

**Scenario 1**

With the start of the holy month of Ramadan, traffic congestions have intensified three times as usual, making it difficult for many people to reach home on time for iftar. On his way back home from office a few days back, as Iqbal Ahmed boarded his regular bus, he discovered it was more crowded than usual. Like one of those days, he was still on the bus during iftar time, so he broke his fast with water. "Within the next five minutes, I found myself sharing dates, cucumbers, a packet of Jilapi with people sitting next to me, and standing around me," he says. Generally, we are careful not to take anything from strangers, but when you share your iftar meal with a bus full of people, it feels more like a celebration.

Scenario 2

There was ten minutes left until iftar and every shopkeeper of Bashundhara City Complex was preparing to take their iftar break. While the shoppers rushed to the food court upstairs, a group of first year students from BUET was still stuck with their broken camera in a camera repair shop. By the time their camera was fixed, they had only a few minutes left for iftar. "As we were getting ready for a race towards the food court, we discovered that the shopkeepers had made iftar arrangement for us as well, much to our

A PUBLIC AFFAIR

FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

surprise," says one of the students. "Forgetting how we were arguing over the service charge just a few minutes back, we sat together, shared food from the same bowl, and stood together for the Magrib prayers," his friend adds, with a smile.

Scenario 3

42-year-old Abdul Hakim, a van driver, bought his usual iftar meal - a packet of puffed rice, some vegetables for salad, a bunch of fried items for himself and some of his companions near the TSC area. As they waited to break their fast, they saw two students holding huge project works, almost running to catch their iftar. "It was about to rain, and there were no restaurants nearby where they could go for iftar, so I asked them to join us," says

Hakim. "We could not say no to chacha's request of joining them for iftar," says one of the students.

Abdul Hakim further adds, "We are ordained to hasten to break the fast and not to delay it. Then why not ask people who are unable to catch their iftar to join us?"

If you find yourself stuck on the road or a market place just as before iftar time, you can definitely relate to these scenarios. Starting from the alleys of old Dhaka, Shahbag, Kakoli to Uttara, the whole city shares this culture of sharing iftar in a public sphere with a group of strangers.

While we celebrate different offers, presented by fancy restaurants of the city, the streets of Dhaka along with group of random strangers welcome us with warm

hospitability during iftar. Iftar, as stated in Islam, is not only a meal to fill our stomach with a variety of food. It also, is an occasion of gratitude, happiness and a spiritual experience. An iftar on the street, thus, carries a different essence from any other gathering elsewhere, as this opens up the lines of communication, appreciation and mutual understanding between people belonging to different classes and cultures.

If you have not experienced any such occasion as of yet, it's probably time to revise your Ramadan to-do checklist. Next time you are stuck somewhere right before iftar, offer whatever food you have to people around you, and you will find many people doing the same as well. Through this simple act of sharing food, you too will feel closer to the strangers. ■

RAMADAN DIARY

AN APPLE A DAY

STAY FIT WHILE FASTING

NAZIBA BASHER

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSEN AGAZ APURBO

During Ramadan, everyone is concerned about physical strain. Anything and everything can dehydrate you in Bangladesh, and people are full to an almost immobile state after iftar. Even climbing a flight of stairs may be too exhausting. Because of this very concern, most people abandon their work-out routines during this month. What they need to know is that it's

HERE IS A BASIC CIRCUIT TRAINING ROUTINE YOU CAN DO AT HOME –

- 10-15 pushups
- 10-15 squats
- 1 min jumping jacks (or walk in place)
- 10-15 Bench dips
- 10-15 lunges
- 1 min jog in place (or walk in place)

Repeat 2-3 times or until you have exercised for 30 consecutive minutes (or longer if you would like)



perfectly alright to work out during Ramadan, as long as you pace yourself.

The best time to exercise or work-out during Ramadan is either just before iftar or 2 or 3 hours after iftar. If your aim is to lose weight, get stronger or simply to be more physically fit, put improvements on hold during this month. Aim instead to maintain your current weight and body fitness. Making fitness or weight loss improvements during Ramadan may prove counterproductive to the body's well-being, lowering your energy levels drastically and often compromising the immune system, ultimately hampering your ability to fast. So instead of overworking your system with the intention of improvement, focus on

maintaining your current fitness and make sure you don't go backwards.

Reducing the rigour and intensity of your work-out routine will allow you to stay consistent without exhausting your energy reserve. If you normally run, reduce to a speed walk. If you lift weights using 12lbs, use 8lbs, and if you normally work-out for an hour, reduce your workout time to 30-45 minutes. The most important thing to do this month is to be consistent. Consistency is the key factor to maintaining your fitness level.

If you normally do both cardio and resistance training as a part of your fitness regime and can't find the time or energy to do both in Ramadan, then combine them both into a resistance training

circuit. Circuit training in general is one of the most effective ways to burn fat and it has the extra benefit of allowing you to burn more calories in a short amount of time. A circuit is performed by doing 3-6 exercises in a quick succession without stopping between each exercise. Doing this will allow you to build muscle and increase cardiovascular endurance all in one workout.

With these few tips and tricks, you can work out with no doubts and frights throughout the whole month. You just always have to remember that no physical strain or work should get in your way or your ability to fast. So make sure to go easy on yourself.

Source: *The 5 Essential Tips for Your Fitness Programme in Ramadan* By Mubarak Ibrahim CPT



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

NUMBERS

13

They say 13 is an unlucky number. However for the Bangladeshis, number thirteen bears special significance. 19 years old Mustafizur Rahman took 13 wickets in the three-match ODI series between India and Bangladesh and helped Bangladesh secure its historical series win against India. Mustafizur has emerged as the player of the three-match ODI series and won every cricket fanatic's heart. This young left-arm pacer took 13 wickets to set a record for most wickets by a bowler in his first three ODIs and equalled Aussie pacer Ryan Harris' record of taking the same number of wickets.