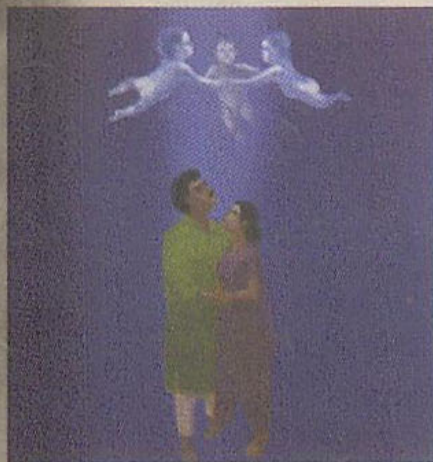


ON THE COVER



We're observing the World Infertility Month this June, so Lifestyle brings you an insight into the lives of some for whom this month has great significance, in our special centre page story on infertility. Join us also, on pages 3 and 7 for a different perspective on the trials and tribulations of parenthood.

Cover illustration by: Sabyasachi Mistry

ESSENTIALS

Question: Do you wear eyeglasses? If not, congratulations. Even if you do, there are some simple ways in which you could maintain or even improve your eyesight for a long period of time.

Walk like an...oh well, Just walk

What do you mean "What does walking have to do with my eyes?" It's common knowledge that regular exercise helps improve blood circulation, and keeps the hypertension at bay. That's good news for the eyes



because high blood pressure is a leading factor in many eye conditions like glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and macular degeneration and so on.

Green seein'

Notice how cows and deer have the loveliest eyes? It's because of their healthy diet. No, turning into a herbivore won't give you a gazelle-like set of orbs, but eating more Lutein-containing leafy greens can help preserve your vision and reduce your risk of macular degeneration, one of the leading causes of vision loss. Guess Popeye had the right idea after all; eat your spinach!

Peeper protection

The Men in Black flaunted them. The cool people in the Matrix trilogy sported them. We're talking sunglasses. Not only are those shades the quickest way to bump up your cool factor, a proper pair can protect your eyes from those big bad UV rays and keep your eyes younger longer, and prevent cataracts. When buying, choose a pair that provides 100% UV protection.

Meds management

If you do have diabetes, be extra careful about controlling your blood sugar, and having your medicines properly and in the right dosage. Uncontrolled diabetes promotes diabetic retinopathy, cataracts, glaucoma, and macular degeneration. High blood pressure, high cholesterol, and cardiovascular disease can negatively affect your vision as well, so be responsible about medicine and check-ups if you suffer from any of the above.

By Sabrina F Ahmad

SPECIAL FEATURE

Rain or shine

THE head is where the brain resides. At least that is the case for most people. Thousands of years ago someone must have realised this and thought such an important part of the body needs protection against the elements. Thus they put a large leaf over their head and started braving the rain and sun. Suddenly the leaf became larger and the user thought, heck, this protects the body as well. And thus the forefather of the umbrella was invented.

Fictitious (or not) as the account may have been, documented umbrellas started showing up about 1700 years ago in ancient China. Come to think of it China 1700 years ago cannot be anything other than ancient but that's another line of thought

The ancient Chinese used large leaves which later gave way to different materials and designs and spread to Japan, Korea, Persia, Europe and finally the rest of the world in that order. Also, the umbrella was initially known as a parasol.

Initially the umbrella was often used as a status symbol more than anything else. Rich influential people like those who could have someone beheaded at a glance had very ornate umbrellas. Slaves or maids (another name for slaves) would have to trail behind such royalty carrying a huge gaudily decorated umbrella. This got out of hand to the point where one Maratha royalty (of the Mughal era) was known as The Lord of Umbrellas for his collection. Most royalty would prefer being called Lord Lionheart or something equally ferocious or even Lord of the Rings. Less powerful people on the other hand carried their own umbrellas. Common peasants who had little power to behead someone and often

lost their own heads were not allowed to carry such umbrellas.

Around the 18th century even the common people began using such protection. Material changed from expensive and largely useless silk to common cotton and nylon. The original wooden frame was difficult to stow away when wet so a new ribbed system was developed in 1852 which was built using steel. It made people very happy to be able to fold the umbrella, use it as a walking stick and even poke other people when they felt like it.

In hot sultry summers such as ours there are two types of respites for the traveler. One is to use the ever trusty umbrella to provide much needed shade. The other is to use a climate controlled, tinted windowed vehicle with a surround sound system and strategically placed cup holders to hold cold beverages. Since option number two is not a viable one for most people the lowly umbrella has to suffice.

The simple yet effective device helps tremendously in times of rain or shine. It is a difficult job indeed to hail a taxi or a rickshaw especially when it pours. Just imagine having to walk through the burning heat looking for transportation. It's worse for young school children who have to carry a whole world of books on their backs most of which are not even read. Considering the dearth of transportation people generally have to walk a certain distance everyday and an umbrella becomes the perfect companion.

The device not only acts as a companion but can also help to find another companion. You might say three is a crowd but in such a case it may be desirable. A few days ago a couple was seen huddling under an

umbrella waiting in the rain for some transportation to arrive. Apparently these two lovebirds have been living as neighbours and have always seen each other but never spoken. One day while going to work in a drizzle one of them left the house without any protection against the elements. The other saw this and offered the shade. The rest as they say is history.

The umbrella is also a must have for the beauty conscious. While westerners love to go all brown and crinkly tanning themselves in the sun, we prefer to be fair and fairer. Of course, it is a well known and scientifically proven fact that the sun can and does damage the skin. Now, when you have an umbrella that is a distant concern. Not only that, a colour coded umbrella matching the outfit can also be a fashion accessory. Point to be noted is that umbrellas made for the purpose of being a fashion accessory are usually smaller in diameter than typical everyday models.

In the villages it is sometimes a different story harking back to the beginning of the umbrella. Many people still grab hold of a large banana leaf and run through the downpour placing it over their heads. City folk on the other hand prefer to splurge upwards for 100 taka. That is not a big amount when you consider the latest Rolls Royce car that has a factory made umbrella hidden in a special compartment in the rear door. With the car costing more than a house the umbrella probably costs as much a cheap car. So what are you waiting for?

By Sultana Yasmin
Translated by Ehsanur Raza Ronny
Photo: Zahedul I Khan
Model: Emi



NEWS FLASH

Merlion takes a time-out for a shower

Singapore's favourite Merlion will be taking a 'shower' away from prying eyes this June.

For about five weeks from 5 June to 10 July, visitors expecting to see the Merlion at Merlion Park will be greeted by a cheery cartoon of the Merlion peeping out from a flowery shower curtain instead. Designed by Miel, an award-winning senior artist at The Straits Times best known for his tongue-in-cheek illustrated social commentaries, the illustrations will cover the

2.4-metre high hoardings around the Merlion and two printed canvases over the 10-metre high safety netting.

This will be the first time that the Singapore Tourism Board is decorating the temporary hoardings around the Merlion during its routine cleaning to offer an alternative experience to visitors. Besides keeping the Merlion away from public view, the illustrations will provide visitors a rare photo moment and a Uniquely Singapore experience. The Merlion is a

treasured symbol of Singapore and over the years has become a must-see for visitors.

During the cleaning period from 5 June to 10 July, the STB will be giving out special unique souvenirs and postcards to Merlion Park visitors from 8.30am to 12.30pm and 5.30pm to 8.30pm daily. Visitors can also visit the Merlion Walk at Sentosa and come up close to the 37 metre Merlion tower.

-LS Desk