

IHSB PUBLICATIONS, ISSUE III, OCT-DEC 2021

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A DREAM

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JUST  
LOOK UP



## ROUSED FROM A REVERIE

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Reality - a pattern. Twists and turns, swipes and curls. Propagations that transition into tangents, zigzags that end up in scribbles. However, still frightfully monotonous.

Dream - an illusive boulevard into the land of fantasy, an escape from the tedium of existence, and at times a rabbit hole to Wonderland.

But to what degree can dreams act as temporary highs? How swiftly do their effects wear off?

The paper for the third issue, "Roused from a Reverie", is a siren to call readers out of their daydream and face reality, the "new normal".

After all, no slumber lasts an eternity. Waking up is inevitable.

As renowned novelist Ian McEwan so marvellously put down in black and white in his work of fiction, *Atonement*, "The cost of oblivious daydreaming was always this moment of return, the realignment with what had been before and now seemed a little worse."

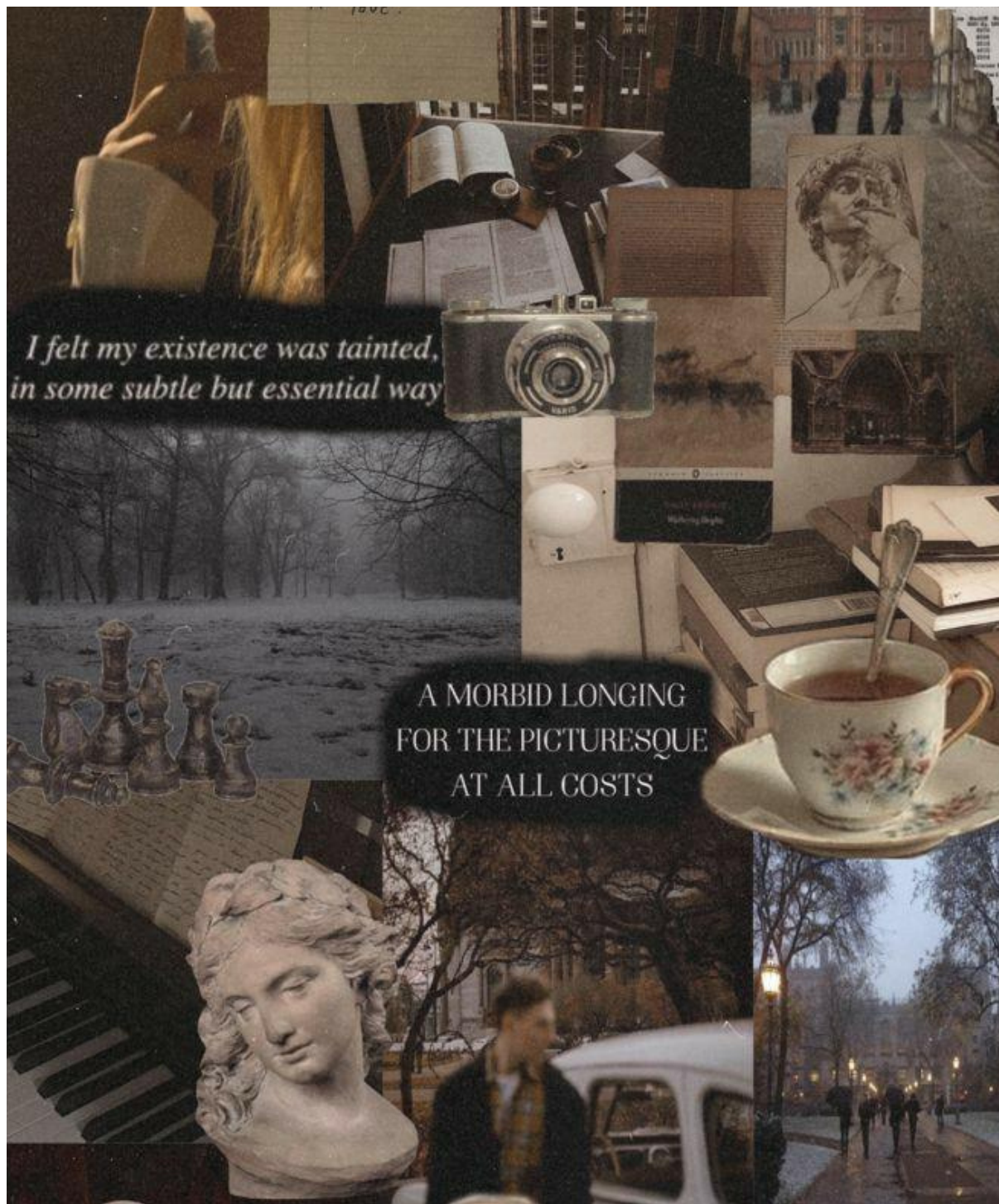


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## IS BANGLADESH'S MAIDEN METRO RAIL SYSTEM THE LONG-AWAITED SOLUTION TO DHAKA'S TRAFFIC?

Jaiyana Chowdhury Mahera

New York, Tokyo and Hong Kong are without a doubt, some of the most celebrated cities the world has to offer. But what do they all have in common? They all have the best metro rail systems in the world. It won't be wrong to say a large part of a city's identity is built on the condition of its travelling routes, and its transportation system. Dhaka's roads have long been subject to scrutiny, due to their infamous traffic and notorious lawlessness.

It wasn't until Dhaka's first rapid transit system was announced, that citizens saw their dreams of better and more convenient ways to commute turn into a reality. On 26th June 2016, four years after the Government's Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved the project, the construction for the first section began. Known as the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Line-6, the line is expected to span 20 kilometres and carry 60,000 people per hour. It will be suspended over roads to not disrupt the daily operations and will enable passengers to spend significantly less time on the commute. As of October 2021, trial runs have already taken place and pictures and videos have been shared by delighted citizens all over social media. Six coaches were put to the test on the Diyabari-Mirpur route. After facing a number of financial obstacles, alongside a worker's strike, it seems that the first metro line will soon begin its operations, thanks to the tremendous assistance and financial aid offered by Japan. Alongside trial runs, staff training has also commenced. At the Delhi Metro Rail Academy, 36 core officials are undergoing training related to operations and maintenance.

Alongside MRT Line-6, an underground metro system is underway too. I think it is safe to say that it will transform our city as we know it. Our view regarding the public transport of our country is anything but positive. However, one thing is for sure, the perspective through which we reject public transport nowadays is likely to change. The new metro rail system will be in stark contrast to buses and trains with people dangling from roofs and windows, and this might just make public transport acceptable to the middle class and ruling elite of the society. If it doesn't sound too good to be true already, people resorting to metros will definitely reduce traffic, and in the long term, benefit our environment.

I, like all of my fellow citizens, have always wondered, while passing by the construction sites, when we would finally get to step onto this dream venture unfolding before us. Two more lines: MRT Line 1 and 5, will hopefully be operational by 2030, and experts are sure this will change Dhaka for the better. As we all look forward to riding our country's first metro, let us all vow to act as responsible citizens, and make commuting easier for all of us.



## OID HOMES - NOW A SHORTCUT FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Aniqa Tabassum

How many of you witnessed the sight of helpless grandparents, once the head of families, now left stranded in the roads?

The prime purpose of 'Old Homes', or to be more exact 'Nursing homes', is to provide a safe shelter for abandoned elderly citizens. Each person or couple in the home is accommodated with an apartment-style room or suite of rooms. The western culture is slowly being adopted by the new generation as they choose to prioritize their work-life, disregarding their familial responsibilities. According to some, old homes suit the perfect 'home sweet home' phrase for their variety of facilities: medical assistance, personal hygiene care, companionship, doctors' consultation, luxurious dining, entertainment, physical activities etc. Being allured by the attractive services and paying a handsome amount of money ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000 per year, children let go of their burden.

However, the "aged" parents claim to wait for their children's love and to be accepted in their own homes again. Furthermore, research shows that there are many trivial reasons for which old homes are considered an alternative: excessive cost for medication, children choosing to enjoy their personal life abroad not wanting parents to "tag" along and reasons as pointless as the wife not wanting to cooperate with them. As their pathological state worsens, the elderly sometimes tend to groan and constantly disagree with the opinions of the current generation and that is why we sometimes come across many debates, aggressive behaviour, unnecessary chaos coming from the neighbouring house with a senior member living in it. Not being able to put up with any more of the daily drama, young adults decide to bid their parents farewell, without any regrets. But what is ironic is that it doesn't even make them hesitate once while thinking of sending the same parents away who patiently raised them to be who they are now - successful, able to live independently and make money.

I personally feel that instead of abandoning elderly people and spending exorbitant yearly fees on retirement homes, children should understand that this time it's their turn to be caregivers. After all, the same treatment might be applied to them later on, making them regretful.

## THE RISE OF THE CLIMATE

Tanzibul Mostafa Mohaimin

Different types of natural disasters impact the lives of thousands every year. There are only a few who have the strength to "bounce back" with the support from their community and family, whereas others require additional assistance to cope and excel on the way to recovery.

As per an estimation, one of the key reasons behind natural disasters is the rapid growth of modernization. This has led people to neglect the environment, causing greater harm to the latter. This is seen in the form of natural disasters, resulting from poor management of water and land resources, alongside the constant factor of global warming.

