

When international crème de la-crème designers like Komal Sood or Jyoti Sachdev approach you as a designer and commend your work, or even ask you to bring your designs to their country- you know all your struggles and hardship have paid off. This immeasurable compliment reached Sohali Chowdhury when she showcased her unique jewellery designs at this year's Pond's Lustrous Runway as the first jewellery designer to do so.

Living in Atlanta, Georgia since 1988, Sohali spent her childhood, life at school and college, beginning of her working and married life and also the early years of motherhood in the USA. She would regularly, as a student, host fashion shows with the Student's Association, and indulged into the fashion world early on. "I had a cousin who would frequently visit Bangladesh and buy clothes and jewellery of ethnic designs, and I was always so intrigued by them. I would keep borrowing her clothes and accessories to wear myself," says Sohali.

In the USA, after finishing her studies and working with companies like Hewlett-Packard and Zale's Diamonds, Sohali moved to Bangladesh for good in 2011 with her family.

"I came to Bangladesh and was so surprised at how much resources we have. I found every thing I need to pursue my passion in designing. I realised right then that I wanted to make something of myself and my own country was the place to do it," she says.

In May of 2014, Sohali gathered her designs and ideas and established Sasha Exclusives, a jewellery boutique. "Even before coming to Bangladesh I knew of our obsession with gold and never understood it. I was even more confused once I moved here, because I saw some amazing work done by our silversmiths and wondered why gold and diamond always got more preference from consumers," she says.

Recognising the talent of our local

silversmiths, Sohali knew exactly what her jewellery boutique would highlight. "They are so good at what they do, and they are all self-taught! The only drawback is that because of the lack of exposure and education, not only do they not know how to break out of the bounds themselves, but they also like sticking to the traditional because they are easier to sell," she observes.

Sohali's designs encompass both traditionalism and modernism. "I want to bridge a gap between the two. There is only so much you can do with design if you stick to tradition, and as much as I think we need to highlight our local products, we need to take inspiration from designers all over the world."

In her opinion, our artisans like the silversmiths she works with are taken for granted in our country. "They are so readily available, and the artisans themselves do not know their own worth and thus, people in our country do not pay much heed to their efforts. But if you look closely at the intricacy of their work, you will instantly realise that the piece of jewellery you are holding is so precious- someone's hard work, time and soul is invested into this piece, and it may have a whole story behind it," she says.

Sasha Exclusives works entirely to highlight the talented silversmith's of Bangladesh, and take them towards international recognition. "Our artisans are talented to an extent where they have every potential to be internationally famous. But our own countrymen are holding them back. With proper exposure, I can see their works in the ramps of Paris, Milan, Chicago; I can see European brides wearing our exquisite designs and proudly flaunting our craftsmanship. And it is our job, as designers, to make this dream come true!"

With an online outlet on Facebook and a display and studio in her home in Gulshan 2, Sohali not only makes her own unique designs, but also caters to those who want a little bit of their idea in

THE SILVER IN THE LINING

STAR PEOPLE

NAZIBA BASHER

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

their jewellery too. She also plans on making a showroom in the near future. "I think with a little more promotion and exposure, and of course getting to understand the business cycle a little better, I can finally attempt to make a showroom. But when I do, I will make sure that my showroom for silver jewellery will be just as big as a gold or diamond showroom," says Sohali.

With such extravagant future plans, Sohali also dreams to inspire the many youngsters who want to enter the world of fashion. "With some effort and a whole lot of fashion, we can start the trend of jewellery boutiques. We need to promote our artisans well. And if we stick to it, along with Jamdani, Taant and the many wonderful heritages that we are blessed with, Silver will become a timeless heritage for us too."



Sohali Chowdhury



PHOTO: COURTESY

REACH FOR THE STARS

APURBA JAHANGIR

One of the brightest students of BUET's Astronomy Department, Lammim has proved herself to be master of many trades. She was the first Bangladeshi woman to participate in the Fourth International Astronomy Olympiad in Beijing. Lammim also co-wrote a book on astronomy with famous astrophysicist Dr Farshid Mannan Mohammadi. She has been conducting the yearly astronomy conference in Bangladesh for the past three years and also is the sub-editor of

Syeda Lammim Ahad

the science magazine Zero to Infinity. Recently she was shortlisted in the KougerCrown Rising Star programme which will lead her to a journey in space.

