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RISING STARS

FOR YOUNG MINDS ON THE RISE

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The importance of STUDENT COUNCILS in schools and colleges

ILLUSTRATION: MONG SHONIE

DID YOU KNOW?

The origin of the Bangalee calender

Pahela Baishakh, the Bangalee New Year, falls on April 14 in Bangladesh and on April 15 in West Bengal.

The Bengali calendar emerged approximately 1,500 years ago during the reign of King Shashanka of Gauda, marking the beginning of formal timekeeping in Bengal.

Nearly a millennium later, Bengal and the entire Indian subcontinent were under the control of the Mughal Empire. Following Islamic customs, the imperial government used the Hijri calendar for official business. Dealing with agriculture and taxes became extremely difficult as a result. Due to its reliance on the lunar cycle, the Hijri year is approximately 11 days shorter than the solar year. As a result, its use in agricultural Bengal caused a misalignment with the seasonal cycles that are essential for farming.

Emperor Akbar gave Fatehullah Shirazi, his royal astronomer, the task of creating a new calendar to resolve this conflict. Persian Shirazi cleverly combined Islamic ideas with the native Shaka period, which was common in Bengal and India, to create what the people came to refer to as *Fasli San* (the agricultural year). This calendar began in the year when Emperor Akbar ascended to the throne, which corresponds to the Hijri calendar year 963. The Hijri month of Muharram coincided with the Shaka era's month of Baishakh in the year Akbar came to power, making Baishakh the first month of the Bangalee calendar year.

PHOTO: **SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED**

Editor & Publisher
Mahfuz Anam

Rising Stars In-Charge
Faisal Bin Iqbal

Rising Stars Team
Abir Hossain
Azra Humayra
Zabin Tazrin Nashita

Photographer
Orchid Chakma

Graphics & Layout
TDS Creative Graphics

Production
Shamim Chowdhury

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NETFLIX'S ONE PIECE SEASON 2

The faithful voyage continues

SHAMS RASHID TONMOY

After a surprisingly potent first season that exceeded nearly everyone's expectations, Netflix's *One Piece* live-action returns for its second iteration, riding a much larger wave of hype. The first season proved that a faithful, heartfelt adaptation of Eiichiro Oda's magnum opus wasn't just possible; it was commercially viable and creatively sound. Now, with the training wheels off and the stakes higher, does the second voyage live up to the promise of the first?

A condensed cruise through beloved arcs
Season 2 adapts material from the Loguetown arc through the Drum Island arc, introducing a host of key characters along the way. For the most part, the narrative remains close to the source manga, with some surprisingly faithful inclusions featuring minor characters and even anime-only figures sprinkled throughout as Easter eggs for eagle-eyed fans.

The cast continues to shine
The core cast continues to be the show's strongest asset, pulling considerable weight to keep the drama engaging. Jacob Romero Gibson's Usopp and Emily Rudd's Nami, in particular, deliver standout performances that feel truly faithful to their source material counterparts. As for the newcomers and side characters, they range from fitting casting choices to actors who look like they have stepped directly off Oda's pages.

Where the live-action stretches thin
Adapting a series as deliberately cartoonish as *One Piece* remains a herculean task. No matter how much polish you apply, certain elements simply resist realistic translation. The most glaring example is the protagonist himself.

Luffy, by design, is a "cartoon" character. He sports mannerisms and behaviours that no human being could ever naturally possess, made even more outlandish by his constant body-stretching abilities.

Consequently, scenes where Luffy goes full-tilt goofy either had to be toned down or completely rewritten to accommodate Iñaki Godoy's live-action performance. This results in moments where Godoy is visibly "acting", screaming or contorting in ways that feel over-the-top theatrical rather than realistic or organic.

Iñaki has done a fantastic job bringing Luffy to life, but the character's inherently cartoonish nature means that any live-action portrayal will inevitably feel like a forced performance rather than a seamless transformation.

Similarly, the action sequences lack much of the imaginative flair of the source material. This is not a knock on the production team. Rather, it is an inherent limitation of the medium. A live-action production, no matter its budget, simply cannot replicate the boundless creativity of Oda's panels without leaning heavily on CGI.

A gateway, not a replacement
This live-action adaptation is not a replacement for the manga or the anime. Oda's oversight on the live-action ensures the spirit of the source material remains intact, but this is definitely not a one-to-one translation. Significant character beats and emotional moments have been trimmed for pacing, and the deliberate toning down of the series' inherent goofiness in favour of grounded storytelling will inevitably disappoint most diehard purists.

