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EDUCATION

How to stay sane during ADMISSION SEASON

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They say the three most important phases of life are birth, marriage, and death. But ask an average Bangladeshi kid, and they will add a fourth: admission season, or at least it feels that way.

You have just finished HSC. You are supposed to relax. Instead, all of a sudden, everybody asks the same questions: Which subjects are you preparing for? Which coaching centres are you going to? Will you go to Dhaka? No matter which answer you give, relatives already have a bunch of advice ready. It seems as though they are more concerned about your academic future than you yourself are. After all, the prevailing belief is that the next three or four months will decide the shape of your entire life.

However, I am here to tell you otherwise. They will not.

As such, here is some advice from a person who has somehow survived this rat race.

FOLLOW YOUR PASSION, ALWAYS

Most students forget this advice. Do not reach for the safe option before you have even asked yourself what you want. Where do you see yourself in 10 years? Does the preparation you are about to start lead you there?

Talk to seniors. Look up what professionals who are already in that field have to say. Then take a deep breath and choose. Do not run toward engineering or medicine simply because that is the race everyone else is running. If you do not love what you study, the regret that awaits you later is heavier than anything admission season can throw at you now.

KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS (AND WEAKNESSES)

Socrates said it best: know thyself. If you have not developed the basics of STEM during HSC, Udvash classes will make that clear within a week. If you do not have the patience to memorise hundreds of facts from a page of a biology book, you will give up medical preparation midway.

See what you are good at, and more importantly, what you are not good at. Prepare for the discipline that suits you best.

CONSISTENCY BEATS EVERYTHING

Not everyone starts from the same place. There will be classmates who have already started counting the ranks they will target in the admission exams. It may seem like you have already lost before it began. Trust me, most people are in the same place as you.

Start with your weakest subject. Make a schedule. Follow it honestly. The only person who can carry you through this is you. The competition may seem overwhelming, but most people will not commit fully until the end. If you go all in, you will be just fine.

SIT FOR PRACTICE EXAMS

This holds true no matter what you are preparing for. In the end, everything narrows down to 90 minutes or two hours in that one room. So, sit for as many exams as you can find. Simulate the pressure before the main exam. Write down every mistake, and make an exam-hall strategy.

Do not get frustrated about your rank in the first few exams. If you are improving, then you are on the right track.

FOLLOW THE PARETO PRINCIPLE

Remember: 80 percent of the exam covers about 20 percent of the syllabus. Study previous years' questions. Find the pattern. Master the most important topics, then move to what you are weak at.

KEEP A PLAN B

This one is an absolute must. The exam you prepared hardest for might still slip away from you. Luck plays its part whether you invite it or not. So, have a backup plan to fall back on. Apply to as many universities as you reasonably can.

Getting into one university will increase your confidence a lot for the upcoming examinations. And in the moments when everything feels uncertain, that confidence is worth more than anything.

REACH OUT FOR HELP

In the moments that frustrate you the most, reach out to the people around you: seniors, friends, and parents. It is the simplest way to hold onto your sanity when everything else feels like it is slipping away.

I owe not losing my sanity to a handful of people who never once made me feel small for needing them: friends who sat through hours of my ranting without asking me to stop, seniors who answered questions I was almost embarrassed to ask, and parents who kept telling me, every single step of the way, that I was going to be fine.

They were right. If their words are anything to go by, you will be fine too.

Irfan spends his time writing, travelling, doomscrolling — and occasionally attending class for a degree he believes will be useful someday. Send him cat reels at: irfan.ink63@gmail.com.