



CAMPUS

Young Bangladeshis
abroad reflect on
postal balloting



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MOVIES

Through fragments, *Tadattwo Onneshan* pieces together the forgotten

ABIR HOSSAIN

History traces grand narratives. The occurrences it speaks of and studies continue to transcend time not simply because of their magnitude, but because they're made profound by personal, more intimate tales. What is remembered are not just the things that were altered but also what was lost. And so, the act of unearthing lineage becomes more than an act of observation. It evolves into an arduous task, one that demands introspection of the self, not through our lived experiences, but rather by forgotten tales.

Tadattwo Onneshan (2025) by Fozle Rabby contemplates what one can truly stumble upon when they devote themselves to this task. The experimental short clocks in at a 16-and-a-half-minute runtime. Despite its short length, the film is deeply meditative, oscillating in and out of the protagonist's psyche and material world. It follows Pankaj Chowdhury – a theatre actor – as he prepares for the role of Kute Kahar, who is a member of a palanquin bearer community known as Kahar.

As the film unravels, its surreal quality – present through strobing and distorted visuals, as well as sporadic high-pitched soundscapes – flutters. Yet, the progression is patient, carefully weaving out the descent

to run parallel with the performer's state of mind. In the initial stages of his preparation, Pankaj clings onto the enunciation of the word "forgot". He repeatedly questions a consultant from Kute Kahar's region, persistent in his attempt to perfect it. Within minutes, however, Pankaj is reciting entire lines. Fully enveloped, he adopts a gruffness to his vocal delivery that is chilling.

The horror takes on a new form when Pankaj's performance adopts the physical aspect. He is hunched over, gazing directly at the audience, stripping himself bare, and even carrying stacks of bricks as if to permanently alter his posture. The performance by the protagonist is not an easy watch, and it isn't meant to be either. We are confronted by the full weight of his devotion to becoming Kute Kahar, no matter the cost. The intention with which his desire is portrayed feels evocative. The film doesn't give in to the banal conveniences that passionate artists on-screen are often characterised by. Rather, it draws from the absurdity.

With Pankaj's growing vehemence, he literally hurls himself into nature. This is perhaps when the film's strongest attribute, its cinematography, really shines through. The performer is seen lying by the river, huddled deep within the forest, and wedged

between broken tree barks. These images are haunting and unsettling in more ways than one, owing to their unorthodox composition, tactile feel, and sharp contrast.

Coupled with the cinematography are repetitive lines that gradually arrive at its conclusion. The limited dialogue alludes to the forsaken memory of Kute Kahar. With each new line, it feels as though the performer — who has been entirely inundated by the role — is clutching onto whatever he has been allowed to know of Kute Kahar. Despite the repetition, the soliloquy doesn't feel drawn out. Rather, it reveals points of contention, withering hope, and perhaps even contempt.

The film stands out for its technical mastery. In each turn, it is deliberate without being contrived and intentional without being overbearing. More than anything, *Tadattwo Onneshan* hints at a powerful reminder, particularly of history. It feels as though the film is asking the audience to consider where precisely the history of the common folk lies. Have they been left to wither against the backdrop of our advances? Is there a place for us to remember them? It is these questions that the film confronts us with and even attempts to decipher through the devotion of a stage performer.

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INTERVIEWS

IUB valedictorian Sajid on self-belief and success

CAMPUS DESK

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) held its 26th Convocation on January 21, 2026, where a total of 2,496 students received degrees from undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Sajid Bin Mohammad, a Marketing graduate and a recipient of the Chancellor's Gold Medal, was selected as the valedictorian.

For Sajid Bin Mohammad, winning the Chancellor's Gold Medal and being selected as the valedictorian represent far more than academic excellence. It stands as a personal affirmation in the face of doubt. The award strengthened his confidence as he prepares for the next phase of his career.

Sajid also credits much of his success to careful academic planning and a clear vision for his future. He also acknowledged the role of his teachers in shaping his intellectual growth, especially Sheikh Mohammad



Fauzul Azim from the Marketing department and Refat Ara Jerin from the Media and Communication department. According to Sajid, their encouragement pushed him to pursue excellence beyond the traditional ways of thinking.