However, for everyone else, the series continues to be the best gateway into *One Piece* to exist till date. It condenses the essential spirit of the early arcs into a digestible, high-quality package while retaining the wonder and charm that made the original a worldwide phenomenon.

Verdict: A job well done
This is an adaptation made by people who clearly love the source material, for an audience that either already loves it or is ready to fall in love for the first time. The craftsmanship on display, from the meticulously designed sets to the heartfelt performances, cements Netflix's *One Piece* as one of the most faithful anime-to-life adaptations ever produced. If you have never watched or read *One Piece* but have always been curious, I absolutely recommend the live-action as a starting point.

COMPRESS(SPACE): A LOVE LETTER TO INDIE GAMES FROM BANGLADESH

PHOTOS: **COLLECTED**

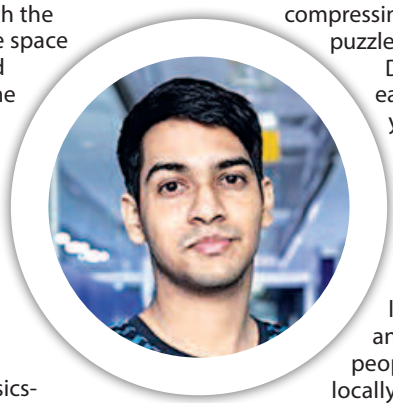
SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Growing up as an ardent gamer, I would often tell people that I wanted to be a game developer. The more I came to understand the reality of our country, the more I thought there was no future here for it, at least when it came to me.

For Fahim Faysal, however, this was a challenge he was willing to take on. "Games shaped my childhood," he says. "Over time, I felt I wanted to give something back to the industry that inspired me."

That motivation led him to study computer science and engineering (CSE) at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), where he began exploring game development more seriously. Alongside his academic work, Fahim took part in game jams—fast-paced competitions where developers build games within days. Several of those projects later grew into commercial releases on Steam, Xbox, and other platforms, collectively reaching over 30,000 downloads.

One of those experiments became *Compress(space)*. It is a minimalist puzzle game built around a striking central idea: instead of moving through the world, players manipulate space itself. By compressing and folding distances, the game asks players to rethink scale, proximity, and movement in ways that feel both intuitive and surprising. Each puzzle introduces a new spatial constraint, gradually expanding on the core mechanic without relying on lengthy tutorials. The result is a thoughtful, physics-defying experience that rewards experimentation and curiosity, drawing clear inspiration from modern cerebral puzzle games while establishing an identity of its own.



Fahim Faysal

"The idea came from a game jam," Fahim recalls. "It was rough, but the concept stayed with me. I felt it could be turned into something much bigger."

The game challenges players to manipulate space itself, folding and compressing distances to solve puzzles.

Development was not easy. For nearly two years, Fahim worked alone. "There is very little government or institutional support for game developers in Bangladesh," he says. "Because of that, I had to look abroad for funding and mentorship. Finding people with the right skills locally was also a challenge."

Gradually, the project evolved into a three-person, multinational team. Redwan Abir, a BUET architecture student, joined as the 3D artist, shaping the game's visual identity. Drew Marcum, a US-based sound designer with more than 50 million streams on Spotify, brought professional-grade audio design, with credits including Pixar, Apple TV+ and Deadmau5.

A major breakthrough came in 2025 when *Compress(space)* was selected for the Draknek New Voices Puzzle Grant, an international programme supporting puzzle game developers from under-represented backgrounds. The grant provided USD 15,000 in funding and direct mentorship from established puzzle game designers.

"That support made a huge difference," Fahim says. "It gave us confidence that we were on the right path."

Today, *Compress(space)* stands as a notable example of how Bangladeshi developers are quietly making their mark on the global gaming landscape. Fahim remains focused on completing the game while working on other ideas in the background.

"This is my main project right now," he says. "But I am always experimenting. I hope this shows that meaningful games can come from Bangladesh too, even if the ecosystem is still growing."

ILLUSTRATION: **AZRA HUMAYRA**

The importance of student councils in schools and colleges

AYAZ KADER

A few months ago, students from various public universities voted in new student bodies after a long hiatus. A body to act as a voice for the students, it also teaches students democratic values, such as accountability and leadership skills.

However, apart from universities, the majority of schools and colleges in this country lack a body where students can make their voices heard.