There are plenty of scenarios when people have come close to hysteria; in fact, many are just lucky to survive the natural phenomenon that could so easily have taken their lives at one point in time. One example, thunderstorms, are a given within climates as tropical as ours but what has pushed them from natural to unspeakably deadly events of lightning strikes plucking out thousands of lives are none other than our own negligence towards global climate change.

Recent studies have shown that natural disasters are more common in developing countries than in developed ones due to their geographical location, geological structure, and lack of technological facilities. For instance, the death toll from thunderstorms and lightning has increased in Bangladesh recently and has been steadily on the rise since 2011. On average, more than 250 people die every year in Bangladesh due to lightning. One such incident that got major media coverage was the death of seven youths during separate lightning occurrences, of whom four were minors killed while playing football in the fields and three were youths struck dead while fishing in a nearby pond.

According to analysts, climate change and global warming are the main causes of frequent thunderstorms. Climate experts from their research have commented that Bangladesh has experienced forty thunderstorms in one per sq. kilometre. The country is one of the most thunder-prone areas in the world. The reason for this abnormality is the increase of black clouds in the atmosphere. Scientists are blaming the increase in the amount of nitrogen and sulfur in the air behind the formation of black clouds. Unless any suitable action is taken together with haste, we may or may not live just long enough to get a glimpse of our so-called unprecedented acts.

# The World is Still Beautiful

Musarrat Rouf

confined in a labyrinth of agony,  
we let ourselves wither in its brutality  
for pain is what we embraced within,  
fearing the enmity of destiny wherein  
felicity is a dark mystery.

scars of the past, wounds of the present,  
we conceal as we grieve inside  
a deceitful facade so artfully insincere.  
our reflection an enigma, utterly mystifying,  
despair had devoured our spirit of gold, shining.

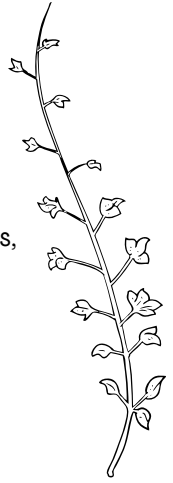
though there were endless nights of tears,  
mistakes that we intensely regret,  
we are still what we are, thriving through the seasons.  
after every storm, comes a heavenly ray of light,  
anguish is not everlasting, happiness is there, living within us.



art is an allure of variety, beautiful with blemishes,  
our littlest flaws together create our true selves.  
your singularity is precious, the divine core you own,  
once battled and shone.

observe the celestial stars of constellations,  
entrancing twinkles scattered over the mass of black;  
hear the twitter of early birds, caress the delicate petals of flowers,  
feel the kiss of a soft breeze, listen to the melody of rain,  
watch the splendour of a sunrise unfurl.

look above - vivid tones of blue,  
the same sky we all gaze at, wherever we are.  
despite every hardship, misfortune and calamity,  
with effortless revival, the world is still beautiful.



# Silent Whispers of Michael

Syeda Naziha Haque

Is the ground that you step on affixed,  
Or should I show you how it ever so subtly  
Unbeknownst to any doth shift, shift and shift?  
Look how it barrels thine substrates beyond flesh  
Look again, O' jostling and jostled tumbleweed of man,  
For here is my measure of the fit:  
Dealt with the loss of the mud  
To have gold from sifting my sift!  
Walk up my stable bridge of enlightenment  
Or should I place you before your steps,  
To have you marched forward  
While you have not walked yet?

I lift the veil from my side of the bridge  
And cast you a lie that does not exist.  
So let him that wants the truth to be his,  
Be ready to catch a buoy.  
He that taketh the anchor instead  
Come away and take my hand,  
Come away and awaken from the dead.  
Await then as you have not awaited  
My good faction of man  
Hear the shout that shall bound  
And cast down the serpent of old,

Who with what is promised for him  
Has held you imprisoned to him in men.  
Let your cry be bold and let it be heard  
That my deliverance has come  
From the snare of the fowler  
And am no longer a casualty  
For I walked across the bridge.  
So come away and take my hand,  
Come away and awaken from the dead,  
Rouse from the reverie of the lifeless,  
Be set free and marched forward  
Unto the place of the living, fruitful and accomplished.



# Living in a Dream

Mirza Md. Ragib

**7 AM:** Her parents awoke normally that day, together. Her dad dropped her off at school on the way to work, and as she sauntered off to class all she thought about was what lesson awaited her, not about whether she would have to return home to the sound of her parents arguing.

**10 AM:** As he logged onto his Facebook profile that day all he worried about was whether his friends reacted to the latest photo he posted. Never once did his mind feel apprehensive about racist comments, and vile memes, his body shamed and his name defamed.

**2 PM:** As he meandered along the various alleys of the shopping mall, his 4-year-old ambling along in tow, no one asked him what he was doing grocery shopping in the middle of the day. In the meantime, his wife was sweating over finalizing a deal with the latest client. Neither was ever reminded about conforming to the gender roles preset by society.

**5 PM:** As he trudged off in the summer heat for his first MBA class, all that ran through his mind was what his teacher and classmates would be like. Not once did he fret about returning to university to finish his degree after 40 years, and his classmates being half his age. Safe in the knowledge that education is not bounded by age restrictions, and that his initiative would be appreciated and not derided.

**9 PM:** Four men at the back of a bus. A woman occupying a seat up front- next to a dusty, stained window. She reached home safely that night, never perturbed with thoughts of her lateness bringing doom. Never once looked at indecently, or illicitly, she reached home untouched, and safe.

We cannot create our own reality, but it is well within our realm of possibilities to control it. The belief that our thoughts create our reality is as seductive as it is misleading. It would be nice if we had unlimited power to change things, however, we have always possessed the ability within us to realign our thoughts. If we reduce everything that happens to us to unhelpful thoughts, we bypass our feelings and our humanity. We plant ourselves firmly in our heads rather than bringing our heart and soul to our human experiences — embracing the joys and sorrows of being alive and recognizing our felt connection with each other and with life.

I hope this year we learn that we can always choose the reality we want to experience. That we learn to be empathetic- to see the world from the eyes of another person and understand the reality they are in. That we choose to accept people for who they are rather than for what we want them to be. That we begin to love people for what they possess in their personalities, instead of what needs they meet. That we learn to live with more peace and coherence and let go of all bias and preconceived notions, so as to see all the similarities sewn within us rather than the differences that divide us, and start to sing from the same hymn sheet. That we are stitched from the same dust, and we will blend into the same earth, and the patterns that define us are common in all our genes.

I wish this year we build our reality to resemble our truer thoughts so that we can all feel like we are living a dream.





# The Turtle That Returned

Habibul Bashar

A soft breeze gently caressed Parvati's cheeks, lifting her dark hair playfully. She repositioned herself on her Nana's lap, staring at her old wrinkled face with eyes as huge as silver sickles.

"Where are they now?" she asked in a high pitched squeak.

Nana stared off into the horizon, her wise eyes reflecting the blue of the vast sea beyond. It was tainted red now, as the dying embers of the sun glanced off its waves. The sound of the sea waves splashing on the shore caused an odd sort of serenity, white foam dribbling from its gargantuan mouth. Seagulls flew overhead in lazy circles, their shrill cries adding to the sense of peace that seemed to cover this beach in the outskirts of Mumbai.

She finally turned to Parvati. "Do you mean the turtles?" she asked with a smile. Parvati nodded her head in acquiescence.

"They are gone, my dear," she sighed. "We did not treat nature well, so they got angry and left."

Once again she was lost in thoughts. But Parvati's mind was reeling with the vibrant imagination that youth offered. She looked to the sea, now almost dark, and imagined huge grey-green creatures magically appearing out of the mysterious world that lay beyond. Lost in these merry wonderings, the waters seemed to whisper to her in strange languages that have been forgotten, and she closed her eyes to the rhythmic sound of the waves rolling to the shore, as a dreamless sleep engulfed her.

"Hey, watch it!"

Parvati was startled, looking at the minivan in puzzlement. It took her a moment to realize she was standing in the middle of a busy road at mid-day, her school bag slung over her shoulder and a huge poster in hand that she had prepared all last night. Slightly unnerved, she continued on her path, determined to complete what she had decided. After a few minutes of quick strides, much dodging and jumping, she reached her destination. A white building rose in front of her, its many gilded columns giving an idea of its resplendent decor. She looked at the greenery surrounding the building in distaste, for she knew these were just for rich people to help them assume a sense of certainty that the planet wasn't dying. Overhead, huge letters in bronze proclaimed the structure to be the Parliament House, the saffron, white and green flag flying with pride in the summer breeze.

Parvati slumped down against the walls of the estate, drenched in sweat from the unbearable heat. Plucking up her nerve, she raised her poster high:

DO YOU NOT SEE? OUR EARTH IS DYING...

And there she sat all day long, ignoring the pedestrians who looked at her as if she had gone insane.

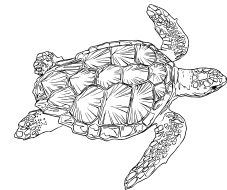
Life went on the same for everyone around her, oblivious to the truth. But her Nana had warned her of this in her last moments.

"Listen to me," she had rasped, gasping for breath, "the journey will be hard, my dear. But you must not give up."

Looking at her Nana then, she had made a silent promise to herself, and here she was. Days turned into months, and every Friday a passerby would see a girl in tattered jeans and a sleeveless t-shirt with a different banner every week, trying in vain to raise consciousness, to make the world see what they saw yet did not see.