Offering advice to current undergraduates, Sajid emphasised balance and perspective. While acknowledging that grades matter, he urged students not to define themselves by setbacks.

"No matter what life-altering calamity it is that you may be going through, the sun will come up the next day, and you'll have another opportunity to do things afresh," he says.

Quoting poet S C Lourie, Sajid concluded with a message of hope: "Breathe, darling. This is just a chapter. It's not your whole story."



CUB ranks 3rd in memorials at Jessup Bangladesh 2026

The Department of Law of Canadian University of Bangladesh (CUB) clinched the 8th position (overall) and ranked 3rd in memorial writing at the 10th Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition - Bangladesh National Round 2026, held from January 22 to 24.

Representing CUB this year was the CUB Law Department Jessup Team consisting of Asef Ibnul, Hasibul Haque Mazumder, Jannatunnesa Jeba, Pabon Das, and Karnig Fatema Himu. In the preliminary rounds, the team won all four of their sessions, qualifying for the quarterfinals as one of the top eight teams nationwide. The team concluded its campaign at the quarterfinal stage.



IUBAT holds 9th convocation

The International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT) held its 9th convocation on January 26. Among the distinguished graduates, Shahrin Khondkar from Agriculture, Mst Lutunnaher Kamini from English, and Maharunnesa Mitu from Public Health programmes were awarded the Miyan Gold Medals in recognition of their outstanding academic achievements. Shahrin Khondkar emerged as the top gold medalist and received the "Alimullah Miyan Award".

The convocation was presided over by Mohammad Touhid Hossain, adviser for foreign affairs. The Convocation Speaker was Prof. Dr Jeff Keshen, President of the University of Regina, Canada.





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■ INTERVIEWS ■

How Bangladeshi universities can adapt to a changing world

In conversation with Dr Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, the Vice-Chancellor of North South University

TINATH ZAeba

North South University (NSU) Vice-Chancellor Dr Abdul Hannan Chowdhury leads the institution's strategic vision in teaching, research, and innovation. *Campus*, recently, had the opportunity to speak with Dr Chowdhury to explore how Bangladeshi universities can navigate rapid technological change, responsibly integrate artificial intelligence (AI), and equip students for future challenges.

Campus (C): What steps do you think universities in Bangladesh should take to keep up with this rapidly changing education landscape?

Dr Abdul Hannan Chowdhury (A): We are living in a world where technology changes heavily, where interactions are intertwined and interlinked. In academic institutions, this convergence has a huge impact: it helps humanity solve problems for society in health, education, and other areas. The question then becomes how academic institutions can adopt and apply these technologies so that the current and upcoming generation of students can benefit.

One example is the adoption of modern technology for students and teachers. NSU uses the Canvas LMS, which adheres to global standards. Through this system, students and faculty members connect every semester, from course outlines to course outcomes, chronological learning, problems, cases, and examinations. Faculty members can customise materials for their own cohorts, using technology to optimise time and flexibility.

It is also important that universities ensure students are up to date with global changes. For example, NSU has started to offer AI training courses and provides AI integration and learning in course outlines for software programming-related degrees.

Universities can also ensure teachers are aligned with this changing world. Through teachers' learning or faculty development programmes, technological efficiencies using AI can be adopted. These programmes help improve writing, teaching, prior checking, and the relevance of topics.

While technology-based plagiarism is not allowed, these platforms offer plenty of learning benefits for students and teachers alike. The development of technology is inevitable, and institutions must adapt to it flexibly.

C: How can universities encourage academic research while also supporting employability?

A: Often, when students pursue undergraduate or postgraduate education, they see it as a means to secure jobs. In Bangladesh, students, parents, guardians, and society itself heavily link university degrees to employability. However, from the service delivery point of view, an academic institution does not exist only to produce graduates who will get jobs.

I believe the greater goal of a university is to transform a human being into a composed, value-added visionary and leading thinker. Job-seeking is one part of the component we focus on, but it is not the only measure of success. Societal impact should not always be counted by employment status. Even self-employed individuals or those working on community-driven projects or with non-government organisations can create a meaningful impact. University education should, therefore, allow students to apply knowledge gained through the academic system across different professions and life paths.