Many might ask, what's the point behind introducing democratic processes to children at such an early age? Most democracies have their voting age set at around 18. Therefore, it is important that students be exposed to democratic processes and institutions well before that age in order to ensure awareness and civic responsibility.

One of the most fundamental misunderstandings of democracy is that you just vote, and the person who wins the majority is automatically the sovereign. This perspective ignores the nuanced structure of democracy, which ensures separation and limitation of powers, respect of basic fundamental rights, rule of law and accountability. Therefore, it's imperative to ensure students are familiarised with these concepts practically rather than theoretically at an early age.

Besides that, due to the nature and structure of most schools, it's difficult for a student to have their concerns and ideas heard, especially by the administration. A student council serves to bridge this gap. This is important because teachers generally address the macro issues, so they do not have the time to address the micro student issues. Hence, students may feel alienated from their teachers.

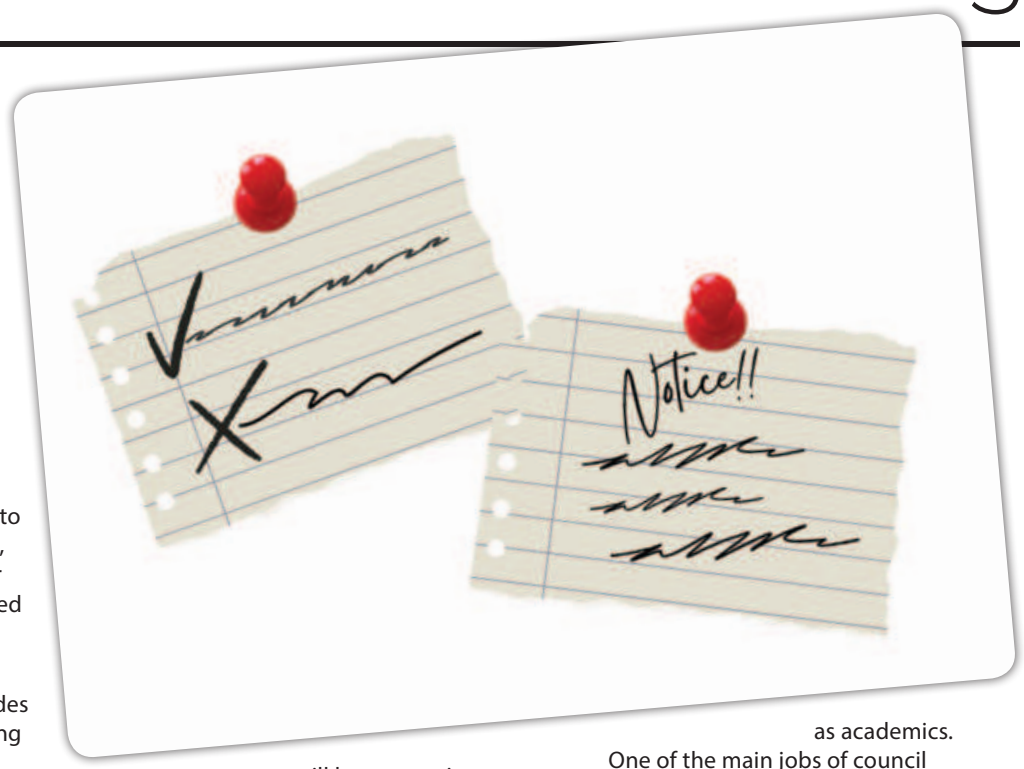
When students actively negotiate with their institution's administration for their demands, it can teach them how to engage in dialogues on the basis of mutual respect. A democratic society must be preceded by the recognition of the fact that differences of opinion might exist, and they're natural, and it's the responsibility of all stakeholders to solve the conflicts considerately and reach compromises in a respectful manner.

Student councils serve exactly that purpose in this case.

When asked how the council at her school benefitted the student body, Anaya Zoya Chowdhury, a head girl at Glenrich International School, argues, "The council ensures students have a voice in school decisions. By structuring duties, maintaining daily checklists, and holding monthly meetings with the principal, we help bridge communication between students and teachers." She thinks that small steps like these encourage participation, make students feel heard, and lay the foundation for student-led initiatives that benefit everyone.