On a fateful morning, the wheels of truth whirled into motion. Parvati had been preparing to leave her home for yet another day of protest when she decided to check her mailbox on an impulse. Her heart skipped a beat when she saw the seal of the Government of India emblazoned on the envelope.

Blood coursing through her veins in nervousness, she tore open the letter and started reading:



**Dear Miss Parvati,**

**The Commonwealth of Nations takes immense pleasure in inviting you to attend the yearly seminar that hosts the leaders of the member countries.**

**It would be an absolute honour to have you present at this ceremony. Details of the session are attached with the letter.**

**Yours Truly,  
The Speaker  
Om Birla**

"I know you do not want to listen to us. After all, we are just children. But I am here to remind you that you do not have a choice. For you have committed a heinous crime. You lied to us. You promised us a future you cannot give. Because you stole it from us and sold it to make fortunes. Do you know why, after all these campaigns of awareness, nothing changes? For we forget to look to the past because if we did we would see a quote that we so graciously ignore.

The greatest threat to planet earth is the belief that someone else will save it.

Many people say that we don't have any solutions to the climate crisis. And they are right. Because how could we? How do you "solve" the greatest crisis that humanity has ever faced? How do you "solve" a war? How do you "solve" going to the moon for the first time? How do you "solve" inventing new inventions? The climate crisis is both the easiest and the hardest issue we have ever faced. The easiest because we know what we must do. We must stop the emissions of greenhouse gases. The hardest because our current economics are still totally dependent on burning fossil fuels, and thereby destroying ecosystems in order to create everlasting economic growth.

"So, exactly how do we solve that?" you ask us – the schoolchildren protesting for the climate.

And we say: "No one knows for sure. But we have to stop burning fossil fuels and restore nature and many other things that we may not have quite figured out yet."

Then you say: "That's not an answer!"

So we say: "We have to start treating the crisis like a crisis – and act even if we don't have all the solutions."

"That's still not an answer," you say.

Then we start talking about circular economy and rewilding nature and the need for a just transition. Then you don't understand what we are talking about. So put your differences aside, and consider what is actually possible, not what is politically possible."

Parvati smiled at all the people seated around the table then, representatives from all the commonwealth countries. They sat in stunned silence, the quiet so delicate as if the gentlest of touches would shatter it into pieces.

"I hope I was loud enough. I hope you all heard me."

Parvati reclined on her porch, staring off into the blue. It was a peaceful day like any other. The sea was a forget-me-not blue, a graceful reflection of the sky. Seagulls cawed away in their shrill voices, a cool breeze made the bells hung on the roof tinkle. She could almost believe she was in her Nana's arms right now, a carefree child with dreams of huge turtles that would one day take her on a ride through the mysteries of the sea. And that was when she saw it.

A small dark green shape was swimming onto the shore, lapping its flippers with the help of the tide. Parvati started walking towards the object barefoot, a silhouette in the fading light, the sand cool beneath her feet, almost in a daze.

It was a turtle. Yes, she thought, it was a figment from her Nana's stories. She knelt down and gently touched the hard shell, its mosaic shaped designs smooth beneath her touch. The turtle quickly scrambled into the safety of its shell. A soft laugh escaped Parvati, and a warm tear began tracing its way down her cheek.

The stories were true. They had returned. She sat down and cried.

## PAIN - CAN IT BE MEASURED?

Irina Naowar Bhuiyan

Have you ever burnt yourself or had a severe injury and the pain was so tormenting yet all you could do was bawl in agony and just say that it's very painful? Until now, doctors have been asking questions in order to gauge the amount of pain felt by a patient which might be crucial for certain medical decisions, categorizing the pain on a scale from 1 to 10, which surely isn't very promising since the endurance level varies from person to person. However, researchers have now observed a unique pattern of how the brain responds to pain.

A group of researchers, guided by Sean Mackey, chief of Stanford School of Medicine's Pain Management Division has come up with a way of neuroimaging brain signals on a computer when a person is in pain. Scientists used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to recognize parts of the brain interacting and reacting to pain, later displaying it using complex computer algorithms which are considered to be 90-100% accurate. In simple words, brain scans instead of scales!

Inspired by Sean, neuroscientists from the University of Colorado Boulder, New York University, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Michigan got down to using fMRI to determine magnitudes of pain.

An experiment was conducted among 114 patients who were subjected to heat that gradually increased from mild to excruciatingly hot. Neurologic patterns transmitted from the brain were noted down to be further analyzed. And using the data, researchers generated a method to estimate the pain intensity.

Scientists were also stimulated by a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) in 2011 where it appeared that the pain of heartbreak is similar to physical pain. However, studying the brain scans, Tor Wager, the professor of psychology and neuroscience of CU-Boulder, said that although the pain sensed is the same, it doesn't exhibit the same as physically being injured. "I think there are many ways to extend this study, and we're looking to test the patterns that we've developed for predicting pain across different conditions," Wager stated.

Though no such pain-measuring gadgets have yet been officially invented, it is predicted that Wager's study is creating the foundation to measure other human emotions such as anger and anxiety. To wrap it up, based on the experiments, I believe it is quite rational to say that we can look forward to such inventions being developed in the future.

Perhaps people can relate to the exact degree of pain you feel the next time you hurt yourself again!

## WHY GACHA GAMES ARE RUINING OUR LIVES

Mouna Mehnaz

Picture yourself going to an arcade. In the arcade, a flashy neon-lit machine catches your attention. As you make your way there, you realize it is a toy capsule vending machine. Inside it, you see red and blue capsules. The blue one resembles a beautiful beryl crystal, twinkling ever so enchantingly, almost beckoning you to hold it in your palms. So, deciding to try your luck, you choose to give the machine a go. There you stand, clenching some coins between your finger joints, and hesitantly inserting them within the slot. Waiting... your body aches with every moment of anticipation, your palms permeate with cold sweat, your heartbeat stops for a second. And after what felt like thousands of years, what did you get? The red capsule.

Your disappointment is immeasurable, and your day is ruined, but you will only stop trying on the machine until you get the blue capsule – that is what you wanted, after all. This 'want' is the core mechanism of gacha, and whether it is in arcades or video games, it is ruining our lives. The dilemma begins the moment you desire the blue capsule, as it entraps you into a vicious cycle of reinserting coins until you reach your ultimate goal.

This cruel, yet spellbinding concept stems from the roots of Japan, with its first known records beginning through tiny toy capsule machines known as gashapons. The etymology of this word originates from two onomatopoeias, 'gasha' being the sound of opening the toy capsule, and 'pon' being the sound of it falling out of the machine itself. These sounds have gradually evolved into all-out animations, striking colours and mesmerizing music as the medium switched from these capsule machines to video games - and that is where the problem worsens.

Intricately designed characters, weapons, special items are far more fascinating and desirable compared to mere toy capsules. Companies creating such designs choose to prioritize profit rather than generously fulfilling the player base's wants, taking full benefit of their psychological nature. They intentionally and drastically drop the rates of these wanted items in order to let them be pursued after, and they bring home billions of dollars in revenue.

Both the casual and heavy spenders get exploited under this situation. Just like you in the arcade, they get stuck in a cycle of spending incalculable amounts of money, all in the hopes of eventually receiving redemption. Many adopt a mentality akin to a person with compulsive gambling - they spend, spend more and keep spending. And they may not be to blame, considering gacha games are similar to gambling in many ways. It majorly mirrors gambling in its manner of stimulating the brain's reward system, by showing the player riveting visuals and dramatic audios upon winning. Should it be played recklessly, it can even turn into an addiction.





## MANNERED INTELLIGENCE

Fuwaz Iqbal

The other day I was reading this big, fat novel when I came across the word "abjure." When I hunted for my phone and said, "Hey Google, what is the meaning of abjuring?", unsurprisingly, it blurted out what I was looking for.

These days, we are surrounded by such an 'entanglement of technology' that we never pause to ponder how they are trailing us to our future. With 6 billion interconnected intelligent devices that proactively ask for and provide support, Artificial Intelligence is one topic. Within a decade, it has turned science fiction into science facts.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a branch of computer sciences that emphasizes the development of intelligent machines (by that, I mean actual decision-making machines), thinking and working like humans. For example, speech recognition, critical problem-solving, learning, and even helping you plan out your day. Four of the smartest out there:

- Siri is a popular member amongst personal assistants offered by Apple in iPhone and iPad. 'She' is a friendly voice-activated assistant that interacts with the user on a daily routine. A relatively intelligent companion finds information, gets directions, sends messages, makes voice calls, opens applications, and calendar management. It understands natural language questions and requests due to its machine learning technology. Truly an iconic example of the machine learning abilities of gadgets.
- Tesla - a full-fledged self-driving car with inhuman predictive capabilities. A Night Rider (minus the flying powers). Not the sunniest of days? High traffic? Not to worry, he will let you know beforehand. When hungry, it charges by itself. This car is getting smarter day by day through over-the-air updates.
- Cogito uses a behavioural version of AI to improve the skills of customer support representatives currently on the market. The company is a synthesis of machine learning and behavioural science to enhance customer collaboration for phone professionals. Cogito is applicable on millions of voice calls that take place daily, simultaneously. The AI analyses the human voice and provides real-time guidance to enhance behaviour.
- Rapid progress in robotics, combined with machine learning, has given rise to an entirely new category of AI Bots, otherwise known as humanoids. One such marvel is the robot 'Sophia,' but kid you not, it's more than just a robot. Hanson robotics (the maker) is optimistic about the future; it won't be long before humanoids take over 90% of manual labour. Granted Saudi Arabian Citizenship, she travels worldwide, giving speeches and interviews to celebrities all around the world.

