



ULAB to be a Student-first University

New Pro VC Professor Jude William Genilo

Professor Jude William Genilo is the newly appointed pro-vice chancellor of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), also the Head of the Media Studies and Journalism Department, ULAB. He is also the Director of ULAB's Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC). He earned his Doctor of Philosophy and Master's Degree in Communication from the University of the Philippines-Diliman. He also has undergraduate degrees in Economics and Management from De La Salle University-Manila. Before joining ULAB, he headed the postgraduate program of a prestigious public relations school in Jakarta, Indonesia and served as a research fellow at the Kasetsart University Research and Development Institute (KURDI) in Bangkok, Thailand. He is author of the book, *Community-Based Communication: A New Approach to Development Communication* (Great Books Publishing: 2005), and co-editor (with Brian Shoemsmith) of the anthology, *Bangladesh's Changing Mediascape: From State Control to Market Forces* (Intellect UK: 2013). He co-edited a book with Muhammad Abdul Kader entitled "Revisiting Anwar Hossain's '71'" (ULAB and Somoy Prokashoni: 2016). The ULABian's **Abrar Farhan Zaman**, and **Roohama An Naba** took this interview.

Professor Jude, congratulations on being appointed as the Pro-VC of ULAB! Being the first foreign Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University, could you kindly tell us about your visions to grow the university at the national and international level? Particularly in terms of its impact on the students, faculty, and global rankings.

The Board of Trustees, Vice Chancellor and I envision ULAB to be a student-first university. This means that in everything we do and decide on as administrators, we need to consider how the action would impact on the students. The vision is not curriculum first, facilities first and income first. By being student first, and by consistently being student first, the university will grow at the national and international levels. Its innovations and programs will obtain recognitions whether for certification, accreditation, awards or rankings.

You have been in Bangladesh for more than 12 years. Please share some stories with us about your experiences with the education system, people, society, and culture.

I have been in Bangladesh since February 2009. The country at that time until now is full of energy and dynamism. The people are very willing to undertake extra efforts in order to move forward, to progress and to be at par with the most progressive nations in the world. I see this great thirst to achieve in the students at the university. In general, many of them want a better life for themselves and their families. They love their country and want to contribute towards its development. So, there are stories of students who do part time jobs to complete their studies. Students who put so much passion in their creative works like films and digital stories. Students who did not allow COVID-19 pandemic to become a hindrance to their learning.



Transforming Communication

In Conversation with Hira

Head of ULAB's 'English Zone'

Can you tell us more about the Writing Lab and the services it offers to ULAB students? How can students benefit from utilising these services?

Hira: The Writing Lab is actually a place where students can come without any hesitation. There is no one judging them or grading them, so they can come to the lab on weekdays at a convenient time between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm. The peer tutors are happy to help them with reading, writing, listening and speaking. In recent times, we have been arranging sessions to aid students, no matter what departments they are from, in developing those four skills. Actually, they have to articulate their words in English when giving presentations and write persuasively when working on written assignments. We make sure to assist students in improving their syntax, diction and also the structure of their essays. In fact, we take extra care to give them personalised feedback so that they can learn consistently.

How does the Writing Lab support students in improving their writing skills? Could you mention any specific techniques or strategies that are employed by the tutors here?

Hira: Our peer tutors assign work to the students who come here based on their personal interests and unique learning needs in order to whip up some interest in them. As they turn in their work, we give constructive feedback and show alternate strategies for writing that expand their writing toolkit. Additionally, we teach them synonyms to organically expand their vocabulary and help them express their thoughts in a myriad of ways. This is also how their syntax and understanding of grammar improves over time by getting that one-on-one feedback.

The 'Conversation Hours' sounds like a great opportunity for students to improve their speaking skills. Could you explain how these sessions are structured and what students can expect from participating in them?

Hira: Whenever we conduct the 'Conversation Hours', we make sure that we do not stop students from making mistakes. In academics, we call this

"thinking time", which is to say when they struggle; we wait, so they have a chance to formulate words and sentences in their minds to articulate their ideas. We reassure them so that they can continue speaking.

It should be noted that we give private feedback after each session is over. If we give them feedback in front of their peers, they might feel like they have lost face. Another strategy we use is that we rotate peer tutors in speaking sessions so that students do not become too comfortable with one peer tutor. This rotational peer tutoring activity will help them learn how to communicate with different individuals even if they are not already familiar with them. This way, students learn how to get out of their comfort zone and become effective at communication.

The English Zone's approach to English language learning through gamified activities sounds quite interesting. How do board games like scrabbles and pictionary contribute to improving students' English language proficiency?

Hira: Certainly, this approach helps students improve their English language proficiency through broadening their vocabulary. When students are guessing by seeing pictures, they come up with different words and learn from their peers participating in the activity. Furthermore, since students have to articulate their ideas in English, it also enhances their speaking skills.

Are there any specific workshops or talks that have been conducted by the English Zone and that have received positive feedback from students? Could you share some highlights or success stories from these events?

Hira: We have been conducting 'Conversation Hours' with our honourable vice-chancellor. The reason for this is that he is the top stakeholder of the university. So, when students get a chance to speak with Prof Imran Rahman sir and share ideas with him, they become more confident and it is easier for them to converse with TAs (teaching assistants), faculty members and with others. We have

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CORRECTION

In the Summer-Fall 2022 edition of The ULABian, inadvertently the editor's name was printed as Nahian Jamal Joyeeta. Actually, Md Abid Hasan Sohag was the editor of that edition. We request our readers to read **Md Abid Hasan Sohag** as the editor of that edition.

The ULABian requests its readers to send views, comments and press releases via email to the following address: theulabian@ulab.edu.bd. The campus paper greets photographs, features, and stories from the university students. Your best story will be printed after selection. So you, our interested candidates may be called to unite with the ULABian. Your submissions are subjected to editing.



Photo Credit:
New Age Bangladesh

Is Heatwave the Newest Global Threat?