Subrata Sutradhar, a teacher at South Breeze School, explaining why his school ratified an election, states, "The school wanted to let the council show responsibility and honesty, and also create a communication bridge between the administration and the students. We also want them to prioritise student interests and represent them in front of the school administration." By getting students accustomed to the proceedings of democracy, schools, in turn, instil values of a responsible citizen.

Councils can also fill the gap in holding activities. The council can plan and arrange whatever is required for events, suited to the needs of the students participating. Kathleen Dhar, the former president of Holy Cross College, said the council in her school "executed most of the big tasks, like planning for rag day and other events." Similarly, Anaya Chowdhury believes that student councils are best positioned to promote more student-led initiatives and clubs. She explains, "These opportunities allow students to explore interests, develop leadership, collaborate with peers, and face their fears—as I did by joining Model United Nations (MUN) this year."



How it might play out

Once the school administration decides to greenlight an election, campaigning will soon start. In this stage, students who are standing up for the election will learn the necessary skills in advocacy and debate when campaigning for their candidacy.

Students who will vote will have questions and therefore raise their queries to the candidates who are planning to represent them. Therefore, they will develop the skills necessary to make a clear judgment and single out the most qualified candidate.

Schools with newspaper clubs will benefit the most, as students of the club can contribute directly to the election process by reporting on all the election-related news and therefore help students cast an informed vote.

Once voting day arrives, students can be familiarised with how votes are carried out and counted. After the voting is over, volunteers can act as observers in the counting process to ensure the election is both free and fair.

After the results are declared and the council is established, the members will benefit the most from the skills they acquire over time. They have to regularly sit with others and discuss their agenda and take action. Besides, they will also have to listen to their voters, the students, to understand their demands and work on them, thereby honing their leadership skills. If their voters perceive that they're not doing their job properly, they will have to face criticism and accountability.

Ishraq Azmaeen, the president-elect of the South Breeze School Student Council, explains what prompted him to stand in the elections: "I decided to stand for presidency because I believed every student had the right to be heard. Oftentimes, teachers are dismissive of students who require assistance outside of academics and are unfair to students who aren't the brightest in terms of studies." He has now pledged to host events and start clubs so that his school can focus on extracurriculars as well as academics.

One of the main jobs of council members will be using their creativity and problem-solving skills for the welfare of students. This sentiment is shared by Subrata Sutradhar, who says, "We wanted to give our students a platform so they could express ideas, develop leadership skills, engage in the democratic process of decision-making and also make use of their creativity."

Anaya Chowdhury explained that being the head girl has strengthened her public speaking and confidence. She exemplifies this by stating, "Organising prefect duties, setting routines, and planning initiatives like the SAT Prep Club and the Math Club have taught me leadership, time management, and teamwork."

What to look out for

Although an election might sound very festive, arranging one might not be so straightforward. Zaim, who organised the South Breeze School student council election, states, "The process of arranging a student council election is always a very difficult endeavour. Yet, we managed to have a free and fair election." It's very important to watch out for the proper execution of the election, or the future legitimacy of the council may be questioned due to a lack of interest or trust.

Besides, in many schools, councils may not be fully effective in promoting student interest due to limited agency. The councils may be subject to undue administrative control, hampering their independence and efficacy. Kathleen Dhar states, "I wouldn't say the student council did much to benefit the students in my institution because mostly the student council followed orders from the administration."

Thus, it is important for a student council system in a school to have the proper checks and balances that normally exist in different branches of power in a democracy. Or else the council risks turning into an ineffective medium which exists solely on paper but has no presence in practicality in improving student welfare.

Ayaz is a contributing writer at The Daily Star and is studying for his IGCSE. Reach him at ayazkader710@gmail.com

ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

CIRCULAR ECONOMY Explained

BIPRA PRASUN DAS

Every year, the global economy pulls roughly 100 billion tonnes of raw materials from the earth. Most of it ends up as waste. The industrial model that powered two centuries of economic growth was built on a simple model: We extract resources from the earth, turn them into products, use them for a while, and then throw them away. It has worked for a while; however, this "take-make-waste" model is now running into hard limits. Landfills are swelling, oceans are filling with plastic, and the climate is shifting in ways that threaten food systems, cities, and livelihoods. The concept of a circular economy gives us a different way of thinking about production and consumption.

At its core, a circular economy is a system designed to eliminate waste and keep materials circulating for as long as possible. Instead of discarding products at the end of their useful life, products are designed to be repaired, reused, remanufactured, or recycled back into new products. For example, office chairs designed with modular parts allow us to unclip and replace just a worn-out cushion, keeping the durable metal frame in use for decades instead of sending the whole chair to a landfill. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation, which has done more than any other organisation to popularise the concept, frames it around three principles: design out waste and pollution, keep products and materials in use, and regenerate natural systems.