AI may, and most presumably will conquer humans in terms of intelligence and cleverness, but it takes more to have flesh and blood. You need gratitude, mutual tenderness, or any feeling one can think of. While it is true that you may, in the next decade, curse dear friend AI for seizing your job, I sit and wonder about what an absolute mess this article would have been without the automated spell checker. Guess it's almost time he said, "Good night, what time should I set the alarm for?"

## T20 GLORY

Intisar Mahmud

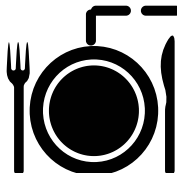
2021 has been a fine year for sports. Due to the outbreak of the global pandemic previously in 2020, matches had been stopped unexpectedly but after a pause, it had kicked off for months, but behind closed doors with empty stadium seats. For this reason, the International Cricket Council, ICC had to cancel their mega-event: T20I World Cup 2020.

As life was returning back to normal by 2021, ICC had marked their calendars to host the event this year which surely pleased the fans. The tournament was no less than a roller-coaster ride. The full tournament was held in UAE and Oman and it was tough to find one empty seat in the stadiums and the fans were not disappointed. The tournament started with the Group Stage matches, played by the associate nations. The "underdogs", especially Namibia and Scotland, made it into the groups of Super 12 and the cricket community was thrilled after they displayed competitive cricket.

Once the Super 12 matches had rolled away, it was looking pretty clear that Pakistan is one step ahead of anyone else who will snatch the precious trophy from all other teams. Pakistan was completely unbeaten and the skills and professionalism they have shown in the field were appreciated even by rival teams and their fans. A total of 4 teams from 2 groups were to make it through to the semi-finals, thus, England, Australia, Pakistan and New Zealand all have fought hard to book their semifinal spot. The first semifinal was a top-notch exciting match, played between England and New Zealand. New Zealand is a quality team that always does their homework quite well against any opponent, thus they were successful in beating one of the pre-tournament favourites to reach the finals. Thanks to the responsible batsmen of New Zealand for chasing the target with one over to spare.

The next match was an anticipated one between Pakistan and Australia. Fans all over the world and even most of the cricket analysts put their money on Pakistan to join New Zealand in the finals but what a match the world had witnessed! To everyone's surprise, Australia just grabbed the victory from the jaws of defeat! Not to forget, Pakistan fielder Hasan Ali had dropped a simple catch, which probably was equal to dropping the trophy. The grand final was played between Australia and New Zealand, two neighbouring countries. Most of the spectators wanted New Zealand to win since they have disappointed themselves in the two previous events' final matches they've played. Thanks to their calm headed captain Kane Williamson who played a masterstroke innings to set a competitive target but it was the Australians who were crowned the champions after chasing the target comfortably.

Looking at the Bangladesh team point of view, this tournament is easily one of their worst performances. The team has failed miserably. Right before the start of the event, fans were raised with hopes after Bangladesh beat the eventual champions Australia and runners-up New Zealand at its home series. Moreover, the irony here is, Bangladesh failed to win a single match in the Super 12, whereas the teams they have beaten previously in home matches reached the finals. This sums up the horrible tournament for the Tigers. If anyone is to be held accountable for this terrible performance, then it should be the fielding unit of the team, missing the easiest of catches left and right, front and back which cost the team valuable points.



## EL PATRON

Ishrath Chowdhury

Stepping into El Patron, my mind was flooded with memories of a trip to Greece a few years ago; colourful mosaic tiling, white sculptures, gentle clouds painted on the blue ceiling, and the sunlight streaming through the windows and bouncing off the tableware that was set neatly waiting for the next hungry customer. (It did also give me some 'Mamma Mia!' vibes if I'm completely honest.)

We sat ourselves down and were handed a menu each. After a brief (20 minutes long) group discussion, the topic of the moment being the lunch menu, we placed our order. The first items to the table were our not-so-spontaneous choices of peach flavoured iced teas, a root beer and a cup of Earl Grey. With our glasses filled, napkins spread and some complimentary bread (with olive oil) presented, our two appetizers arrived; a Mezze Platter and Skirt Steak Pinchos. The mezze platter's herbed pita bread and kofta kebabs were accompanied by 3 different, but equally complementing, dips. Earthy eggplant, garlic and sesame balanced out by lemon in the baba ganoush; familiar homely hummus that we all know and love; and creamy Greek yoghurt and cucumber tzatziki. They each had winning qualities for my tastebuds but the victor had to be the tzatziki dip, which I kept close to my end of the table. Moving onto the line of pinchos (the only line I'd ever do, if you know what I mean), the crisp baguette base had a smooth spread of pesto and a strip of beef that was tender and juicy, just as described on their menu. It was certainly a trip of flavours. A trip it was but we had yet to reach the end of the journey.

Just as the appetizers settled comfortably in our stomachs, the waiter served the main course dishes. My eyes locked on the Lemon Capered Chicken as it was set on the table. The pan-fried chicken presented on the plate like a butterfly was paired with a side of couscous. (Is it rice? Is it pasta? You decide.) Though the chicken was superb with its salty fried exterior and subtle lemony interior (sounds like me), the couscous could have done with a bit of independent flavour. As we approached the finale of the meal, I gave the Mushroom Risotto a try. Opposite to the taste of the former, the risotto was more familiar in taste. The bowl of rice evoked memories of a dish you'd eat at home on a warm Saturday afternoon. The combination of cheese and mushrooms is a magical union as usual. Although, I do feel there was a bit of a strange aftertaste to this dish. Nonetheless, it was a favourite at the table.

If you thought I was done, I'm certainly not. The desserts menu had to be explored, so we ordered the Crème Brûlée. The Crème Brûlée was creamy with the perfect texture - not even a hint of an egg-like taste (a usual downer for most egg-based desserts) - and had a sweet surface, caramelized to the right degree, to pull it all together. To conclude our visit was the Chef's Special Sorbet. The sorbet of the day was mango (it'd be a crime if it were anything else considering that it was mango season). With slightly tangy and minty undertones, the sorbet was close to perfection. The sweet flavour of the cool sorbet was perfect for the hot weather waiting for us outside as we left.



## SQUID GAME: A BLOODY TAKE ON CHILDREN'S GAMES

Farah Tasneem

Are you willing to gamble your life for an almost impossible chance to win \$40 million prize money?

The most-watched show in the history of Netflix and at No.1 on the platform for multiple weeks, the nine-episode survival thriller *Squid Game* released on September 17 is the first Korean drama to do so. Its commendable screenplay, storytelling, and cinematography by writer and director Hwang Dong-hyuk and applaudable performance by the star-studded cast made this series an overnight success, proving the growing popularity of Korean entertainment content on a global scale.

Set in the present day with the backdrop of vivid stairways, labyrinthine corridors, and humongous playgrounds, *Squid Game* revolves around desperate, debt-ridden players who take part in six classic children's games with dangerous twists for a chance to win a hefty sum of money. However, elimination results in death and the contenders are more likely to perish than survive, guns pointed at them every breath they take and bloodbaths sparking around the clock.

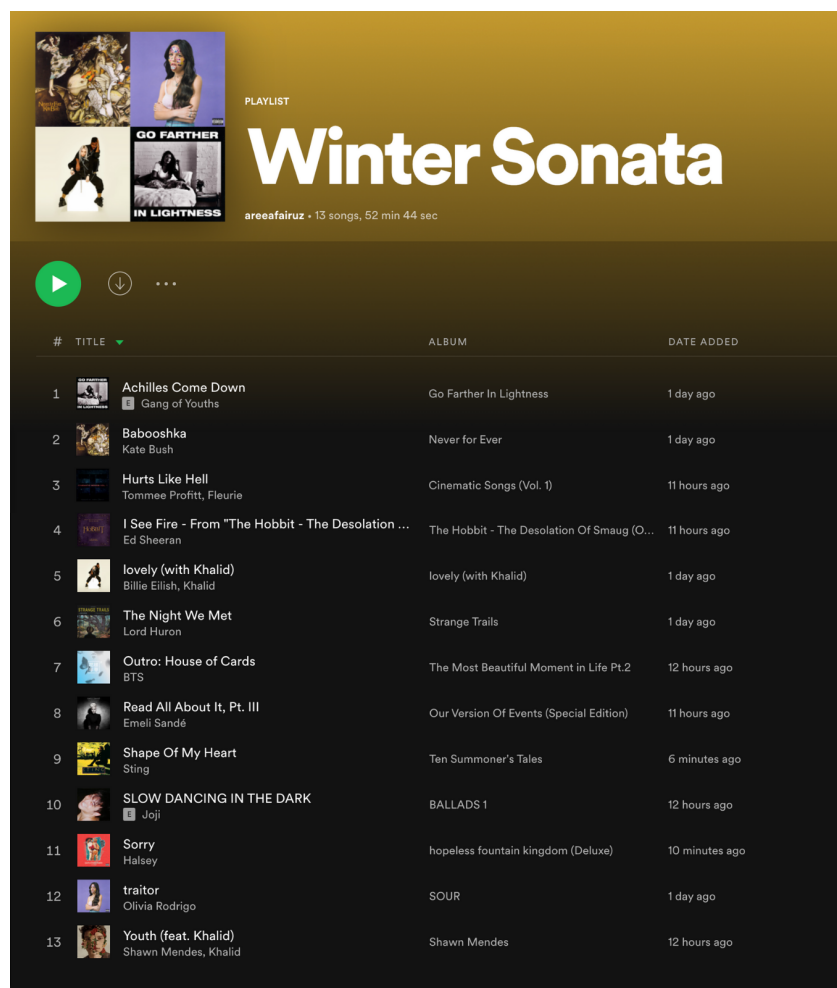
The first episode focuses on the setting and introduction of the large ensemble of characters, both leading and supporting, with clips of their backstories. The contest starts with 456 players, all striving to fit into the modern capitalist society, money being their common denominator. Seong Gi-hun (Lee Jung-jae), a chauffeur and gambling addict father unable to pay his debts, Cho Sang-woo (Park Hae-soo), a banker and prestigious university graduate on the run from the police, Kang Sae-byeok (Jung Ho-yeon), a North Korean defector struggling to save her separated family, and Hwang Jun-ho (Wi Ha-joon), a police officer searching for his missing brother, are protagonists in the show. Avid fans of the critically acclaimed film *Train to Busan* and drama *Goblin* can also look forward to the special appearance of Gong Yoo as a salesman for the game.