Roohama An Naba, MSJ

The first week of June this year was the longest and deadliest for Bangladesh as a sweltering heatwave like June's was never endured in the past decades in history. Not June alone, recent months have witnessed the scorching heat that has been more fatal than any other diseases. The current state of intense air temperature is not only limited to Bangladesh, but also has become a global phenomenon. Climatologists have sounded a note of caution that global carbon emissions are the key culprit for a faster rise in the earth's temperature. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has feared an existential threat across borders and territories as it is posing significant risks to human health, animal welfare and the environment.

The heatwave, or a period of unusually hot weather, was so oppressive that it seemed the merciless sun overhead sent down volleys of fireballs at mortals below all day. The rise of heat felt like a burning asteroid came down to earth and boiled over the surface. The steamy indoor spaces, lack of greenery, no scope for ventilation had people drenched in sweat, suffering from heatstroke as the sultry atmosphere drained energy out of the body. The heat of the sun during the period in question had been unbearably excruciating to the point that people started comparing the heat to hell fire.

Vulnerable segments of society, especially the elderly, children and individuals with pre-existing medical conditions, are particularly at risk. A majority of people are thus pushed to undergo a near-death experience. To shock many, some even lost their lives due to high humidity. Regular activities seemed hazardous in the torrid hours of summer. Most of the elementary schools were shut during the blazing heat all over the world.

A heatwave occurs due to many sequential climate exploitations as a result of a combination of meteorological and climatic factors and obstructions. While specific causes can vary depending on the region and weather patterns, there are some common mechanisms that contribute to the formation of a heatwave. Subsidence is one of the many reasons for a heatwave as it refers to the sinking of air in the atmosphere. During a heatwave, air descends from higher altitude to the surface, creating compression and warming. This process suppresses cloud formation and traps the heat near the ground, leading to elevated temperatures.

A heatwave can also be caused by the advection (the transfer of heat in the atmosphere) of hot air masses from nearby regions. Other than that, certain weather patterns, including persistent ridges in the jet stream or the presence of blocking patterns, can contribute to the development and persistence of a heatwave. Although the most rational reason for the current ongoing climate fiasco is global warming. Rising global temperatures due to greenhouse gas emissions substantially contribute to a higher likelihood of extreme weather events on this lone liveable planet Earth.

Adapting to personal safety is the only way out of this climate catastrophe. It is suggested to stay hydrated throughout the day with water and glucose. Consumption of oral saline is a must whenever anyone

feels dizzy or drained. Seeking cool shelter is equally important while hitting the streets. Accessories like a portable fan, an umbrella or a water bottle might come in handy on the go. Avoiding strenuous activities during peak heat hours are fundamental precautions to take. Another effective step is to wear loose, breathable clothing and applying sunscreen can also provide protection for a while. Additionally, monitoring weather forecasts and heeding heat advisories issued by the local authorities can help individuals plan their activities accordingly. Unnecessary family outings should be avoided during the hot period.

On the other hand, the ones people almost forget about are the pure beings, the domesticated and wildlife animals. They are highly susceptible to the adverse effects of a heatwave as well. Pet owners should ensure their animals' access to cool water, shade and adequate ventilation. Similarly, wildlife habitats must be offered with shelter holes and necessary foods so that they do not have to wander around under this searing summer weather. Collaboration between animal welfare organisations, government agencies and communities is essential to raise public awareness and implement effective measures to protect animals during a heatwave.

Preventing global devastation is next to impossible, although it can be efficiently managed as heatwaves of similar proportions are more to come and have increased temperature year by year. Promoting sustainable practices such as energy efficiency, green infrastructure and urban planning can help reduce the urban heat island effect and mitigate the intensity of heatwaves in urban areas. At the same time, community outreach programmes and public awareness campaigns play a pivotal role in educating the public about risks of heatwaves and the necessary preventive measures.

ULAB to be a Student-first University

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As an academic and administrator in Bangladesh for more than a decade, how do you evaluate your journey in the country?

Overall, I could say that my journey as an academic and administrator in ULAB has been pleasant. Most people understand the importance of cooperation and collaboration. I guess this is because Bangladesh is a collectivistic society. I have leveraged on this cultural trait of Bangladeshis to put forward various programs of the university.

I also wish to emphasize that I am a foreigner that I come from a minority religion. But, I was accepted wholeheartedly at ULAB and in Bangladesh. This shows the openness of our society where as long as someone contributes positively, there will be a place for you. The acceptance was not just in me being Media Studies and Journalism Department Head; it also extended to me becoming the Pro Vice Chancellor.

As Pro Vice Chancellor, I now have a bigger platform to impact the education sector. I will use this platform to bring together more people towards quality education. This is through quality education that educational administrators create positive changes in industry.

As the Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Head of the Media Studies and Journalism Department at ULAB, you have played a significant role in shaping the academic landscape. Can you share some of the initiatives or programs you have implemented to enhance education and research opportunities for students?

I came to Bangladesh at a very critical time when private university education was still in formation. I have been very fortunate to

have been given this responsibility of shaping a world-class media education program at ULAB. The mission given to me by the Board of Trustees was very clear from the beginning - create a great program that would improve industry practice. As such, we have instituted a lot of innovations at the Media Studies and Journalism Department such as building a strong co-curricular program, spearheading student portfolio creation, instilling ethics through exposing students to authentic experiences through curriculum integration, reaching out and collaborating with industry, updating the curriculum every few years, preparing for the fourth industrial revolution, the list goes on.

As the Director of ULAB's Institutional Quality Assurance Cell, what strategies have you implemented to ensure academic excellence and continuous improvement in the university's programs and services?

The main task of IQAC is to instill a quality culture within the university in both academic and administrative aspects. This is undertaken by creating standards and procedures, which would be followed by everyone at the university. If everyone follows the standards and documents how they follow such standards, the university will be in a much better place in terms of providing student services and academic programs.

As the Ambassador for Bangladesh for the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), what are some of the opportunities and challenges you have encountered in promoting academic and research collaboration on an international scale?

As IAMCR Ambassador, my task is to pursue the goals of the organization within my context and sphere of influence. IAMCR basically aims to improve media and communication research around the globe. In Bangladesh, we have organized several workshops such as conceptualizing research and formulating study frameworks. We also invite, from time to time, resource persons who can provide learners with the tools needed to navigate challenges faced in

industrial practice. The highlight of IAMCR Bangladesh activities is the annual Dhaka Media Summit, where academics, researchers and practitioners come together to discuss the latest studies and best practices of a particular communication field. In 2022, the theme was on the future of journalism. For 2023, the theme is reshaping cinema narratives.