Syeda Lammim Ahad grew a passion for space at a very early age. "Like everyone else's, my mother too used to tell me stories about the old woman who lived on the moon, and how Zeus lives in the stars. Though no child takes these stories seriously, I did. One can say that is where I got my fascination for astronomy," says Lammim. She finally found a platform to pursue her passion by winning the District Astronomical Olympiad in 2007. A couple of years later, she attended the International Astronomy Olympiad in Beijing. "That was a life changing experience for me. I was the only Bangladeshi woman who participated, which meant a lot of pressure from my end," says Lammim. She also adds, "Academically, it was the best experience of my life." In 2014,

with 11 other participants from the country, attended the One Young World Summit 2014, held in Dublin.

Lammim's dedication towards astronomy was because of one achievement. She wanted to go to space. This dream has come to a reality when Lammim got shortlisted in the KougerCrown programme. "KougerCrown Corporation and One Young World jointly ventured to pick participants to fly in the next Irish space programme. It was first a shot in the dark, but when I got to know that I was shortlisted, it was as if I was just one step behind from my dream coming true," says Lammim.

She has been quite an inspiration to astronomy enthusiasts around the country. "People don't take it seriously as other academic subjects, but we forget this can be the one element which can take us to the stars," says Lammim.

QUIRKY SCIENCE



Researchers from CSIRO and Imperial College London have assessed how widespread the threat of plastic is for the world's seabirds, including albatrosses, shearwaters and penguins, and found the majority of seabird species have plastic in their gut.

The study, led by Dr Chris Wilcox with co-authors Dr Denise Hardesty and Dr Erik van Sebille and published today in the journal PNAS, found that nearly 60 per cent of all seabird species have plastic in their gut.

Based on analysis of published studies since the early 1960s, the researchers found that plastics are increasingly common in seabird's stomachs. In 1960, plastic was found in the stomach of less than 5 percent

PLASTIC SEA BIRDS

of individual seabirds, rising to 80 percent by 2010.

The researchers predict that plastic ingestion will affect 99 per cent of the world's seabird species by 2050, based on current trends.

The scientists estimate that 90 per cent of all seabirds alive today have eaten plastic of some kind.

This includes bags, bottle caps, and plastic fibres from synthetic clothes, which have washed out into the ocean from urban rivers, sewers and waste deposits.



INCREASE IN DROUGHTS

Droughts and heat waves are happening simultaneously with much greater frequency than in the past, according to research by climate experts at the University of California, Irvine. Their findings appear today in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

A team from UCI's Center for Hydrometeorology & Remote Sensing examined data gathered from ground sensors and gauges during a 50-year-period beginning in 1960. Applying a statistical analysis to the half-century data set, the researchers observed a significant increase in concurrent droughts and heat waves.

"Heat waves can kill people and

crops while worsening air quality, and droughts exacerbate those serious impacts," said senior author Amir AghaKouchak, assistant professor of civil & environmental engineering. "With these two extremes happening at the same time, the threat is far more significant."

For the purposes of the study, heat waves were defined as three to seven consecutive hot days, with temperatures in the 90th percentile of the historical record. Droughts were described as extended periods during which precipitation was 20 percent or less of the norm, as measured by the Standardised Precipitation Index.

Source: Sciencedaily.com

FIVE THINGS

5 THINGS TO DO ON A ROAD TRIP

NAZIBA BASHER

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

A road trip with friends is probably one of the most fun activities a group can do. Suddenly taking off to Sylhet, Cox's Bazaar or even nearer by to Gazipur or Ashuliya is a regular thing amongst friends. But even though minimal planning is required, staying thoroughly entertained with just each others' company can become quite monotonous, and strenuous on everyone. You might want to keep a few things with yourself to make sure you can keep yourself occupied when your friends are tired or busy.



- 1 Keep a Book**- This cannot be said enough. Every solution to every problem is keeping a book. Whenever you find yourself in solitude, whip it out and flip through the pages to learn new feelings portrayed with new words. A book, a kindle, whatever helps you enter your own world.
- 2 Diary and Pen**- A diary and pen will not just help you write down your thoughts (how long can you do that for anyway, right?) You can unleash your inner creativity and just make some sketches. If you aren't too proud of them, who says you have to show them off?
- 3 Instagram**- Road trips are the best for Instagram lovers. They say beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. So, look around, find beauty and click away! Remember to keep your data internet on so you can upload your favourite snaps right away on Instagram and Facebook!
- 4 Music Console**- A road trip without music is no road trip at all. While during the early hours, everyone may be in on it- radio and yourself on full volume- but at one point that hype dies down. Keep your own Ipad or Mp3 player, fill it up with your favourite on-the-road playlist (everyone has one!), and hit play the moment you're faced with boredom.
- 5 Sleep**- This is of course applicable when you are sleepy from the swaying from one side to the other on the road, or when you are done keeping yourself busy from all of the above. Although, by that time you are probably near your destination. So grab that last minute nap to re-energise yourself for the great time ahead.