The successive instalments get progressively more brutal with the introduction of an organ trafficking side story and actors having to perform even more challenging scenes, but their performance is phenomenal as they marvellously bring their roles to life with their stellar acting. The diversity of the thespians and the distinct personalities of the characters undoubtedly add to the addictiveness and insanity of the show. On top of that, the spooky camera angles, genius editing, and meticulous prosthetic makeup only prove to show the detail and dedication that the crew put in to concoct this masterpiece.

Grotesque but gripping, complex but captivating, *Squid Game* is not a show for everyone, but a treat for those who can and find it enjoyable to consume gory themes and media. Especially for *Alice in Borderland*, *Battle Royale*, and *The Hunger Games* enthusiasts, this bloodfest of a show will be a binge-worthy, white-knuckle watch, viciously riveting and have them at the edge of their seats.







Jane Austen's most celebrated "Pride and Prejudice"- a novel designed to kindle your interest in romance is a timeless classic. Every advancing page, every etch of word offers a visually transporting flight with a blend of bewildering emotions and etiquette. The novel being fashioned in the Bennet household unravels the sly snootiness and whimsical manners of the early Victorian era. Her daughters being a quarry of fee tail, Mrs. Bennet's intent in life is to secure "advantageous" suitors for them.

Elizabeth Bennet, remarked for her quickness, vows to loathe handsome and propertied Mr Darcy for all eternity as a consequence of his wryness and pride on their first meeting. As the story warps, she meets amiable Mr Wickham (yes, foes always seem pleasant at first) who's been denied the right of his inheritance by Mr Darcy (at least that's what he says). She's resolved on abhorring him even more after he tries to part his friend Bingley from her dearest sister Jane. Nonetheless, soon enough Mr Darcy finds his body and soul bewitched by Elizabeth and unable to conceal his indifference, he confronts his feelings for her. Elizabeth rejects him instantly, condemning him for her sister's broken heart and poor Wickham's state. But as dawn settles, Lizzy learns the brutal truth of Wickham trying to lure Darcy's younger sister into eloping with him, only for her inheritance.

Before long, Mr Bingley reunites with Jane and, Lizzy regrets all her former prejudices upon learning about Darcy's succour towards Lydia's ill-judged marriage (the youngest Ms Bennet). Destiny and their long-suppressed attachment usher the two broken hearts into confessing the folly of their own vanity and prejudice. In a twinkling, the yearned wedding bells are heard. Jane and Elizabeth feel all the blissfulness of matrimony while having three daughters married leaves Mrs Bennet in complete ecstasy.

Austen's writing, spinning its own artful energy makes romance seem so urgent that it becomes irresistible till they kiss. Furthermore, when they accept each other both in pride and in prejudice, you feel almost unreasonable contentment. This lovesick scrimmage of sexes exceeds all expectations making it a novel for the age, and a keeper for ages.



## TO LIVE DEEP AND SUCK OUT ALL THE MARROW OF LIFE

Mouna Mehnaz

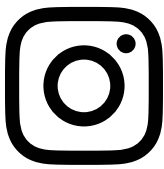
Never have I ever seen a movie that illustrates itself as so ineffable, inexpressible, and yet unveils its curtains to display an imminent truth. "Dead Poets Society" is a story set in 1959, filmed in 1989, exhibiting a sentiment that carries on to this day.

In the all-male fictional preparatory school of Welton Academy, the viewer witnesses the bonding and growth of seven friends, alongside the shaping of their characters caused by a charismatic, new English teacher. Confined within an environment of cage-like strictness, this teacher's classes soon become their source of solace, incitation, and inspiration. Going by the Latin phrase 'Carpe Diem, their companionship grows stronger as subplots are introduced. It truly is oneiric until the very ending, that evokes emotions so intensely, as though roused from a reverie.

Robin Williams' portrayal of the English teacher was stellar, as were that of the seven friends. With a striking smile on his face, and a heart warm like the heat one craves for, in winter, Williams infallibly performs as the perfect influence on his rule-constricted students and inspires them to act according to their own wills. Elements of amity, nonconformity, and liberation found a celestial representation amidst the bohemian poet aspirants. Every scene was precise, with warm shades of caramel, brassy shades of vivid gold, and the occasional forest green which brought visual contentment through a dark academia aesthetic.

Steady camera panning combined with comforting tones of voice allowed for increased immersion, which made me feel as though I were right beside them, living through their eyes. Seeing their bonding let me relive and cherish my own; it could be said that the story that centred poetry had poetic cinematography as well.

While not intending to disseminate any further information, it is to be thoroughly expressed that the movie caresses the very core of one's heart, releasing visceral, cathartic emotions.



## HOW FAR WOULD YOU GO FOR PASSION?

Jaima Jahin Jessin

Instagram is a well-known app amongst most teenagers. Scrolling for hours every day, posting stories about our lives and sharing our passion has been the highlight of this app for the longest time. Maybe we even share to contribute to others' passion. Dancing, singing, baking has always been appreciated. In the same manner, photography has taken up a notch as well to become popular on this app.

While photography can be categorized into many types (bridal, landscapes, aerial etc.), we never get enough of seeing the world through different lenses. Every photographer has their own way of portraying an image and each of them amazes us differently - but we eventually forget about it. However, when there is a story behind every photo, we hold it close to us. Humza Deas from New York does exactly that.

With 292k followers on Instagram, this photographer has changed the perceptions of viewers by taking it to extremes for his clicks. What makes him so different from other photographers across this app? This 24 year old risks his life every day in order to post a picture that his followers will never forget. Edge of skyscrapers, crawling through subway tunnels and scaling bridges before dawn - Humza has done it all to make sure his feed only has photographs with a story. His photographs are known to be daring, unusual and cityscape portraits.

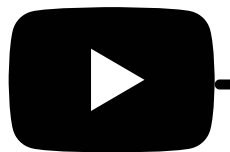
Humza has also been arrested a few times by trespassing through restricted locations. He is known to be a leading member of the 'outlaw Instagrammer' movement. Intelligencer magazine analyzes that "the outlaw Instagrammers are better-positioned to thrive in post-Giuliani, post-Facebook New York than old-school graffiti writers: transgressive enough to be cool, but innocuous enough to amass a huge following without getting hunted down by the NYPD." They thrive off their creative potential and are known to be daredevils. Much like graffiti artists, they make sure photography has no rules or specific canvases as well.

Besides photography, Humza has other passions too. He has been skateboarding since he was 8 years old and is good enough to be sponsored by the Belief Skateshop in Queens. He is known to be fun-loving and always up for more adventures. This is one of the many reasons he continues to fuel his passion.

While all his posts are extraordinary, he never fails to make sure the newer ones are even better than the last. All his photos have illuminating passion, danger and a fearless outlook. Above all, they always make the viewer feel something.

## OPEN DOOR: A PEEK INTO THE CELEBRITY LIFESTYLE

Jaiyana Chowdhury Mahera



### Troye Sivan's Victorian-era Melbourne home tour

This one was released recently and instantly became a favourite. Bought and designed during the covid-19 pandemic, Troye Sivan has raised the benchmark for lockdown productivity with his striking home. Huge windows, a skylight, maroon carpets that light up, the most comfortable couch in the world and a courtyard that feels like heaven and has a 146-year-old spear are just some things that made this house extremely special.

### Zedd's \$16 million mansion tour

This gigantic house might just be the classiest one on AD's channel. What's impressive is that considering the enormity of the house, the details have been paid attention to, and there's something unique in every room. With automated blinds, remote-controlled curtains, full-length windows, a pool with a hidden jacuzzi and a skittles-machine, it's almost impossible to pick out the coolest feature. In a word, it's breathtaking. It truly is commendable how Zedd was able to show us the whole house within a mere nine minutes.

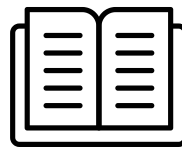
While so many magazines died out, AD managed to stay relevant and it's clear that their YouTube channel played a big part in it. For interior design enthusiasts and commoners alike, this channel has loads to offer.