Also, not every student moves into academic research, but those who do are driven by curiosity and

inquisitiveness. This mindset is what universities have to focus on: students must be encouraged to search and investigate unknown matters, develop research questions, and resolve them through classroom learning and real-world problems.

Through structured teaching, especially in graduate classes, classroom discussions are designed to be challenging rather than purely theory-driven. Universities should encourage engagement with academic research by shaping how learning takes place.

C: What role can companies or industries play in ensuring effective academia-industry collaboration, especially in research?

A: In Bangladesh, academia and industry are often viewed as mutually exclusive, yet both share a common point where mutual support is needed. In developed countries, industries collaborate with academics to take ideas and use them for innovation, but this practice remains limited locally.

limits innovation. For instance, students may generate ideas but struggle to execute them due to gaps in complementary knowledge, such as marketing or product design. Interdisciplinary education addresses this gap.

Students must embrace interdisciplinary learning, but institutional structures are equally important. In many universities, administrative systems are bureaucratic and constrained by red tape. For example, upgrading course-related materials to expand learning requires permissions that may be time-consuming.

In Bangladesh, reducing administrative bottlenecks is essential for universities to respond meaningfully to interdisciplinary demand. Universities must also think about what students need beyond theory and books and develop programmes accordingly.

C: What role should universities play in shaping ethical leadership and civic responsibility?

A: Higher education is not only about delivering courses but also about cultivating ways of thinking that promote empathy, morality, and civic responsibility.

Universities must lead by example. At NSU, initiatives focused on social impact and sustainability allow students to reflect on ethical practices in their own lives. For example, our Center for Social Impact and Sustainability (CSIS) encourages reduced plastic use and environmental responsibility, which is a practical example of civic leadership.

Ethical leadership is also developed through extracurricular activities. Club participation and activities develop an individual who is receptive to feedback and has exposure to diverse opinions, and this is what develops leadership without personal gain.

Furthermore, ethics and civic responsibility should be further reinforced through coursework, including history, philosophy, ethics, and political science.

C: What does your vision of an ideal university in Bangladesh look like over the next 10 to 15 years?

A: When we discuss an ideal university, we first must think realistically about Bangladesh. We have millions of youths pursuing university degrees, yet many are unable to access meaningful learning due to capacity constraints. Public universities also have limited capacity to accommodate the growing number of students.

An ideal university would prioritise skill-based learning while having the capacity to handle and accommodate these youths effectively. Universities must utilise this large youth population to create benefits for the country by expanding access to opportunities. This means an ideal university would be focused on providing learning environments where students not only seek jobs but are also able to create jobs.

An ideal institution would also focus on building a skilled faculty pool to ensure proper academic quality. Encouraging innovation and excellence is essential, too. Universities should help students become thinkers who can apply knowledge in different ways and respond to real-world challenges.

Ultimately, an ideal university in Bangladesh would balance accessibility with quality, prepare students for diverse career paths, and support long-term national development through education that is adaptive, inclusive, and forward-looking.

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Academics are often not consulted in innovation processes, resulting in assignment-based reliance. Improving this requires a collaborative mindset from both sides. Industries can interact intentionally with student bodies to introduce real-world problems and discuss issues at the root level. Academia and industry are not mutually exclusive; they are mutually beneficial. Academic institutions must also ensure accessibility to industry-level conversations so that collaboration becomes possible on both sides.

At NSU, progress has been made through industry-funded research involving local and global industries. The university also has industry advisors at the departmental level, enabling two-way collaboration that supports real growth. Examining specific industry cases allows students to understand practical challenges while industries benefit from academic insight. This also allows academia to gain new challenges while industries receive ground-level, research-informed solutions.

C: How should universities respond to the growing demand for interdisciplinary education?

A: As the world changes, educational institutions must move beyond single academic paths. Restricting learning

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Retaining talent depends on government action

What can the next elected government do to help retain Bangladesh's young talent?

AZRA HUMAYRA AND ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

Brain drain is usually described as a loss. A leak. In Bangladesh, it often comes with a sigh and a statistic. The bright student you've known since school has already left the country for higher education. The story sounds finished before it even begins, but stories are rarely ever that neat. People do not leave places in straight lines, and they do not stop belonging just because they cross a border.