Why is a circular economic model central to sustainability?

The connection between how we produce things and the environmental crises we face is direct. Resource extraction and processing account for roughly half of global greenhouse gas emissions; material use also drives habitat destruction, water stress, and soil degradation. A circular approach reduces the demand for virgin materials, cuts emissions tied to extraction and manufacturing, and lessens pressure on ecosystems. It also builds economic resilience. Countries that depend heavily on imported raw materials are exposed to price shocks and supply disruptions. Using materials more efficiently is not just an environmental goal. It is an economic one. And it connects directly to several of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, from responsible consumption to climate action.

How does the circular economy work in practice? The first step is design. A product designed for easy disassembly and repair stays in use longer and is far easier to recycle at the end of its life. For example, modular electronics, clothing made from mono-materials, or packaging engineered to be composted rather than landfilled.

Beyond design, circular systems depend on strategies that extend product life. Patagonia's repair programme and IKEA's furniture buyback schemes are well-known examples, but smaller and less visible operations matter just as much.

When products do reach the end of life, responsible recycling and material recovery close the loop. However, it is important to note that the quality of recycling matters a lot, too. Downcycling a plastic bottle into a lower-grade product is better than landfilling it, but it is not truly circular.

Underlying all of this are new business models. Leasing instead of selling, product-as-a-service arrangements, and take-back schemes shift incentives so that companies benefit from durability rather than disposability. None of this works without coordination and intent from producers, consumers, and broadly, everyone involved in the economy.

Now, the question arises: What is our role in the circular economy? The circular economy is a concept that also involves actively reshaping everyday choices. When we repair a phone instead of replacing it, buy second-hand clothing, share tools within a community, or choose products with minimal packaging, we are supporting circular systems.

Governments also play a critical role. Policies such as extended producer responsibility (EPR), right-to-repair laws, and landfill taxes create incentives for companies to design better products. Without policy support, circular practices often struggle to compete against cheaper, disposable alternatives.

In other words, circularity is not a lifestyle trend; it is a shift that requires effort and coordinated action from everyone.

Many people think recycling alone makes an economy circular. It doesn't. Recycling matters, but it's the last resort, not the first. A truly circular system starts by using less, then reusing and repairing what we already have. Only when something can no longer be used should it be recycled. Even then, recycling takes energy and often weakens materials over time. If products aren't designed properly in the first place, they may not be recyclable at all. That's why good design sits at the heart of circular thinking.

The linear economy helped build the modern world, but it was never designed to last forever. As environmental pressures grow and resources become more strained, continuing to extract, use, and discard at today's scale is no longer sustainable. The circular economy offers a practical alternative that rethinks waste as a design failure and treats materials as valuable resources rather than disposable goods. If sustainability means securing a livable future, then moving toward circularity is essential.

Bipra Prasun Das studies economics at North South University.

ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

FICTION

LETTER FROM MY DEAD GRANDMOTHER

PUNOMI RAHMAN TITIR

My grandma died an unnatural death at the age of seventy-five. During a certain period preceding her passing, she was seized by delirium, exhibiting delusions, agitation, and a persistent mistrust of her surroundings. She had likely succumbed to their effects. Collective effort was underway to convince her to seek treatment. Though it was quite a difficult task, as she had been ruthless. The following letter was composed during this interval and must therefore be read with utmost caution, and is not to be taken seriously at all costs. I subsequently destroyed the original, as its continued existence would have invited misinterpretation and unnecessary familial discord at the time.

Rashamoni,
It is unfortunate that your foremost thought of me involves that of a rotten steel almirah, though I will not fabricate the fact that I am only somewhat disheartened. I can almost picture you rummaging through the corners of my jam-packed drawers stacked with worn-out property papers and copies of old passport-sized photographs; bear in mind, however, that the object of your search is not to be found here.

By virtue of my untimely demise, it appears that I have all of a sudden been promoted, quite without my consent, to somewhat the rank of a posthumous enigma. I could go on and on, shedding dust upon the hypocrisy that exists to favour the hospitality of the dead. But rest assured, dear daughter, as this letter is neither about me nor is it about my former legacy and what it may have translated to your father and his three brothers.