Architectural Digest is an American magazine that focuses on interior design. Why is it worthy of being written on, you ask? It has managed to stay relevant for a hundred years. Launched in 1920, the content being produced by AD is still being talked about, even if it is from a different medium. Amy Astley, AD's editor in chief, recently remarked in a podcast that she did not want the magazine stuck in a legacy mindset. Therefore, they utilized the tools at their arsenal- Instagram and YouTube, to captivate a younger, more diverse audience. The popular YouTube series Open Door first came to my attention during the uncertain days of March 2020, when we had all the time in the world to explore new things. The show allows celebrities to show around and talk about their homes and the ideas behind the interior, which is miles away from the typical rapid fires, "what's in my bag" and closet tours they usually engage in. Once I started, I had watched all the videos within two days, and I was loving what I was seeing. All the videos are worth a watch, but these are my top three:

### Dakota Johnson's serene Hollywood home tour

An aesthetic, livable home, Dakota Johnson's wit and charm, and a myriad of memes made from it- this is Open Door at its best. Every nook and corner of the house houses something different yet interesting in its way, be it crystals, vinyl, or a wax mushroom. The star of the show, for me and thousands of others, is her green kitchen. The wooden furniture and vintage pieces surrounded by greenery make the house a treat for sore eyes.





“But if you are going to claim, as humans do, to be superior to all life forms, past and present, then you must gain an understanding of the oldest living organisms on earth who were here long before you arrive and will still be here after you have gone.”

Few fictional narratives will inspire eco-consciousness to the same degree as having a sentient tree narrate a tale of war and immigration, hope and belonging.

The Island of Missing Trees follows the lives of a Cypriot family who escape to England after a war, told partly from the perspective of a fig tree they carry with them to the new land. It bears witness to the love blossoming between youth, the plunder and pillage of its world in wartime, and the struggle to plant your roots in a new land, both literally and metaphorically. “A tree is a memory keeper,” it reminds us. “Tangled beneath our roots, hidden inside our trunks, are the sinews of history, the ruins of wars nobody came to win, the bones of the missing.”

Elif Shafak weaves a mesmerizing history of the small island nation of Cyprus, for those who may be unfamiliar with it. Cyprus’ cultures and customs, its geography and joys, are inextricably linked to the plot. Chapter by chapter, Shafak alternates between the past and the present and links decades of a person’s life together seamlessly.

I can never look at a tree the same way. These days, as I walk down the street, I take a moment to thank these living beings, resiliently rooted beyond the concrete invasion of humanity, still providing us with oxygen, shade, and as a friend to lean on. In this connection with creation around me, I have begun to find a connection to my own roots. Although far away from Cyprus, the values of eco-consciousness run deeply through the veins of the Bangladeshi people. We honour nature, waste little and make most of everything we take. In an age of hyperconsumption and development, we may be forgetting it, but this book inspired me to thread my way back to those roots.

Elif Shafak’s writing is pure poetry, crafting a story that effortlessly encompasses the experiences of making a home in an unfamiliar land, the impact of pain and sorrow we carry deep within us, and the treatment that humans subject their ecosystems to. No other author so deftly rouses us from a state of complacency into one of empathy: for those who may feel they do not belong, for those whose suffering goes unnamed and unnoticed and that with great power over our ecosystem, we humans also have a great responsibility towards it.

I highly recommend this book! It gives you the opportunity to learn more about the world we live in, find common ground with those who seem on the surface incredibly different to us, and inspire us to become more actively empathetic global citizens. Next time you pass by the trees in our school building, thank them for doing their job so wonderfully!



## JUST LOOK UP

Walija Hossain Asbah

Adam McKay’s eye-opening “Don’t Look Up” is a movie as gruesome as it is beguiling. Unlike its folks Interstellar and The Martian, this movie immaculately unveils the vile business of the government at mangling our system, along with an almost appeasing array of scientific gibberish.



Set in the flourishing state of Michigan, the movie commences with genius astronomer, Kate Dibiasky (Jennifer Lawrence), who has inadvertently discovered a cataclysmic meteor, 6 months away from crossing paths with planet Earth. Its motive: to mould the Earth into a graveyard. Thanking her stars that this doomsday came with a snooze button, she and Professor Mindy (Leonardo DiCaprio) deliriously forewarn the White House of the doom that awaits them. Condemning this affair as nothing but a mere rickroll, President Orlean (Meryl Streep) and her son, Jason (Jonah Hill), laugh it out.

Vexed and disgusted by their negligence, Kate and Mindy take the bold step of publicizing the news worldwide. This step turns out to be scandalous for Kate while the latter’s arresting appearance fends for him, as he slips into his lust for fame. In an attempt to conceal her sexual affairs, President Orlean confirms the possibility of global annihilation and assures to extirpate it through nuclear missiles.

However, having learnt that this comet entails a fortune worth of rare-earth minerals, witless billionaires lose the heart to destroy it. The world divides into three: just save the damn Earth, riches from the resources WILL save the Earth, and who cares about any Earth? As humanity refuses to wear their glasses, the plot goes through a storm of perfidy, caterwauling and revelations. All endeavours at harnessing this blessed meteor fails. The rich take off in a spaceship (accidentally leaving Jason behind) in hopes of finding a habitable home while Mindy, Kate and their team agree to be peacefully erased by it.

Fast forward to 22740 years, the distraught evacuees land on a verdant planet where they’re immediately devoured by a blood-curdling creature. The curtains close with Jason being a survivor on Earth, filming himself on social media (of course).

The film, being gorgeously hypnotizing, deserves its immediate success and speaks for why it’s predominant on Netflix. As justice to the brutal hypocrisy of earthlings and its engrossing CGI, a confession is pending: I was forced to watch it; I was not, however, forced to give it 5 stars.





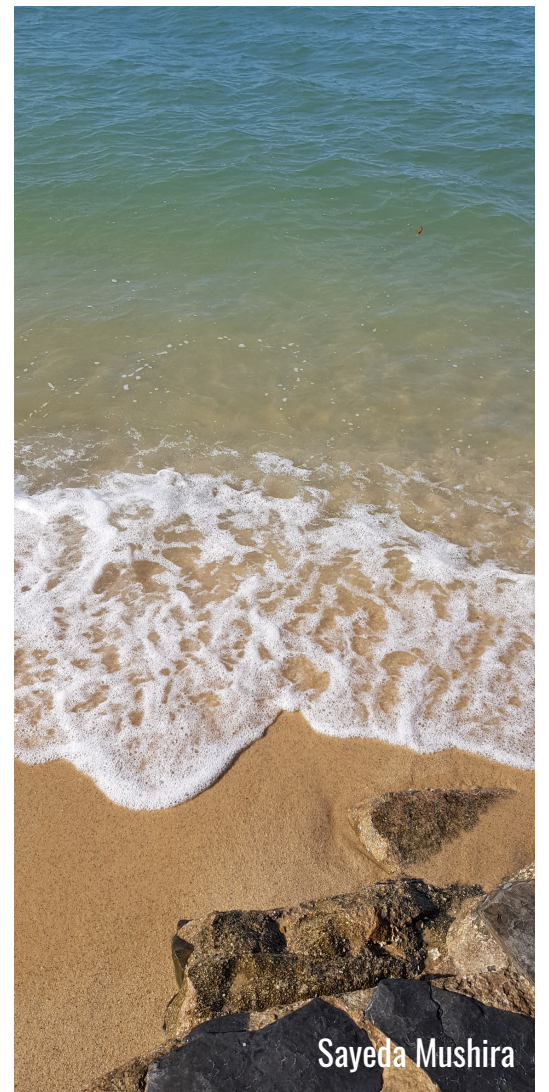
Afrida Ibnath Nanjiba



Irina Nawar Bhuiyan



Nesibe Nur Soyar



Sayed Mushira



Maymun Tamanna



Md. Mahir Tajwar



Anayed Hossain Eshan



Jaima Jahin Jessin



Mirza Md, Ragib



# Follow the Fish

Andrew Eagle

If I was a writer...

If I was a writer, with words would I scoop the hiss of Indian Ocean waves as they glide into the beach beyond the balcony. This Dhigurah Island sound is a fine pickle to preserve, to savour as a memory, as a kind of mental balm to Dhaka's car-horn vibrancy. The Maldivian sea is soul music. "I'm still here," the ocean breathes...

It doesn't begin this way. The first waves I surf are on the net. A trip to the nation of a thousand islands starts with information overload, Dhaka-big. As recently as the 1970s, the Maldives was one of the twenty poorest countries in the world. Now there are around a hundred extravagant resort islands to choose from. Since 2009, it's been possible to visit inhabited islands like Dhigurah too.

A certain bucket list comes to mind as I browse. It'd be interesting to stay in a water villa directly above the sea. It'd be fun to take a seaplane. It'd be quite an adventure to swim with the world's largest fish, the whale shark.

With the third item on the bucket list in mind, I hone in on Dhigurah. South Ari Atoll, of which Dhigurah is a part, is about the most reliable place in the world to find a whale shark.

Are you insane?

Oddly, we test ideas on our friends. It's as though in hearing ourselves say it, or by writing it, or by gleaning friends' reactions, a first solid step towards making an idea believable has been achieved.