In this article, we try to present student perspectives from two places at once: from those studying at home and from those studying abroad. They talk about ambition, frustration, and hope. They also talk about systems that work and those that do not. Alongside their voices is a larger question: What can the next elected government do to support its youth? Because talent responds to opportunities.

Raisa*, a recent graduate from a top university in the US, laments that the lack of better pay compels her not return to Bangladesh. She states, "Bangladeshi jobs do not pay enough for me to be able to pay off my student loans."

Similar to Raisa, there are many others who opt for jobs abroad in hopes of better pay. Beyond economics, students frequently describe a broader climate of instability that influences their decision to leave. Political uncertainty, periodic social unrest, and everyday corruption create an atmosphere where long-term planning feels fragile.

Ernest Prottoy D'Rozario finished his undergrad in Japan and is currently working in the same country. He states, "Nepotism and communal tensions further erode trust in institutions that are meant to reward merit."

Merit-based recruitment across public and private sectors is seen as essential to breaking entrenched networks of nepotism and institutional bias. He also believes that without fair hiring, stable banks, and transparent governance, it becomes difficult for graduates to imagine building secure lives, starting businesses, or planning long-term futures within the country.

Raisa believes that, for women in particular, this sense of precarity is intensified. Many speak of navigating public spaces with constant vigilance, where harassment is normalised, and complaints are met with suspicion. While gendered violence exists everywhere, the difference students note abroad is institutional and social response: laws are enforced more decisively, and public sympathy tends to align with victims rather than interrogate their character. This contrast alone becomes a powerful push factor.

At the same time, students are drawn to the promise of functional systems: universities that compete globally, invest in research, and open pathways through international networks, hackathons, and collaborative projects. Better salaries make these lives sustainable, allowing the youth to save, to move, and to feel a sense of security.

Daily life also matters – reliable amenities, accessible public events, and communities built around shared interests contribute to a feeling of belonging. Interactions are often described as more respectful and predictable, reducing the emotional labour required to simply exist. Taken together, these factors frame migration not as a rejection of home, but as a rational response to environments that offer dignity, stability, and the chance to turn education into opportunity.

Students consistently emphasise that any meaningful effort to retain or bring back young talent must begin with restoring trust in the state itself. This means tackling corruption, communal violence, and insecurity,