Throughout the entirety of my existence, I leave behind me, of value, two things: a waning passion for over-steeped tea and a reputation for saying all of the wrong things at the right time. You will hear many versions of me now.

Listen carefully, Rasha. The bundle of keys that hangs beneath the broken picture frame must be stashed aside before the disputes warm up, as they shall inevitably arise in a day or two. I assume you have already done so. Next, attend to the bedside table in front of the lamp shade. Dispose of the medicines that are no longer fit for use and retain the remainder in a single container (you may return them to the pharmacy for recompense, on the express condition that you make no inquiry into the prescriptions). All loose papers are to be destroyed, with the exception of those bearing signatures, which must be stapled together and filed away. These matters are strictly outside of your concern; hence, do as I say and refrain from further intervention.

Rasha! You shall not visit my grave, and you shall not mourn my death. Your uncle Subodh should arrive at any given moment, draped in a shawl of pretentious grief and smelling of cheap naphthalene. He will proceed to lament about what I was and what I had become for about a good hour. Poor child, let him have this one. I do have a somewhat wicked reputation after I told Subodh to his face that his freelancing ventures did not, in fact, constitute a real profession, and that he might as well consider attending to my weekly chores and groceries, and chasing after tenants for rent. I could even fire Sobuj, the poor boy runs to the bazar five times a day. Huh! He has been a victim of my malicious torment for long enough, I think.

And by the way, how is Sabuj now? Shed a tear or two, no? Oh, I'm sure he's thanking God plenty that he need not pay back the ten thousand I lent him months ago. I had almost turned it into a ritual to make sure to remind him of it once every two weeks; you should have seen the look on the boy's face turn all red and bashful. Rasha, why do I enjoy the feeling of standing superior to others so much?

Anyway, Robin, how about him? Note down my words, he will end up marrying that office peon's daughter, despite my forbiddance, and both of them would eventually hang upon your shoulders like haunting ghosts. Ah, the weight of inherited burden! Have a great time figuring out means to get rid of them, child (spoiler: you can't).

Now, since all roads lead back to land and locks, let us return to the matter that first summoned you to my drawers like a pilgrim to a shrine. You may rest your clever head: the house, the accounts, the parcels of stubborn earth that have outlived three governments and five family feuds — they have not been left to chance. I am not so careless in death as I was accused of being in life.

Nearly everything that bears my name has already been loosened from it and stitched, quietly and without ceremony, into yours. This, however, is not knowledge you are to parade. You will keep it as one keeps contraband. For a time, you must play the fool and wear ignorance as though it were mourning. Let them quarrel over cupboards and speculate over deeds. Let them weigh my memory like meat in the market. You will say nothing.

For reasons beyond my understanding, Rasha, I do love you dearly, I always have, even after all that you have done. Do not mistake my love for generosity, however. Property is a form of revenge, and I have chosen its shape carefully.

Even as I write, I can imagine your fingers already blackened with dust, tugging at folders, hoping paper might confess what blood will not. You look for land before you look for me. You search for signatures before you search for sense. Do not pretend otherwise. You are no different from the rest of them. I spared you the noise of my contempt while I lived. Death, it seems, has freed my tongue.

Farewell,
Didamoni

Titir uses the art of storytelling as an excuse to give life to her fantasies in the form of hideous characters. Find her at punomirahman@gmail.com.

WHY READING BOOKS MATTERS

PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

ZARA ZUBAYER

For many of us, some books leave a lasting impression—like footprints on wet cement. For my father, it was *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque; for my mother, *Shei Shomoy* by Sunil Gangopadhyay. In the case of my kindergarten tablemate, it was a book regarding facts about the great white shark. Though I didn't appreciate it at the time, there was something to admire about his vast knowledge of great white sharks.

There's a pattern among children nowadays with their familiarity with technology in their formative years. Initially, it begins when parents and toddlers make "peace treaties" involving iPads for a single bite of food during mealtimes. By the time they start school, most tasks require the use of devices, making it nearly impossible to keep them away from a world that depends heavily on modern tech.

"I tried my very best to keep my daughter away from screens, but ultimately I had no choice, as her school uses numerous software programmes for assignments," says Faria Jahan, parent of a class five student in the IB curriculum.