Whale sharks are the largest non-mammalian vertebrates in the world. The graceful giants grow to eighteen metres in length. They live for at least seventy years, and although the scientists aren't quite sure, possibly to the ripe old age of one-hundred-and-thirty. Curious creatures, whale sharks are prone to investigate divers and snorkelers. I don't suppose I was entirely convinced. How much did I want to be the subject of a shark's curiosity?

"Are you insane?" was the approximate, fearful reaction of the handful of friends. "Don't make emotional decisions when it's a question of life and death!" one friend responded. It's nice when people care.

I knew that whale sharks are filter feeders, that their enormous toothless mouths are disposed toward plankton. I knew that in South Ari swimming with whale sharks is an activity undertaken by tourists just about every day. All the same, I wondered: how would I really feel jumping off a boat into the deep blue sea with a shadowy shark lurking nearby?

I checked such questions into the hold with my luggage. From the Maldivian capital of Malé, I took a twenty-minute murir tin plane ride, unfortunately, an ordinary propeller type rather than a seaplane. This journey was followed by fifteen minutes on a speedboat. As I finally stepped ashore at the island's small port, where an open-backed motorised contraption waited to whisk me off to the nearby hotel; whale sharks were furthest from my mind. Indeed, if I had thought about them then I might've concluded that Dhigurah was about as close to a whale shark as I needed to be.

It probably won't happen...

Dhigurah is ridiculously serene. It is so serene that I couldn't find a way to let all that serenity in. One could do a weeklong meditation course and still feel stressed in comparison with that island.

Just 650 people live there, in a clean and quiet town towards the north end, a town of sand streets stretching the island's entire three-hundred-metre breadth from east to west. There are swinging chairs suspended from trees. There are hammock-like public seats of knotted rope along the town's roadsides. About everywhere the tropical sea sound calms.

Surprisingly there is terrestrial wildlife. Flying foxes circle the coconut and pandanus tops, birds of every measure perch, wade or flit through the undergrowth. About a hundred thousand sand crabs line the beach by daylight, not much scared of the humans. Dhigurah is an island with pockets of jungle to explore, dark places that extend away to the south, where Dhigurah thins, ever thinner until a final wisp of sand dissolves poetically into the sea. It's hard to appreciate, but at a few kilometres long, Dhigurah is a large landmass for the Maldives.

Was it the echoing bustle of Dhaka that prevented surrender? Was it the possibility of a looming whale shark? These were questions to be pondered from the balcony, so close to the beach that it'd not be entirely absurd to measure the distance in centimetres.

"Don't worry much about your stuff," a Bangladeshi hotel staff member told me. "There's no crime here. If a phone gets lost they make a lost phone announcement over the island's loudspeakers when somebody finds it." Dhigurah didn't allow any excuse, it seemed, for stress. To the contrary, it's as though the island wanted to blurt out accusingly, over those same loudspeakers, to let everybody know: "He's worried about the shark!"



Youtube says one has to be a strong swimmer to keep up with the fish. Please define strong. I hadn't been snorkelling for more than ten years as I recall, not since Tobago. I knew that I knew how to swim but how good was I at it really? Would I remember just how to use a snorkel without flooding it with saltwater? Would I be remembered as that adventurous soul lost at sea while foolishly trying to have a chat with a shark?

There was also the question of the underwater camera. It was new, and it seemed so entirely odd to contemplate diving into the water with an electronic device. As much as the shark concerned me, so did the possibility of technological humiliation, of reaching the boat again to find the camera destroyed, to have some onlooker flippantly comment the retrospectively obvious: "Oh, you forgot to attach the standard water-keeper-outer thing."

The hotel's manager was a Maldivian by the name of Ali. Despite running the tours he wasn't pushy. "We haven't seen a whale shark for the last ten days," he counselled. "It happens so, maybe once a year. But every day we don't see one is one day closer to finding them again." Yes, of course! Whale sharks are wild animals. They swim vast distances across the ocean. I could book a tour not to meet one! If I went, I could just get lucky, either way.

Maybe I'm tired...

I had to meet the boat at nine-thirty. They were taking some German scuba divers out for a dive first, before swinging by the harbour to pick me up. I tried to think of reasonable reasons not to go. Maybe I can't swim. Maybe I should think seriously about the environmental impact of whale shark tours since there is online talk that the endangered sharks don't really enjoy flash mobs of snorkelers and divers turning up. Maybe this was a tropical island and I would be well within my rights to laze all day at the beach. Maybe I was tired.

And yet, that morning, I drove myself on. "Okay, I'll just have breakfast and then decide. Okay, I'll just put on sunscreen and then decide. Okay, I'll just pack up the underwater camera..." In this way I was soon waiting under the attractive Dhigurah welcome shelter beside the harbour, still deciding.

My next best hope was not to find the fish. As we powered off at speedboat speed following the island's coast, the weather was good; it was enjoyable. "It was a nice day even if we didn't see a whale shark," I half-hoped I would be saying, entirely legitimately, later. Unfortunately, when it comes to animals I have a history of being fortunate.

Not six months earlier I'd seen that nocturnal giant jumping rat in the one national park where it's still found, in Madagascar. There was an Indian-origin couple from the States who hadn't seen it. "He'll be upset for days," the wife said of the husband the next morning. There were the wild tigers too: two sightings from two attempts. In Sariskar National Park in Rajasthan decades ago, another disturbed Indian couple had also missed out. They'd been camped in a camouflaged treehouse for a week, and when they heard that we'd seen a tiger on our first morning, the guy muttered under his breath "Westerners' luck!"

Whale sharks too, it seems, favour me. Or at the least that one did. It only took half an hour. "Get ready!" the guide said excitedly. The crew of two became agitated. There was a rush of movement onboard.

Perhaps I don't look like a strong swimmer. I'm not sure if the guide was imagining giving testimony at a subsequent coronial inquiry when he said, "Would you like to wear a life vest?" I shook my head instinctively, wondering if that was the correct response.

As I put on the flippers I realised that the most remarkable difference between me and the German divers wasn't nationality. It was that they knew what they were doing. The boat pulled up, first on the scene, what luck! – and the divers stepped overboard one after the other, like Bolshoi ballerinas.

I moved to the edge. For the first time, I saw a very big shadow of a fish in the ocean below. My last chance, my very last, would be to baulk and call the whole thing off. But there could be no pride in that.

How to make flippers reverse?

Splash! Okay, so the camera might be broken except it wasn't. Okay, so I might've just kept sinking except I didn't. To my delight, even the snorkel wasn't filled with water. There was no way back now, certainly no shoreline nearby. All that was left to do was to look underwater and enjoy the pleasing sensation of the flippers. I'd forgotten how much easier it is to swim with flippers.

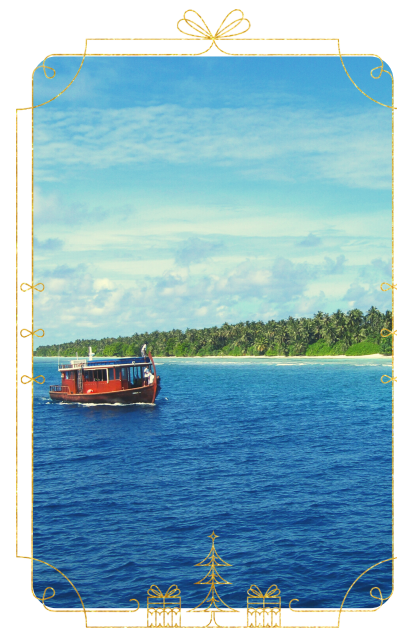
The shark was altogether too much to comprehend. There was the dark skin with the telltale white spots, a gigantic tail sliding almost robotically. The tail is the dangerous part, I remembered from Youtube. It can swipe, accidentally I suppose, with enough force to injure. The shark was close to the surface, as they often prefer. It was close to me and, on the slightly distressing side, heading closer!



Small baubles on either side of its giant square mouth, its eyes seemed firmly set on checking us out, not that one can really tell what a whale shark is thinking. "Come closer," the guide gestured with his hand, underwater. "They eat plankton," I was telling myself. "I'm not plankton." Still, I was nervous. What if it somehow ran into me? I desperately tried to figure out how to make flippers go in reverse.

Of course, it turned, and I wish it hadn't turned, in a way. In fact, I don't think I'd even considered what a whale shark encounter might be like. I guess I assumed the fish would be scared, that it'd be there only fleetingly, for just enough time to get an underwater photo if one was lucky.

Not so. Whale sharks can dive deep at any moment when they get sick of tourists. It even did so, for a short while. But then it returned; the encounter resumed. I swam and swam, no longer worried, in pursuit of the shark. The ocean blue was ethereal, the creature stunning in its limitless, borderless reality.





It wasn't only fear that vanished. So did time. "Follow the fish! Follow the fish!" was chanting through my mind. No longer did I know where the boat was. I had no clue as to which direction we were headed. That fish might have been leading us well out to sea, to a rocky reef, into a dangerous current or even into a pod of orcas. Nothing mattered. I was lost entirely. I was entirely ecstatic. "Follow the fish! Follow the fish!"

I can't say how long the encounter lasted. I meant to ask. My guess would be somewhere between ten and twenty minutes because it was long enough for even stranger thoughts to claim me. For some reason, a random bank manager image came to mind. People chase money. People chase fame. Here was I, at least for the immediate present, chasing a fish. What was the merit in chasing a fish? Surely it wasn't any more illogical than devoting one's life to the pursuit of wealth or power?