As a recent elected representative speaking on behalf of Academics and Researchers on the board of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (GA), what are your primary goals and areas of focus during your two-year tenure in advancing the field of public relations and communication management?

Global Alliance has a mission to improve the practice of public relations worldwide. As a board member of this association, I need to uphold this mission, especially as an academic representative. One of the first agenda items is to popularize Global Alliance in Bangladesh. For this reason, we are inviting its president, Justin Green, to come to Bangladesh this coming September to meet with industry practitioners and students. From here, I plan to improve industry practice by making ULAB a knowledge partner of the Bangladesh Public Relations Association. I hope that this would materialize in the future.

Having experience both in the academic and professional world, what advice would you give to ULAB students who aspire to pursue careers in media and communication, and how can they make a positive impact on society through their work?

My best advice is to follow your dreams and never give up on your dreams. As a human being, you have the right to dream – whether this dream is big or small. Do not allow anyone to take away your dream. That someone may be a parent, relative, teacher or friend. Do not allow that person to take that dream from you. As Elenaor Roosevelt once said, the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. If you stop dreaming, you lose your future.



*Kiva Han outlet on the ULAB campus.
Photo: Nabian Jamal Joyeeta*

Kiva Han Outlet on ULAB Campus

WORTH THE HYPE?

Nabian Jamal Joyeeta, MSJ

The start of the summer term for ULAB students coincided with one of the most unpredictable monsoons ever. The only thing that prompts the walk from Building D to Building A in this weather is the new Kiva Han kiosk at the southern part of the chattr (square). As someone like me who frequents local cafes in her spare time, having one right on the campus is a welcome novelty to me. By the time the morning classes rolled out, the word spread and almost everyone was seen walking around with printed orange-yellow coffee cups. I was obviously one of them.

Kiva Han, a popular café chain, inspired by an ancient Turkish café, started life in Bangladesh in 2013 with its flagship outlet in Gulshan-01, the upscale commercial hub of Dhaka city. Since then, Kiva Han has expanded to numerous locations around the city — from shopping malls to food courts and different festivals. Kiva Han has opened its first campus store on the permanent campus of ULAB with an eye to courting younger customers.

Kiva Han sells both sweet and savoury snacks, making it popular among students. It is convenient for students to stop by and get a bite to eat in the time between classes. Since I love desserts and cold coffee, I could not miss going there on the very first day. When I first heard that my favourite Freddos were not available yet, I was slightly disappointed. The spongy fudge brownies, however, quickly lifted my mood, complementing the iced Americano I had ordered.

While the student-focused menu at this Kiva Han outlet allows for lower prices than its regular menu, many students have already expressed concern that the prices might still be too high. The idea of spending Tk 100–200 on coffee when the

adjacent cafeteria vendor sells instant coffee at Tk 20 may be discouraging as the initial excitement has worn off.

“It is affordable for me, but most students will not or cannot pay the prices on the menu,” says Abrar, a fourth-year student. Another student, Ayera, feels rather strongly about the prices, calling the cafe a luxury and expresses her disappointment at how expensive the shakes and cappuccino are. “They are not worth the prices and the coffee is too bitter, but I still need it to get through morning classes!”

The Kiva Han kiosk does not have air conditioning or seating, but it does offer a convenient take-away service for the patrons who are in a hurry. The busiest times of the day for the kiosk are brunch time from 11:00 am to 1:30 pm and afternoon slot from 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm. During the busiest hours, students flock to the kiosk to purchase snacks. It is possible to choose from a variety of beverages, including hot and cold tea or coffee, alongside refreshing mocktails, guaranteeing an appeal to every customer.

Many private universities in Dhaka are adopting the idea of allowing local cafés on the campus as a way to attract students and offer them more amenities. While a kiosk offers an improved campus life for many, is there really a need for cafés and restaurants at universities? While a number of people believe that it is just another profit scheme for universities, Fatiha, who is in her fourth year, has the opinion that an on-campus café like Kiva Han has been long overdue. According to Fatiha, young adults in Dhaka have a strong desire for finger foods and caffeine. So, there is a significant demand for such a facility on the campus.

The contented Hima, a final-year student, explained, “Coffee is a regular drink for me because I find it absolutely romantic to read books or study while sipping coffee.” Abrar echoed Hima’s sentiment and suggested that the café offer seats for students looking for a place to study or work. “Our library often remains preoccupied. On the other hand, the cafeteria is too crowded and chaotic to serve that purpose,” according to Abrar.

Recently, I sat in an interview with Kiva Han staff members during one of their busy hours, around 11:30 am, so that I could retreat to the background between conversations and get raw insights regarding orders, reactions and reviews of the clientele. On that humid day, many customers opted for various flavours of iced tea in a desperate bid to seek relief from the sweltering heat. I could not help but give Kiva Han some brownie points for offering a variety of drinks for customers to quench their thirst.

Jannat, one of the baristas at Kiva Han, shared her observations with the interviewer. She said: “People love iced coffees, especially during the morning around 9:00 am to 11:00 am. At lunchtime, our mocktails and sandwiches are in great demand.” Red velvet cakes and fudge brownies are among desserts that keep customers coming back, Jannat added.

“I sometimes double as a barista when we have a rush,” began Kiva Han’s manager, Mr Mahmud, with a shy smile. I observed as he expertly blended my salted caramel latte, packing it with caramel and topping it with milk foam. After handing me the drink, Mr Mahmud continued, “We are quite satisfied with our performance because we are receiving good reviews from students.”