Teachers, too, notice these shifts in reading habits. When asked whether children today are reading less, Maliha Tasnim Amin, a teacher at Siddiqui's International School, explains, "I believe children today are reading differently rather than less. They are still learning, but in new ways. Many are more drawn to cartoon-style educational videos, songs, and interactive content. They enjoy visual and activity-based learning, though they sometimes struggle to focus on traditional reading for longer periods. Some also feel shy or uncomfortable reading aloud in front of the class."

She adds that it often depends on the student: "Some are genuinely interested, especially those who watch English documentaries and are naturally curious. They tend to be more fluent in English, already have strong background knowledge, and enjoy learning more. However, others are less motivated and need constant encouragement and reminders to participate, and at times they are reluctant or unresponsive during reading activities."

This also made me reflect back on my childhood, which wasn't very long ago. I had the same access to technology, yet life wasn't centred around it.

Dr Irfana Samia, an educational and counselling psychologist, explains the importance of reading in a child's development. "Reading serves as a cornerstone for both emotional and cognitive development in children. It can be considered a source of superpower for a child's mind. By engaging with diverse characters and narratives, children gain exposure to new perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding of others' emotions—and their own. This process is vital for building empathy and emotional intelligence."

She also highlights the effects on the brain: "Reading triggers significant structural changes in the developing brain. As a complex task, it integrates visual, auditory, and linguistic processing, expands vocabulary, and sparks the imagination. Regular reading sharpens essential executive functions, including memory, sustained attention, and problem-solving skills."

Books, particularly fiction books, allow the imagination to run free. That's something technology, an invention that provides the visual, the problem, and the solution in an instant, cannot do. There's a reason why the cognitive habit of reading is so emphasised by elders: it's the glimpse into a mind that's not your own; the chance to experience perspectives that at times transport your mind into somewhere entirely new.

The Room on the Roof by Ruskin Bond was the first of many that showed me how literature can make a reader confront realities that they otherwise may overlook. There are many writers like Bond who, in very subtle ways, paint vivid images without trying to dictate a reader's emotions.

Writers like Khaled Hosseini educate readers about history while weaving in impactful lessons about friendship, femininity, and resilience. Bangladeshi authors like Zahir Raihan, capture the nuances of human emotion and cultural realities of everyday life, inviting readers to reflect on their own experiences long after the story ends.

Beyond the stories themselves, the habit of reading shapes not just what we know, but how we think, speak, and make sense of the world. A rather ancient practice used to be to read the dictionary to improve vocabulary and increase word stock. It plays a significant role in self-expression and clarity of thought. However, it's not a habit that can easily be built in a short time span; it should be encouraged from early days in school.

"My father used to give me vocabulary lessons every Friday morning throughout primary school," says Amira Rahman, who is a student of class seven. "Each week, he would give me a new list of words from the dictionary and encourage me to keep up with both Bangla and English newspapers. I was often impatient and sometimes even pretended to read by cleverly shuffling the pages. But looking back, that constant practice is why the habit of reading stayed with me."

Children often tend to mirror the habits of their parents, and at times, a shared interest is far more appealing than one imposed upon them. Being told to complete a task naturally takes the fun out of it, transforming "reading for pleasure" into "reading to please".

"I was a shy kid at school," begins Adiba, a student of Class 10. "For my 10th birthday, my mother gifted me Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitabitan*—specifically for the words of 'Sankocher Bihobolota'.Over time, I began to understand why. It was her way of telling me to let go of my hesitance and shyness. There was always a love for books and poetry at home, which definitely still has an influence on me."

As important as reading books is, so too is the discussion that surrounds them. Analysing characters, interpreting metaphors, or even debating a writer's message can spark curiosity in even the most reluctant readers.

Although many schools try to encourage reading habits by assigning storybooks during vacations, the effort often gets blurred as students are tested on the books to verify if they've actually read them. This immediately turns reading books into a chore. It's also impractical to strip the younger generation of devices in this day and age. So, reading for pleasure can also be encouraged in ways that fit their world—such as through e-books, interactive apps, or other digital formats that make stories accessible and engaging.

When asked about effective strategies, Dr Irfana Samia also shared, "By creating reading clubs where children have the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about the books or stories they have read, schools can instil a positive attitude towards reading."

The bottom line is: read books. Read whatever you get your hands on—fantasy, fiction, romance, or even a healthy dose of non-fiction and self-help books. Discover authors with whom you agree and those you don't. Read about history, and if it bores you, there are war-centric thrillers and romances. It can make you relate and realise how innumerable human experiences are. We may live one life, but through books, you can experience infinite lives.