Nothing to say.

There were many other divers and snorkelers in the water by this stage. When a whale shark is spotted all of the tourist boats rush in that direction. To the shark, perhaps we were not more than larger versions of the remora fish that constantly ride by its side. But it was hard to avoid running into the plastic flippers or wetsuit-clad arms of other swimmers. It was easy to get momentarily lost in a whiteout of human-made bubbles.

On the other hand, even then they didn't exist. There was only ever the shark, floating somewhere outside time, beyond the reaches of the known world, and there was me.

I'm not sure how long I could've lasted in the ocean. I grew tired at perhaps the same time as the shark got bored with spectators. It finally descended, growing increasingly shadowy, to finally merge at some distant depth with the tranquil blue of nothingness. Finally, I looked above the water.

To my surprise, the guide who I'd quite forgotten about was nearby. Perhaps he'd been watching me as intently as I had watched the shark. He pointed out our boat among the many, which was good because I had little idea which one it was. I found some sort of new energy to swim there. I guess the only thing more embarrassing than drowning in the quest to meet a whale shark would be drowning after the whale shark has been met. One of the German divers had to tell me to take my flippers off before climbing the ladder back onto the boat. It was a useful suggestion. Soon enough we were all on board, headed to a coral reef for general snorkelling and diving.

Following such an extraordinary experience there was little to say. I did manage to ask the Germans if they'd met a whale shark before – some years earlier in the Galapagos Islands, they said. And I asked a crew member if the whale sharks were scared. "The ocean is their home," he said. "They don't feel fear. We humans feel the fear."

Apart from these few words, we rode on in silence. Inside was a bubble, a kind of thrill that lingered, that I knew would be impossible to express with words. If I was a writer, I might be tempted to call it a whale shark smile, a smile so self-confident, so fulfilling that it need not bother to present itself on the face. I'd really swum with a whale shark! Truly that was something...

# The Perfect Getaway

*Jaima Jahin Jessin*



After rotting within the 4 walls of my room since the lockdowns were announced, unannounced and announced yet again- we finally reached stability. The lockdowns were lifted and so were almost all of our spirits. Except, how do we appropriately celebrate?

A getaway sounded like the perfect option to me and my family. However, debates were already set up to decide the perfect location for it. Anywhere far outside Dhaka still seemed too risky and far-fetched. In this case, the only plausible option would be a place within the boundaries of Dhaka. Ring any bells? Gazipur! The home of numerous resorts in Bangladesh. However, as much as each resort had to offer, what we really needed was to stretch our legs. None of the resorts seemed to offer proper outdoor activities which are family-friendly. After further research, we stumbled across a resort that seemed to be crafted flawlessly for our desires- Sarah Resort Ltd.

It was a 4 day and 3 night trip with 2 families alongside mine. If you do that math right, we were a huge group which meant more excitement. The resort had buggy rides for a proper tour on the first day. This introduced us to all their services in a visual manner. As the guides explained what each facility is, we all made a mental note of hastily revisiting it after the tour. And that's exactly what we did!

Day 1 had swimming, shopping and visiting their café in store for us. The fun pool toys they had elevated the swimming session beyond what we normally experience. Having done a physical activity after so long, I felt very satisfied. I could tell others felt the same when instead of crashing on our beds, we decided to keep walking around the resort to explore more. We then came across a base camp with tree-top activities, archery and much more. The whole camp seemed like a brilliant idea to restore our physique.

So the next day, we visited the base camp. There were age and height restrictions to make it safe, so not everyone was allowed in. Luckily, I passed both and got to experience a feeling I'll get to brag about for a while. The tree-top activities were harder than they looked like from the bottom. Having underestimated it, I panicked for a while trying to defeat the obstacles. Nevertheless, I got used to it quickly and was the first one to finish all of it. The whole camp took around 5 hours to finish so the sun was already setting by the time we were down. We set off for an evening swim and freshened up for dinner.

At dinner, there was a live kitchen and concert. An open-mic session was arranged as well where a lot of people participated. The crowd was encouraging and supportive which made the entire dinner enjoyable.

The next 2 days consisted of zip-lining across the resort, kayaking and more activities. I zip-lined for the first time there and the facility was flawless. Kayaking was arranged across a false lake and was an experience to remember as well. Although the duration was shorter than an average zip-lining and kayaking activity would be, I was befuddled by the fact that a resort manages such facilities so neatly in Bangladesh.

The whole trip was something my family and I needed almost urgently. We weren't disappointed at all with our choice and so weren't the other families who went along with us. This might be the first of many trips after being locked down for so long. Onto more exploring until next time...

# a l u m n i



## SUBRINA FAHREEN EUSA

They say music is like a memory capsule. When you hear familiar sounds from your past, the neurons in your brain fire up to rev the engine for a quick tour through nostalgia terrain. I remember, on my first day in school, sometime in August of 2004, the first thing I noticed was the bell wasn't a typical "ting ting", but rather some melody I heard in children's toys. Still today, I have no clue why Beethoven's Fur Elise was set as our school bell, but nonetheless, every time I come across it, a reflex smile creeps on my face. But music alone isn't the only transporter. The slightly tangy, spicy smell of blue lays chips manages to do the same. The greatest thing we as Hopians could flex about was the fact that after every class, there was a short break, with a 20 mins tiffin break after four periods. We obviously diligently allocated the breaks, ensuring 20 mins was entirely spent on playing. Any one of the other breaks were for food. A packet of blue lays chips and a bottle of cold Pepsi was the ultimate cool food. And if you could indulge in Lamachun or a slice of pizza, needless to say, you achieved your quota of happiness for that week. Saying life back then was simple, would be a lie (and would also make me sound too much like my bitter older generation). Life back then had its complications.

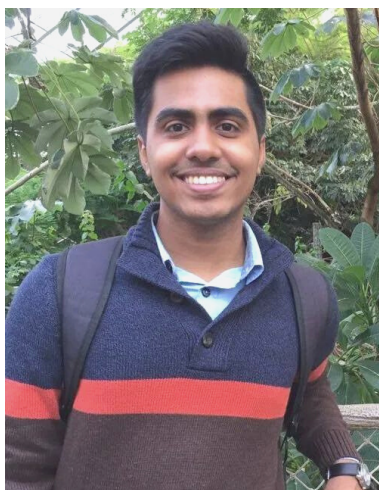
But school was where you found your space. Be it swinging quietly in the corner or showing off the latest learned acrobatics in the field during fireball, you knew you belonged. A big reason for it was the way the key shapers of our life, the teachers treated us. We weren't just students to them. We were little brothers and sisters who needed help navigating the complexities both inside and outside the classroom. You could see back then, the teachers wouldn't just know your name, but know your family, your pet and even your favourite author. The culture we grew up in at Turkish Hope was such that teachers weren't a separate entity, but an extended family. We confided to them things we couldn't confide to our parents. We weren't just another student of yet another batch. We were a tight-knit family. The problem though, came when we realized, that this family wasn't there forever. The days when the greatest concern was marks and who won the fireball or football tournament were over before we were ready for it. Truth is, no one can be quite ready for it. Now that the family has changed, the members have moved far away, I can't help but wonder, why were we so eager to grow up? But then again, who wouldn't be? Adulthood is endless freedom (or so we thought). Needless to say, if I had the choice, I would go back to those olden days of singing Turkish songs together that no one knew the meanings of, making chocolate cakes with teachers, nagging teachers for a free class, bartering with Alpenliebe in canteens and so much more. But all I have left are little memory transporters now- fur elise on youtube, blue lays chips in hand, and a slightly crooked finger from fireball.

## SAYOR AJFAR AARON



If I were to be blatantly honest, this paragraph is not enough to summarize my school life. I got admitted here when I was only four years old; I practically grew up here. My school made me who I am. While the education, cultural programs and campus were noteworthy, the best part for me was a culmination of the experience and how the narrative of my life turned out. I am indebted to the constant support of my teachers for academics or mental health, the lifelong and temporary friends I made, all the competitions I had a great time participating in as well as performing at year-end programs and giving exams during the same period; candidly speaking, even for the enemies I made and the drama that took place, I am eternally grateful. Hypothetically, if on a whim I went back in time, I would do it all again in a heartbeat.

## ABRAR RAHMAN PROTYASHA



It's difficult to put into words what I cherish about my school days given that's all I knew for the first eighteen years of my life. In my time as a student, the school had transformed from an unassuming pink house to a six-storied building with best-in-class facilities, with the only constants being the people and a nurturing environment. The person I am today is a manifestation of this unchanging nurture and environment I found at IHSB. There was never a time at IHSB when I felt like I didn't have the support of the teachers and the administration, whether it be in pursuing academics, athletics, or the myriad of other activities I invariably took part in, and I would run out of fingers to count with if I wanted to single out those who had a lasting impact on my growth.

## ZARIN TASNIM

The school has given me more than an abundance of memories that I will cherish forever but has also taught me very important values that I abide by to this very day. I didn't realize I would miss school days as much as I do now. But some of my best memories in school are sleepovers at the hostel and eating delicious Turkish foods. My advice to anyone in school right now is to make the most out of your days. Even though waking up early to go to school was challenging but those were the most fun and the least stressful days when I think about it now. So make memories, build lifelong friends and most importantly, have fun!