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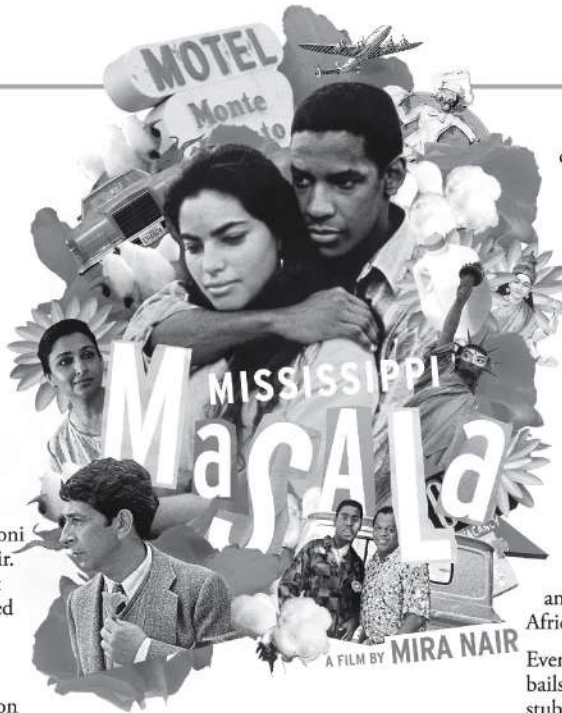
CRITICAL CINE REVIEW

MISSISSIPPI MASALA

An Underappreciated Classic of an Interracial Romance

Mahzabeen Yousuf, MSJ

In the year of 1992, one of the most underrated films, *Mississippi Masala*, about the South Asian diaspora was released. The movie was written by Sooni Taraporevala and directed by Mira Nair. *Mississippi Masala* has marked its 31st anniversary this year and it has explored topics related to racial prejudice and migration in a way that was not ever explored by either Hollywood or Bollywood. Starring Denzel Washington in a completely different outlook from his previous works along with the brilliant Roshan Seth, Sharmila Tagore and Sarita Choudhary, *Mississippi Masala* gave us an insight into the lives of both people of the South Asian diaspora and African Americans. It is a quirky romantic



comedy that allows the audience to understand the concept of love, duty and community, in a realistic depiction with subtle wry humour.

The name 'Mississippi Masala' implies the

concept of multiculturalism as the movie itself analyses the cultural differences among diverse communities in the United States. On the face of it, the film may appear to be like a typical interracial comedy about an interracial romance shared among two individuals, but it happens to be way more than what it seems. The story revolves around the rural parts of Mississippi during the 1990s. The film initially travels back to the Ugandan capital of Kampala in 1972 when military dictator Idi Amin's regime forced Indian-born solicitor Jay (Roshan Seth) and his family members Kinnu (Sharmila Tagore) and Mina (Sarita Choudhary) to flee the African country.

Even though Jay's childhood friend Okelo bails him out of jail and questions his stubbornness with intent to save him and his family, Jay resents the virulent racism he has faced in Uganda and struggles with the idea of trusting black people ever again. Moving to Mississippi in the 1990s, Jay and his ethnic Indian family show the

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Make Yourself Suited for Global Media Corporations

Prof Jude tells Summer '23 Freshers Orientation and Apprenticeship Program

Roohama An Naba, MSJ

The Media Studies and Journalism (MSJ) Department of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) inaugurated its Summer 2023 programme with a fresh batch of students at 10:00 am on June 17. The event was hosted in the cafeteria of the ULAB permanent campus with an eye to introducing new students with the department's curriculum, apprenticeships and acquainting them with the faculties.

The event kicked off with an inspirational

speech by Prof Jude William Genilo, the dean of the School of Social Science, head of the MSJ Department and pro-VC. He placed emphasis on earning ample competence with higher ambition to work for prestigious news organisations and media corporations, and never shifting focus from own objectives. Prof Jude also encouraged students to represent Bangladesh in international organisations, saying: "I hope one day multinational companies worldwide will wait for ULAB graduates to hire." He concluded the speech highlighting the importance of being grateful to the people who help students get on their way to success.

Then came the turn of introduction by the distinguished faculty members and respected administrative bodies who supervise the department. They all exchanged niceties and shared some words of wisdom and the journey the students are going to begin with them. The faculties also represented the apprenticeships they are advisers of and encouraged students to

join them for hands-on learning experience. The event moved on with the description of some course curricula and counselling sessions.

As the event advanced, multiple apprenticeship programmes were showcased through documentaries and promotional videos, made by apprentices, which helped the freshers understand the motives and tasks behind each programme undertaken. The ULABian, the campus newspaper, screened their actions and activities as well as other flagship platforms like ULAB TV, Shutterbugs, Radio CampBuzz, PR4U, CinemaScope, Animation Studio, and two outreach programmes Axis MIL and DIMFE. To top it off, all the best contributors of the apprenticeships were awarded for their excellence through hard work.

After a photo shoot, the event came to an end at 12 noon with an invitation to all the students to join and lead the apprenticeship programmes and enlighten themselves with learning platforms.

COUNTRYSIDE THRU LENS

Semester Break Shenanigans: Code MGRA for the Spring!

Saqib Bin Raschid, MSJ

As semesters come midway at ULAB, the clock seems to slow down. The reason behind this thought simply provokes the idea of a getaway. Who does not like to retire to the countryside? We are no exceptions. Hence, another semester break means another trip for us.



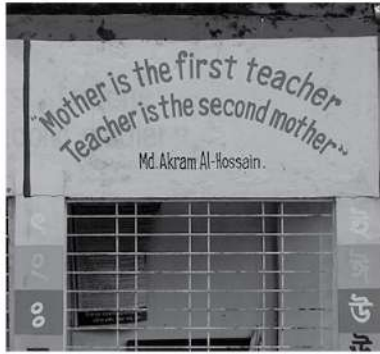
This picture is very blurry and unclear, yet special simply because of the fact how it was so in the moment and impromptu. In the scorching heat of the campus, amidst all the chaos and reality, our trip was planned with a similar energy — right in the moment.



This picture was taken the next morning inside the perimeter of the house of my friend's grandparent. A chicken under a leafy shade symbolises the escaping mentality we all crave from an oppressive heatwave. I thanked the Supreme Being for allowing me, for allowing us to be amongst the green.



I feel there are moments in life where you really do not think about the outcomes, the consequences of your actions or the results of anything you are doing.



“Mother is the first teacher and the teacher is the second mother” — this highly meaningful wise saying features the front wall of a local kindergarten school at Aralia — a village we were staying in. It is a message both for parents and pedagogues as both are the makers of an educated as well as a prosperous nation.



