB). From India, there were Arpon Das (Jr) and FM Singh Gurpreet Pal. Nepal was represented by Silwal Purushottam.

South Asia's first Grandmaster, Niaz Murshed, who is also the Advisor to the IUB Chess Club, was the tournament's host. Mutual Trust Bank PLC (MTB) was the title sponsor. Md Haroon Or Rashid, Chief Arbiter of the Bangladesh Chess Federation, oversaw the event. He was assisted by Mishan Baskota, an assistant arbiter from Nepal.

The closing ceremony was graced by Captain Syed Sujauddin Ahmed, President of the Bangladesh Chess Federation; Md Bakhteyer Hossain, Deputy Managing Director, MTB PLC; Prof. Daniel W Lund, Pro Vice-Chancellor, IUB; and Atif M Safi, Head, DoSA, IUB.

Earlier, the opening ceremony was held on December 14 at the IUB Multipurpose Hall. GM Niaz Murshed; Didar A Husain, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of IUB; Trustees Towhid Samad, Rashed Chowdhury, A Matin Chowdhury, Mohammad Zakaria Khan, Dr Husne Ara Ali, and Md Tanveer Madar attended the event. Vice-Chancellor Prof. M Tamim, Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof. Lund, deans, and members of the IUB senior management were also in attendance.

The event was further graced by Dr Shoeb Reaz Alam, Vice-President, Bangladesh Chess Federation, and Md Bakhteyer Hossain. A highlight of the opening ceremony was an exhibition match between Towhid Samad and GM Niaz Murshed.

OFF CAMPUS

Winter plans for students on A BUDGET

FARHEEN RAHMAN

Winter in Bangladesh arrives bearing a deal. For one, cool air, hearty warm food, and more motivation to have fun. On the flip side, the academic reality threatens to return in full force. Students experience this shift acutely with inviting rooftops, early morning shenanigans, and the city feeling like it's waiting to be discovered. The best part? You don't have to spend a lot to celebrate, as the most beautiful winter experiences are often simple and cheap.

Rooftop BBQs

A BBQ on the balcony or rooftop is an oldie, but a goodie. There's no need to spend a lot on ingredients; everything from chickens to spices can be bought fresh and cheap at local markets. Not owning a grill is not the worst thing in the world. Just stack some bricks to form an oven and use a piece of foil or a wire rack to arrange a cooking setup. A homemade marinade with mustard oil, chilli, garlic, salt, pepper, and a bit of lemon can taste much fresher than store-bought mixes.

An electric fan is ideal for stoking flames, but a hand fan works well too. Fairy lights, if you have them, can enhance the charms of winter darkness, along with a small speaker. If all else fails, the half-dreadful, half-charming performances by your songbird friends will always liven things up.

Cycling

Winter mornings are ideal for cycling and for people who enjoy the enchantments of early hours. Roads are quieter and cleaner during winter mornings. Riding with friends is both exercise and therapy, and there's no feeling like cycling down the foggy streets. At the end of the session, maybe drop into a roadside stall for breakfast, and gossip while sipping on steaming cups of tea. Winter mornings will transform these modest pleasures into enthralling memories.

Cosy movie nights

If you can't be bothered to go out, winter is the perfect time for hosting movie nights. Theatres are impersonal and lack festivity. A white bedsheet tacked to a wall makes a good makeshift screen. A laptop or TV works well in the absence of a projector, but you can always recreate the theatre atmosphere by renting out projectors from social media for the low price of one VIP ticket.

Once the stage is set, make your own popcorn, and grab all the snacks the theatres stop you from taking. Get comfortable, and feel free to be loud since you're not bound by social customs. This is your theatre, and you play by your rules.

Welfare projects

Winter is also the season of compassion. Some take this period to volunteer or fundraise for charities. Gathering warm clothes, organising low-cost meals, or distributing blankets – every little bit helps. You can plan and advertise digitally, and start from your personal space to get your initiative to flourish, and engage other interested people. These meaningful actions keep you grounded and remind you that warmth is meant to be shared.

Winter gardening

If you prefer something calmer and homelier, try gardening. Cooler temperatures make it more manageable to grow a variety of herbs and vegetables. In little pots on balconies or windowsills, most winter plants, like coriander, mint, or tomatoes, flourish with minimum fuss. There's a sense of fulfilment in watching a seed you planted grow, and being able to brag about your urban farming journey doesn't hurt.

Exploring new hobbies

Winter is the hobby season. Cooking feels better when it's cold outside, and crocheting feels more cuddled-in. Photography is irresistible with winter's foggy mornings and soft sunlight. You don't need fancy equipment to start, just curiosity and a willingness to try something new. Cooking a familiar bowl of soup, or a blurry picture of winter mist, can feel unexpectedly nourishing.