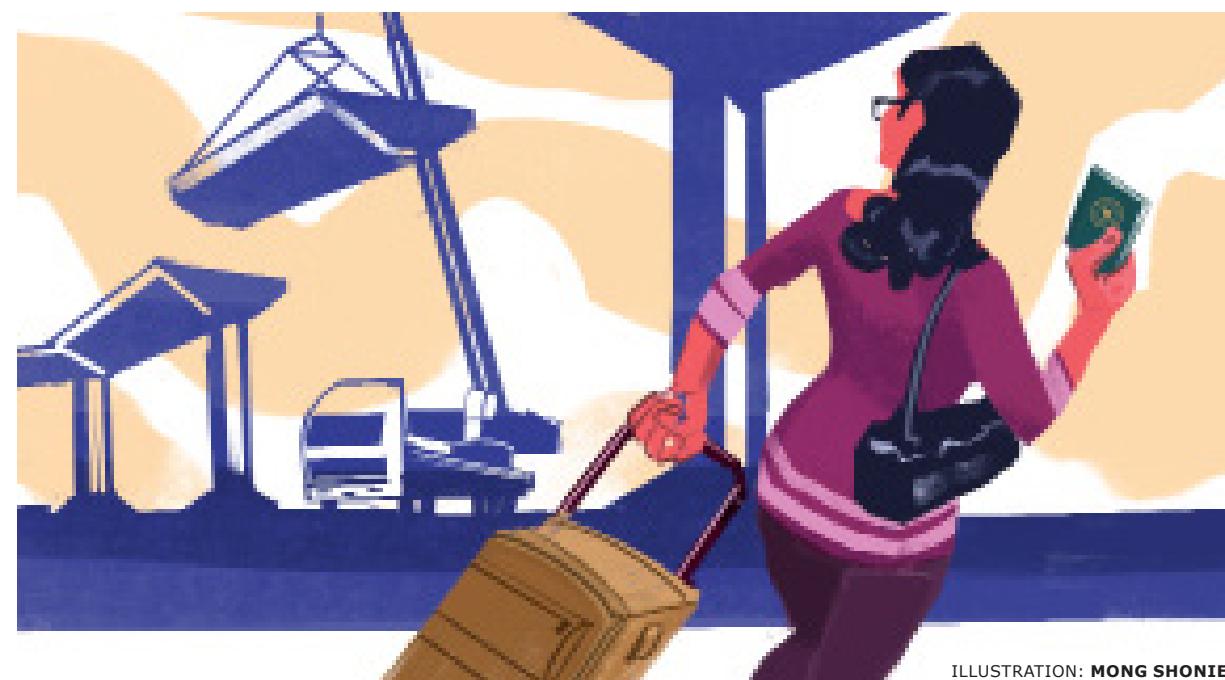


ILLUSTRATION: MONG SHONIE

particularly violence against women and minorities, through firm enforcement of the rule of law. Ernest says, "The government can first figure out how to solve the never-ending corruption and violence within communities and against minorities in Bangladesh. Then they need to invest more in education that is on par with the education systems of other countries."

We have reached out to students who envision spending most of their lives in Bangladesh, and most, if not all, of them echo similar sentiments. The biggest anchors for them rarely have anything to do with the quality of life, infrastructure, or state benefits, but tend to be of a more personal nature.

Faiaz Riasat Saad, a recent graduate of Electrical and Electronic Engineering from the Islamic University of Technology, shares his perspectives on why he wishes to remain in Bangladesh. "The biggest reason driving my decision is that I don't want to leave my parents alone here in their old age while I live comfortably abroad."

Faiaz shares Ernest's viewpoints, drawing from his own experiences. "One of the problems I have recently faced is the scarcity of fairly compensated jobs. There's a mindset among recruiters at top companies that caters only to graduates of renowned universities in the country. Later, those people leave the country for even better opportunities, and the vacancies are then filled by the next batch of graduates from the same universities. So, it's like a cycle where the others are not even in the loop. However, as a fresh graduate myself from a renowned university, I still had to face hurdles in the job market since the opportunities are very limited compared to the number of applicants."

Education reform emerges as the second major priority. Students want a modern, skill-based curriculum that reflects global standards in science, technology, analytics, and research, alongside fair access to scholarships and funding. Teachers are central to this vision: better training, professional recognition, and institutional support are seen as prerequisites for any improvement in learning outcomes.

Adib Sadman Al Haque, a management trainee

officer at IPDC Finance PLC, emphasises the gap between the education curriculum and the industries: "In education, outdated curricula and limited emphasis on critical thinking and practical skills have restricted meaningful learning and academic growth. I want the next government to modernise education with an updated, skill-based curriculum that ensures fair access to scholarships and research opportunities and creates strong links between universities and industry so students can better leverage opportunities."

Stronger links between universities and industry would allow students to translate academic work into employable skills, reducing the gap between graduation and meaningful work. Raisa urged that equal emphasis be placed on improving healthcare and mental health services, recognising that productivity and wellbeing are deeply interconnected.

Nafiz Islam Nadit, a servicing executive at DotBirth, expresses that while convenience and affordability drive his decision to remain in Bangladesh, there's room for improvement, especially regarding the youth who think out of the box.

"I've been personally affected by the difference between academic studies and practical industry knowledge. So, I believe that the new government should work vastly on the education sector and make it more application-based, empower sectors related to entrepreneurship and art, and create opportunities for the youth with different, new, and creative mindsets," says Nafiz.

Perhaps, brain drain is not contradictory to progress. It is seemingly a part of it. When students gain exposure, the country gains perspective. But this only matters if there is somewhere to return to. Governments largely control that reality. Through investment, trust, and long-term thinking, governments can create a sphere where young minds can thrive. The future of Bangladesh does not rely on stopping young minds from leaving, but it certainly depends on giving them a reason to believe that coming back is worth it.

*Name has been changed upon request