A triad of ladies or a bevy of beauties, wherever they are, are caught on the lens as a shot of the trip. Amazing it was to see the beauty of nature through a canopy of fruit and flower trees. Kudos to them for finding peace in the littlest of things!



This place gave me a feeling of déjà vu that I had been here several times and thus had an umbilical connection. I did not know how soothing one can feel about a place which one had not seen or been to before.



We were in a rush to visit an open field, a few minutes' walk from the water body in the previous picture. One of our friends, Tanzim, is caught in this frame. He normally handles most of the itineraries of the trips we do by his own choice, but he was strictly ordered to enjoy the trip this time like the rest of us.



This is the photo story writer softly touching and playing with a pair of little hands of a baby while others are inside felt like a sweet getaway. This scribe tries to prioritise this thought: a person should always enjoy their childhood to the fullest. If he can contribute to any extent of that enjoyment, he always enhances his gratitude in every way possible.



The final photo of this reel portrays the tale of our 'veni, vidi and vici' [came, saw and conquered] of a picture-perfect place, a chocolate-box village. This village offered us so many things, but we could not stay longer to take in everything. However, there will be a next time for sure. MGRA, as we named the Magura trip, will have us again and that's definite.

Pictures taken by Mahiya Tasnim Upama, Noor-E-Tanzim Muhtasin and Nirbheek Muttaqui Mullick

CRITICAL CINE REVIEW

CONSIDER PHLEBAS

Dive into Innards of Cosmic War

Sakibur Rahman Arnab, DEH

Consider Phlebas is a space opera written by Iain M Banks, a prominent Scottish sci-fi (science fiction) author. It is the first interstellar book in Culture, a captivating as well as a sensational series. The novel tells the story of a cosmic conflict between the Idirans and the Culture clans, a blend of intricate plots, potential characters and exquisite prose. Iain M Banks wrote this book magnificently through depicting enthralling ideas and engaging themes. I, personally, admire Banks for his scrupulous attention to the scientific details that are inscribed in the book. Banks depicts potent themes, such as power and control, identity and loyalty, war and its consequences, survival and sacrifice, through his fascinating writing style and dynamic characterisation. His ideas were considered way ahead of time. In this assessment, I am going to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Consider Phlebas, which is set in outer space.

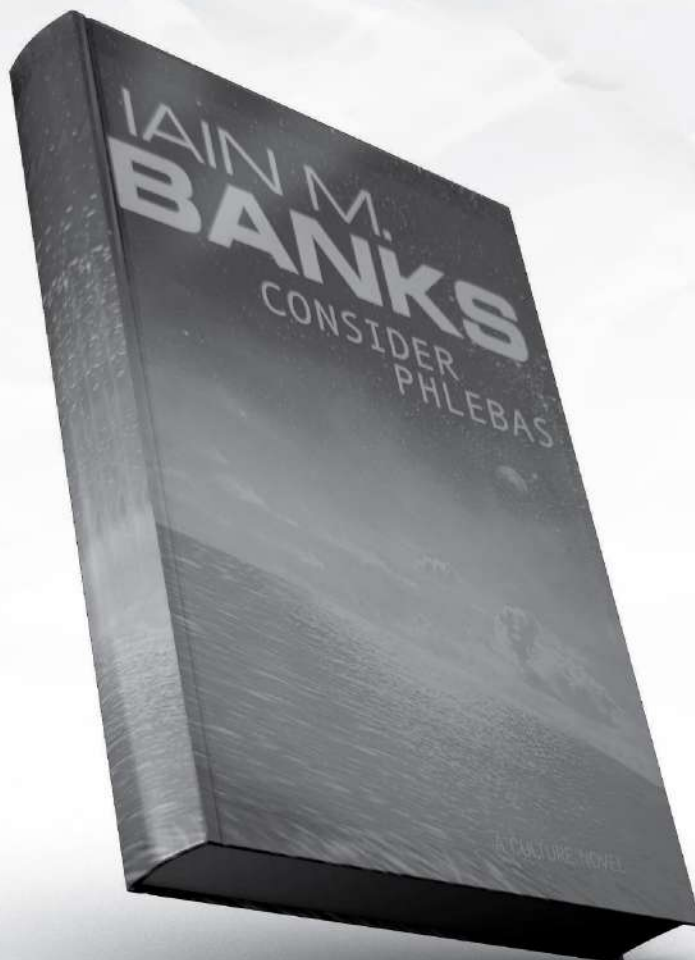
This impressive novel centres on the war that was raging between the Idiran and the Culture empires, annihilating moons, planets and stars. The enthralling elements such as advanced technology, societal values and intellectual creatures plunge the reader's attention from the very first page as the

book further constructs a concept of a cosmic future in the mind of the reader with a sense of authenticity. Additionally, Banks has efficiently created an imaginative and expansive world with a distinct civilisation, advanced technologies and beliefs in this book. What is more, Banks delves into the themes of identity and loyalty through the portrayal of the protagonist, Horza. The shape-changing mercenary faces many challenges and moral dilemmas, which can be intriguing for the reader's experience.

Banks's characterisation is noteworthy for its intricacy and profundity. The pacing of the story is well balanced with moments of suspense, brutality and survival, potentially taking the narrative forward. Over and above that, the plots and subplots are meticulously structured by Banks, consisting of several moments of flabbergasting twists. Through virtuousness, deception and sacrifice of characters, the novelist depicts the complexities of the nature of power and the consequences that come with it. He also explores the impacts of war on individuals, societies, communities and civilisations. The writer has portrayed the vulgar consequences of war by showcasing different

aspects of governance, ethics and existence. However, the novel has its criticisms. Firstly, the sheer intricacies of themes, characters and storylines may not appeal to the readers who are new to science fiction or who are looking for an easy read. The complexity of power, the deceptive identities of characters and the fluctuating storyline may not fascinate readers who are new to the genre, directing them to a less engaging experience. Secondly, the violent and grim tone of this book may not be appealing to everyone. Such vulnerable readers may find certain aspects of violence very outrageous.