Games and sports

If you want light-hearted group activities, badminton and board games are your wintertime essentials. Playing badminton in the cold is energising; even missing every other shot is bound to incite laughter. Call your friends over for tea and a game of Ludo, UNO, or carrom. The heat from teacups radiating through your palms, the razzmatazz of debates, and spilling the verbal sort of tea – there's an intimate sense of warmth that's distinctly winter.

Winter doesn't need big plans or great journeys. The little things, like warm food, cool air, giddy laughter, and moments that don't cost much, mean everything. So, grab some friends and create joy from every angle winter can offer, and let this season warm you in its own magical way.

Farheen Rahman is an IR student who researches contemporary crises faster than she handles her own. Reach her at: farheen.subah@gmail.com.

ILLUSTRATION: **SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR**

YOUTH ANXIETIES

The distressing psychology of screen time

FARIHA LAMISA

Since getting my first phone in the ninth grade, I have found it excruciatingly difficult to keep it away from me. I always feel the typical fear of missing out. Until 12th grade, my screen time was loosely monitored by my strict, working mother. Having grown up in a household where both my parents were employed, it was easy enough for me to sneak back onto my phone, though. This act was an appropriate reflection of my lack of self-control, masked in the bravado of teenage rebellion.

Naturally, doomscrolling became my way of seeking out connection in the world and escaping my reality. Paradoxically, it also acted as a source of stress due to constantly being inundated with content. From my observation, my experience is not isolated. Rather, it is a microcosm of the collective experience of our generation.

Abdullah-Aat-Tahmidus Siddiquee, a recent graduate from the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Dhaka University (DU), says he slips into doomscrolling when he feels stressed, anxious, or even bored, using it as a coping mechanism. He says, "Obviously, I find myself online on social media when I am stressed or anxious, because I feel it helps me stay informed. I specifically find myself on TikTok, given its algorithm is more curated and cleaner."

Maintaining a similar tone regarding distraction from stress, Raisa Nuzhat, a lecturer at Green University, says, "When I feel stressed or anxious, I sometimes go online and watch something funny to distract myself or lighten my mood. It helps for a while and gives me a short break from my thoughts. But in the end, my stressful thoughts really do not go away."

Needless to say, our generation has adopted doomscrolling as a counterproductive coping habit, effectively keeping us insulated and creating an illusion of relief through temporary distractions. However, relying on social media to momentarily divert our attention could potentially backfire as well. This is especially the case in this day and age of curated algorithms and constant connections, where users are bombarded with content. Given just how digestible online consumption has become, it is unlikely that users are able to spare a thought, let alone process, what's been presented to them. This can lead them to giving in to their compulsions, the consequences of which can range from unhealthy comparisons between peers to slipping down the pipeline of dangerous ideologies.

Shumia Islam, a final-year undergraduate student from East West University, says that sometimes she finds herself comparing her life to her acquaintances' online. She states, "While scrolling on social media, sometimes I find myself wondering if my life would turn out to be as successful as some of my relatives. Will I be able to measure up to the expectations of society, or will I miserably fail? Sometimes these thoughts can be stressful."

Meshkat E Rabbani, an assistant case manager at Raju Law, articulates that while scrolling, he often encounters intolerant ideology that makes him anxious. "Oftentimes, screen time stresses me out because I end up seeing things that I find intolerant and distasteful. Sometimes, there is a lot of bad news to consume in a single day. These things do work as a negative trigger to my psychology," he explains.

Sumaya Afrin Misty, co-founder and lead psychologist of BloomAid Online Mental Health, emphasises the need for young people to invest themselves in mindful activities. She says, "Recent research suggests that while doomscrolling provides temporary relief and distraction from ongoing life stressors, this ultimately is a maladaptive coping strategy which can result in anxiety, feelings of helplessness, and sleep disturbances."

"It is important for young adults to be mindful, which is often overtaken by the distractions of doomscrolling. Rather than thinking about a problem and seeking solutions and resolutions, young people often use doomscrolling as a maladaptive coping strategy. Journaling, expressive art, or face-to-face meetings with loved ones can often give new perspectives on any problems. Seeking active solutions often helps young people build resilience and better anxiety management," she adds.

Although doomscrolling has become a common way for young people to cope with stress, it often exacerbates feelings of anxiety rather than easing them. The situation has devolved into a vicious cycle for many young people. For this demographic to escape the rut, methods – such as those discussed by Sumaya Afrin – can be adopted. What is also worth exploring are the limits of temporary digital escapes. Feelings of distress are obviously uncomfortable, and the need to find ways to distance oneself from them is natural. However, the notion that the solution rests on a system that deepens the pit of content warrants scrutiny. Perhaps then we can take the first step towards reclaiming focus, resilience, and psychological well-being.

Reference:

International Journal of Interdisciplinary Approaches in Psychology (December, 2024) *A Study on Doom Scrolling Behavior and Its Correlation with Personality types and Psychological Distress GenZ College Students.*

Fariha Lamisa is a clueless human being in an insane world. Please send your well-meaning consolation to her via flamisa2020@gmail.com