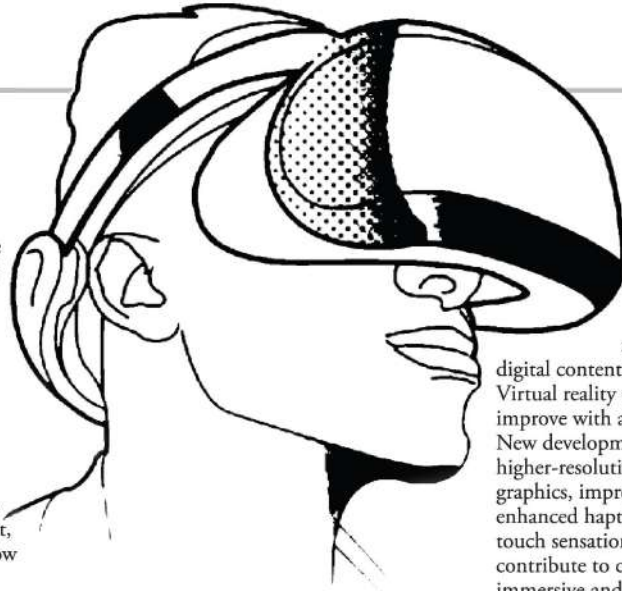
To sum up, Consider Phlebas is a rich tapestry of thought-provoking themes, expansive world-building, intricate characterisation and interweaving multiple concepts of advanced technology. However, the dark and grim tone of the book is one such aspect for consideration. Despite these shortcomings, by the same token, it is an enthralling book that leads readers to an intriguing cosmic war. The readers, who are willing to delve deeper into the sheer setting of interstellar society and explore fascinating themes like power, identity and war, can have an exquisite experience after reading Consider Phlebas.



In the realm of technology today, little advancement has captured our collective imagination as vividly as virtual reality (VR). What was once confined to science fiction has now become an accessible and increasingly popular medium that is transforming the way we interact with digital content. Let us delve into the captivating world of virtual reality, exploring its applications, impact on various industries and the exciting possibilities it holds for the future.

Virtual reality (VR) refers to a computer-generated simulated ecosystem that can be experienced through a headset, a device that can be compared to a window of some sort that welcomes users in a three-dimensional, interactive environment, providing a sense of presence and the ability to interact with and manipulate objects in the virtual world. The head-mounted display (HMD), which covers the user's eyes and ears, provides visual and auditory stimuli. The HMD is often equipped with motion tracking sensors to detect the user's head movements and adjust the perspective accordingly, enhancing the feeling of immersion.

The virtual reality experience can be further enhanced by incorporating other peripherals such as motion controllers, gloves or haptic feedback devices. These enable users to interact with the virtual environment, touch and manipulate objects and receive tactile feedback. Virtual reality has applications in various fields, including gaming, entertainment, education, training, healthcare, architecture and more. In gaming, VR allows players to be fully immersed in the virtual world, providing a more engaging and realistic experience. In training and education, VR can simulate real-life scenarios, enabling learners to practise skills



EMBRACING VIRTUAL REALITY

A Glimpse into the Future of
Immersive Experiences

Md Tausiful Anam Siddique

in a safe and controlled environment.

Virtual reality has proved itself to be a versatile technology compatible with applications in numerous fields. VR has enhanced immersive gaming experiences, revolutionised training simulations, enabled virtual travel and tourism, facilitated remote medical consultations and paved the way for creating virtual architectural walkthroughs. Real-life examples and success stories highlight the transformative power of VR in these domains.

From advancements in display technology

and motion tracking to the exploration of augmented reality (AR) and mixed reality (MR), virtual reality holds the potential to revolutionise various industries and reshape how we interact with digital content and the world around us.

Virtual reality continues to evolve and improve with advancements in technology. New developments include higher-resolution displays, more realistic graphics, improved tracking systems and enhanced haptic feedback to simulate touch sensations. These advancements contribute to creating increasingly immersive and engaging virtual experiences for users.

But despite its tremendous potential, virtual reality faces a few hurdles on its path to widespread adoption. This means VR developers and users encounter some challenges such as high costs, technical limitations and ethical considerations. Also, the ongoing research and development efforts aimed at mitigating these challenges and making VR more accessible and user-friendly for everyone.

Virtual reality has come a long way since its inception and the impact of VR is being felt across a wide array of industries. As technology continues to advance and more barriers are overcome, VR has the potential to revolutionise the way we experience and interact with digital content. In the virtual world, virtual reality is poised to redefine our notion of reality itself through training for a high-stakes scenario or exploring new frontiers. As we embark on this exciting journey, it is clear that virtual reality is here to stay and will continue to shape the way we live, work and play in the years to come.

MISSISSIPPI MASALA

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struggles of the people of the diaspora, where he works at a liquor store run by him and his wife Kinnu while living in a shabby motel run by the people of the Indian community, where his daughter Mina works for a living.

Every South Asian female audience can see themselves in Mina for the relationship dynamic she shares with her mother and the choices she makes through forming a connection with Demetrius, an African American self-employed carpet cleaner, after accidentally hitting his van while driving. Mina's mother Kinnu also wanted to marry a nice Indian man and she knew that she was old enough to decide what she wanted, but that would not live up to the expectations of her family.

Mississippi Masala also reveals what Mina experiences within her community for her appearance having a dark skin tone, even though she grabbed the attention of Demetrius for her exotic beauty and her attachment to Africa, causing him to slowly catch feelings for her. This eventually leads to defiance and protestations within both of their communities, which illustrates how the complexion of the skin tends to symbolise colour barriers that are created among the communities, also indicating a double standard and how it affects both the protagonists.

Both Mina and Demetrius are shown as dutiful towards their families and their communities until a certain point where both individuals realise they should think for themselves as well after their love starts to blossom. On the other hand, Jay's antagonistic response towards the love affair of Mina and Demetrius is a reflection of the same treatment he had received before he fled Uganda, which is a striking representation of internalised racism.

Mira Nair and Sooni Taraporevala beautifully capture the real-life portrayal of the stories of immigrants and how their colour, class and status affect the lives of individuals that can be found relatable in both Eastern and Western communities. Mississippi Masala also explores all depths of the excruciating pain of separation that Jay experienced when he left Uganda, the land where he was born and raised in. It gives the audience a sense of exclusion that is caused against one's own will.

The criticism about Mina's skin tone is a racial abomination that exists in South Asian communities as being fair is considered to be a conventional benchmark of beauty. Many young girls find themselves often falling victim to this social curse. Lastly, the racial discrimination that has existed in every generation does not seem to come to an end. Mississippi Masala can be used as a great example of understanding intercultural communications. It is, therefore, a must-watch movie for the audience who enjoys learning about different cultures.



Student-budget menu at Kiva Han.

Photo: Nahian Jamal Joyeeta

Kiva Han OUTLET

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Kiva Han has filled a much-needed void on the ULAB campus by giving coffee lovers a place to socialise along with enjoying their favourite drink. Since there are no nearby cafés or restaurants, students find some solace in having a place to both socialise and enjoy quality coffee without having to venture far from their academic buildings.

According to Hima, “An on-campus café like Kiva Han gives us a sense of being somewhere worthwhile to unwind. I am willing to spend a little extra for the quality and ambiance that Kiva Han provides.”

The café benefits students and teachers alike because it gives them a break as well as a breather from the monotony of a cloistered university life. The café’s proximity to faculty lounges and the library makes it a popular meeting place between classes, giving teachers a chance to relax and chat with their students.

There is no denying that Kiva Han has enriched life at ULAB in a unique way. It is a great place for students to get their caffeine fix and hang out with friends during study breaks. The convenience of having a café on the campus, combined with the quality of the products, has created quite a positive buzz all around. Kiva Han’s success at ULAB, however, will depend on whether or not it can find a happy medium between being affordable to students and keeping up the quality that has made it so well liked by all.

Does Kiva Han live up to the hype? If you like coffee and want a fun place to meet, greet, mingle and hang out on the campus, the answer may be a big yes. For students with a tighter budget or with unfulfilled wants and tastes, the answer may be less obvious. How the venture adapts and maintains its territory in the long run is something only time can tell.

About the author: An avid reader and a passionate author, Nahian Jamal Joyeeta has often been accused of being too opinionated, but she now sees it more as a virtue than a vice.

Note: All information provided in the article is primary data acquired through interviews. The opinions of the interviewees are subjective.

Transforming Communication In Conversation with Hira

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so far conducted this for three consecutive semesters and have a plan to continue this for the foreseeable future. We have also conducted report writing and essay writing workshops. As you know, our office has space for 14 students only, but we have had 120 sign-ups for sessions. This brings to light how much in demand our services are. It so happens that we have to bring chairs from other classrooms, and people are even willing to stand just to learn.

If a student considers visiting the English Zone for the first time but they feel shy, what words of encouragement would you share with them?

Hira: English is just a language, and every language requires an immersive environment to learn them. We always share the idea that students have no reason to be shy about their current English proficiency level. If they visit the English Zone for two consecutive semesters and actively participate, their fluency in English will improve dramatically as they are applying what they have learned. The main purpose of recruiting peer mentors in the English Zone is to make students feel comfortable by learning from their seniors. We like to remind students that this is their place and not ours. This zone solely belongs to them, so they should avail this opportunity for their own betterment.

Minor in South Asian Studies

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arrangements are being made and new collaborations are being initiated with several top think tanks and institutions/universities in Bangladesh, South Asia and South-East Asia. These will offer internship, research and collaboration opportunities. The C-SAS will also be guiding study tours to various South Asian countries as a key aspect of the ‘Minor in South Asian Studies’ programme.

How do you envision the ‘Minor in South Asian Studies’ preparing students for their future careers? What specific skills and knowledge will students gain that can be applied to various fields like business, media, foreign policy or climate change?

Mr. Chakravarti: The ‘Minor in South Asian Studies’ programme is designed to enhance every core major or concentration. We have students of BBA with a concentration, for example, in supply chain management, who sign up for the ‘Minor in South Asian Studies’. It is a perfect mix: a core major enhanced by minor courses designed to enable students. BBA students are interested in a career in banking, international finance, export-import, entrepreneurship, consultancy, corporate affairs, corporate and international law, and so much more.

On the other hand, MSJ students are keen to work with global and regional organisations and NGOs, and become regional and foreign policy experts and editors, or communication and development experts. DEH students focus

on a future of communications, publication and research. Take the CSE and EEE students who understand technology very well but need to understand the world in which their chosen tech firms and start-ups will operate. All of them will benefit from the ‘Minor in South Asian Studies’ programme.

As the director of the Centre for South Asian Studies, how do you plan to ensure that the courses and curriculum remain up-to-date and relevant to the evolving research and practices in the field of South Asian studies?

Mr. Chakravarti: Courses and curriculum update will be done through continuous conversations with peers in academia, industry and the government. The C-SAS aims to work with all stakeholders to orient conversations towards the region with an eye to securing positive futures in South Asia. Our media outreach and policy advocacy are already among the best in Bangladesh. Our research, outreach and advocacy are designed to bring a real change; they are not limited to a seminar or a webinar only. Everything that the C-SAS and the Minor in South Asian Studies do, and will do, is focused on value addition. If something does not add value, we see it as pointless.

What advice or message would you like to give to the ULAB students who may be considering applying for the ‘Minor in South Asian Studies’ programme?

Mr. Chakravarti: Join us and embark on a journey with us! Understand the region and the world! Enhance yourself! Secure your future! Enhance and secure the region’s future!

THE PEARL OF THE BAY



A Mesmerising Retreat
in Cox's Bazar

Abrar Farhan Zaman, DEH

Cox's Bazar, a coastal haven cradled in the loving arms of the Bay of Bengal, is a traveller's utopia, where time stands still and the rhythm of the waves orchestrates the perfect symphony of relaxation. As a passionate wanderer with an insatiable desire to explore, I embarked on a pilgrimage to this enchanting retreat, keen to immerse myself in the allure of its sun-drenched shores and bask in the tranquillity it promised.

Upon my arrival, I found myself enchanted by the azure expanse that stretched endlessly before me. I wrote in my journal "Cox's Bazar is where the sky and sea converse with eternal whispers" and indeed, it seemed as if the horizon whispered secrets of forgotten lands and untold tales. The beach, aptly dubbed the "longest and unbroken natural sea beach in the world" left me awestruck, its soft sands an invitation to leave behind the worries of academia and embrace the art of idleness.

Venturing beyond the shore, I discovered a world teeming with life at Himchhari National Park. Serenading cicadas and melodious birdsong accompanied me as I trekked through the verdant trails. The canopy overhead provided a welcome respite from the scorching sun, and amidst the foliage, I understood why travel writer Pico Iyer deemed nature a "silent teacher". The park's lush beauty taught me to appreciate simplicity and to find solace in the harmony of existence.

As the sun dipped into the horizon, turning the sky into a canvas of vivid hues, I joined the locals in their evening ritual of strolling along the beach, embracing the gentle sea breeze that caressed our faces. Conversations with fellow travellers unveiled the hidden gems of Cox's Bazar, such as the Inani Beach, a pristine oasis cocooned within a crescent-shaped cove. Here, the sands sparkled like diamonds under the moonlight, revealing the ethereal charm of the beach.

To fully understand Cox's Bazar, one must acquaint themselves with its vibrant culture. The Burmese Market, a colourful tapestry of local craftsmanship, captivated my senses with its array of handmade jewellery, intricate textiles and aromatic spices. Conversing with the artisans, I grasped the significance of preserving cultural heritage, as travel writer Lawrence Durrell once advocated: "Travel can be one of the most rewarding forms of introspection."

In search of a deeper connection with the locals, I participated in a beach cleanup initiative. As Mark Twain aptly noted, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness," this endeavour allowed me to contribute to the preservation of this paradise, leaving behind a part of my soul in return. Through this experience, I realised that responsible travel is not just an option; it is an obligation to the world we explore.

As my days in Cox's Bazar waned, I found myself torn between the yearning to explore further and the desire to preserve the memories I had forged. The words of travel writer Isabelle Eberhardt resonated within me: "My life will be the best illustration of all my work". Indeed, Cox's Bazar had etched itself into the tapestry of my journey through life.

In conclusion, Cox's Bazar is not merely a destination; it is an emotional journey. It is a retreat where the heart finds peace, the mind discovers wonders and the soul unearths its hidden truths. Anne Morrow Lindbergh's words echoed in my mind as I bid farewell to this gem by the bay: "The beach is not a place to work; to read, write or to think." Rather, it is a sanctuary to simply savour every moment and to embrace the grandeur of life. Cox's Bazar unveiled itself as a pearl, a treasure to cherish forever in the treasury of my wanderlust-infused memories.

'Minor in South Asian Studies' programme launched at ULAB

The campus newspaper ULABian conducted an interview on the new 'Minor in South Asian Studies' programme with Sudeep Chakravarti, Associate Professor of South Asian Studies and also director of the Centre for South Asian Studies (C-SAS). Mr. Chakravarti brings with him an experience of nearly 40 years as a practitioner in media, South Asian affairs, regional history, the intersection of democracy and development, and conflict resolution in South Asia. The interview was taken by **Abrar Farhan Zaman.**

Can you tell us more about the motivation behind launching the 'Minor in South Asian Studies' programme at ULAB? What are the main goals and objectives of this programme?

Mr. Chakravarti: Bangladesh is growing rapidly and globalising everything rapidly — from its foreign policy application to securing trade, investment and employment. It is also finding its place in this hugely promising region that is a bridge between South Asia and South-East Asia, and a bridge between China and the Indian Ocean region. Given this era of rapid changes, it is crucial to prepare next-gen Bangladeshis to understand this dynamic region of immense and exciting possibilities, harness opportunities and secure their futures. The 'Minor in South Asian Studies' programme at ULAB, which is being offered through the General Education Programme (GED), has an express aim to facilitate this process. The Centre for South Asian Studies (C-SAS) will act as a hub of knowledge and understanding, and prepare a student for a practical, transdisciplinary future as a Bangladeshi citizen, South Asian citizen and global citizen.

How does the 'Minor in South Asian Studies' differ from other similar programmes offered at different institutions? What unique features does the ULAB's programme offer to students?

Mr. Chakravarti: It is a very good question. Unlike programmes offered at other institutions, the ULAB's 'Minor in South Asian Studies' is truly

transdisciplinary, with an evolving 360-degree view that takes in the background, ground realities, opportunities and risks in Bangladesh, South Asia and the world. The curriculum of this course has been tailored taking all these aspects into account. Moreover, the course programme on offer has been designed to keep pace with changing needs and realities.

Could you elaborate on the range of courses that will be available in the South Asian Studies programme? How do these courses reflect contemporary issues and challenges faced by the region?

Mr. Chakravarti: Look at the initial offer of courses in the 'Minor in South Asian Studies' programme. 'HUM 2204: History of Modern South Asia', 'SSC 2151: Introduction to Climate Change', 'SSC 2250: International Relations', 'SSC 2146: Globalisation' and 'SSC 2252: Living with Conflict'. Singly and together, the courses offer a grounding in the history of the region, ongoing dynamics in the region, aspects of conflict mitigation to secure futures, the elements of globalisation that include trade, investment and jobs, and, of course, climate change, which is supremely important to understand and work with. These courses address issues that are as contemporary as they get. This programme will soon be adding more courses like public policy and governance, migration, and security issues.

How does the programme offer students practical experiences

and opportunities for active learning, internships and collaborations? Can you give some examples of potential internships or partner organisations that students may have scope to work with?

Mr. Chakravarti: The bonus of the 'Minor in South Asian Studies' programme is active learning, practical experience, internships and collaborations. This will be designed and coordinated by the ULAB's Centre for South Asian Studies (C-SAS). Several courses in the programme, including 'Living with Conflict and Globalisation', are already built-in with aspects of practical/active learning. In general, we will be offering visits to the Foreign Service Institute, interactions with top regional diplomats, trade and industry entities, and domain experts. We have already started inviting domain experts as guest lecturers to our classes.

Internships are already open at C-SAS, and partner organisations such as Dhaka Tribune, which is transforming into a policy paper. Moreover,

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